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PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON EDUCATING
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS DURING A GLOBAL
PANDEMIC OR TIMES OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated

... to my three amazing sons, John, Braxton, and Bryson. The road to achieving an advanced degree has not been an easy one. As a young mother, many obstacles threatened to derail me from completing my last degree. There were many days that I wanted to give up and quit. Many days, I could no longer see the vision or the finish line, but what I did see were your little faces. Each time a new life was given to me, it reminded me of God's promise and my purpose in my life. May my grit and perseverance be an everyday reminder that through God, all things are possible; all you must do is believe.

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON EDUCATING
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PANDEMIC OR TIMES OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

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University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2023

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The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyze the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the barriers and successors of educating African American students through a global pandemic, or unexpected school closure. The study researched successful practices and impediments African American students experience and suggested future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic, natural disaster, or other times of school closures. The theoretical framework in this study is centered on the educational philosophy of the Social Learning Theory developed in 1963 and later detailed in 1977 by Albert Bandura (Nabavi, 2012). The research questions that guided the study were, (a) What are parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?, (b) What are parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially- emotionally during virtual instruction compared to

face-to-face instruction?, (c) What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic? , (d) What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students? A purposeful sample of the groups of participants parents and teachers were interviewed to build an empirical understanding of the significant impact of school closures and virtual learning on African American students' achievement. The study found when analyzing the experiences of the parents and teachers who worked with African American students pre, during, and post pandemic students were impacted more socially- emotionally during virtual learning than they were academically. Parents reported noticing more temperamental changes impacting African American students because of the isolation from peers which research from the Social Learning Theory suggest is critical to development of children. According to the teacher's perspectives pre-pandemic African American student's academic performance in general was aligned to current literature that suggest on average academic students perform subordinate to other races. However, what the study found was that post-pandemic African American students were behind academically but not substantially more than any other race. All races showed deficits in learning loss when returning to school post-pandemic.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In March and April of the 2020- 2021 school year, schools across the world, including the United States of America, closed the doors of campuses and mandated that students and parents utilize other modes of learning in fear of spreading the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) (Locke, 2021). Researchers' lack of knowledge of the epidemiology of the virus among children, teenagers, and teachers at the start of the pandemic served as reasons countries collectively decided to cease school districts' face-to-face operations and have the sections run remotely (Haeck & Lefebvre, 2020). Home confinement and school closures became mandated as preventive measures, which created a new way of living and learning for students in America (Hatzichristou et al., 2021). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning and development were interrupted and disturbed for millions of students forcing the schools to close and students to learn virtually (Garcia & Weiss, 2020).

Schools across the United States began to pivot from a traditional in-class learning model to virtual modes of instruction in the spring of 2020. Yet, learning modes continued to differ from school district to school district in the 2020-2021 school year (Oster et al., 2021). Garcia and Weiss (2020) found that the school closings that started in the spring of 2020 are found to impede student performance, with harsh impacts especially on African American students, because they reduced instructional learning time in schools. Considering the history of African American (AA) families and their disadvantages concerning education and the students' need for face-to-face instructional learning, the loss of instructional face-to-face time may have a serious impact on their academic achievement. Many African American students and parents rely on the consistency of face-to-face instructional learning time to enhance their academics

(Tarkar, 2020). With school closures and the loss of face-to-face instructional time, the elimination of the consistency of educators and educational resources will present challenges for educators and students. School closures force students to learn from individuals in their homes, whereas some African Americans caregivers in their homes may lack the resources, and higher education, knowledge, or skills to help the child. Dorn et al. (2020) state that school closure has serious impacts for all students but especially presents challenges for students of color.

Literature shows that school interruptions can harm students' academic skills and perseverance, and these impacts may differ by socioeconomic status because of cultural differences in access to learning resources and learning opportunities (Haeck & Lefebvre, 2020). Moreover, school closures can affect students' academic achievement (Hatzichristou et al., 2021). According to Haeck and Lefebvre (2020), school closures may impact educational attainment because of the loss of face-to-face instructional time and the challenges presented to different students of different SES by virtual instruction. School closures also can influence critical social and emotional skills that develop through personal relationships between students and teachers. In addition, school closures can hinder after-school activities that support students' emotional security and skill ability (Locke, 2021).

As a result of school closures, educators, researchers, and stakeholders grew concerned regarding the learning loss of students (Locke, 2021). Researchers pondered whether the pandemic's school closures would create a learning deficiency that would put students behind academically, most notably African American students, based on research that supports the idea that some African American students struggle to perform academically when compared to their white- counterparts prior to the pandemic. With African Americans historically underperforming their counterparts the change in learning

mode to remote learning may have the potential to make worse the challenge of performing well academically (Locke, 2021). Research shows that children's academic performance had the potential to deteriorate during the pandemic, along with their progress in other developmental skills (Pressley & Ha, 2021). According to Garcia and Weiss (2020), the pandemic can widen the existing socioeconomic disparities by cultures, especially for the African American students who were experiencing challenges academically prior to the pandemic. According to Garcia and Weiss (2020), the pandemic may affect the learning and educational outcome of children experiencing educational inequalities such as limited access to knowledgeable individuals who can assist with learning, access to technology, and changes in rigor in the curriculum in the 21st century. Locke (2021) suggests that researchers begin to find ways to bridge the learning gap between African Americans and their counterparts, which may have widened due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Masonbrink and Hurley (2020) insinuate action is needed to offset the educational loss of children, especially children already experiencing educational disparities and who live in poverty-stricken communities before the gap of educational inequality is widened. Knowledge gained from this study may be beneficial should events such as national disasters, hurricanes, tropical storms, pandemics, or epidemics affect school closures in the future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the barriers and successors of educating African American students through a global pandemic, or unexpected school closure. The study researched successful practices and impediments African American students experience and suggested future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic, natural disaster, or other times

of school closures. According to Oster et al. (2021) reduced access to in-person learning models is associated with poorer learning outcomes, adverse mental health, and behavioral effects in children. Therefore, analyzing the barriers and successors that present themselves regarding African American students specifically will help educators and researchers understand the dynamics of problems these students faced and strategically plan action steps to bridge the educational gap of said students.

During the current study, the researcher met with and interviewed parents and teachers to gain their perspective on the performance of African American students during and after the pandemic. The researcher analyzed current practices to assist low-performing students who the teachers felt their academic performance was impacted by virtual instruction and suggested future approaches for educating low-performing students. By examining the multiple perspectives of stakeholders regarding what instructional practices and other protocols took place inside campuses and in the home during the pandemic, other educators may understand current methods used to combat the underachievement of African American students. Educators may also gain insight into effective practices and thus participate in more effective approaches that enhance the knowledge of African American students.

The researcher conducted this study to add to a current body of research attempting to find research-based strategies that help African American students succeed academically. Historically, there is limited research on strategies from parents' and teachers' perspectives on effective practices to educate students falling behind due to the pandemic. In addition, more research is needed in this area because a great deal of research on this topic is new and does not highlight the implications a pandemic may have on prekindergarten and kindergarten African American students. Therefore, the current study triangulated information from interviews of teachers and parents' artifacts

to aid in future research strategies used to educate African American students during the pandemic. Masonbrink and Hurley's (2020), presented research that suggests that researchers need to take action to offset the widening of potential educational and health disparities that may occur in poverty-stricken communities during pandemic and post-pandemic times.

Statement of the Problem

When equated to White students, children of African American and Latino ethnicities often exhibit a gap in educational achievement (Vega et al., 2015). Bowman, et al. (2018) found that African American students on average score lower on test than any many other races such as Asian, Whites, and Latino students. Enduring the struggle to perform as well as their counterparts in school, the COVID-19 pandemic presented an unexpected barrier in African American journey to academic excellence. According to Bryan et al. (2020) disparities in academic and behavior outcomes among students attending urban public schools continue to capture the nation's attention. For instance, students attending urban schools score lower than their peers in suburban, small town, or rural schools on tests measuring academic proficiency levels in core subject areas such as science, mathematics, reading, and writing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures and forced students to shift from face-to-face instruction to virtual instruction inside the home. The shift presented many challenges to underperforming students whose parents lacked the knowledge and skills to support them (Russell et al., 2021). Dizon-Ross (2019) found that children who are members of families with lower levels of education and low socioeconomic statuses are likely to display lower levels of academic achievement due to limited knowledge and resources available to them. Garcia and Weiss (2020) conducted pandemic-relevant research that suggests that schooling in a home setting is only beneficial for students for

whom intentional, personalized, and sufficient resources are available. Online learning and teaching are effective if students have consistent access to the internet and computers.

Bowman et al. (2018) found that lower performance in school of African American students is not only a problem for their families and their communities but rather an issue affecting the entire country. When African Americans display lower educational levels, it is challenging for them to gain substantial employment, ultimately receiving low-income jobs to maintain financial stability which may have substantial impacts on the economy (Vega et al., 2015). For adults and parents, sustaining low-paying jobs hinders their ability to provide resources such as quality early childhood centers and tutors for their children (Doi et al, 2020). When African American students maintain low educational standards and thus obtain lower-paying jobs themselves, the African American community creates a cycle of poverty that continues from generation to generation (Doi et al., 2020). To combat this phenomenon, Garcia and Weiss (2020) suggest an examination must occur of the practices currently in place in classrooms during the pandemic to promote the academic achievement of African American students at the elementary level. The elementary classes teach the foundation for skills students will need to excel in academics throughout grade school and into their career fields which can lead to the elimination of the cycle of poverty (Doi et al., 2020).

One way to eliminate the cycle of poverty for African Americans is to create dual families where both parents are highly educated and reach financial stability. Elango et al. (2016) suggest that children of single-parent households are significantly correlated with poverty in the United States. Moreover, single-parent homes are less likely to succeed in life when compared to children with dual-income families (Elango et al., 2016). Haeck and Lefebvre (2020) found families with dual incomes have more

resources; therefore, they are in a position to provide an enriched environment for their children. In addition, dual-income families are likely to have flexible jobs and access multiple resources to help their children, such as the internet and internet-connected devices to gain information. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many African American students; many African American families live below the poverty line, live in single-parent homes, and live in low-socioeconomic neighborhoods with limited resources (Haeck & Lefebvre, 2020). Dizon-Ross (2019) researched educational inequalities when virtually educating students in low-income communities. The results of Dizon-Ross's (2019) study suggest that the low-academic performance of African American students can result from limited resources needed to complete educational activities effectively. Due to school closures and a pivot to virtual instruction, children who were already struggling to learn effectively and thrive in school under normal school operations found it difficult, to receive adequate instruction and perform successfully during pandemic times (Garcia & Weiss, 2020).

Significance of the Study

Recognizing the underperformance of African American students is an essential topic within academic literature. According to Batubara (2021), even before the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning occurred, the problem of educational disadvantages for African American students was an issue. Decades of research outline various reasons students of African American backgrounds continue to underperform in school (Vega et al., 2015). Over the past decades reasons African American students experience trouble in school can include but are not limited to inability to read, inability to read on level, limited resources, and/or poverty related issues (Veg et al., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened to change the way children encounter academics. The change in instructional mode during the COVID-19 pandemic posed a threat to underperforming

African American students (Batubara, 2021). The magnitude of the outcomes that African American children experienced in terms of their academic stability is unknown (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). Therefore, researchers, educators, and stakeholders must place a particular focus on this group of students, starting primarily with the young children who had never experienced a school setting before the pandemic. Educators must collectively plan ways to ensure that African American students do not fall further behind their counterparts due to school closures in the future (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). The current study analyzed various stakeholders' perceptions of why educational gaps exist between African American students and their perception of how this educational gap widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing multiple perspectives is critical to understanding the position that all stakeholders play in the educational advancement of students. Also, different stakeholders may have successful suggestions as to how to work with children who are underperforming during times of school closures. Many stakeholders present great ideas but often lack ways to put those ideas into practice. Therefore, the current study will contribute to research aimed at identifying effective practices that enhance the academic success of African American students during a pandemic or any event that prompt school closures. The strategies outlined in the study may be not only useful in the classroom but also useful for students to practice with their families at home.

Since there is limited research coming from the stakeholder perspective on effective practices for educating students during a Pandemic, this research study can set the framework for additional research that examines the perspective of stakeholders before developing practices for educators to implement on campuses (Hamid et al., 2020). In addition, this research study will suggest practices and strategies to implement on campuses that come from parents and teachers who live the reality of educating low

socioeconomic students during the pandemic. Having insight into what works best for students and parents of this socioeconomic status may allow school districts to develop professional learning opportunities for educators to understand the magnitude of one group of students continuing to lag. Moreover, educators will understand the educator's critical role in closing the achievement gap.

Research Purpose and Questions

The current study analyzes stakeholders' multiple perspectives regarding the barriers to educating African American students through a global pandemic, natural disaster, or school closures. The study researched successes and impediments and suggest future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic or unexpected school closure. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ2: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially- emotionally during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic?

RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students?

Definition of Key Terms

Achievement Gap- the spacing between success rates measured by test scores of two separate groups (Jeynes, 2019).

African American- refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Barriers- Obstacles that hinder the completion of a task (Chomsky, 1986).

Black- refers to individuals from the African Diaspora who now reside in the United States (Battle, Buttarro, & Pastrana, 2010).

Economically Disadvantaged- A family or individual eligible for family aid or food stamps. (U. S. Department Education, 2013c).

Parent Involvement- Parent participation in school, such as volunteering/ attending school functions, assisting with homework, and collaborating with teachers (Berkowitz, Astor, Pineda, DePedro, Weiss, & Benbenishty, 2021).

Pandemic- a disease that extends over a large geographic area (Morens, Folkers, & Fauci, 2009).

Perception- The insight of an individual (Ndebele, 2015).

Poverty- Scarceness of resources, most notably financial currency (Battle, Buttarro, & Pastrana, 2010).

Urban Schools serve mainly students of ethnic minorities from low socioeconomic communities (Berkowitz, Astor, Pineda, DePedro, Weiss, & Benbenishty, 2021).

Socioeconomic status- the rank in the number of funds a family receives from all sources of income (Doi, Isumi, & Fujiwara 2020)

Low-Income Communities- The residents have low revenue levels (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020).

Stakeholders- families and guardians; teachers; administrators; custodians; secretaries; other school staff; business owners; religious leaders; social service providers; law enforcement officers; and neighbors (Janmaat, et al. (2016).

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the research problem, purpose of the study, significance, research questions, and critical definitions. The present study will contribute to research attempting to minimize the achievement gap of African American students by highlighting strategies that may help their academic achievement. As the 21st century continues to call for an increase in the rigor of the knowledge and skills of students, already failing students will need additional programs, supports, and services initiated to assist the instruction-taking place inside of the classroom. Furthermore, this study will be an addition to future research attempting to analyze how stakeholders' perceptions influence student achievement during a global pandemic. The next chapter will be a literature review of the major topics that will complement this study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study's core purpose was to examine essential stakeholders' perceptions concerning factors that affect African American students' academic achievement during a pandemic, natural disaster, or school closure. This chapter will feature current literature in the following domains: (a) educational experiences of African American students; (b) virtual education; (c) education during the Covid-19 pandemic; and (d) the impact of Covid-19 on African American students learning.

Educational Experiences of African American Students

Historical Contexts

To provide a holistic view of the impact virtual education may have on the education of African American students, it is essential to understand the history of African Americans and education. According to research, historically, when equated to White students, children of African American and Latino ethnicities often exhibit a gap in educational achievement (Vega et al., 2015). In a study that details the historical stereotypes perpetrating the African American male, Taylor et al. (2019) present research that implies that educational gaps for people of color stem from the beliefs and treatment of people of color during slavery. According to Taylor et al. (2019), years ago, white male enslavers developed beliefs, also called stereotypes of African American people. These stereotypes are believed to be created to explain why the white male should remain the recipient of economic, social, and political domination. According to Taylor et al. (2019), years ago, owning enslaved African Americans symbolized the upper-class status and power of African Americans. White enslavers believed African American males were like savage beasts and more robust than White males. Enslavers believed African Americans needed to be tamed and controlled to maintain White Supremacy. According

to Taylor et al. (2019), these stereotypical beliefs shaped how the world viewed and interacted with people of color. Taylor et al. (2019) believe that the stereotypes and unfair treatment of African Americans are still prevalent today and have impacted people's beliefs and actions regarding how people interact with students of color in schools today. Even though slavery ended in 1865, negative stereotypes and unjust treatment of African American student is still prevalent within the school system today (Taylor et al., 2019).

Today African American students in the United States continue to lag White students academically on average and are suspended from school at a much larger rate (Bartz & Kritsonis, 2019). In a study that analyses the relationship between racism, white supremacy, and African American education, Bart and Kritsonis (2019) explain that there is a link between the White power structure and the education of African American children. Like Taylor et al. (2019), Bartz and Kritsonis (2019) state that racism is a connector to the ineffectiveness of educating African American students in the United States. Bartz and Kritsonis (2019) present literature detailing that as early as 1790, black boys were enslaved and tarnished of their rights to read and write. Laws such as The Black Code prohibited African American children from learning to read and write. Bartz and Kritsonis (2019) explained that years later, when African American boys and girls were afforded the ability to learn, their resources, such as schools, transportation, and textbooks, were far less intact than that of white students. The effects of African Americans' inability to read and write for years later than Whites affects equal job opportunities and education opportunities for many African Americans today.

Laws Regarding Equal Education for AA Students

The inequalities that still impact education for African American students today have been noted within the literature for many years. The unequal treatment of African Americans compared to Whites gained so much attention that in late 1800, policymakers

began to investigate adjusting laws that prohibited African American from having the same rights as whites Bartz and Kritsonis (2019). According to Bartz and Kritsonis (2019), years ago, Jim Crow laws were created by white politicians to protect white power and limit the amount of education African Americans received. According to Taylor et al. (2019), Jim Crow laws ensured that African Americans were not given the same rights as whites. At these times, Whites were entitled to the best education, the best standards of living, and the most expensive houses, much like the society in the United States today.

However, African Americans soon began to read and write and eventually became politicians. Bills and laws began to pass that aided in the advancements of African Americans. According to Bartz and Kritsonis (2019), The Blair Bill of 1887 made significant changes to educate African Americans. The Blair Bill of 1887 was intended to lower the rate of illiterate African Americans. However, the bill never passed and made it to law because it was coined as a bill designed for Black people and was not intended to be equal to all races. The non-passing of the Blair Bill was a setback for African Americans, but it did not stop their fight for equal equality.

In 1896, a supreme court case, Plessey vs. Ferguson, set the framework of change for African Americans. Medley (2012), the author of "*We as Freeman*," writes a book that explains the ruling of the Plessey vs. Ferguson case and the case's implications on the life of African American people. According to Medley (2012), the case of Plessey vs. Ferguson was one of the first rulings that mandated that institutions that serve colored people were equal to those that serve white people. The case was the first of many efforts to equalize the treatment and the resources that African American received compared to Whites.

Later in history, another crucial court case began to unfold that would change history for African Americans and education. A critical court case that significantly impacted African American history is Brown vs. Board of Education of 1954. In an attempt to review the Brown Vs. Board of Education case and its implications on education today, López and Burciaga (2014) grant a precise overview of the ruling in the case. According to López and Burciaga (2014, P.3), the ruling of Brown vs. The Board of Education ruling "effectively declared the unconstitutionality of separate but equal schools ." According to López and Burciaga (2014), the Brown vs. The Board of Education case ruling eliminated the separation of schools between whites and African American. The ruling mandated that all children be able to attend school alongside one another. According to López and Burciaga (2014), despite the ruling, several states tried to get the ruling overturned or seek exemptions stating that demographic barriers prohibited their states from abiding by the ruling. Therefore, the rulings further implied that school districts could abide by the ruling and maintain constitutional principles. Moreover, the Brown vs. The Board of Education ruling set the framework for equality in schools for African American children; there continued to be essential cases that would change the reality of education for AA students.

Institutional Racism

Despite African Americans still feeling the impact of poorer school conditions and limited resources compared to students who live in higher-income communities, African Americans continue to make strides toward better education for their children. Although it appears that African American children today are granted equal access to learning environments and learning resources as children of other races, there are still factors that impact the education of African American students more than any other race.

Institutional racism exists today for African Americans in domains such as old school buildings, limited resources, and socioeconomic-related factors (Taylor et al., 2019).

School Buildings

Despite significant efforts of constitutional court cases to equalize the treatment and resources of African American today, institutional racism still exists for African Americans in domains such as old school buildings, limited resources, and socioeconomic-related factors (Taylor et al., 2019). Barrett et al. (2019) conducted a study composed of a review of 129 publications that focused on how the school environment impacts education. The study reviewed publications from articles, research reports, books, and monographs and analyzed the literature to explain how school infrastructure impacts students learning. The study's findings indicate that most older school buildings in poorer conditions are in the poorest areas in rural and urban school districts worldwide. Barrett et al. (2019) suggest that when students attend school in buildings that do not meet their health and safety needs, it impacts their academic achievement. According to Barrett et al. (2019), this is the reality for many low- and middle-income students. Implications of the study suggest that low and income students are primarily impacted by the conditions of the school building they learn within. Allowing students to attend school in buildings in poor conditions not only places AA students' health and academic achievement at risk but also sends a message that the system values them less than students in more financially abundant areas Barrett et al. (2019).

Like the study of Barrett et al. (2019), Fisher (2001) composed a study that analyzed multiple literary sources to understand the linkage between school infrastructures and student achievement. Fisher's (2001) study details the process of the partnerships that come together to create safe schools and school environments. The

article explains that importance of school building being a baseline for effective learning. Fisher's (2001) site research defines *poor school conditions* as a building with ventilation, temperature, lighting, and future functional issues. Fisher (2001) agrees with Barrett et al. (2019) that most buildings are in low- and middle-income communities. However, Fisher's (2021) findings found that students in this poor building scored five to ten points in percentile rank lower than students in better school buildings on academic testing after controlling for socioeconomic status. Years of research have and continue to support the linkage between school infrastructure and student academic performance.

Limited Resources

In addition to school building conditions, African American students today continue to experience disparities in the educational resources their schools receive. According to Taylor et al. (2019), in their study that detailed the history of African American students and education, as mentioned earlier in the review, despite efforts to desegregate and equalize schools following the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling, there are still inequalities in the resources predominantly AA school receive and those of White communities. According to Taylor et al. (2019), the inequity of resources contributes to the achievement gap in the academic performance of AA students. Taylor et al. (2019) support this statement by presenting data from a national report card in 2013 that showed that 17% of AA students, compared to 46% of white students, were reading at or above grade level. Further data presented in their study suggest that analyzed graduation rates of students showed that African American students were 73% and Whites were 87%. Data from this study further suggested that African- American males suffered from high school dropout rates and lower college-entry completion rates far higher than other races.

In a study that aimed to examine the factors contributing to the achievement gap between African American students and Whites. Hung et al. (2020) note equity of educational resources as a contributing factor. Hung et al. (2020) conducted a study that used pooled data from across five years(2008-2013) from students within six-grade levels, third through eight using descriptive, correlational, and multiple linear regressions to identify factors affecting student achievement. The study's findings revealed that low-income neighborhoods receive a host of funding from the state to equalize the educational resources that students receive at school. Due to the amount that low- and middle-income neighborhoods receive for school funding, the impact of the lack of educational resources on students' achievement may begin to reduce. Hung et al. (2020) study suggests that the resources in higher-income communities are attributed to the parents' socioeconomic and educational level difference. Hung et al. (2020) study suggests that communities with higher incomes have better schools, more excellent educational resources, and a higher level of education because the parent's educational level and the value of education are much higher in communities of higher-income families than in lower.

Socioeconomic Status and Educational Levels of Family

Additional research reveals that a family's socioeconomic status and parental education levels impact student educational attainment. Hung et al. (2020) study's findings revealed relevant information linking student achievement to parental education. The findings suggest that students of color may experience educational struggles when they attend schools with a high level of parent educational attainment because the students in those districts, on average, perform at a higher level than the average student. Moreover, the findings suggest that the strongest indicator of the achievement gap between White and African American children in school districts across the United States

was a higher percentage of homes with adults holding a bachelor's degree or higher education. According to Hung et al. (2020), adult educational level is an indicator of student success and plays a role in reducing educational gaps in student achievement. Hanushek et al. (2019) research supports the idea that families' socioeconomic status impacts student achievement. Hanushek et al. (2019) conducted a study that used data from four national assessments of students' performance assessments. The assessment for the data was collected over five years. The data examined whether the achievement gap between White and African American students persisted. Moreover, the research aimed to examine if the relationship between students from higher, middle, and lower socioeconomic status impacted their academic performance. The study found that socioeconomic status was a predictor of student achievement. His research revealed that children growing up in a household of lower socioeconomic status (poorer households and communities) were at greater risk of traumatic stress and other medical problems affecting brain development.

Research has supported that Institutional Racism may significantly impact the Academics African American children within the classroom. The study noted that higher-income families have greater access to richer schooling environments regardless of race. Their exposure to crime and violence was much less than in poorer communities. The study suggests that the condition in which students grow up and thrive impacts their physical and mental development and academic performance. In another direction, the study highlighted that college-educated mothers speak more frequently to their infants, use a more extensive vocabulary with their toddlers, and are more likely to use parenting practices that respect the autonomy of a growing child than mothers with no degree. This point seconds what Hung et al. (2020) found in their study that parent educational attainment impacts student achievement. Hanushek et al. (2019) research suggests that

parental education and other childhood or adolescent experiences contribute to profound socioeconomic disparities in academic achievement.

Virtual Education

Models

Virtual instruction is an online learning platform with various models to engage users. During the Covid-19 pandemic, all districts conducted virtual learning; however, many districts utilized different models. Al Salman et al. (2021) conducted a study to identify students' preferred levels and challenges of distance learning. The researchers used a sample of 720 students who all engaged in a questionnaire to answer questions about their virtual experience. The study used mean, standard deviations, and ANOVA tests to test the data. The study had significant findings about students' preference levels and challenges. Moreover, the study outlined the different models used during virtual learning. The study explains four different models of virtual instructional platforms used during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first platform is Darsak. Darsak is a free Jordanian platform that provides first through twelfth-grade students with educational lessons and video clips. Along with the learning material provided, teachers were available to help students access the platform and to answer any questions. However, there was no student-to-teacher interaction. The second virtual model utilized was Noorspace. Noorspace is a unified electronic system created for groups, schools, teachers, students, and parents to remain in contact. Noorspace connects to school systems, allowing people to engage in activities, exams, attendance, and meets. Etc. Zoom was the third virtual platform available during virtual instruction for districts. *Zoom* is a videoconferencing tool allowing participants to meet online with or without a video. The platform is designed for the user to record sessions, collaborate with others, share, and write on each other's screens, all within the web-based

platform. Lastly, the fourth virtual platform option was Microsoft Teams is an online platform designed to allow companies to work together in a virtual space. The tool allows users to participate in videoconferencing, real-time discussions, and document sharing and editing. According to Al Salman et al. (2021), these four models were available for districts to use during the Covid-19 pandemic, which prompted school closures and mandated virtual learning.

Teacher Perceptions of Virtual Education

In an article dedicated to explaining elementary school teachers' perspectives on online- learning through the Covid-19 pandemic, Garcia and Weiss (2020) allow teachers to give their perspectives. According to Garcia and Weiss (2020), the pandemic may have impacted the learning and educational outcomes of children experiencing educational inequalities, such as limited access to knowledgeable individuals who can assist with learning, access to technology, and changes in rigor in the curriculum in the 21st century. Therefore, it is critical to understand the teacher's role and perspective in educating students virtually since Teachers have such a significant role in the educational advancement of students.

Fauzi et al. (2020) provide some insightful perspectives for teachers. Fauzi et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study of 45 elementary school teachers (17 male and 28 female) and surveyed the teachers about their experience teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey consisted of an open and closed questionnaire made in google forms and sent to each teacher individually. The questionnaire allowed the teachers to answer questions about their experiences. The researchers used inductive content analysis to code and categorize respondents' answers. The study's results indicated that out of all teacher participants, 73% of teachers felt like online learning was ineffective. The respondents noted that the ineffectiveness was attributed to poor facilities availability,

internet connection, expensive internet quota fees, difficulty giving an objective assessment, making teaching materials takes much time, difficulty measuring student understanding, difficulty teaching in lower grades because many children still cannot read, less cooperative parents, difficulty explaining the material in detail, giving awards were not very memorable, and difficulties in conditioning students. The results of the study were grouped into four main categories; (1) availability of facilities; (2) network and internet usage; (3) planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning; and (4) collaboration with parents.

Tamar and Blau (2021) also analyzed teachers' perspectives of remote or virtual learning. However, their study aimed to analyze the pedagogical, technological, and organizational benefits and challenges of digital learning environments and to explore teachers' pedagogical strategies. The study used a qualitative design to analyze the experiences of 133 elementary and secondary school teachers. The study uses a Grounded Theory approach to yield a bottom-up analysis of responses reflective of teachers' perspectives from their experience.

The results yield a combination of pedagogical distance learning strategies used by teachers and a list of challenges teachers face during remote learning. Challenges of remote learning included challenges of teachers included difficulties in conducting differential learning, assessing student performance, or maintaining contact with students, technological challenges such as lack of technological knowledge or suitable equipment, organizational and systemic challenges such as lack of readiness for ERT (Emergency Remote Learning), lack of organizational guidance or support, personal challenges, and overload caused by the preparation of new tasks, and long work hours at home spread over the day and combined with family care.

The result of the study also combined a list of strategies teachers found compelling during remote emergency learning. Effective strategies used by teachers included

- whole-class videoconferencing for social cohesion,
- creating whole stratum/school activities and activities with family members,
- leading discussions in synchronous or asynchronous mode,
- giving guidelines for individual asynchronous learning,
- creating engaging Synchronous learning activities through videoconference sessions,
- gamification in videoconference class sessions,
- allowing opportunities for peer teaching in videoconference class sessions, and
- prompting self-directed teacher-led learning in small groups through videoconferencing.

The two articles granted insight into teacher experiences and produced strategies that may benefit students during virtual learning.

Parent Perceptions of Virtual Education

Another stakeholder group impacted by the prompt closing of schools and the quick shift to virtual learning was the parents of students. Hamaidi et al. (2021) examined parents' perceptions of primary and secondary students' experience with virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study used the descriptive survey method using a questionnaire to gain input from parents. The questionnaire was distributed to 470 parents during the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year. The study's results indicate that parents were moderately satisfied with virtual learning during the pandemic. The results indicate that the parents in the study rated themselves as mediumly familiar and accepting of the distant learning process. Parents of the study were favorably pleased with the children's cooperation skills during virtual learning. The results indicate that the parents

favored female versus male teachers during virtual learning. The results also showed differences in parents attributed to the grade of the child, teacher's gender favorably female teachers, and school type favorably private schools.

Another study that analyzed parents' perceptions of virtual learning found new information regarding parental experiences. Like Hamaidi et al. (2021), Sari et al. (2020) conducted a study analyzing parental perspectives. However, the purpose of Sari et al. (2020) was to determine ways parents were involved in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study used a quantitative approach through questionnaires made by Google forms. The study used purposive sampling with sample criteria of parents of children ages three through six. The study used a total of 39 parents. The study results indicated that the parents' educational level impacted how involved the parents were during distance learning. The study suggests that parental education affects a child's education continuity. The study suggests that the higher the parent education, the more open the parents were and the more importance they placed on educating their children. The study results revealed that the parents with higher education levels were more involved with their children during the distance level. The results further indicate that parents' involvement in children's play and learning schedules showed room for improvement in parent involvement.

Education during the Covid 19 Pandemic

Educational Experience for All

The global pandemic that led to school closures and mandated virtual learning directly impacted teachers, parents, and students. Chen et al. (2022) conducted a study that analyzed the academic performance of school ages children in the United States during the first three months of 2020. The study uses an online survey to gain data about the experiences of two hundred and twenty-three parents of school-aged children. The

study considered the parent participants' income level and races/ ethnicities. The results indicated that income class was linked with family structure. The study showed an increased rate of single-parent households with low-income and lower-middle-class income than those of higher-middle-class and higher-income families. The results showed a moderate relationship between class and ethnicity. The study found that white families were more likely to be in the higher-income class than their counterparts; families of color represent 56% of the low-income and lower-middle class, 42% of the middle-class, and 25% of the upper-middle and high-income class families.

The results of Chen et al. (2022) study found that low-income and lower-middle-class parents, regardless of race, experienced more financial and instrumental hardships because of the pandemic compared to their higher-income, White counterparts. However, when factoring academics, white parents with higher incomes reported being more stressed over home-learning environments and planning educational and physical activities for their children while in the home. In sum, the finding of Chen et al. (2022) study suggests that family income level played a significant role in the academics and coping abilities of parents and children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A study catered more directly to how the pandemic had the potential to impact families financially, socio-emotionally, and academically Kuhfeld et al. (2020) analyzed the impact on students. The study aimed to project how the Covid-19 pandemic would impact learning loss considering the absenteeism of literature on the topic and summer learning patterns of FIVE million students. The study uses NWEA's anonymized longitudinal student achievement database to collect data. According to the authors, schools use this database to assess and monitor students' elementary and secondary growth in reading and writing each school year. The researchers used data from about 5 million third- to seven-grade students in about 18,958 schools across the United States.

The researcher followed said students for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The researchers used the MAP data to project academic learning. The researcher produced a set of plots to compare the empirical- and literature-based projections with typical learning rates of students. The study's results suggest that under thier projections, returning students were expected to start to fall in 2020 with around 63 to 68% of learning gains in reading and 37 to 50% in mathematics compared to a typical school year (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

The literature reviewed above research shows that students and families were impacted financially and socio-emotionally and were projected to be impacted academically during the pandemic. Thus, it is essential to revisit the literature post-pandemic and analyze how students fared academically once returning to face-to-face instruction. Lewis et al. (2021), like Kuhfeld et al. (2020), used data from NWEA's assessment released by the NWEA's research team in December 2020 and December 2021 to examine students' academic progress one year after the pandemic. The researchers used the data of 5 million students in grades third through eight who took the MAP assessment in reading and math before and after the pandemic. The researchers compared the data to answer two questions; how do gains across the 2020-2021 year compare to pre-pandemic trends, and how does student achievement in the Spring of 2021 compare to pre-pandemic levels? The study found that most average students, regardless of race, in grades third-eighth made gains in math and reading in 2020-2021. However, students made gains at a lower rate than pre-pandemic trends, mainly in winter and spring. Moreover, the study results showed that students ended the years with lower achievement than an average year, with more significant declines to historical trends in math. Achievement, in general, was lower for all student groups in 2020-21 but mainly for American Indian, Alaska Native, Black, and Latinx students. Students in high-poverty schools were disproportionately impacted within the grades studied.

Challenges

Research has shown that virtual instruction was projected to impact students and families during the covid-19 pandemic. In a study that aimed to analyze parents' perceptions of virtual learning, Abuhammad (2020) found insight into the challenges parents faced when attempting to be involved in the virtual learning experience. The purpose of the study is to review content posted on parents' social media accounts to examine parents' perceptions of challenges during distance learning. The researcher used the social media platform Facebook to locate Facebook groups and then reviewed the posts and discussions from parents from March 15th to April 25th, 2020. A qualitative method was used to analyze the parent's reports of attitudes, perceptions, and conventions of barriers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher analyzed all comments to understand the data as fully as possible. The researcher coded the comments, and four emergent barriers arose; (1) personal barriers; (2) technical barriers; (3) logistical barriers; and (4) financial barriers.

Personal barriers ranked as one of the most repeated challenges among parents. Parents needed more knowledge or training on the material and navigating the platform. The lack of trained personnel present impacted the quality of education their children received. The study found that parents with lower educational levels felt challenged in assisting students in specific subjects and handling technology. Parents sighted technical barriers with issues with connectivity and internet speed as a common barrier that impacted their child's success during virtual instruction. Logistical barriers noted by the parents included comments on students needing to prepare to engage in distance learning. Parents also commented on the content being taught on the online platform and CITED students needing help grasping the material significant challenges. Lastly, parents commented on the financial barriers they endured during virtual instruction. Parents

struggled with the cost of purchasing the technology needed for virtual learning and the struggles of covering the cost of internet services during this time.

Like Abuhammad (2020), Sari and Nayir (2020) conducted a study that analyzed the challenges of virtual instruction. However, Sari and Nayir's (2020) study focused on teachers' and administrators' perspectives during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study aimed to analyze teachers' and administrators' experiences of the challenges they experienced during virtual learning and the strategies they used to cope. The study used a qualitative method using written responses to standardize open-ended interview questions to speak with 65 teachers (37 women and 28 men) and seven administrators about their virtual experience. The study's findings revealed that the most prevalent challenge among the participants were teachers' difficulties in internet access and lack of infrastructure, classroom management, and human resources. The findings further revealed challenges in managing student behaviors in the virtual platform. Lastly, the study noted challenges with the distance learning process itself. Strategies used to cope during the virtual learning period include new arrangements for classroom management, seeking help from others such as colleagues, and open communication with parents and students.

Impact of COVID-19 on African American Student Learning

Learning Loss

Students across the globe experienced challenges during virtual learning that may/ may not have impacted their academic achievement. According to Lewis et al. (2021), African Americans were one group who experienced learning loss during the pandemic time. Thus, it is essential to analyze the learning loss of African American students post-pandemic. In a study that aimed to project the learning loss of young students, Dorn et al. (2020a) provide insight into the learning loss for African American children. Dorn et al. (2020a) study presents data that revealed that the shutdowns caused by COVID-19 could

potentially exacerbate existing achievement gaps. In this study, researchers Dorn et al. (2020a) used a statistical model to estimate the potential impact of school closures on student achievement. The models were created based on the academic studies of virtual learning and its effectiveness compared to the traditional face-to-face classroom. The researcher used the information from the models in three different epidemiological scenarios. The scenario most applicable to this study is called Exhibit Two; the researchers reveal that according to data, learning loss will most likely be more significant for low-income, black, and Hispanic students. The gap in learning loss can be attributed to the fact lower low-income students are less likely to have high-quality remote learning opportunities or access to a conducive learning environment, such as a quiet place to work with limited distractions, high-speed internet, and parental academic supervision. The study uses data from Curriculum Associates, which shows that only 60% of low-income students log on to virtual compared to 90% of high-income students. According to the research, this variation may factor in more significant loss for low-income, African American, and Hispanic students.

In a similar study conducted by the same authors, Dorn et al. (2020b) conducted a study that analyzed the learning loss of students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study aimed to analyze if the pandemic impacted student achievement. The study used a quantitative methodology by analyzing assessment scores from the Curriculum Associates i-Ready platform. When comparing the data gained from the assessment from pre-pandemic years to post-pandemic years, the study indicated that the average student lost three months of learning in mathematics and one-and-a-half months of learning in reading. Moreover, the data revealed that the learning loss was especially acute in schools predominantly serving students of color. The results indicated that the data from the student participants of the study revealed that most students needed to catch up.

However, students of color were far worse because, due to their findings, students of color test scores indicate that they may have lost three to five months of learning in mathematics, while white students lost just one to three months.

Socio-emotional Learning

The disparities African Americans face that impact academic achievement have been well documented in the literature. The achievement gap between African Americans and Whites is also controversial in the literature. In a study examining the impact of socio-emotional learning (SEL) on students, Allbright et al. (2019) suggest that socio-emotional learning may be the missing link to the achievement gap between races. Allbright et al. (2019) conducted a study that uses a case study method consisting of interview, observation, and document analysis to fill the gap of limited socio-emotional learning practices to implement in classrooms that develop student socio-emotional skills for students.

The study highlights that SEL programs can potentially mitigate racial inequalities in education. The study suggests that Black and Latinos may experience stereotypical threats about their racial group that interfere with their academic performance, and SEL programs and strategies may help them fare with this reality. The findings suggest that SEL opportunities have the potential to help African Americans and Latino students deal with the reality of the disparities they face. Research has contested that African Americans face many disparities in educational equality in schools. The COVID-19 pandemic may severely impact African American students, which will be examined in the following section. More research is needed to examine the impact on socio-emotional learning programs and strategies during school closures or natural disasters when virtual learning in the home is mandated.

Summary of Findings

Research highlights educational inequalities when virtually educating students in predominately African American communities, especially during a global pandemic (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). Children who live in poverty, are homeless, or experience high mobility rates may display subordinate levels of academic achievement and increased problems at home and school (Battle et al., 2010). In addition, children who are homeless or have high mobility rates are also inclined to experience family adversity and other hazards for poor developmental outcomes such as educational, social-emotional, and health problems (Battle et al., 2010). After overviewing virtual instruction's impact on academic achievement, it is critical to explain this study's theoretical framework and related research. The following section will explain in depth the essentials of these matters.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical framework in this study is centered on the educational philosophy of the Social Learning Theory (Nabavi, 2012). Behaviors and attitudes towards learning are factors that can be learned from the observation of peers. Learning through observation and imitation are components of the Social Learning Theory developed in 1963 and later detailed in 1977 by Albert Bandura. The social learning theory implies that people learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Nabavi, 2012).

According to Nabavi (2012), the basic idea of the theory is that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Nabavi (2012) states that the implications of the social learning theory suggest that people develop similar behaviors by observing the behaviors of others.

Many theorists have also noted the benefits of social interactions and learning through observation and experimentation. In addition to Albert Bandura and John Dewey,

they also believed that students learn best by observing, experimenting, and socializing with others (Radu, 2011). In Dewey's view, learning comes through forming habits through engaging in interesting interactions and readjusting knowledge to the condition of the activity; thus, students would learn by doing, observing, and socializing (Radu, 2011). According to William (2017), Dewey believed that a traditional teaching method in classrooms where students are not encouraged to explore was not developmentally appropriate for young learners. Like many other philosophers, Zhang and Sheese (2017) state that Dewey believed children needed reflection from experiences to enhance learning. Dewey's work noted that children learn by engaging in experiences that include things that the child is most interested in (Radu, 2011). Thus, Dewey's work implied that when children engage in learning that piques their interest, children will learn more from experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic played an essential role in how today's children experience learning with remote education (Locke, 2021). According to (Garcia & Weiss, 2020), the pandemic forced school closures and the unexpected shift to virtual learning. Virtual learning occurs in the child's home, forcing caregivers and parents to become the primary point of instruction and social interaction (Batubara, 2021). The isolation of children in their homes disregarded the need for children to experience learning through social interactions and observational learning (Radu, 2011).

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature concerning the purpose of this study, which is to analyze stakeholders' perspectives regarding the barriers and success of educating African American students through a global pandemic. In Chapter III, methodological facets of this dissertation are outlined to incorporate the overview of the research problem, research purpose, and questions, operationalization of theoretical

constructs, research design, population and sampling selection, data collecting procedures, data analysis methods, privacy, and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations of this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to analyze the multiple perspectives of stakeholders regarding the barriers to educating African American elementary school students through a global pandemic, natural disaster, or school closures. The study researched successful practices and impediments and suggests future practices that school districts may implement to help bridge the achievement gap of African American students during other times of virtual instruction and remote learning in the future. The qualitative case study focused on the following three areas in attempting to understand the experiences of African American students during times of school closure: (a) teacher perception of virtual learning, (b) parent's perception of virtual learning, and (c) challenges and success faced by students and family during virtual learning.

This study also aimed to identify if school closures and virtual learning impacted African American students at a greater rate than other races from the perspectives of educators who worked with various races. The qualitative data aimed to add and expand on existing literature regarding educating African American students during times of school closures. This information is important to future educators as well as policy makers because it presents another aspect to consider when making instructional decisions for campuses that have high populations of African American low-income students. This chapter outlines the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose, questions, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research limitation design for the present study. The following four questions will be examined in this study:

RQ1: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ2: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially- emotionally during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically during pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic?

RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students?

Research Design

This qualitative case study utilized a research design that was composed of interviews with participants speaking of their own experiences about educating African American students during the 2019 global pandemic. This case study used a qualitative methodology that included, but was not limited to, interviewing teachers and parents on their perception of educating African American students. A multi-source analysis consisting of interviews, interviews validation, and current research was used to validate the data collected in this study. The semi structured interviews allowed participants the opportunity to speak from their personal experiences and suggest strategies that may aid in the educational advancement of African American students. The interview focused on analyzing the academic and social elements of student behavior prior, during, and post pandemic. The researcher took detailed notes from the interview that were related to the various success and challenges that African American students faced in terms of academics during virtual learning. In addition to the interviews, the researcher researched additional programs and support centers that are designed to aid in educating low-income students.

Gustafsson (2017) defines a case study as an in-depth study of a person or group to generalize the results to a more significant source. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) state that case studies are essential to research because case studies compile evidence that bounds a case together. Thus, a case study design was used in this study to allow the researcher the ability to gather information from the experiences of people who live the reality of African American students. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative design was to gather, analyze, and compose strategies that contribute to aiding in the academic success of African American students. By using the research design the researcher gained useful information from various interviews and compiled the information to outline the challenges and success that African American students may face when school closures occur, and virtual learning takes place.

Instructional Setting and Context

This research study was conducted in a large urban area in Southeast Texas. The area in which the study was conducted is composed of low, middle, and rarely high-income families of diverse backgrounds. The area houses many Title-One elementary campuses. Title-One elementary campuses house students who receive free or reduced lunch because of the income status. The participants in the study are members of families who live in this community. The participants in the study either live or teach in this community and have agreed to share their experiences.

Participant Selection

Once approval was granted to the researcher by the University's Committee for the protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), the researcher began to seek out participants to participate in the study. To gain the data needed for this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive sampling is a practical approach used for participant sampling that provides

methodological rigor as judged by trustworthiness. The study aimed to analyze the experiences of African American students who attended both face-to-face and virtual schooling. Thus, in the spring of 2020, students shifted from face-to-face schooling to virtual schooling to finish out the remainder of the school year. Students returned in the 2020-2021 school year virtually and then mid-fall returned face-to-face. To compare African American students' experiences of achievement during virtual learning to face-to-face, students must have experienced learning in both settings. Students who experienced both settings would be students who were enrolled in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten in 2019-2021, and then in the 2021-2022 school year were enrolled in first grade or second grade. Therefore, the study aimed to select parents who had students in first or second grade and those students who had experienced both virtual and face-to-face schooling.

The study participants were chosen by their willingness to participate in the study. To identify and recruit voluntary participants for the study the researcher reached out to co-workers and colleagues and asked if they knew teachers who worked with African American students during the pandemic. Then the researcher asked co-workers, colleagues, and possible candidates if they knew of African American parents who would willing to participate in the study and collected their information. Once the researcher gained multiple responses of possible candidates, the researcher gathered their contact information and reached out to the candidate via a phone call. The researcher told the possible candidates of the research's purpose and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once the potential participants confirmed the researcher began to ask screener questions to select candidates that fit the study's criteria for candidate selection.

Teachers. Teachers for the study were selected based on their years of experience and their experience in working with African American low SES students who experienced learning in both face-to-face and virtual school settings. Thus, teachers selected for the study were not in their first year of teaching and must have taught in both the 2019-2020 and the 2020-2021 school year. Teacher participation in this study was vital because teachers are the primary source of student instruction and student data. According to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, teachers are responsible for planning engaging lessons (Texas Education Agency, 2022). After preparing the lesson, the teacher is responsible for teaching the class and assessing students. From the assessment, the teacher can gauge student mastery. If students cannot master the content, teachers can meet with students in small groups.

In a small group setting, students can work closely with the teacher. The teacher can gain data on students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. The teacher will then decide what skills need to be retaught or practiced regularly. Lastly, the teacher's role is to liaison between the student and the parent regarding academics. Through conferences, teachers collaborate with parents to highlight students' strengths and weaknesses and develop plans to ensure that students are academically successful.

African American Parents. In addition to teachers, parents are another stakeholder group whose input is vital to this study. During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and caregivers took on the role of the teacher inside the home. Parents had the responsibility of ensuring students' needs were met. They were required to be able to access virtual instruction via the internet; moreover, parents may have needed to work closely with their children to ensure their children understood the assignment given by the teacher. Parents were also expected to communicate with campus principals, assistant

principals, and teachers to ensure they were equipped with all resources provided by the campus and supported their children academically.

The study results include data from, teachers, and parents who worked specifically with African American students during virtual learning and times of school closure. All stakeholders within the study worked exclusively with low- socioeconomic African American students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the study will examine their perceptions.

Participants

Parents

This case study consisted of a sample of 10 African American parents of students who were in elementary schools' grades Kinder through second in the 2019-2020 school year during the global pandemic. These parents all have students who endured school closure and virtual learning. All the parents were able to speak on the personal challenges and/ or success their child and family endured during virtual learning. The study's parent selection consisted of parents whose education ranged from high school graduate, some college, and degree holders. Parent participant income ranged between low, middle, and upper class with the maximum amount gross being \$75,000 per year. These parents all live within the Southeast Texas; however, they live in various communities and neighborhoods. For the purpose of confidentiality of the participants included in this study, the researcher has used pseudonyms to refer to the participants.

Table 3.1*Parent Participants Demographic Data*

Pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	Grade of Child		
Eric Pete	47	Single	3 rd		
Felicia Ferguson	37	Single	3 rd		
Jessica Flyod	47	Single	2 nd	Single	47
John Miles	35	Married	3 rd		
Laila Ashton	45	Married	2 nd		
Lauren Smith	32	Single	3 rd		
Makalah Spencer	41	Married	4 th		
Michael Hill	49	Married	2 nd		
Rachel Stephens	29	Married	2 nd		
Wendell Fobbs	43	Single	2 nd		

Table 3.2*Parent Participants Demographic Data*

Pseudonym	Education Level	Income p/year
Eric Pete	Bachelor's Degree	\$52,000
Felicia Ferguson	High School Diploma	\$49,000
Jessica Floyd	High School Diploma	\$36,000
John Miles	Bachelor's Degree	\$65,000
Laila Ashton	Bachelor's Degree	\$62,000
Lauren Smith	High School Diploma	\$44,000
Makalah Spencer	Bachelor's Degree	\$75,000
Michael Hill	Associate Degree	\$69,000
Rachel Stephens	High School Diploma	\$24,000
Wendell Fobbs	Bachelor's Degree	\$55,000

Teachers

The group of teachers selected to participate in the study consisted of eight educators. The educators consisted of a mix of male and female teachers. Using both male and female teachers allowed for a diverse group of responses from both perspectives. The teachers in the study ranged from early twenties to early forties. Each teacher had unique years of experience with most years being completed in an elementary

school setting. All teachers held a minimum of two years working at Title-One schools and could speak on their experience working with African American student, prior, during, and after the pandemic. These educators were able to provide information from their experiences related to the challenges and successes African American students may have experienced with virtual learning during the time of school closures as well as supports they may have given to the students. For the purpose of confidentiality of the participants included in this study, the researcher has used pseudonyms to refer to the participants.

Table 3.3

Educator Participants Demographics

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Teaching	Grade Level Taught
Amber Rose	White	Female	7	Kindergarten
Brandon Shaw	White	Female	23	2 nd
Brittany Johnson	African-American	Female	18	3 rd
Delaney Wolfe	White	Female	16	Kindergarten
Ivory Dorian	African-American	Female	8	1 st
Jordan Ballein	White	Female	23	2 nd
Parker Emory	African-American	Male	13	2 nd
Sam Whitehead	African-American	Male	4	1 st

Researcher's Role

The researcher who conducted this study is currently a kindergarten teacher at an elementary campus. However, the researcher has not taught any of the students or worked with any of the families included in the study. None of the parents or teachers included in the study worked with or were at the same campus as the researcher. The researcher has six years of experience working with students of diverse backgrounds in grades prekindergarten through first grade. The researcher has multiple years of experience teaching in numerous school districts in Texas. From her experience, the researcher is aware of students' differences in academic performance between Title 1 campuses and non-title campuses. Having worked for Title 1 and non-title campuses, the researcher is passionate about finding strategies to promote students' academic achievement at Title 1 campuses. Being an African American educator and mother, the researcher has a passion for assisting African American students in reaching their full potential academically as counterpoints their same age. The researcher conducted her research within the community she is familiar with, hoping that the strategies learned from this study will help children of the same background. The researcher chose these communities to conduct her study because she understands the importance of literacy development and its impact on students' success academically in all grade levels. With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing schools to close and students to receive virtual instruction, time for intervention is limited. Therefore, the researcher focused on practical strategies and classroom strategies that can combat the instructional deficiencies of African American students.

Data Collection Procedures

First the researcher gained permission from The University of Houston Clear Lakes' Human Protection Subject (CHPS). Once the participants who fit the criteria were

selected the researcher scheduled a time to conduct a semi-structured interview. Prior to the interview, the researcher sent out courtesy emails to remind the participant of the upcoming interview and included the informed consent letter was sent to both parents (See Appendix A) and teachers (See Appendix B). Participants received an informed consent letter agreeing to their knowledge that the study is confidential, and information shared will have no affiliation to any school. Upon receiving the signed consent letter from the participant, the researcher set a three-week timeframe to conduct the interview.

Interviews

Participants were asked to engage in a semi-structured interview to gain an in-depth understanding of parents'; and teachers'; perceptions of how the pandemic has influenced student achievement. Data through semi-structured interviews was collected to examine teachers, and African American parents' perceptions of whether the perceived influence of COVID-19 impacted their children's academic, social and physical performance. The interview questions in the study were developed to provide a more in-depth understanding of the perceived academic, social-emotional, and physical performance of African American elementary students during the pandemic. The interview questions contained open-ended questions, which allowed for a more in-depth response and understanding of the participants' perspective of the pandemic and its influence on students. At the start of the interview, the researcher requested permission to record the interview for research purposes. Upon consent, the researcher recorded all interviews to aid in the study's validity. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes to an hour. After the interview, the researcher transcribed all conducted interviews. The interviewer emailed each participant a copy of their transcription, and each participant was allowed the opportunity to read over their interview to validate their responses.

Parent Interviews

The researcher met with several parents to gather data on the experience they had while educating their child virtually during the global pandemic. By interviewing the parents individually at a time that was convenient for both the parent and the researcher allowed the researcher an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the parent's experience. These parents as well as the researcher want the best academic outcome for their child so a collaboration in this effort was beneficial. The first couple of questions the researcher asked the parents focused on their demographics such as age, ethnicity, education levels and the number of children they had in elementary school during the time of the pandemic. The next set of questions asked of the child's academic performance prior to the pandemic, and their performance during virtual learning. The questions asked of challenges the families and/or children may have faced during virtual learning and any strategies the parents may have tried to successfully help their child succeed academically. Lastly, the parents were asked their suggestions on how schools could better assist families and students next time should school face closure again. The interview questions for parents are listed below in Appendix C.

Teacher Interviews

The selected qualifying educators within the case study were contacted to meet with the researcher and engage in a semi-structured interview regarding their experience of educating African American students prior, during, and after times of virtual learning. The researcher reached out and was able to contact more teachers than able to use in the study but was only able to use eight candidates because the others did not fit the study's selection criteria. After gathering the appropriate number of participants qualified to participate in the study, the researcher reached out to the participants emailed them the appropriate consent forms and set up times and locations to conduct the teacher

interviews. The teacher interview questions first consisted of questions that asked about ethnicity and numbers of years teaching. The questions then focused on their experience teaching African American students pre and post-pandemic. The questions examine the types of communication and preparation they received regarding virtual learning and their confidence in their ability to educate African American students in the virtual mode. Lastly, the questions asked for educators' opinions of successful strategies that can be used to help struggling African American students academically. The interview questions for educators are listed below in Appendix D.

Data Analysis Procedures

Using an inductive coding process, the researcher analyzed the qualitative data obtained from the interviews to build an empirical understanding of the significant impact of school closures and virtual learning on African American students' achievement (Thomas, 2006). After the interviews were conducted the researcher transcribed the recordings of the interviews and place them into word documents. Once in Word, the researcher clarified when the interviewer spoke and when the participant spoke. Prior to the analysis, the interviewer sent a copy to the interviewee for them to verify their responses for accuracy of meaning. Next, the researcher reviewed the participant's responses to each question. When similar responses between participants arise, the researcher coded the responses in the same color. The researcher went go color by color and created a theme or category that represented the group of responses. After all the themes are selected the researcher went back and made sure all the information within the theme eluded to the same idea or message. The researcher made sure that there were more than one instances where participants spoke about the same subject to make it a theme.

For example, every time a participant spoke about academic challenges the researcher highlighted the participant's response in green. Every time the participant spoke about social-emotional challenges the researcher highlighted the response in yellow. Once common themes are identified by color, the researcher began to analyze results by theme.

The data analysis plan for the interviews included Data Reduction, Constant Comparative Analysis, Analytic Induction, and Triangulation (Kolb, 2012). Utilizing data reduction, the data obtained went through reduction to make it more manageable and comprehensible. The data were reduced to include only information applicable to the study, and all additional information was noted and stored for confidentiality. After the data was reduced, the researcher used Constant Comparative Analysis to compare and contrast the responses of the participants using data display matrices (Kolb, 2012). Next, the researcher used Analytic Induction to identify responses that were very different from other responses to the same question (Pascale, 2011). The qualitative analysis included validation by triangulation of the interviews, interview transcription, and the interview transcription review as well as the artifacts. The study also used triangulation of the participants-, teachers, and parents to look for similar responses and reoccurring themes from multiple sources.

Validity

To ensure validity while collecting data and during data analysis, the researcher selected participants to interview that meet the criteria of the research. In addition, once all data obtained from the interview was transcribed; participants received a copy in full of the transcribed interview. Participating parents and teachers were allowed the opportunity to review their transcribed data to enhance the validity of their responses to each question. Member checking was used to confirm that what was transcribed from

their interviews accurately reflected the intended purpose. The benefit of this process is to ensure that all participants are granted the opportunity to review the data for accuracy. The feedback from the review allowed the researcher to make edits or adjustments to the data before utilizing it in the study. To further enhance the study's validity the researcher only used participants who fit the criteria of working with African American students during the 2019 global pandemic,

Reliability

Before conducting the interviews with participants in this study, the researcher piloted the questions with people who are in the same role as those in the study such as parents and teachers. The researcher interviewed parents in the same demographic group whose child is of the same age and grade and who participated in virtual learning. None of these pilot participants' data is included in the final study. The researcher conducted the trial interview to receive feedback on questions. With the researcher's knowledge from the piloted interviews with teachers and parents, the researcher revised the interview questions. Once the researcher had the interview questions doubled checked for accuracy, the researcher used the exact interview questions with the participants of this study.

Generalizability

This study was conducted to grant parents, educators, researchers, and school districts personal insight into the experience of educating African American students during a pandemic. The lack of effective practices to use with students who are at risk of performing below grade level may have severe implications for the academic success of African American students. The results of this study cannot be generalized to African American students within the general school population because the data collected only utilize a small population. In addition, not all African American students may exhibit the same learning behaviors as students observed in the study. However, the purpose of the

study is to suggest future practices that may be useful to all schools in settings that educate low-socioeconomic African American students through a global pandemic and other incidents of school closure where remote learning may be necessary.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality, the researcher gained permission from the University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) prior to the start of the study. Before qualified participants took part in the study, the researcher notified each participant of the research purpose and gain their consent to participate in the study. The researcher distributed an introductory letter to all the study participants via email, which contained a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the rights of the participant, and asked for their voluntary consent to participate. Confirmed voluntary participation and confidentiality of all participants in the study was maintained. Furthermore, all participants' identities and settings of interview are protected when stating the interview results by referring to the participants using pseudonyms.

A combination of phone calls and emails were vital to the communication process to set time schedules to conduct face-to-face and over the phone interviews with the parents and teachers. Face-to-face interviews took place in a location in the community convenient to the parent and the researcher and will remain confidential. Interviews were not be completed during work hours for educators, instead, interviews will be conducted at an agreeable time between the researcher and the study's participants. Data collected for the analysis was stored in a password-secured computer only accessible to the study's researcher.

Limitations

There are several research design limitations to this current study. First, the external limitation most applicable to the study is using only African American families within elementary school children in a selected area of the United States. Teachers and parents of schools in one area present a small sample size, which offers limitations. These external limitations hinder the generalization of the results from being applied to larger populations inside and outside other states. Broad generalizations about this study should be made with special consideration and caution. Third, the truthfulness and subjectivity of the interviews serve as a limitation. Fourth, the perception of the parents and teachers may include student biases, which could cause limitations for the data. The limitations may reflect the different interpretations of what student achievement means to each participant. Teachers and parents may answer interview questions based on their own perception of their child or certain groups of students. Moreover, data collection from this study comes from a single point in time and does not follow participants for a longitudinal period.

Summary

The current study analyzes stakeholders' multiple perspectives regarding the barriers to educating African American students through a global pandemic. This chapter outlined the methodology used for the study. The study used a qualitative case study method through interviews for data collection. Interviewing will be used to understand the participants' perceptions of living the reality of educating African American students. Data from the interview was coded and categorized to enhance a deeper understanding and interpretation of the reality of the participants of the study. The next chapter will present the results of the data obtained and presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The achievement gap between African American and white students has been a concern across literature for many years (Hung et al., 2020). According to Batubara (2021), even before the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning occurred, the problem of educational disadvantages for African American students was an issue. Locke (2021) suggests that researchers begin to find ways to bridge the learning gap between African Americans and their counterparts, which may have occurred or even widened due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Masonbrink and Hurley (2020) insinuate action is needed to offset the educational loss of children, especially children already experiencing educational disparities and who live in poverty-stricken communities before the gap of educational inequality is widened.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to analyze the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the barriers and successors of educating African American students through a global pandemic or unexpected school closure. The study researched successful practices and impediments African American students experience and suggested future exercises school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic, natural disaster, or other times of school closures.

This study is critical because there is limited research coming from the stakeholder perspective on effective practices for educating students during a Pandemic; this research study can set the framework for additional research that examine the perspective of stakeholders before developing practices for educators to implement on campuses (Hamid et al., 2020). In addition, this research study suggested practices and strategies implemented on campuses by parents and teachers who live the reality of

educating low socioeconomic students during the pandemic. The results of the study are formed from the preceptive of low to middle income families. Results may differ when considering students of different socio-economic status such as poor, middle class, and high-class African Americans. Having insight into what works best for students and parents of certain socioeconomic status may allow school districts to develop professional learning opportunities for significant educators to understand the magnitude of one group of students continuing to lag. Moreover, knowledge gained from this study may be beneficial should events such as national disasters, hurricanes, tropical storms, pandemics, or epidemics affect school closures in the future. The research questions that guided this qualitative study are as follows:

RQ1: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ2: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially- emotionally during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?

RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically during pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic?

RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students?

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

The theoretical framework in this study is centered on the educational philosophy of the Social Learning Theory (Nabavi, 2012). The social learning theory implies that people learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Nabavi, 2012). Behaviors and attitudes towards learning are factors that can be learned from the observation of peers.

Learning through observation and imitation, are components of the Social Learning Theory developed in 1963 and later detailed in 1977 by Albert Bandura.

According to Nabavi (2012), the basic idea of the theory is that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Nabavi (2012) states that the implications of the social learning theory suggest that people develop similar behaviors by observing the behaviors of others.

Many theorists have noted the benefits of social interactions and learning through observation and experimentation. In addition to Albert Bandura, John Dewey also believed students learn best by observing, experimenting, and socializing with others (Radu, 2011). In Dewey's view, learning comes through forming habits through engaging in interesting interactions and readjusting knowledge to the condition of the activity; thus, students would learn by doing, observing, and socializing (Radu, 2011). According to William (2017), Dewey believed that a traditional way of teaching in classrooms where students are not encouraged to explore was not developmentally appropriate for young learners. Like many other philosophers, Zhang and Sheese (2017) state that Dewey believed children needed reflection from experiences to enhance learning. Dewey's work noted that children learn by engaging in experiences that include things that the child is most interested in (Radu, 2011). Thus, Dewey's work implied that when children engage in learning that piques their interest, children will learn more from experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic played an essential role in how children of today experience learning with remote education (Locke, 2021). According to (Garcia & Weiss, 2020), the pandemic forced school closures and the unexpected shift to virtual learning. Virtual learning took place in the child's home, forcing caregivers and parents to become the primary point of instruction and social interaction (Batubara, 2021). The isolation of

children in their homes disregarded the need for children to experience learning through social interactions and observational learning (Radu, 2019).

A total of 10 African American parents were selected to participate in the study. The parents all lived within the city where the study took place. However, the participating parents lived in various neighborhoods in the Southeast Texas area, and their children attended multiple schools in different school districts. All the parents that participated in the interviews were high school graduates. Of the ten participants, four parents received high school diplomas only; one participant holds an associate degree, and four had bachelor's degrees. The parent participant ages ranged from 29- 49 years of age at the time of the study. Parents reported gross incomes from various occupations from \$18,000 to \$75,000 yearly.

Since this qualitative study sought to understand parent perception of their child's academic success before, during, and after virtual learning, the researcher thought it is best to provide the parent's educational level to provide additional background information on the potential knowledge base of the parents. Thus, in addition to providing their academic status, the researcher provided their income yearly to provide background on the socioeconomic status of each participant. The following names are pseudonyms given to each participant to protect their identity and respect their privacy.

Parent Participants

Lauren Smith

Lauren Smith is an African American mother of one child who attends elementary school in the Southeast. Lauren has a high school diploma and averages about \$44,000 gross yearly. Lauren has one child, currently in third grade at the time of the study. When asked about how familiar she was with the campus her child attends, Lauren stated, "She was unfamiliar with the school campus as this was her child's first year at the campus."

Lauren spoke about how her child performed academically before the pandemic, "Her child performed very well. He loved learning, and he always made good grades."

John Miles

John Miles is an African American father of four children. John's yearly gross income is about \$65,000; however, John and his wife have dual incomes. John and his wife have children in Kindergarten, third, fourth, and seventh grade. For this study, John decided to share information about his third-grade son. At the start of the interview, John shared that he was very familiar with the campus his third grader attends, as all his children participated at the elementary campus in their neighborhood. When asked about his son's academic performance before the pandemic, John stated, "My son struggles with reading; he likes math but only receives minimally passing grades."

Makaylah Spencer

Mikalah is an African American mother of one son who was in fourth grade at the time of the study. Mikalah averages about \$75,000 gross yearly and shares her expenses with her husband, who also earns income. When asked if she was familiar with the campus her sons attend, she replied, "Yes, I am part of the parent-teacher organization (PTO), and I am very active on campus." When asked about their child's academic performance before virtual learning she stated, "overall my son performs well in all subjects."

Wendell Fobbs

Wendell is an African American male, the father of one child who was enrolled in second grade at the time of the study. Wendell has a bachelor's degree and gross yearly income of around \$55,000. Wendell is a single male who solely provides for his household. When asked how familiar he was with the campus his daughter attends, he replied he has had family attend the elementary school. However, his daughter's first year

at the school was online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He responded when asked about his child's academic performance before the pandemic. "My child does well in school. She likes to read, and she likes to learn. School comes easy to her."

Michael Hill

Michael Hill is an African American married father of three children. His children were in grades kindergarten, second, and preschool. Michael's annual gross income was roughly \$69,000 without considering the additional income of his wife. Michael agreed to share information regarding the academic performance of his second-grade daughter. When the researcher asked Michael how familiar he was with his daughter's elementary school, he stated that he was familiar with the campus as this was not his first year there. When asked how his second-grade daughter performed academically before the pandemic, Michael stated she was "Eager to learn. Relaxed. Confident."

Felicia Ferguson

Felicia is an African American parent of two children, a first and a third grader. Felicia is a single mother with a high school diploma and grosses a yearly average of \$49,000. Felicia agreed to share information about her third-grader's academic and social performance before, during, and after virtual learning. The researcher asked Felicia how familiar she was with the campus her elementary students attend. Felicia shared she was familiar with the campus because she visited a few times to meet the teacher and at orientation and after-school events but stated that at the time of the study, it was her children's first year at the campus. When asked about her third-grade daughter's academic performance before the pandemic, she stated that her daughter typically does well in school.

Jessica Floyd

Jessica is an African American mother of two children. Her children are in grades second and third. Jessica is a high school graduate with no college experience and earns roughly \$36,000 gross yearly. Jessica agreed to share information on the academic performance of both her second and third-grade daughters. When asked how familiar Jessica was with the campus her daughters attended, she replied, moderately familiar. When asked how her daughters performed academically before the pandemic, she replied, "My second grader had some struggles with math specifically and was at the beginning stages of being evaluated for learning disabilities. My third grader was a top performer and has never struggled academically since she started school."

Rachel Stephens

Rachel is a married African American mother of three children. Rachel and her husband have children in second, third, and fifth grade. Rachel earns solely \$24,000 gross yearly but lives in a dual-income household. For this study, Rachel agreed to share information about the academic performance of her second grader. When asked how familiar Rachel was with the campus her children attended, she replied, "Very familiar. I am a cafeteria worker at the campus". When asked about how her second grader performed academically before the pandemic, she stated. "she performs very well. I would say she is average or above average in all school subjects."

Eric Pete

Eric is a single African American father of one elementary school child. At the time of the study, Eric's daughter was in the third grade. Eric has a bachelor's degree and grosses yearly around \$52,000. Eric stated that before the pandemic, he was unfamiliar with the campus his child attended because it was her first year at the campuses as they had just moved to the neighborhood. Yet he recalled that since moving there at the start

of the year, his daughter struggled a little to get used to the changes; her first report card could have been better. However, her grades improved as she got used to her surroundings and new community.

Laila Ashton

Laila was the last member of the parental participant interview group. Laila is an African American married woman with three children. Laila and her husband's children are in kindergarten, second, and fifth grades. Laila chose to share information about her second-grader's school performance during the interview. When discussing her daughter's performance academically before the pandemic, she shared that her daughter was an average student who typically earned B's and C's as grades in various subjects. Laila shared that she needed to become more familiar with the campus her children attend as she only visited the campus around three times at the time of the study.

Parent Perspectives and Experiences

Various common themes emerged through the data analysis of the parent participants' one-on-one interview data. The answers to the interview questions were diverse but fit under six broad themes. The emergent themes that were discussed the most during the one-on-one interviews included: a) challenges of virtual learning; and b) successful strategies for helping students. The following themes permeated the study and answered research questions; RQ1: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction; and RQ2: What are African American parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially- emotionally during virtual education compared to face-to-face instruction?

Challenges of Virtual Learning

Once virtual learning was mandated, the participating parents expressed similar concerns regarding their children's challenges during virtual instruction. The parents mainly spoke about common themes: a) academic responses; b) social-emotional challenges; c) student preferences for face-to-face interactions; (d) technology assistance; and (e) additional supports.

Academic Responses

The academic responses were split three ways according to the participating parents' experiences. Four out of ten parents recalled their child struggling or performing poorly during virtual instruction. One parent stated that her child was very distracted, was less attentive, and had trouble staying in one spot to complete the work during the time designated for virtual instruction. While three other parents stated their children's performance could have improved, the child struggled a lot or was decreasingly interested in the information in the online format.

Four of the ten parents found that their child's academic performance during virtual learning was moderately impacted and noted that they performed well once their child figured out how to work the platform. Makaylah shared that:

Overall, my child did okay. He needed help with keeping up with the level of work that was expected of him. Learning online was not the ideal mode of instruction for him. Yet, he did the best he could.

Lauren stated that her daughter "Performed averagely. She continued to enjoy learning and perform well during the virtual learning time." Eric said his daughter "Struggled at first and then became used to the instruction style." Rachel recalled, "It was very challenging adjusting to a new schedule and not being able to interact with peers, but she did well academically."

Two of the ten participating parents claimed their child did well with virtual learning. Compared to face-to-face learning, their children showed no significant difference in academics. When asked about her child's academic performance during virtual instruction, Jessica said, "About the same as before the pandemic. Her performance in reading improved, and she spent less time doing homework after school was over." Wendell agreed by stating his child "Adjusted well during virtual instruction. She could work independently and re-review the recorded lessons if she needed help."

Social/Emotional Temperament Changes

In addition to the academic struggles some African American children faced during virtual instruction, some parents revealed that some students also experienced social-emotional temperamental changes. The researcher asked the parent participants to describe their child's temperament during virtual education and to define any times of sadness or frustration their child may have experienced during the time designated for virtual learning. Parents' responses regarding their child's temperaments are listed below.

When asked to describe his child's temperament during virtual learning, Michael stated:

Every day, it was hard for her to stay awake and be enthused in the learning. It was too much work, honestly, and she was very bored. She didn't have a problem completing the work but getting her to want to do it was the challenging task. Felicia stated, "My child struggled to get started and to complete the work. My husband and I were constantly being asked for assistance." Laila recalled:

My child experienced times of sadness because she is a very hands-on learner, and when everything went virtual, it was hard for her to learn on the computer. She enjoyed playing the games on it but having to complete work on the computer was a change.

Other parents recalled having similar experiences in temperament changes in their children during virtual learning. John claimed:

Our family experienced lots of frustration from figuring out how to work to help each other. We needed to get everyone set up. Once we got the devices set up, brought the supplies home, and learned how to take pictures of the work and get it turned in, it was better. The children did not understand the same way they did in a stable environment.

Jessica stated, "My second grader struggled a bit in the beginning, but once she learned the expectations and got used to the assignment list and schedules, she improved." Eric recalled times when his child felt lonely and isolated and was often bored and unengaged. Mikalah shared:

During virtual instruction, my child's temperament was often frustrated. His frustration came about when he felt overwhelmed with the work he had to complete during the day. Completing assignments took time due to the amount of work expected, especially in a virtual setting. At first, he struggled, but we created a schedule that allowed him to manage his time better.

Lauren stated that her child did not experience any sadness, "it was just the initial frustration of the school closing and the shift trying to figure out how to learn online that was frustrating for her." Lastly, Rachel explained that it took a lot of work for her child to keep track of the class schedule. She stated, "We had to set multiple reminders, and the hardest part for my son is that he missed his friends and teachers."

Student Preference

Another theme that arose consistently within the parent interviews was their comments regarding their child's preference for face-to-face- versus virtual learning. Six of the ten parents who participated in the study said their child preferred face-to-face

instruction; one parent said their child liked both modes of education, and three parents stated their children wanted virtual instruction. Amid the frustration from social isolation and infrastructure malfunctions, there were a mixed number of students who preferred face-to-face- learning over virtual.

When asked what their child's view of virtual instruction was, the following parents agreed that their child preferred face-to-face instruction over virtual. Michael stated his daughter "Was uninterested most of the time and preferred in-person instruction." Felicia recalled her child "Did not like online learning and cried most of the time to go back to school." Laila said her daughter preferred something other than online learning. She stated, "Every child learns differently, and my daughter preferred face-to-face." John said that his child liked virtual instruction but did not like to help his siblings, so he preferred to go back to school instead. Eric's daughter reported feeling lonely and isolated because she preferred face-to-face instruction. Wendell stated his daughter liked virtual instruction. However, "She is a very social child, so she prefers to go to school where she can talk and play with her friends." One parent's child had mixed emotions about face-to-face and virtual learning. Rachel explained, "My child had pros and cons about it. She liked sleeping an extra hour and working from home in her pajamas but felt the days were longer and slower. She seemed very bored without the social interaction."

Although most parents' children preferred face-to-face instruction in comparison to virtual, there were three parents whose children preferred virtual instruction. Jessica stated, "My child liked virtual instruction and wished school could stay virtual." Lauren reported that her son said he "Liked virtual instruction better because the time spent was shorter, and he could spend the rest of the day playing." Makalah stated, "My child's view of virtual instruction was positive. He prefers virtual learning over face-to-face."

Technology Assistance

Another common theme that arose from interviewing the ten participating parents in the study was the struggle to obtain, set up, and launch the technology required to complete the virtual learning assignments. Although parents had different modes of accessing technology, the common denominator was all students had to have the right technology to access the online platform that their District mandated for virtual learning. Seven parents claimed they used their technology, hot spots, and an internet connection to log into the virtual platform, whereas one parent had to attend local libraries when open.

The parents of the study spoke openly about their issues regarding technology. Mikalah shared:

When virtual instruction was mandated, we had our technology and borrowed a laptop from the campus. The families had to sign up for the equipment and, when called, had to come to the campus to pick it up. Once we had the laptop, we could access the internet through our internet plan. My son knew how to work on the online platform and submit assignments. If he had questions about anything, we would assist him as best we could.

Lauren stated that her family was fortunate enough to have laptops and internet service at home and that her daughter's teachers were available by email should they experience any technology-related trouble. Jessica explains that:

The school provided us with laptops, but we also had backup equipment at home. We just had to email the teacher whenever we experienced connectivity issues, and my daughter could make up the work and submit it once we could connect again.

Rachel agreed that her family also had laptops and used their internet to log on at home. Once they were logged in, they followed the steps in the teacher's email to log into the platform and complete the work.

Wendell stated that his daughter could use her laptop and internet plan. He explains:

My daughter could troubleshoot on her own if there were technical issues. She would also ask another family member or me for help if she needed it. The campus could also assist if there were any issues we could not solve. Also, we received notification if the school district was having any technical difficulties.

Eric shared that his daughter used a laptop provided by the school and was hooked to their home internet service. He explains, "At first, the work was paper and pencil, then it changed to online. The teachers emailed us instructions on accessing the class page and completing each subject's assignments." John stated, "We got a laptop from the school. We had to wait until the school issued them, and we went up there to check them out." He also shared, "We went to the neighborhood library and used their Wi-Fi as long as we were under the number of people permitted to enter at one time." When asked if he had assistance if he experienced technical issues. He stated, "There wasn't much the teachers could do. The principal told us to contact the District's IT department, and they attempted to walk us through it." Laila's family agreed that during the time of virtual instruction, they, too, used their device and own internet service. She claimed if her family experienced any issues, she had to reach out to the principal, and the principal led her in the right direction. Once stable internet was established, Laila stated, "The teachers sent out instructions via email and the schedule. They sent a syllabus and district phone numbers to call if we needed help." Felicia's experience with technology was different from the other participants. She explains that the school

provided her family with laptops but no internet plan or hotspot. "I had to rely on the hotspot of my mom daily to get the work done. The school gave us the equipment but everything else we had to figure out ourselves."

Additional Support

The halt of face-to-face instruction and the pivot to virtual learning may have caused many challenges, including academic, social-emotional, and technical issues for some families. With so much uncertainty at a rapid time of significant change and challenges, some family detail how they used additional support to cope with the change. When the researcher asked the parent participants what challenges were presented to their child or family during virtual learning and how their families overcame these challenges, many participants eluded using additional support such as family members, neighbors, and siblings to assist with the barriers that may have unexpectedly arisen.

Felicia spoke with the researcher about how her family overcame the challenges presented during virtual instruction. She stated, "My mother came to stay with us to help, and my husband put in for early retirement so that he could help at home as well." Michael commented, "I added fun projects and supplies at home so my child could add some fun and hands-on experience to the virtual environment. I was very encouraging and hands-on with the work; otherwise, she would not have done it herself." Laila mentioned she had to have a complete lifestyle change. She explained that her family experienced lots of frustration from being in the home together all the time. She explains she had to create a schedule that could separate work time from playtime and develop times for alone time.

John stated the challenges his family experienced were limited supplies, increased groceries, light bills, etc. He stated:

I seek [SIC] help from wherever I could get it. I got technology and supplies from the school. We applied for public assistance to assist with food and bills. I helped my son with his online work whenever I had time and was not working myself.

While John's family had to make many changes to adjust to virtual instruction inside the home, other participants, such as Eric, made the simple adjustment. Eric shared that during virtual education, when his family experienced challenges, "We just became accustomed and adjusted over time." Wendell recalled how his family adapted to the changes in virtual instruction by stating, "We hired a tutor that my daughter met with twice a week online, and he helped her complete her work. They would go over concepts that were taught in class. If my daughter or the tutor had questions, my daughter would meet with the teachers online during their office hours."

Mikalah's family used the same coping strategy as Wendell. She also shared that her son would reach out to his teachers online if he needed additional support. Jessica disclosed that her family also experienced frustrations with everyone not having their own space. She explained that the best strategy for us "was to resolve the spacing issue. We allowed everyone their own space to do their work. If they needed help, they knew they could ask the teachers." Lauren said she would "Talk with neighbors to figure out the learning platform. We would work together to figure out how to get the kids set up and started. We checked in with each other frequently to discuss the kid's progress and the learning expectations and ask each other questions."

Summary of Challenges

The shift from face-to-face instruction to virtual learning caused a magnitude of challenges for some families. The parents mainly spoke challenges of academic responses, social-emotional/temperament changes, and student preferences for face-to-face interactions. Academic achievement is a measure that educators use to indicate the

success measure of a student. Typically, students learn the material and are tested or observed for mastery of the content. Producing good grades or high-test scores are just a few ways students achieve high academic standing. Usually, these graded assignments and tests are given in a traditional school setting. When the school setting is changed, it can be expected that some students' academic achievement may also vary. Parent participants of the study reported changes in their child's academic achievement during virtual instruction as moderately affected or no change. Most parents noted that it was more the changes in structure that their child struggled with than academic challenges. Moreover, considering another aspect of challenges, many parents reported noticing temperament changes in their children. Some families recall temperament changes caused by social isolation, and others said frustration from infrastructure management and workloads.

In addition to feeling an array of emotions of temperamental changes regarding virtual learning, parents recorded times of frustration not only for students but for parents as well. At the start of the pandemic, when school was forced to close, there was uncertainty about what would become of schooling. Months later, districts rolled out communication plans for virtual learning. In the beginning stages of these plans' parents; reported times of frustration because the infrastructure of the program needed to be more detailed than some may have liked them to be. Parents and students experienced frustration navigating the online platform, accessing student work, completing student work, turning in student work, and receiving grades and feedback. However, some parents noted that once their children became accustomed to navigating the online platform, their academic performance either remained the same or increased, and their student's confidence in their ability to navigate the virtual platform peaked.

Most students reported that they preferred face-to-face instruction versus virtual instruction, citing the reason for social engagement and hands-on experiences as the main reasons. Others noted that they liked virtual education because the workload and expectation of the learning time frame were much shorter online, and they had additional time to play. Whether the student preferred face-to-face or virtual instruction, almost all parents agreed they faced challenges during school closures when the learning mode was mandated to shift from face-to-face teaching to virtual.

In the 2019-2020 school year, the COVID-19 virus hit the United States, causing school districts worldwide to shut down face-to-face instruction and create a virtual mode of learning that would allow students to continue learning. Many families experienced challenges as the shift to virtual education was swift and mandatory.

Parents of the study recalled their experience of changing quickly from face-to-face instruction to virtual learning. One of the most apparent changes was the need for a stable technology device and internet connection. Most families interviewed within the study revealed they were fortunate to have a laptop, iPad, or computer at home and could use their existing internet plan to log in to the virtual platform.

However, having a personal means of technical assistance was only valid for some families. Some families received laptops from the District and were able to use their connection in the home. Nine families needed laptops or stable relationships. Two parents stated they had to rely on family members and community resources such as the public library, which at the time were limited in the number of people, they accepted due to not wanting to spread the virus. No matter what the family's circumstances were, what held to each family was the need to have stable technology to access virtual learning.

The unexpected mandate for students to stay home, access a virtual platform and submit assignments was a change that came with various challenges for some families.

Participating parents in the study shared the support they used to cope with the sudden shift in instruction. While some families were minimally impacted, stating they adjusted and got accustomed to the new platform over time, other families had to take more severe measures. Common additional supports mentioned by parents of the study were:

- Creating space and schedule inside the home for students to work.
- Reaching out to neighbors for assistance.
- Using government assistance to get relief for food and bills.
- Relying on tutors and teachers to assist with learning difficulties.

Table 4.1 summarizes the Challenges of Virtual Learning According to Parents.

Table 4.1*Challenges of Virtual Learning According to Parents*

Challenge Type	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Sample Quote</i>
Academic Responses	Parents participants of the study reported changes in their child's academic achievement during virtual instruction as moderately affected or no change. Most parents noted that it was more the changes in structure that their child struggled with than academic challenges.	"It was very challenging adjusting to a new schedule and not being able to interact with peers, but she did well academically."
Socio-emotional Changes	Many parents report noticing temperament changes in their children. Some families recall temperament changes caused by social isolation, and others said frustration from infrastructure management and workloads.	"During virtual instruction, my child's temperament was often frustrated. His frustration came about when he felt overwhelmed with the work he had to complete during the day."
Student Preference	Most students reported that they preferred face-to-face instruction versus virtual instruction, citing the reason for social engagement and hands-on experiences as the main reasons.	"My child was uninterested most of the time and preferred in-person instruction."
Technology Assistance	Having a personal means of technical assistance was only valid for some families, other families had to rely on technology assistance from the school.	"We got a laptop from the school. We had to wait until the school issued them, and we went up there to check them out."
Additional Supports	Common additional supports mentioned by parents of the study were Creating space and schedule inside the home for students to work, Reaching out to neighbors for assistance, using government assistance to get relief for food and bills, and relying on tutors and teachers to assist with learning difficulties.	"I seek [SIC] help from wherever I could get it. I got technology and supplies from the school. We applied for public assistance to assist with food and bills. I helped my son with his online work whenever I had time and was not working myself."

Successful Strategies for Students According to Parents

The study aimed to identify effective strategies that would aid African American students academically during school closures or virtual learning. The researcher sought to compose a list of successful practices that helped African American students experience academic success during school closures. The study interviewed ten African American participating parents and gained their perspective on strategies that worked well for their child(ren) during virtual instruction. The participating parents' responses are included below.

When asked what strategies worked well for their child academically during times of virtual instruction, Lauren stated persistence as an indicator of success; she quoted:

We just kept working together when the assignment was challenging for her. Sometimes, a family member would sit with her to view the lesson, discuss the content, and complete the project together. We just kept trying until we all figured it out. Once we figured it out, she began to be able to do the work on her own progressively.

Rachel shared that frequent breaks worked well for her daughter. She shared, "emailing and communicating with her teacher and working as a family and giving her frequent breaks worked well for her." Jessica agreed that asking for help when needed was the most beneficial strategy her family tried. Jessica reported, "Asking for help worked well when she needed assistance. Most teachers offered additional office hours so that we could come in asking for help when needed. I noticed when we attended those hours and asked for help; she understood the assignment better." Mikalah cited asking for help as her son's best strategy. She stated:

Strategies that helped my child during this time were asking for help, reaching out to his friends, and researching topics. One main strategy we used a lot was to

create a schedule that helped him balance his day and time. Without the schedule, he got behind and often became frustrated.

Wendell agreed with Mikalah; his words were:

The primary strategy that worked well was time-management. My daughter had to create a schedule that would fit what was required for each subject and which assignments were due. We encouraged her to reach out to her friends, tutors, or even me if I wasn't busy. We also enabled her to reach out and ask if she needed help. Also, we allowed her frequent breaks from the computer.

When asked about successful strategies that worked well for his daughter, Eric shared, "Just asking for help and providing her with one-on-one time so I could be there to help if she needed it." John claimed, "Relying on each other, giving lots of compliments, taking lots of breaks, and being able to go play at times was helpful. Also, we had reached out to the teacher, had a neighbor who was a librarian help, and we prompted the siblings to help each other out".

Like many other parents, Laila claimed to ask for help from a village of people was helpful. She stated:

Time management and a village to help her stay focused was helpful.

Communicating with others and relying on friends to talk about how they access the work and what their child was doing and having small play dates helped relieve a lot of the stress from the work.

Felicia agreed, "Having friends was the one thing that worked well. Also, having them complete the work while an adult or I was present, and we sent her to her teacher's office hours often helped a lot." Lastly, Michael agreed with the group that "one-on-one time with the teacher, breaking into small groups just her and I, and using different learning

apps like K-12 learning and epic, using workbooks and tutors helped her understand other concepts better.

Looking Ahead

The purpose of the study is to suggest strategies from the perspective of parents and teachers who live the reality of educating African American children. The study sought to hear the perspective of parents on ways educators can further assist African American students in performing well academically during school closures. Thus, to end the parent interview, the researcher asked the participants what advice they would give to schools to make things better the next time schools have to shut down. The participants' answers varied; however, nine out of ten parents agreed that they would like the school district to have a plan in place so that protocols run smoothly and that the students and families are better prepared in case of a school closure next time.

When asked what advice he would give to schools, Michael stated, "To provide students with learning zones to attend versus staying home. Students would probably get more work done and more students engaged in the curriculum compared to those at home with no help or living in unfair environments." Felicia commented, "Make the workload more manageable and realistic for the age group, and do not assume that people can or will help their kids in the home." Laila added, "Have enough equipment to pass out to each student and be more prepared with a plan to continue learning for all students."

John said that he would like districts to "just be patient with parents and students trying to learn something new. Go ahead and design an online platform that students can use at school now so if they need to shift, it would be easier." Eric agreed with John by simply stating, "Plan." Wendell was more detailed and said, "The advice I would give schools is to consider designing an online platform, coordinate testing to be simplified for

each subject, and provide one day a week for teachers to plan instruction for face-to-face and online formats of instruction."

Mikalah explained, "The advice I would give schools is to be mindful of the amount of work they expect a student to do online. Work for each subject can be a bit much on a person." Jessica enclosed that she would like school districts to:

Have the plan to make the transition between face-to-face and virtual instruction more seamless. Also, it would be helpful to ensure that the requirements/expectations are clear and consistent for all schools throughout the District. Additionally, it would be beneficial if all teachers employed similar strategies for assigning and organizing tasks for online submission. Teachers who used an online grade book attached to the instructional platform worked well. I could see what needed to be turned in or redone by clicking on each assignment in the online grade book, but only in one class. It would have been helpful for all teachers to set it up that way.

When Rachel was asked for advice, she stated, "Make sure the workload and classroom hours online were more developmentally appropriate." Lauren concluded she would like the districts to:

Have a plan for school closures. Think about how the kids will continue learning. Think about the students who do not have the internet. Be gracious with the amount of work given and the expected grades.

Summary of Successful Strategies

After analyzing all ten parent interviews, seven common successful strategies regarding educating African American students arose. The seven successful strategies that worked well during virtual learning were persistence, positive praise, scheduling,

frequent breaks, multiple tries, constant practice, and encouraging students to ask for help.

Parents of the study thought that one thing that helped their children succeed was the ability to continue to try their best and constantly practice, despite encountering challenges during virtual instruction. Positive praise was another strategy identified as being successful. Praising students for giving their best efforts despite passing or failing may boost confidence and give them the encouragement they need to continue to provide their best.

Scheduling was also a reoccurring theme mentioned by many parents. Seven out of ten parents quoted asking for help, whether from the teacher, a neighbor, a classmate, a tutor, or a peer, as an effective strategy that promoted academic excellence. The parents felt that scheduling the student's day and scheduling assignments were an organizational strategy that helped keep their child on track. Included in their student schedules, some parents incorporated frequent breaks and play times to give students temporary relief from the stresses of virtual learning.

Participating parents of the study offered their perceptions on how school districts and campuses can be more prepared during unexpected school closures. Since the 2019 school closure was unexpected and caused a sudden shift from face-to-face to virtual instruction, parents suggested ways districts can better prepare in the future. From the parent interviews regarding things to do looking ahead, five themes arose: planning for school closures; the online platform being pre-designed; easing the workload/ work expectation for virtual learning; making the time frame online developmentally appropriate; and having consistency between teachers and districts.

Planning for school closure was the unanimous answer among parents. The COVID-19 school shutdown was unexpected, and many districts had never experienced a

closure of the school for an extended period. Thus, they needed a plan for virtual learning. However, some districts incorporated technology into their lesson for older students; therefore, they already had an online platform. They just needed to adjust it to fit the demand of online learning. Parents suggest looking ahead and that districts pre-design an online platform for virtual instruction and have students use this platform inside of the school campus already; that way, if there is an unexpected school closure in the future, the students, teachers, and parents would already be familiar with the platform.

When designing the online platform, parents would like the District to consider all students from different backgrounds and have various resources and abilities. Parents would like districts to be mindful of the type of assignments, the number of assignments, the time- frame to complete tasks, and the rigor of the projects when creating a task for virtual learning. Parents want districts to be mindful that only some students have the resources or support to complete lengthy, rigorous assignments.

Parents suggest that districts be mindful of the time students must sit, attend online sessions, and complete work online. Moreover, parents grew concerned regarding the screen time children were exposed to when sitting for an extended period for online learning. Lastly, parents would like districts to design a plan and train all teachers, so there is consistency between teachers on their expectations, assignment requirements, and assignment upload procedures. Table 4.2 summarizes the Successful Strategies for Students According to Parents.

Table 4.2*Successful Strategies for Students According to Parents*

Strategies	Sample Quote
Persistence	"We just kept working together when the assignment was challenging for her. Sometimes, a family member would sit with her to view the lesson, discuss the content, and complete the project together."
Positive Praise	"Relying on each other, giving lots of compliments, taking lots of breaks, and being able to go play at times was helpful."
Scheduling	"One main strategy we used a lot was to create a schedule that helped him balance his day and time."
Frequent Breaks	"emailing and communicating with her teacher and working as a family and giving her frequent breaks worked well for her."
Multiple Tries	"We just kept trying until we all figured it out. Once we figured it out, she began to be able to do the work on her own progressively."
Constant Practice	"one-on-one time with the teacher, breaking into small groups just her and I, and using different learning apps like K-12 learning and epic, using workbooks and tutors helped her understand other concepts better."
Encouraging Students to ask for Help	"Asking for help worked well when she needed assistance."

Teacher Participant Demographics

A total of eight educators were selected to participate in the study. Additional educators signed up to participate. However, they did not meet the study's selection criteria; therefore, they were not selected to participate. The researcher sought to get the perspective of elementary teachers who taught during the COVID pandemic to see how their perspectives compared to those of the parents interviewed. Of the educators chosen to participate, all had experiences working with African American students before, during, and post virtual learning. Three of the eight educators worked in the district where some parent participants' students attended. In addition, each educator had several

years of experience in elementary school settings that ranged from four to 23 years of experience. The educators in the study were of two different backgrounds white and African American. The study consisted of four white participants and four African American participants. Moreover, the study participants represent both genders; three males and five females.

Since the study aims to understand the multiple perspectives of various educators on working with African American students during school closure, a mixture of educators from different backgrounds was vital. Analyzing people's experiences from different backgrounds and genders allowed the responses to be based on individuals' diverse experiences, beliefs, and other cultures. The participants' years of experience were also additional information that may have shaped the participants' responses because some participants had more experience working with African American students than others. The following names are pseudonyms given to each participant to protect their identity and respect their privacy.

Brandon Shaw

Brandon is a white male who has eight years of teaching experience. Brandon has four years of experience working on Title-One campuses and four years of experience in non-Title-One schools. Brandon states that he was a teacher of record pre, during, and post-pandemic. Brandon was a second-grade Math and Science Teacher at the time of the study. When asked to describe African American students' academic performance in the 2019-2020 pre-pandemic school year, Brandon stated, "The overall academic performance of African American students I've taught before the COVID-19 pandemic was below or slightly below level compared to other races."

Jordan Ballein

Jordan is a white female who has 23 years of teaching experience. All of Jordan's years as an educator has been served on Title-One campuses. Jordan disclosed that she was a teacher of record pre, during, and post-pandemic. At the time of the study, Jordan was a second-grade English Language Arts Teacher. The researcher asked Jordan if she could describe the academic achievement of her African American students in the year 2019-2020 before campus closure. Jordan recalled that her African American students had been performing well since the beginning of the school year. She stated, "the students were behind in skills such as phonics and beginning reading, but all students who completed Kindergarten at their campus were."

Brittany Johnson

Brittany is an African American female who has 18 years of teaching experience. Most of Brittany's educational experience has been servicing students from Title-One campuses. Brittany agreed to share her experience working with African American students pre, during, and post-pandemic. At the time of the study, Brittany was a third-grade ELA and Social Studies teacher. When asked about the African American students' academic performance in her class during the 2019-2020 school year, Brittany stated, "my African American students performed on grades level compared to my peers. I may even have had a few that could read above grade level before the school closing."

Ivory Dorian

Ivory has eight years of teaching experience, three of which are served at a Title-One campus. At the time of the study, Ivory's current teaching position was as a first-grade teacher. Ivory is also an African American female educator. Ivory spoke with the researcher and recalled her experience working with African American students during the global pandemic when the school closed, and virtual learning occurred. Ivory shared

that during the 2019-2020 school year before the pandemic, her African American students "were not eager to learn, did not have confidence or support to complete work, and many did not believe in themselves."

Parker Emory

Parker is an African American male educator. He has served Title-One campuses for 13 years, his entire career as an educator. At the time of the study, Parker was a second-grade teacher. Parker agreed to discuss his experience working with African American students during the global pandemic. Parker started by sharing the experiences of his students pre-pandemic. Parker explained that at the start of that particular school year, all students- even African American students had gotten off to a good start academically. He reported that none of his students, as he remembered, were failing in his class at the beginning or middle of the 2019-2020 school year.

Delaney Wolfe

Delaney is a white female educator who has 16 years of experience. Delaney has nine years of Title-1 experience and seven years serving non-Title campuses. At the time of the study, Delaney was serving as a Kindergarten teacher at a Title-One campus. She agreed to speak with the researcher about her experience educating African American students. When the researcher asked Delaney to describe the academic performance of her pre-pandemic students, Delaney explained, "from my experience, overall, the performance of African American students was less than that of other ethnicities. I noticed that when working with African American students, the disruptive behaviors are much more prevalent among students of color."

Amber Rose

Amber is a white female educator of seven years. Her first four years of her career were at a Title-One campus, and the remaining three were served at a non-Title campus. When interviewed, Amber was currently serving as a Kindergarten teacher. She was asked about her experience working with African American children before the pandemic. Amber told the researcher, "before the pandemic, African American students were a little behind in phonological awareness and sight word knowledge; therefore, it made it challenging for them to read and write."

Sam Whitehead

Sam is an African American male with four years of teaching experience. All of Sam's years of teaching took place on one Title-One campus. Sam states he helped open the campus and has a deep love for the campus and the students who attend. At the study's time, Sam served as a first-grade teacher. Sam met with the researcher and shared his experience working with African American students during the 2019-2020 school year. The researcher asked Sam if he would mind describing his students' academic performance before the pandemic. Sam told the researcher that the kids loved school before the students were made to attend virtually. They loved to come and sing and dance and to come to do work. He said he tries to make learning fun and easy, and from what I can remember, all students performed well.

Teacher Perspective and Experiences

After interviewing the eight educators and analyzing the data, common emergent themes arose. Although each educator spoke of their own experiences, six common themes were repeatedly apparent. The emergent themes that were discussed the most during the one-on-one educator interviews were (a) student performance; (b) teacher preparedness; and (c) successful strategies for helping students.

The following themes permeated the study and answered research questions; RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically during pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic; and RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students?

Student Performance

African American Student Performance Pre-Pandemic

This study analyzes teachers' and parents' perspectives on educating African American students. This section aims to examine teachers' experience educating African American students pre-pandemic. Thus, to begin the interview, the researcher asked the teacher participants to describe the overall academic performance of African American students in their class in 2019-2020 before the 2019 pandemic. All eight participants had a different experiences and shared knowledge from their point of view with the researcher.

When asked about the academic performance of African American students in her classroom in the 2019-2020 school year, third grade teacher Brittany Johnson explained, "At that particular point mid-year, my African American students were performing on par with their peers." Second grade teacher Brandon Shaw stated, "The overall academic performance of African American students I taught before the COVID-19 pandemic was

below or slightly below compared to other races." Second grade teacher Jordan Ballein recalled, "The African American student's academic performance varied by the student. Some students were performing above average, most were on grade level, and I had maybe one or two students who were below level academically."

Ivory Dorian commented that before the pandemic, her African American students were "Not eager to learn, did not have confidence or support to complete work or believe in themselves. Many but not all performed this way." Second grade teacher Parker Emory claimed that, to his recollection, all his students were progressing on the level. Kindergarten teacher Delaney Wolf stated, "From my experience, overall, the performance of African American students was less than other ethnicities. I also noticed that the disruptive behaviors were much more prevalent among students of color." Kindergarten teacher Amber Rose recalled, "Before the pandemic, African American students were a little behind in phonological awareness and sight word knowledge; therefore, it was challenging for them to read and write."

African American Student Performance Post-Pandemic

Early in the study, we asked the eight participating teachers to describe their African American students' performance generally in the 2019-2020 school year before the pandemic. Students finished virtually the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic school year and the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year online. For many districts, the Spring of 2021 was the first time they instructed students face-to-face again. Due to the split of the school year, teacher participants could not speak on the academic performance of the students they had in their classrooms the year prior. However, the teachers were able to talk generally about the academic performance of the African American students they taught the following year.

When asked about the Academic performance of African American student's post-pandemic, Sam stated, "my new group of students were behind in terms of where they should have been in the middle of the school year. I had to go back and teach concepts from where the primary grade left off." Parker agreed that once returned, African American students performed about the same as students from different racial and ethnic groups. Brittany noted she did notice a gap in the student's academic skills, but African American students performed about the same as other students of other races. Amber stated, "They performed about the same as other students. Teachers automatically knew to show grace and allowed students time to refresh the material of the primary grade." Delaney explained, "I did not notice a difference in the academic knowledge of students mainly because the students that I taught virtually remained virtual students for the remainder of the school year, so it was hard to gauge their competency levels." Ivory stated, "all students were behind significantly, African American students probably struggled a little more to catch up."

Jordan shared, "Yes, I observed a gap in my student's academic knowledge and skills when they returned to face-to-face instruction. The African American students may have been impacted more than other students. This may be due to having to share technology with other siblings, unreliable internet connections, and excess free time (not used for academics).

Summary

In the above section, the eight participating teachers recalled their experience educating African American students before the pandemic. Key areas highlighted for improvement were reading, writing, phonological awareness, sight word knowledge, behavior, personal work habits, and work ethic. When asked about African American students' performance, four teachers recalled that African American students performed

lower than the other races represented in their classrooms. Two teachers recalled African American students performing on level and relatively the same as their peers. Two teachers reported that students' performance varied by the student and commented on their work habits versus their academic performance. In terms of the academic achievement of African American students before the pandemic, most teachers noted that African American students performed subordinate to their peers. In terms of the academic achievement of African American student's post-pandemic, eight teachers' perspectives were analyzed. Three of the eight teachers believed that African American students were academically behind; however, not more than any other race. Five other teachers commented that African American students were behind academically compared to other races. Two teachers contributed reasons for African American performance to lack of resources and access to internet services, working parents, home-life balances, and not attributing free time for academic purposes.

Teacher Preparedness

Another common theme that reoccurred when speaking with the eight teacher participants was the need for more time to prepare for the launch of face-to-face virtual instruction. Many teachers shared concerns when being told that they were mandated to instruct students using an online platform. The teachers spoke about their confidence and comfort levels in being able to teach students and help them perform well academically. Teachers talked about the challenges they faced launching and enduring virtual instruction. Moreover, teachers spoke about the levels of support they received when they were mandated to shift from face-to-face to virtual education.

Teacher Concerns

When asked what their concerns were about teaching virtually, Jordan shared that she had concerns about keeping the students engaged and resources. Ivory shared she had

worries about students not being engaged. Brandon recalled, "Some of my concerns about teaching online were keeping the students' attention and being motivated. Also, technology, whether or not it would work." Brittany stated my concerns: "Not having the necessary instructional resources, not having enough training using the necessary technology and equipment, student privacy and confidentiality, and time management." Parker shared he was concerned about "Not being prepared and not having a clear plan of action or format." Delaney's concerns were time restrictions and the preparation of classroom instructional materials. Amber shared, "my only concern about teaching online is I didn't know what it would look like. I did not know how the students would turn in work. I did not know how the work would be graded and things like that".

Teacher Confidence

After the teachers shared their concerns about teaching virtual instruction, the researcher inquired about their comfort and confidence level in their ability to help the student succeed academically during virtual education. When asked about her comfort level teaching virtually, Brittany shared, "On a scale of one to ten, my confidence in virtual teaching was a two." Brandon recalled, "At first, I was uneasy about delivering instruction virtually, but as I got the routine down, it became easier." Sam reported, "Very confident, even excited because I am a tech guy." Ivory, too felt confident, stating, "Very confident. I always feel that I am the one who can adapt to change." Delany, too, said, "I was confident due to the majority of my classroom experience included an online component teacher have to access regularly." Parker commented that he was slightly confident. Jordan said, "I was very skeptical about teaching elementary students remotely. I was not comfortable with navigating online." Amber admitted she needed to be more confident as she had never taught virtually.

Challenges

In addition to sharing their concerns and confidence levels, the teachers also spoke about some challenges they faced while attempting to instruct students online versus face-to-face. Amber recalled, when asked about challenges she experienced, "The only challenge I experienced was waiting for the District to roll out the platform to get started. Once they told us what to do and gave us time to create the lessons, things ran smoothly.' Sam agreed, "I did not experience many challenges other than the initial challenge of getting started." Jordan explained, "My biggest challenge was the technical issues, creating lesson plans that were online appropriate, and student engagement." Parker stated that his challenges were "Internet connection and equipment." Delany did not report experiencing any challenges.

When asked about her challenges, Ivory spoke more of student behavior rather than issues the teacher can control. She stated her biggest challenge was student absences and students being upset about having to log on. Brandon explained:

I believe my greatest challenge during virtual instruction was keeping small children engaged, focused, and not distracted by objects or people in their backgrounds. Also, having to flip through multiple screens to see if all the students were present and engaged.

Brittany also explained in great depth:

student engagement, collecting assignments from students, cheating/ code of conduct violations, distractions, parent interruptions, student attendance, effective small group instruction, failure, and the amount of time and energy that was necessary to prepare and plan lesson were challenges for me.

Each participant spoke of the challenges they encountered while enduring virtual learning.

Teacher support

The research sought to understand the teacher's experience preparing and launching virtual instruction by inquiring about the support teachers received during the time designated for virtual education. Seven out of the eight teacher participants reported experiencing challenges when teaching virtually. When asked if there was support or if the teacher felt supported during virtual learning, Brittany admitted, "No one felt supported because I do not think that anyone knew how to support one another at that time." Brandon stated, "I did feel supported by the administration during virtual instruction. They were there to answer any questions or concerns either myself or my team had." Ivory recalled, "We were supported in every aspect. We got through it together as a school family." Delany explained:

In some ways, I felt supported, and in others, not so much. At times, it felt as if the administration and district leaders were making decisions based on everything except for the experiences and expertise of the teachers. In decision-making, teachers were the personnel thrown into this new experience, and we were not asked for input on anything we were instructed to do. There were mandatory components of the job that needed to be more feasible and realistic, and often we were faced with disgruntled parents and struggling students. Many of these decisions also led to confusion and a chaotic work environment. Teachers should have been allowed to be part of the conversation, and we were just being told what to do. We, in turn, needed to gain ownership of the things we were doing and how we were teaching.

Parker felt he was supported by his administration as best as they could. Jordan also felt supported by her administration. She said, "I felt supported by the administration during

virtual instruction. They were always available to help and informed us of any changes the District made."

Professional Development

Once virtual instruction was launched and mandated, school leaders attempted to find ways to support their teachers. One way for teachers to learn new material is by participating in professional learning opportunities. When asked if professional development opportunities were offered during virtual instruction for the teachers within this study, the answers varied by participants. Jordan explained that at her campus, "the school provided countless numbers of virtual training on apps and tools to utilize during virtual instruction." Sam mentioned, "The school did a TEAMS call with each grade level to explain to teachers what to do, the expectation as far as lesson plans and getting things set up with students." Amber stated that there was no professional development or training at her campus. "We just figured it out as the District passed down the expectations. A lot of it was team meetings and creating things as a team," Amber stated. Delaney and Parker indicated that their districts did not offer any training either. Ivory shared that the training she did receive while virtual was curriculum based. Brandon shared that his school "Provided training regarding how to work the platforms we were using, and different apps or tools we could use to present information as well as for the students to turn in their work." Brittany concluded that most of their professional developments mainly consisted of technology integration."

Summary

The eight teachers who participated in the study shared their experiences of teacher preparedness when launching virtual instruction. Many teachers discussed their concerns when being asked to instruct virtual instruction on online platforms. Comments from these teachers included worries about student engagement, suitable student

activities, equipment and technology malfunctions, time management, and student privacy. In addition to sharing their concerns, the teachers of the study also discussed their confidence and comfort level when instructing students virtually. Out of the eight participating teachers, half reported being uncomfortable about having to teach virtually. The other half of the teachers were confident in their ability to teach online because they either liked technology, liked adapting to change, or were already using a virtual platform inside their classroom. Once virtual instruction was launched, teachers spoke of their challenges while instructed. Leading challenges among the teachers were student attendance, student engagement, and infrastructure of using the virtual platform. When asked if they felt supported by their administration when these challenges occurred, all by one, the teacher revealed they felt strong support from their administration. Three out of ten teachers explained that their District or campuses offered training and professional development opportunities that centered around how to launch virtual instruction, expectations of students and teachers, and navigating tools within the online platform that the District has chosen.

Table 4.3

Challenges of Virtual Learning According to Teachers

Challenge Type	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Sample Quote</i>
Technology	Multiple teacher participants listed trouble with technology as a big challenge during virtual learning.	"Internet connection and equipment."
Student Behavior	Teachers spoke about student behaviors such as attitudes towards learning and work ethics.	"My biggest challenge was student absences and students being upset about having to log on."
Student Engagement	Getting students to actively participate or engage in lesson online was a challenge for some teachers.	"I believe my greatest challenge during virtual instruction was keeping small children engaged, focused, and not distracted by objects or people in their backgrounds."

Successful Strategies for Students

One aim of the study is to compose a list of strategies teachers who work with African American students have used during the pandemic times to help African American students who are struggling academically. For that purpose, the researcher asked the eight participating teachers what strategies they successfully implemented to help struggling African American students. The eight teachers shared various strategies from their experiences.

Amber recalled that she used consistency, repetition of daily work expectations, simplifying assignments, pre-teaching the vocabulary, and meeting with students in small groups to help struggling students. Jordan revealed:

The strategies I used during virtual instruction was to ensure my students were learning was to provide grade-appropriate online activities that would engage all my students, for my African American students, providing spiraling activities to

review skills that were not mastered, opportunities to meet with me after class (office hours), and time to interact with their classmates. I also was in constant communication with parents about student progress.

Brandon stated:

I kept my lesson short and precise to keep the attention of all my students; I also had interactions with my classes to keep my students focused and engaged. For my African American students, I used content they could relate to. I provided opportunities for them to socialize with their classmates online, which allowed them to catch up and share with friends, all the things they wanted to do while I was teaching. All the strategies mentioned above worked well with my African American students and families.

Ivory recalled she used many learning videos with hip-hop songs to keep the students engaged. Delaney explained:

I kept them organized with a checklist and synced my grade book to the actual assignment so they could access their graded assignments easily. I opened virtual office hours for students to have the option to meet with me if they needed extra support. I provided opportunities for small group work and guided instruction by using break-out rooms and setting up groups with the TEAMS app. These same strategies worked well for my African American students.

Parker explained that his primary strategy was using small groups and intervention times.

Brittany shared, "We used more after-hour help for students that had working parents. We also offered Zoom meetings to help parents as well. The parent's meeting was the most beneficial."

Looking Ahead

The participants shared their perspectives when asked how we, as educators, can make learning better for African American students and what advice they would give districts should another school closure occur. Brittany stated, "I wish they would consider a face-to-face and virtual option from the beginning of the school year. I want districts always to have a backup plan to continue student learning." Parker believes, "The school needs to have a system already in place, meaning students are already familiar with using Schoology. Be proactive, and don't wait until there is a problem. Plan ahead." Delaney stated:

I wish that technology had been more accessible for students of color. Even though I did not have many students of color in my class, I heard my colleagues mention how lack of parental support and technology negatively impacted attendance and student achievement. Have a plan. Also, district and campus leaders should provide more extensive opportunities for actual classroom teachers to have input in decisions made for their students. When given options, listen openly to the teachers' suggestions, wants, and needs. This could have made teaching much easier for teachers, parents, and students throughout this pandemic. It takes a village, and sometimes decision-makers forget what it is like to be in the classroom, explicitly performing in a way that is foreign to all involved. No one knew what this should have looked like or what we should be doing, but only those who were not teaching had a say in what we would do. All this is at the expense of our students.

Ivory commented, "Set up learning zones for those who need help with learning, doing homework or curriculum in general. Many students were at home without proper educational supervision."

Brandon stated he wished districts would "provide technology sooner to the families who need it, so no one loses more instructional time than others. However, my District and school did their best with the concise notice. Whenever they came to a bump in the road, they quickly tried to fix it and move forward." Jordan wishes, 'devices and internet service for all families and a help center dedicated to helping students who need academic support was available. Amber concluded:

Perhaps offer opportunities where small groups of children could log on and ask for help. Make technology more available to them. Provided free tutoring service to families that cannot find help for their children. Always have a plan should online instruction have to retake place.

Although the mandate to virtual learning was swift and unexpected, teachers stated what they would like to see from school districts looking ahead.

Summary

This section highlighted some critical strategies educators used during the pandemic to educate African American students. All eight participants spoke from their experience and recalled strategies that were helpful to the academic achievement of African American students. The strategies that were most common among the group of educators were: providing small group instruction opportunities, creating short and precise lessons, using relatable content, creating engaging lessons, providing opportunities to talk with friends, and providing opportunities for students and families to speak with the teacher during office hours.

Although the 2019-2020 pandemic school closure epidemic caused a swift shift that most school districts were unprepared for, the participating educators offered advice should a pandemic occur again. The most repeated comment was for school districts to have a plan. Interviews suggest that the districts with an online model already in place

experienced a smoother transition to virtual learning than others that did not. Another method of action was for school districts to consider teacher input when creating the following steps before mandating the measures to all employees. One teacher suggested creating learning zones or safe places for students to go when they have no supervision. Three teachers' top concern was ensuring all students had the appropriate technology to participate in online learning. Table 4.3 summarizes the successful strategies for students according to teachers.

Table 4.4*Successful Strategies for Students According to Teachers*

Strategies	<i>Sample Quote</i>
Providing small group instruction opportunities	“I provided opportunities for small group work and guided instruction by using break-out rooms and setting up groups with the TEAMS app.”
Creating short and precise lessons	“I kept my lesson short and precise to keep the attention of all my students”
Using relatable content	“For my African American students, I used content they could relate to.”
Creating engaging lessons	“I also had interactions with my classes to keep my students focused and engaged.”
Providing opportunities to talk with friends	“I provided opportunities for them to socialize with their classmates online, which allowed them to catch up and share with friends, all the things they wanted to do while I was teaching.”
Providing opportunities for students and families to speak with the teacher	“I opened virtual office hours for students to have the option to meet with me if they needed extra support.”

Chapter Summary

From the beginning, the researcher inquired if the experiences of the teachers would be the same as the parent, or at least similar. However, the experiences of the teachers were slightly different from that of the parents. In terms of the academic Achievement of African American students before the pandemic, most study participants, parents, and teachers recalled that their African American child(ren) were performing on/above grade level, with very few performing below. When virtual instruction was mandated, parents and teachers spoke of a few challenges they encountered while citing technology and the infrastructure of switching from face-to-face instruction to online education as one of the biggest challenges.

When evaluating African American students' post-pandemic performance, parents and teachers agreed that most students were behind but similar to students of other races. This small gap could be attributed to some of the successful strategies teachers and parents used during virtual instruction, such as instructing in small groups, being available for additional assistance, and utilizing other resources and supports as different ways to help students. The next chapter will summarize the study's results, provide implications for future reference, and conclude the investigation.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The research study was conducted to analyze the multiple perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the barriers to educating African American students through a global pandemic, natural disasters, and school closures. The study researched successes and impediments and suggested future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic. Four research questions guided this study. The first question asked, "What are parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?" The second question asked, "What are parents' perceptions about how their child has been impacted socially-emotionally during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?" The third question asked, "What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction?" The fourth question asked, "What are teachers' perceptions of the success and impediments academically, physically, or socio-emotionally, if any, African American students encountered while being educated virtually?"

For this study, the researchers used one theoretical framework to enhance the understanding of the learning that occurs through the social component of engaging with others. The theoretical framework used to guide this study is the Social Learning Theory developed in 1963 and later detailed in 1977 by Albert Bandura. This qualitative study utilized this theory to ascertain why students, when isolated from people with whom they can physically interact, may begin to experience academic and social-emotional development challenges. This theory serves as a foundation for understanding the impact

that isolation through virtual instruction may have or may have had on African American students during times of school closure.

The social learning theory detailed by Albert Bandura implies that people learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Nabavi, 2012). According to Nabavi (2012), the basic idea of the theory is that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Nabavi (2012) implies that the implications of the social learning theory suggest that people develop similar behaviors by observing the behaviors of others. Stated differently, people learn from the social interaction they encounter by engaging in experiences with other people.

A constant comparative analysis was used in the study to constantly compare the data of ten parent participants and eight teacher participants. The parent participant group comprised of ten African American parents, four males, and six females. The teacher participant group comprised eight educators, six females, and two males. There were four African American and four white teacher participants. The teacher participants' years of experience ranged between four and twenty-three. All teacher participants were teachers of record during the 2019-2020 school year when schools closed, and virtual instruction was mandated. The study results are based on the perspectives of both the parents and the teacher's experiences. From the interview data, the researcher addressed the four research questionS that guided the study.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings from this study addressed the themes that emerged from the parents and teacher data collected via one-on-one interviews. The themes permeated the study and addressed research questions; RQ1: What are parents' perceptions about how their child performed academically during virtual instruction compared to face-to-face instruction; and RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about how their child has been

impacted socially-emotionally during virtual education compared to face-to-face instruction? RQ3: What are teachers' perceptions about how African American students performed academically during pre-pandemic compared to post-pandemic? and RQ4: What are teachers' perceptions of the successful practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students? These themes that were analyzed from the parent and teacher interviews prompted important findings that will be compared or contrasted and discussed in depth. The findings of the study are discussed in the following domains: (a) parent versus teachers view of academic achievement, (b) socio-emotional learning importance in education, and (c) practices for helping African American students academically.

Parent Versus Teachers View of Academic Achievement

Findings of the study revealed that there was a disconnect between what parents and teachers viewed as academic success for students. Parents worried more about their child's social emotional well-being whereas teachers were more worried about students' knowledge and skills. According to parents' perception overall their children were performing well academically pre-COVID and during virtual learning because parents spoke of their child's academic success holistically in terms of passing and failing grades. According to the African American parents who participated in the study under half (4 out of 10) parents reported their African American child performed poorly during virtual instruction, (4 out of 10) reported the academics performance of the African American children in the study were moderately affected or no change was noted, and (2 out of 10) reported their child performed well. Masonbrink & Hurley (2020) conducted a study that suggested African American children may be more impacted than other races because of their limited ability to have access to educational resources, school resources for health care and counselors, and increased exposure to socio-emotional stressors. However, the

results of this study suggest that just under half of the students performed below average or experienced trouble during virtual learning. More students (7 out of 10) of African American students performed averagely or better academically during virtual instruction despite the perceived circumstances. Therefore, it can be implied that although different races may encounter different barriers that may be perceived as hurdles to their academic achievement, many students such as the African American parents' children in this study may have a form of resiliency and far well academically despite their circumstances according to the interview data. Moreover the students in children of the parent participants in this study are low and middle class socio-economic study who may have different circumstances than children living in poverty.

When teachers were asked about African American students academic performance teacher responses differ from parents. The teachers spoke of academic success of students more specifically according to knowledge and skill citing reading, writing, phonological awareness, sight word knowledge, behavior, personal work habits, and work ethic. Teachers responses where broke into two categories African American students' academic achievement pre-pandemic and post-pandemic in effort to gain understanding on whether school closures and virtual learning had an impact on the academic achievement of African American students. When asked about the academic performance of African American students pre-pandemic; Three of the eight teachers believed that African American students were academically behind pre-pandemic: however, not more than any other race. Five other teachers commented that African American students were behind academically compared to other races. When asked about the academic performance of African American student's post-pandemic; two out of eight teacher participants noted recognizing a gap in the knowledge and skills of African American student's post-pandemic. Six out of eight teacher participants noted recognizing

a gap in the knowledge and skills of African American student's post-pandemic but not much more significant than other races. After analyzing the experiences of the African American teachers who participated in the study data revealed that the academic performance of the African American children in general pre-COVID was congruent with what the literature expressed about African American student performing subordinately (Vega et al., 2015). The data revealed that pre-COVID five out of eight teachers generally expressed that their African American students were behind academically than other races. However, once students returned to school post-COVID only two of eight teachers recognized African American students underperforming compared to other races. Six of the eight teachers said that African American students were behind but so were all other races. These teachers reported going back to teach all students to make up for deficient and learning loss not only African American students.

The difference between the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the academic achievement of African American students can be attributed to the fact that parents and teachers view may view the term academic achievement differently. Parents spoke of academic achievement holistically whereas the way teachers spoke of student's knowledge and skill was more in line to what current research refers to when it states that African American students are behind in terms of reading rates and proficiency, and how reading abilities may predict outcomes later in life (Bartz & Kritsonis, 2019). According to Vega et al. (2015), historically African American students lag behind whites academically. Bartz & Kritsonis (2019) state that today, post-pandemic, African American children continue to exhibit the academic achievement gap when compared to white students. More specifically according to National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) students attending urban schools score lower than their peers in suburban, small town, or rural schools on tests measuring academic proficiency levels in core subject

areas such as science, mathematics, reading, and writing, which is the reality of many AA students. In that direction Dorn et al. (2020) study showed the study indicated that the average student lost three months of learning in mathematics and one-and-a-half months of learning in reading. Moreover, the data revealed that the learning loss was especially acute in schools predominantly serving students of color. The results of Dorn et al. (2020) indicated that the data from the student participants of the study revealed that most students needed to catch up. However, students of color were far worse because, due to their findings, African American students test scores indicate that they may have lost three to five months of learning in mathematics, while white students lost just one to three months.

The findings of this study are in some way congruent current literature that suggest African American students lag behind their counter parts academically (Dorn et al. 2020). However ,this study also presents an opposing perspective regarding the achievement of African American students. In this study, teachers spoke directly of areas of improvements for academic achievement for African American students as reading, writing, phonological awareness, sight word knowledge, behavior, personal work habits, and work ethic which is more detailed than the holistic response parents offered. This data provided by teachers is congruent with the research of National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) and Dorn et al. (2020) in the respect of there are some African American students experiencing trouble academically post-pandemic in the areas of reading, writing, and math. However, data from the parent's perspective and some teacher's perspective is that all races including African American students showed deficits in these areas. Thus, educators must consider the learning loss that occurred during times of school closures and its impact on all races of students. The results indicate that African American students did experience disparities during virtual learning

and times of school closures, however with the right instruction and resources in place African American students can perform at the same levels of their peers.

Comparing the data from the parents and the teacher's perspectives, taking into account what the literature says regarding African American students' performance, it can be concluded that the academic performance of African American students is still an area in which educators must pay close attention. In this study, most parents believe that their African American child performed well academically, whereas most educators believe that African American students, in general, continue to lag academically. Although not the truth for every African American student in the world, it can be implied that African American students prior to the pandemic exhibited an achievement gap compared to other races. The statement can be supported by the data collected from the five educators who live the reality of educating African American students prior, during, and after the pandemic. However, one must consider the three teachers out of eight parents who believe that African American students can and have made significant academic progress in school.

Since this study does not account for every African American student, it can be concluded that there are some African American students who do perform on or above grade level and do not contribute to an academic achievement gap that existed prior to the pandemic. When asked about how African American children performed in school pre-pandemic answers between parents and teachers conflicted. Parents felt on average their child performed well. The majority of the teachers in the study agreed with past and current literature that suggest African American students exhibited an educational achievement gap when compared to other races (Dizon-Ross, 2019). The difference in perspectives can be contributed to several factors. The first factor could be that the teachers in the study are not answering the question referring to the parent participants

children. Parent participants had no affiliation to the teachers in the study. None of the teachers in study taught any of the parent's participants children. The teachers in the study answered the questions referring to African American students in general based off groups of students they have taught in the past. Since we are referencing two different groups of students it is challenging to make generalization about one group of students. Furthermore, when answering questions regarding comparing the performance of one group to other teachers are in a position where they can analyze the achievement of two different group whereas parents can speak for one group which is their particular child.

Because this study uses a small sample size and does not represent every African American child, this study may serve as another piece of data suggesting that educators need to place special attention on how we educate this particular group of students. Placing special consideration on additional ways to support the academic learning of African American students is essential because Bowman et al. (2018) found that African American students' lower performance in schools is not only a problem for their families and their communities but rather an issue affecting the entire country. When African Americans display lower educational levels, it is challenging for them to gain substantial employment, ultimately receiving low-income jobs to maintain financial stability, which may substantially impact the economy (Vega et al., 2015). For adults and parents, sustaining low-paying jobs hinders their ability to provide resources such as quality early childhood centers and tutors for their children (Doi et al., 2020). When students maintain low educational standards and thus obtain lower-paying jobs, the African American community creates a cycle of poverty that continues from generation to generation (Doi et al., 2020). To combat this phenomenon, Garcia and Weiss (2020) suggest an examination must occur of the practices in place in classrooms before, during, and after a pandemic to promote the academic achievement of African American students at the

elementary level. Therefore, educators must look at the type of educational experience African American children encounter from elementary. Elementary classes teach the foundation for skills students will need to excel in academics throughout grade school and into their career fields, which can eliminate the cycle of poverty (Doi et al., 2020). When students have strong foundational skills or utilize educational resources, their chances of academic achievement in reading and writing are maximized.

Socio-emotional Learning Importance in Education

Another key finding of the study is the importance of socio-emotional learning programs that are offered in classrooms. According to the data from the parent perspective socio-emotional learning may be just as important as academic knowledge and skills in the success of students. According to the parent data, most parents (7 out of 10) reported temperament changes in their children as the biggest challenge of school closures versus academic struggles. Many parents reported their child feeling bored or isolated because of the disregard of students being able to learn from interactions with their peers as indicated as a need for children development detailed in the Social Learning Theory (Nabavi, 2012). The parent's participants data indicate that the need for students to socially interact and learn from their peers may have just as much impact on students' success as their academic performance. This finding is important to the nature of education because it supports the needs to educate the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally. According to the theoretical framework that guided this study social interactions and collaboration with others are a vital part of the learning process for small children (Nabavi, 2012). In Theorist Dewey's view, learning comes through forming habits through engaging in interesting interactions and readjusting knowledge to the condition of the activity; thus, students would learn by doing, observing, and socializing (Radu, 2011). Dewey's work noted that children learn by engaging in experiences that

include things that the child is most interested in (Radu, 2011). Thus, Dewey's work implied that when children engage in learning that piques their interest, children will learn more from experience. Virtual learning required students to complete online activities within the home, which limited social interactions with peers outside the home. The isolation of students from their peers limited time for conversation, interactions, and play, which many theorists have noted that children learn best. The pandemic, which forced school closures, prompted social isolation, which led to temperamental changes such as sadness, loneliness, boredom, and dysconnectivity from the enjoyment of learning for some students, which presented challenges. Like students, teachers of the study noted that having time to collaborate with their team members or administration members was a helpful way to overcome the challenges presented to them during virtual instruction, such as learning how to work the platform or creating engaging assignments in isolation. The Social Learning Theory suggests that people learn from the collaboration and experience they engage in with other. Thus, if students and teachers could engage with peers and colleagues, the academic performance of African American students would be piqued, and feelings of social isolation would be minimized.

Moreover, the Social Learning Theory highlighted the importance of children learning through social interactions with others (Nabavi, 2012). Socio-emotional learning programs build on the foundation of learning through a social context. In addition, socio-emotional learning programs provide students the opportunities to learn through socializing with other, enhance communication skills, promote positive social interactions, and teach strategies for control and regulating behavioral emotions. Allbright et al. (2019) suggest that socio-emotional learning may be the missing link to the achievement gap between races. According to Allbright et al. (2019), social learning programs can teach students how to deal with the reality of the disparities they may

encounter. Socio-emotional learning programs teach students skills to be able to deal with different situation in real-life context therefore when students face emotions from being placed in situation beyond their control, they are equipped with skills to handle these situations in a positive manner.

One important finding of this study was the need for social interactions between children to enhance their achievement in school. This finding is important because it presents another aspect for educators to consider when interacting with students. Educators are tasked with helping students achieve success. However, often this success is equated to academics and not equally equated to the socio-emotional aspect of learning. The parent data in the study highlights the important need for both. The data suggest that there is a social-emotional context within a child that must be met before the child is comfortable enough to learn academically. As educators, it important to ensure that socio-emotional learning is incorporated into the curriculum of child development because it could be the missing link in helping to close an achievement gap that exist between races.

Practices for Helping African American Students Academically

In the current study, the researcher analyzed the parent's and teachers' data from the one-on-one interviews and composed the following strategies for best practices for educating African American students. After analyzing all ten parent interviews, seven common successful strategies regarding educating African American students arose. The seven successful strategies that worked well during virtual learning were: (a) persistence, (b) constant practice, (c) positive praise, (d) multiple tries, (e) encouraging students to ask for help, (f) scheduling and, (g) frequent breaks. In addition to the parent's input about successful strategies that worked well for African American students, all eight educators spoke from their experience and recalled strategies that were helpful to the academic

achievement of African American students. The strategies that were most common among the group of educators were: (a) creating engaging lessons, (b) creating short and precise lessons, (c) using relatable content, (d) providing opportunities to talk with friends, (e) providing small group instruction opportunities, and (f) providing opportunities for students and families to speak with the teacher during office hours.

After analyzing the data of suggested best practices for aiding in the academic advancement of African American students, the researcher found that most strategies that the parents and teachers mentioned are already practices implemented in many classrooms today. For example, Solone et al. (2020) conducted a study on the effectiveness of collaboration between students, teacher, and parents in educational setting. The study listed collaboration as a research based best practices for building strong communities for learning. Solone et al. (2020) suggest that collaboration is that act of people working together towards a common goal. The benefits of collaboration are that all parties have a clear understanding of the vision. When collaborating all parties can agree on actions that help in making the vision attainable. When multiple people are holding each other accountable for reaching the desired goal the outcome is more attainable because the support, motivation, and assistance is present. The findings of the study identified providing opportunities to talk with friends, providing small group instruction opportunities, and providing opportunities for students and families to speak with the teacher during office hours as strategies that work well when educating African American students. These three strategies require the collaborative effort of a group of people to work toward the common goal of helping African American students succeed academically. According to Solone et al. (2020) when collaboration is not present opportunities for students to benefit from the strengths of other are minimized and students are left to fend for themselves. Thus, collaboration is an essential practice that

encompasses many other best practices that has been supported by research to yield positive results in advancing the education of students.

Another practice that was references by educators and parents was effective lesson planning. Strategies suggested by educators such as creating engaging, short, precise lessons using relatable content when done correctly could incorporate parental suggested best practice which are opportunities for persistence, constant practice, positive praise, and multiple tries. Janssen et al. (2019) conducted a study that focused on preparing new teachers in the form of effective lesson planning. According to Janssen et al. (2019) effective lessons should include objective based and include opportunities for students to interact with relevant material in hands-on experiences that prompt critical thinking and authentic learning. Janssen et al. (2019) that educators must create lesson with the target students in mind. Educators must create lessons that will connect to the experience of students and require them to engage in higher-level thinking that produces authentic learning. Placing a special attention to effective lessoning planning is important because according to Janssen et al. (2019) ineffective lesson planning can have substantial impact on the amount of learning that a student gains or losses in an academic year. The findings of this study in terms of the suggestions of strategies that worked well for African American students is mostly congruent with best practices implemented in districts today. However, the study presents another outlook on the importance of finding ways to enhance the learning of African American students not only academically but socially emotionally as well.

Implications and Recommendations

The current study researched successes and impediments to suggest future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic or times of school closures. This research

study had several findings which have note-worthy implications. First, findings of the study imply that yes, the pandemic did have an impact on the academic performance of AA students but not significantly more than any other race. Therefore, educators can work on filling deficits after times of school closures with the midframe that most AA students display the same knowledge and skills as their counterparts. Second, findings of the study imply that authentic conversations between parents and teachers need to continue to happen with transparent engagement on specific skills student needs to work on therefore all parties are on the same page on how the child is authentic performing academically. Third, findings of the study imply that as educators and parents we need to remember that educating the whole child –academically and socially- may be equally as important and be mindful when working with students that there is a social component that must be met in order for the child to want to learn more.

Implications for Future Research

The research study was conducted to analyze the experiences of parents and educators in educating African American students during a global pandemic. The researcher aimed to compile strategies that will aid educators in supporting the academic achievement of African American students. This research leaves further consideration in other areas related to the education of African American students. Since this study mainly focuses on educating African American students during school closures, further research should focus on special consideration of the different groups of African American students, such as advanced, average, below level, and special education students.

Additionally, this research study only interviewed participants about one set time frame. The study focused on the experiences of parents and teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic that happened in the Spring of 2019. The participants spoke of experiences before this pandemic, during this pandemic, and after. Thus, this study only focuses on a

set time period. Future research can conduct further research on the impact school closure have on African American students over a longitudinal period of time. Following the African American students who were in elementary during the 2019 pandemic through high school may provide more insight on whether the pandemic or school closures had any impact on their academic achievement. Lastly, an important finding of the study focuses on the socio-emotional aspect of student learning. Future research may place special focus on the socio-emotional impact school closures have on different races of students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study analyzed parents' and teachers' perspectives regarding the barriers to educating African American students through a global pandemic, natural disasters, and school closures. The study researched successes and impediments and suggested future practices school districts may implement to bridge the achievement gap of African American students during a global pandemic or unexpected school closure. The results are based on the parents' and teacher participants' experiences and perspectives. After analyzing the data, the findings of the study are discussed in the following domains: (a) parent versus teachers view of academic achievement, (b) socio-emotional learning importance in education, and (c) practices for helping African American students academically. It was discovered that there was a disconnect between how parents felt African American students were performing academically compared to educators' perceptions. Additionally, parents and educators alike agreed on strategies that may help boost the academic achievement of African American students, as detailed in the study.

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APPENDIX A:
PARENT CONSENT LETTER



Fall 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Greetings! You are being invited to participate in a research study interview. The purpose of this interview is to get parents' and guardians views regarding their experiences of educating African American students during COVID-19 when school were closed and in person learning was limited. The data obtained from this study will contribute to research aimed to identify effective practices that enhance the academic success of African American students during other times when schools may need to close, and in-person learning is limited. The strategies learned in the study may be used by educators and parents either at school or in the home to promote children's achievement.

Although your participation in the interview is voluntary, answering the questions to the best of your ability is vital. Answering all the questions in their entirety is very helpful. The interview will be approximately 30-45 minutes, and all responses will remain confidential. There is no anticipated risk in the participation of the interview, and you may stop the interview at any time. Alike, you will have the benefit by participating in the study of knowing that you have helped teachers and administrators better understand ways to help African American children be successful during times where in-person learning is not possible.

If you choose to grant your consent, please sign, and date below and the researcher will be in contact with more details on completing the interview. Your participation in the study is not only appreciated but also cherished. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Alicia Taylor (researcher) at (TaylorA8224@uhcl.edu) or my dissertation chair Dr. Kent Divoll (divoll@uhcl.edu). Thank you!

Sincerely,
Alicia R. Taylor, M.Ed.
Doctoral Student
College of Education
[REDACTED]
TaylorA8224@uhcl.edu

Participants Signature _____
Participants Email Address: _____

Date: _____
Phone Number: _____

APPENDIX B:
EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM



Fall 2022

Dear Campus Educator:

Greetings! You are being invited to participate in a research study interview. The purpose of this interview is to get educators' views regarding their experiences of educating African American students during COVID-19 when school were closed and in person learning was limited. The data obtained from this study will contribute to research aimed to identify effective practices that enhance the academic success of African American students during other times when schools may need to close, and in-person learning is limited. The strategies learned in the study may be used by educators and parents either at school or in the home to promote children's achievement. Although your participation in the interview is voluntary, answering the questions to the best of your ability is vital. Answering all the questions in their entirety is very helpful. The interview will be approximately 30-45 minutes, and all responses will remain confidential. There is no anticipated risk in the participation of the interview, and you may stop the interview at any time. Alike, you will have the benefit by participating in the study of knowing that you have helped parents, administrators, and other educators better understand ways to help African American children be successful during times where in-person learning is not possible.

If you choose to grant your consent, please sign, and date below and the researcher will be in contact with more details on completing the interview. Your participation in the study is not only appreciated but also cherished. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Alicia Taylor (researcher) at (TaylorA8224@uhcl.edu) or my dissertation chair Dr. Kent Divoll (divoll@uhcl.edu). Thank you!

Sincerely,

Alicia R. Taylor, M.Ed.
Doctoral Student
College of Education
[REDACTED]
TaylorA8224@uhcl.edu

Participants Signature _____ Date: _____
Participants Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

APPENDIX C:
PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



University of Houston- Clear Lake
Interview Questions for Parents

1. How many children do you have that are enrolled in school and what grade are they currently in?
2. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic how familiar were you with school campus that your child attends? Was this your child's first year attending the campus?
3. Please describe your child's overall academic performance before the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. When the pandemic hit, did your child's school close its doors to face-to face instruction?
Was it required that your child receive virtual instruction in the home?
5. What forms of communication did you receive from the teachers, district, or campus regarding the switch from in-person instruction to virtual?
6. How was your child's overall academic performance during the time designated for virtual instruction?
7. When virtual instruction was mandated, did you have access to school or your own technology equipment such as tablets, laptops, and/or multiple screens? If not, did the school provide you with access to technology and how?
8. Once having a computer or laptop how did you access the internet? Did you have your own internet plan, use of hotspot, or did the school or any other organization provide internet access to assist you?

9. Did you have any communication with teachers, or campus administrators, or anyone who could assist should you had experienced trouble with technology.
10. Once a stable technology device was set up how did you access the learning activities mandated for your child to complete? Who assisted you or the child with knowing how to work the device and/or apps? Was help available from teachers, administrators, or district personnel available if you needed help working the apps?
11. What kind of learning activities was your child asked to complete? Who helped the child, if needed complete the assigned learning activities?
12. What, if any, strategies did you or anyone else use in the home use to assist your child academically during virtual instruction?
13. What was your child's view of virtual instruction? Did he/she show or state a preference between in-person instruction and virtual instruction?
14. During the time of virtual instruction what was your child's temperament like regarding completing the work? Did completion come easy to them? Did he/she struggle to complete the work? Did they often seek help from someone else?
15. During the time of virtual instruction please explain any times of sadness, or frustrations your child may have experienced. Please explain.
16. What, if any, were the challenges presented to you and your family during virtual instruction? How did your family overcome these challenges? Was the campus teachers or administrators able to help in anyway?
17. What strategies worked well for the child(ren) during this time? Example, asking for help, using search engines, calling a friend, etc.
18. What advice would you give to schools to make things better the next time schools have to shut down?

APPENDIX D:
EDUCATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



University of Houston- Clear Lake
Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What is your current teaching position?
2. How many years have you educated students? Were you a teacher of record during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Please describe the overall academic performance of African American students you taught before the COVID- 19 pandemic compared to other races?
4. When the pandemic hit, did your school close its doors to face-to-face instruction? When did the school reopen? Was it required that you teach virtual instruction?
5. What communication did you have from administration and/or the district about remote teaching prior to being mandated to instruct it?
6. What were your concerns about teaching virtually?
7. How confident were you in your ability to help your students succeed academically during virtual instruction?
8. What, if any, were the challenges presented to you during virtual instruction?
9. During virtual instruction, did you feel supported by the administration? In what ways did they help you?
10. What professional development experiences where you give regarding teaching online?

11. What equipment was provided for online instruction? Did you have to use your own equipment? Own laptop? Double Screen? Could you check out equipment at school?
12. What communication did you send to families regarding virtual instruction? Did the district or school give you certain communication to send home to families? How often were you in contact with families daily?
13. What were the reactions of different families to online learning, especially African American families?
14. What, if any, were the challenges presented to students during virtual instruction?
15. What, if any were success accomplished by students during virtual instruction?
16. What strategies did you use during virtual learning to ensure all students continued to learn? Any specific strategies used for African American students? What things worked well for African American children and families that you observed?
17. When children returned to face-to-face instruction, did you observe a gap in their academic knowledge and skills of students? Were African American students impacted more or about the same as other students? Why?
18. What do you wish would have happened that didn't happen to make learning better for the children, especially African American children?
19. What advice would they give to schools to make things better the next time schools have to shut down?