Teachers' Emotional Experiences during COVID-19: A Narrative Inquiry

by

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Abstract

Teaching became harder during the pandemic. More specifically, elementary teachers were expected to monitor student health on top of teaching curriculum, they were required to find creative ways to maintain relationships with students, and they needed to coach parents on implementing daily lessons. Changes to the profession such as these are likely to bring up emotions in teachers. Indeed, teachers who taught virtually during the pandemic were more anxious than in-person teachers. Teachers also reported feeling uncertainty and emotional exhaustion during the pandemic. Therefore, the pandemic was clearly an emotional experience for some teachers. However, pandemic research to date has focused on emotion-adjacent outcomes such as efficacy or identity, or has a narrow scope of emotion data due to quantitative methodology. This omission led me to select an open-ended methodology, narrative inquiry, that allowed me to dive deep into teachers' emotions and the experiences and context surrounding them. Precisely, I conducted a narrative inquiry to tell the stories of three Alberta elementary teachers' emotional experiences during the pandemic. In this thesis, I incorporated elements of Labov's structural episodic analysis and Clandinin and Connelly's restorying thereby creating an integrated analysis framework that allowed me to both deconstruct participants' narratives into their structural components and reconstruct them into restoried narratives as a process of meaning-making. I situate these findings in existing psychological literature and discuss methodological and practical implications.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Kendra Wells. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, No. Pro00120876, August 3, 2022.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, I would like to thank the participants in this study. Their openness and vulnerability were crucial in the success of this research. Thank you all for your contributions.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the Thesis

In this thesis, I conducted a narrative inquiry to tell the stories of three Alberta teachers' emotional experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carrying out this research was important to me because it was a way for me to make sense of my personal experience as a teacher during the pandemic as well as to qualify the different ways that teachers experienced similar events.

I chose to conduct my research using narrative inquiry because it allowed me to strike a balance between preserving the voices of my participants while still engaging in a meaning-making analytical process. Although narrative inquiry methodology posed challenges with high degrees of openness and flexibility, I am pleased with the restoried products that contain both the participants' words and ideas as well as my own interpretation of their narratives.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In this current Chapter, I provide a brief overview of the thesis simply to orient the reader to the structure of the document. In Chapter 2, I establish the pandemic teaching context and the relevance of emotions to teachers during this time. I also review narrative inquiry and the tensions the methodology faces. It is important to note that I chose to present theories, ideas, and evidence from multiple perspectives in the literature review that guided my thinking about teachers' emotions during the pandemic without becoming prescriptive about what I might hear in the narratives. As with most qualitative research, there is no single guiding theory to this research. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the study. Specifically, I describe narrative inquiry as the methodology that I used and my analytic process that combined elements of deconstruction and reconstruction through an integrated data analysis framework. Chapter 4 contains the results of this study presented in two parts. First, I describe the deconstructed results consisting of structural episodic analysis. Second,

I present the reconstructed results consisting of restoried narratives. Finally, Chapter 5 serves to discuss the results and situate the present study within existing theories and research.

Overall, this work was meaningful to me because I was able to connect with teachers who were trying to make sense of the pandemic for themselves–as I too had been doing. The participants in this study kindly told me that through the interview process, they felt like their emotions were validated and the work that they did to tell their stories contributed to a better understanding of their own emotions during the pandemic. Most importantly, this research had a consequential impact for these three people. As an emerging scholar, I also hope this research inspires other teachers and researchers through the emotional power of story, my methodological recommendations, and my position that narrative inquiry should be more widely adopted in psychology as a meaningful form of qualitative research that can highlight individual lived experiences, contextual factors that play a role in an individual's lived experience of an event, and the impactfulness of research presented as story.

Chapter 2: Introduction and Literature Review

Research Context

I was a teacher in Alberta during the COVID-19 pandemic. From my own experience, and as I later rediscovered in empirical literature, teaching is an emotional profession (Frenzel et al., 2021). The profound impact of the pandemic on the job of teaching (Bascia, 2022; Wells & Daniels, in preparation; Kim & Ashbury, 2020) led to my interest in pandemic teaching research generally, and in particular, research about the emotional experiences of teachers during the pandemic.

Teachers' Experiences during the Pandemic

The teaching profession fundamentally changed during the pandemic. In particular, the demands of the job increased, or in other words, the job became more difficult (Bascia, 2022; Wells & Daniels, in preparation; Kim & Ashbury, 2020). Some research during the pandemic addresses important shifts in job demands. For example, teachers had to find creative ways to maintain strong and meaningful relationships with students (Spilt et al., 2011; Veldman et al., 2013) during the pandemic when students were learning virtually, such as using compassionate pedagogy to connect with students (White, 2022). A second example is that elementary teachers spent more time than prior to the pandemic explaining to parents how to implement daily lessons, rather than just implementing the lessons in their own classrooms (Yazici & Yuksel, 2022). Lastly, even prior to the pandemic, teachers felt unprepared to implement digital learning, but were required to do so without access to relevant professional development (Lorenz et al., 2017). While these studies contain consequential findings in pandemic research, they do not provide an exploration into the nuances of teachers' emotions surrounding these experiences. In the case of these three studies, the methodologies used were not conducive to describing the

participants' lived experiences of emotion. Therefore, there is room in the existing literature to explore similar pandemic experiences from an emotional perspective.

The three studies that I outlined above did not address emotions at all, but other research has in fact connected the increase in job demands during the pandemic with teachers' emotions, although no study has specifically done so through narrative inquiry. One of these studies found that teachers who taught online during the pandemic had more feelings of anxiety than teachers who did not teach virtually (Pressley et al., 2021). Two other studies found an increase in teachers' emotional exhaustion symptoms during COVID-19 (Pellerone, 2021; Sokal et al., 2020). These three studies bring emotions into the picture, but they are quantitative studies, so the depth and breadth of the emotional experiences that they describe are limited. A single qualitative study, a reflexive thematic analysis by Kim and Ashbury (2020), identified six themes around UK teachers' experiences during the initial lockdown: uncertainty, finding a way, worry for the vulnerable, the importance of relationships, teacher identity, and reflections. This study was not specifically on teachers' emotions, yet the results are laden with emotions, underscoring the importance of teachers' emotions during the early months of the pandemic.

Emotional Lives of Teachers

Exploring teachers' emotional experiences of the pandemic first requires a shared understanding of emotion. Emotions, along with feelings and mood, can be considered under the umbrella term of affect (Feldman-Barrett & Bliss-Moreau, 2009). In this study, I will be using these terms interchangeably as did the participants when they spoke about their affect, feelings, mood, and emotions. While some conceptions of affect state that it is almost inconceivable (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), I opt for a more concrete perspective on emotions that they can be readily known and expressed by ordinary people in everyday life. In understanding where

emotions come from, what they feel like, and their consequences, I draw together various multi-componential definitions (Frenzel et al., 2021; Russell & Feldman-Barrett, 1999) as a foundation from which to approach teachers' narratives on emotions. My understanding of emotion combines internal cognitive and affective factors, external situational and environmental factors, and contextual historical and cultural factors to produce a primary and secondary cognitive appraisal about the situation (Lazarus, 2001; Schutz et al., 2007; Kemper, 1987; Ratner, 2007; Greenberg et al., 1992). These two cognitive appraisals elicit an emotion, which then has motivational effects such as action tendencies, coping strategies, and thought-action repertoires (Figure 1; Lazarus, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Fredrickson, 2001).

Figure 1

Conceptual model of emotional processes informing the present study

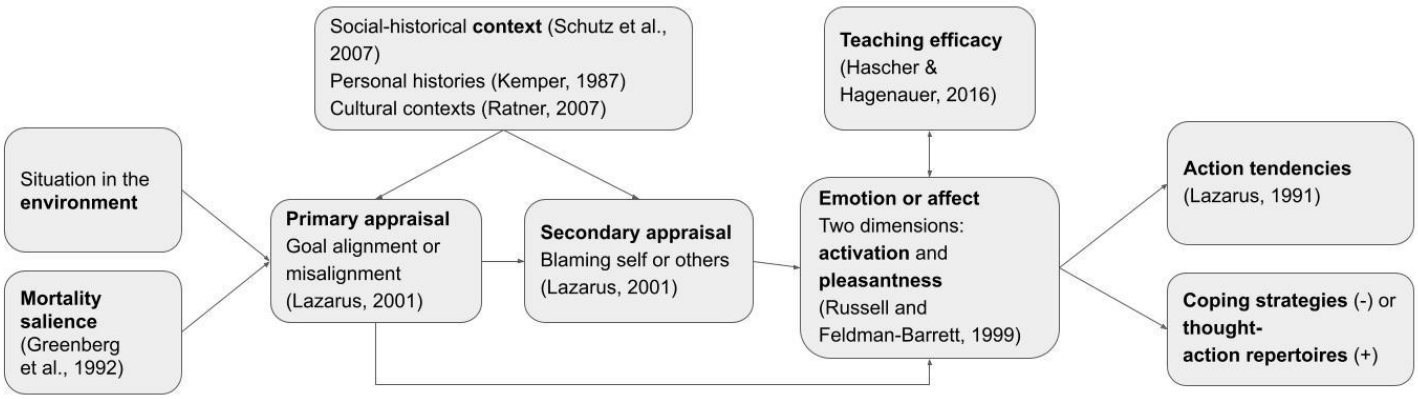


Figure 1 outlines a multi-componential model of affect and emotion that I created by drawing on various constructs and theories and which I used to guide my thinking in this research. Russell and Feldman-Barrett (1999) posit that affect varies along the two dimensions of pleasantness and activation. Affect is inherently rooted in context–both situational context as well as the context of an individual's life experiences leading up to the situation (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). It plays a role in an individual's response to and experience of positive and

negative situations (Moore, 2018). Affect is also influenced by the internal thought of mortality salience, or the idea that we are all going to die someday (Greenberg, 1992). Ultimately, both these external and internal factors come together to provide an individual an experience of affect (Feldman-Barrett & Bliss-Moreau, 2009). Emotional or affective processes are also made up of cognitive appraisals, which are personal judgements about the importance of a person-environment interaction (Lazarus, 1991). A hypothetical example of Lazarus's primary and secondary appraisals (1991) during the pandemic could be a teacher handling the situation of a student not completing their assigned virtual work. Initially, the teacher might be angry upon their primary cognitive appraisal because the student's non-completion misaligns with the teacher's goal of engaging their students. Their secondary appraisal might reduce the emotion of anger if the teacher recalls that the student's family has a lower socioeconomic status and might not be able to afford the technology required to complete the assignment. Appraisals are dependent on the individual's goals, personal experiences, and the context of the situation, so individual teachers could feel different emotions in response to the same situation depending on how they appraise the situation (Sutton, 2007).

Affect is motivational as well. It can incite or suspend action through cognition (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), which reflects motivational components of emotion as Weiner describes through Attribution Theory (1986). In keeping with this motivation perspective, Fredrickson describes through the Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions (BBT; 2001) that positive emotions broaden an individual's cognitions, allowing them to have a wider range of potential positive behaviours stemming from an emotion. In addition, Lazarus describes action tendencies that follow emotion or affect (1991), particularly negative affect (Fredrickson, 2001). For example, someone who is feeling angry may frown, clench their fists, or yell. Action tendencies

could take this anger one step further by motivating the angry person to attack or retaliate to the situation (Lazarus, 1991). For teachers, regulating these action tendencies is vital (Sutton, 2007); an angry teacher might calmly ask a student to be quiet when their action tendency is to yell at the student. Therefore, teachers can display emotions that are incongruent with their actual emotions if unwritten emotional display rules require it (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 2013).

Teaching efficacy is the teacher's self-perceived capacity to influence how well students learn (Berman et al., 1977; Guskey & Passaro, 1994) and is reciprocally tied to emotions (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2016). Efficacy is a cognitive process that influences persistence, resiliency, stress, and depression when coping with demands or failures (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy is rooted in control (Rotter, 1966); the increased micromanagement of teachers during the pandemic meant a loss of control, and perhaps a shift in efficacy. Not only do more efficacious teachers feel more positive emotions such as enjoyment than their less efficacious counterparts (Hagenauer et al., 2015), they also have more job satisfaction and less emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). In turn, positive emotions while teaching are associated with higher quality instruction (Schutz, 2014), whereas negative emotions while teaching are associated with impaired instruction (Frenzel, 2014).

The reality of teaching being an emotional profession holds true outside of the pandemic (Schutz et al., 2006; Frenzel et al., 2021). Likely, teachers' emotions were even more salient in the context of the pandemic when the factors that influence emotion directly or indirectly through cognitive appraisals shifted. For example, mortality salience (Greenberg et al., 1992) was logically higher than before the pandemic as the general public was reminded of death constantly through media briefings and pandemic restrictions, theoretically impacting emotions through cognitive appraisals. Another example is the increased feelings of inefficacy that

teachers experienced in the early stages of the pandemic (Weißenfels et al., 2022) that theoretically was directly associated with emotional shifts during the pandemic. Therefore, the conceptual model I presented can provide a basis for theorising on how and why teachers' emotions might have been more salient during the pandemic.

Theorising on Emotions in the Pandemic

Developing a shared theoretical understanding of the pandemic using existing theory is one way to situate the pandemic in existing literature. Using pre-existing theory instead of developing new theory allows researchers to liken the pandemic to other events in history. In this section, I will use the existing psychological theories of the critical incident, mass affective experience, and impasse, and the educational theory of resistance to place the present research on teachers' emotions within the broader context of the pandemic.

The notion of the *critical incide*nt (Miles & Huberman, 1984) is one interesting lens to view the COVID-19 pandemic through. A critical incident can be a turning point in a person's life (McAdams, 1985), but Schutz and colleagues (2018) explain that what might be "critical" for one individual might not be for another because the individual's perceptions of the event and the emotions that they feel in relation to the event are what determine its significance. The notion of the critical event relates to this research because there were aspects of the pandemic that were objectively universal for Alberta teachers, such as schools shifting to online learning in March 2020, but individuals' experiences of those same events vary, suggesting that their lived experiences were different. For example, a teacher could view the school closure as a critical event where they lost their relationships with colleagues and students and were isolated at home, but another teacher could consider it to be an interesting end to a school year without assigning much more meaning to it. Although the critical incident idea would hold true for emotions in

teaching, little research to date has focused on teachers' emotions from a critical incident perspective.

Moore (2018, p. 120) described the concept of a *mass affective experience* to illustrate how a collectively met challenge causes intensified affect within individuals and emphasises divisions and differences between individuals. I liken this idea of a mass affective experience to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the world came together in some ways to combat the virus but was isolated in other ways with pandemic restrictions. Both positive and negative emotions were certainly intensified, and Alberta became more politically divisive than before the pandemic. These ideas were reflected in the intensification of teachers' emotional burnout (Sokal et al., 2020) and media reports describing political polarisation in the general public due to the pandemic (Djuric, 2022). Mass affective experience is also related to Greenberg and colleagues' ideas in Terror Management Theory (TMT; 1992), who explain that affect is heightened through mortality salience, which was a prevalent theme through the pandemic. Interestingly, the pandemic was an opportunity for these two ideas to converge, creating a mass affective experience intensified by heightened mortality salience for all.

In keeping with Moore's theoretical idea about mass affective experience, Berlant (2011) discusses the idea of an *impasse*. He defines it as feeling blocked or frozen in simultaneously occurring yet incoherent narratives (2011). This causes indecisiveness and an inability to move forward as the individual spirals in the present to search for an explanation or an answer that will allow an exit from the spiral to return to true progress (2011). Like the idea of the mass affective experience, the theory of an impasse stood out to me as a way to elucidate the pandemic experience for teachers. During the initial wave of COVID-19, authorities did not know how long the pandemic would necessitate school closures. Once virtual learning began, the sustained

uncertainty led teachers to believe that the situation was temporary. Rather than settling into the new model of schooling with the belief that it would persist until the end of the school year, teachers were just trying to make do until in-person learning restarted. This continuing uncertainty might have led to a feeling of impasse for teachers as true progress was halted while they waited for the pandemic to wane.

The last framework which I am going to theorise the pandemic through is an educational theory of resistance. Teachers who have beliefs in opposition to educational policy, which includes policies related specifically to the functioning of the school, are experiencing *resistance* (Moore, 2018). These teachers may or may not act on this experience of resistance; therefore, resistance is an internal process based upon cognitions but ultimately leading to affect (Moore, 2018). Resistance originates from a tension between a desire to ensure that students learn and perform well within the school system, while also feeling that that very school system is imposing, "educationally inappropriate, and potentially damaging" (Moore, 2018, xi). For the purposes of this research, I am expanding this definition of resistance to include the tension teachers may have experienced between wanting to keep students and themselves safe from COVID-19, while also feeling that the restrictions imposed by the government hinders students' ability to learn. In part, I chose to do this because both health and education are provincially governed; and in part because during the pandemic, teachers were expected to take on the role of ensuring adherence to health restrictions as a part of their jobs, much like they are expected to adhere to educational policy as part of their jobs outside of the pandemic.

These frameworks as applied to the pandemic are helpful for understanding teachers' emotions during the pandemic because they provide psychological rationales for the feelings that teachers may have had during this time. In other words, I have chosen to ground the stories of

teachers' emotions in these theories for the purpose of providing a psychological perspective on teachers' emotions that encompasses the context of the pandemic. To do so, I used a qualitative narrative inquiry study.

Qualitative Research and Narrative Approach

Qualitative research is an essential part of the literature in both psychology and education. Although the data in qualitative research originates with the participants, researchers' interpretations of the data are the essence of this approach (Willig, 2017). Upon speaking with other teachers post-pandemic, I realised that there is an inherently individual aspect to the experiences that teachers had during this time. Even though we lived through nearly the same events, each individual had personal and contextual factors that led them to have different emotional experiences during the pandemic. I found a benefit to having lived through similar circumstances, albeit having incredibly different emotional experiences: it gave me an emic perspective. My own emotions may have felt similar but were not universal. Because of this realisation outside of the research world, I knew that I needed to preserve the individual experiences of teachers in the research I conducted. Narrative inquiry appeared to provide the balance I was looking for in a research methodology because although it preserves stories it also recognizes that the researcher is inseparable from the narrative. Narratives themselves are ubiquitous in our world and there is no clear-cut criteria for what constitutes a narrative in natural lives. From a research perspective, however, I drew on the work of Parks (2023), Iser (1974), and Ruthrof (2017) to shape my understanding of narratives and various analytical approaches to the narratives shared by participants.

Parks (2023) explains the distinction between two main types of narrative research: analysis of narratives, which involves paradigmatic categories or typologies as the end product of

analysis; and narrative analysis, which involves stories as the end product of analysis. These stories are written through a process called "restorying" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Given the purpose of my research was to tell teachers' stores of emotions during the pandemic, restorying appears to be a good match.

Iser (1974) explains that narratives can be divided into the *presentational process*, which is the act of telling the story, and the *presented world*, which is the events and characters that live within the story. For the study of teachers' emotions, this means that although teachers would present a story of emotions, there would also be elements of the presented world such as public health restrictions and other members of their family that hold a role without necessarily being stated as such.

Ruthrof (2017) expanded Iser's double schema of presentational process and presented world, and added the idea of multiple layers of abstraction that exist within a narrative: the first layer is the surface-level presentational process and the presented world (2017). The second layer of abstraction is the meaning that can be made from these surface-level storytellings; this layer is connected to societal contexts and is collective in nature (2017). The final layer is the meaning that is then made from the second layer of abstraction; this is done when the individual reader or listener makes their own interpretations of the narrative and the initial layer of abstraction (2017). In other words, Ruthrof acknowledges that even as teachers tell their stories, I as the researcher and you as the reader create our own interpretations.

Given these variations on purpose, structure, and analysis of narrative inquiry, it is unsurprising that the analysis of narrative and final output can also vary widely. According to Blumenfeld-Jones (1995), every story is a restory from the moment it is first told. A human has

an infinite number of experiences to draw from, and they choose just one from which to invent a self and to express and repress various elements of that experience to craft a story (1995). Restoried narratives are somewhat contested in empirical and theoretical literature. Grumet (1988) coined the term "alienation," which refers to how a story becomes increasingly distanced from the lived experience the more it is retold by others. In retelling a story, the storyteller inherently expresses and represses elements of the original story. The more that this happens, the further the product moves from what you might call the "objective" reality of that experience to the interpretive, constructed space that a retold story exists in. The purpose of narrative inquiry contrasts with the notion of alienation; it does not try to represent an objective truth because meaning cannot be made while living through an experience (Mattingly, 1991). Therefore, narrative inquiry is concerned with the meaning-making that occurs upon reflection of the lived experience. As part of that reflection, a story must be told, and alienation inevitably occurs not as separation per se but as part of the essence of meaning-making. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) corroborate this idea by explaining that telling stories and crafting a retold version of the story is a type of personal growth that the participant and the researcher experience together. Mulholland and Wallace (2003) also suggest that if researchers focused on this potential for expanded value and quality through restorying, rather than reduction and alienation as Grumet (1988) suggests, narrative inquiry might be more widely accepted as a methodology that has the ability to access meaning beyond an objective truth through multiple tellings of a story. With the premise in mind that retelling a story is the essence of developing knowledge claims in narrative inquiry, restorying is a method of legitimation in narrative inquiry.

The Current Study

Research that narrates teachers' emotions during the pandemic in their own voices is a current omission in the literature, making a qualitative approach to narrate the unique experiences of teachers an important contribution to the literature. The individual aspect of narrative inquiry offers several advantages for studying teachers' emotions during the pandemic. People spent more time as individuals than ever before. We were alone with our own thoughts and emotions as each of us tried to make sense of both the global narrative of COVID-19 and our own personal narratives of it. Telling and retelling these stories is a way to find meaning in them, at a time where many peoples' thoughts and emotions felt chaotic and unpredictable. This is true for teachers, who had the additional task of making sense of a narrative related to their occupation that was constantly changing, and the emotions that no doubt came along with feelings of resistance and impasse. In light of the previous research done in teachers' emotions and the contextual influence of the pandemic on their experiences, the purpose of this study was to narrate individual teachers' emotional experiences during the pandemic. To do this, I used a narrative inquiry design and applied a multi-faceted analytic strategy to deconstruct and then reconstruct the narratives to bring meaning to them.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I used narrative inquiry to tell the stories of three elementary school teachers from Alberta, Canada about their emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positionality

I was a new teacher when COVID-19 first appeared. My first full year of teaching was halted by the pandemic. In Fall 2019, I had carefully built emotional connections with each of my Grade 3 students because that was what was most important to me in teaching. The lesson planning and day-to-day assessment was finally starting to feel like second nature in the second half of the school year. My personal perspective was that those relationships and opportunities for personal growth were terminated when online learning began. At first, I felt a lot of worry for my students. They missed out on social opportunities and learning experiences. Then, I began to worry about teachers, who in my eyes were feeling inadequate and isolated with the reality of online learning. I never got to see my students again after the school closure. The impact that that had on me was profound. To this day, I have been unable to process my emotions about this sudden nullification of my relationships with my students. I began graduate school with the intention of finding a research methodology that would allow me to hear other teachers' pandemic stories as a way to validate my own emotions and begin to heal from my own feelings of loss. Then, I realised that the right methodology could potentially do the same for the teachers who chose to participate in my project.

I was new to research when I began graduate school. I had done a single statistics course in my undergraduate degree, and when I decided on qualitative methodology, I had no background in it whatsoever. I slowly gained confidence in my qualitative research skills through coursework, other projects, and general scholarly growth. I knew choosing narrative inquiry

would be difficult, and in truth, my emerging confidence was sometimes marred by the tension that I experienced between the openness of narrative inquiry and looking for more clear direction for my research. Indeed, striving for rigour in narrative inquiry was difficult. Not only is there an epistemological challenge that asks the participants, the researcher, and the reader to accept the truthfulness of the participants' stories, not as an objective truth, but as a lived experience, I found that there is scant practical information on how to conduct such a study and produce a meaningful scholarly and publishable product. For purposes of both methodological transparency and pragmatic organisation, I documented all parts of the analytical decisions that resulted in my final restoried products. As an emerging researcher, I see great potential in publishing these methodological recommendations as well as the main results of this study for other researchers who experience the tension of openness versus prescription in the quest to bring meaning.

Participants

Three elementary school teachers participated in this research. As elementary school teachers from the same province, they shared experiences such as teaching young children, having a single class they taught, and being generalists. These shared experiences helped structure the research in a way that would not be possible if I involved teachers from all levels of compulsory schooling.

Table 1 lists detailed participant demographic information. I gave each participant a pseudonym, as per my REB ethics approval. John was the only man in my study. He was in his 30s at the time of the study. John worked at an urban private school in Alberta during the pandemic. Betty, a female participant, was in her 60s at the time of the study. She worked at a rural public school in Alberta during the pandemic. Samantha was a second female participant in

this study. She was in her 30s at the time of the study. Samantha worked at an urban public school during the pandemic.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Grade Taught	School Type	Location
John	30s	Man	6	Private	Urban
Betty	60s	Woman	2	Public	Rural
Samantha	30s	Woman	1	Public	Urban

Procedure and Materials

All three participants were Alberta teachers during the pandemic. I recruited them through word of mouth. I did not know any of the participants personally or professionally before meeting them for the purposes of this research. Once participants indicated to a mutual contact of ours that they were interested in participating in my research, I asked them permission to send an email with more information. I contacted the participants with detailed information about the study and a consent form. The participants orally indicated their consent to participate in this research.

I collected demographic information through an online survey and I conducted two individual interviews with each participant. The first interviews were held between October and December 2022. The second interviews were held between January and March 2023. This length of time between two interviews existed for two reasons. First, it gave me time to complete my initial analysis of the data and allowed me to devise topics of discussion for the second interview based on the first interview. Second, it gave the participants an opportunity to continue thinking

about their experiences during the pandemic. I hoped that their thoughts and memories would become more articulate while they continued to think about them.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. In keeping with narrative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), the first interview was particularly open, containing only the prompt "I would like you to tell me the story of your emotions during COVID-19, all the events and experiences that were important to you. Start where you would like. Please take as much time as you need and I'll just listen." The protocol for the second semi-structured second interview emerged based on my preliminary analysis and a member check. Semi-structured interviewing balances flexibility and structure. For example, a participant can speak at length in response to some questions, and the nature of the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to make room for such conversations to occur while being able to direct the conversation back towards the interview protocol as needed (Emery & Anderman, 2020). An example of the protocol for one of the second interviews is in Appendix A.

I conducted these interviews over Zoom for convenience given the current living locations of participants outside my home city of Edmonton, Alberta. I recorded and transcribed each interview verbatim. I transcribed the first interviews by hand and the second interviews using Otter.AI transcription software (Otter.AI, Version 2.18.2). All files were stored on a password-protected Google Drive. Participants received a $20 Amazon gift card as remuneration. This procedure was approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board No. Pro00120876 (Appendix B).

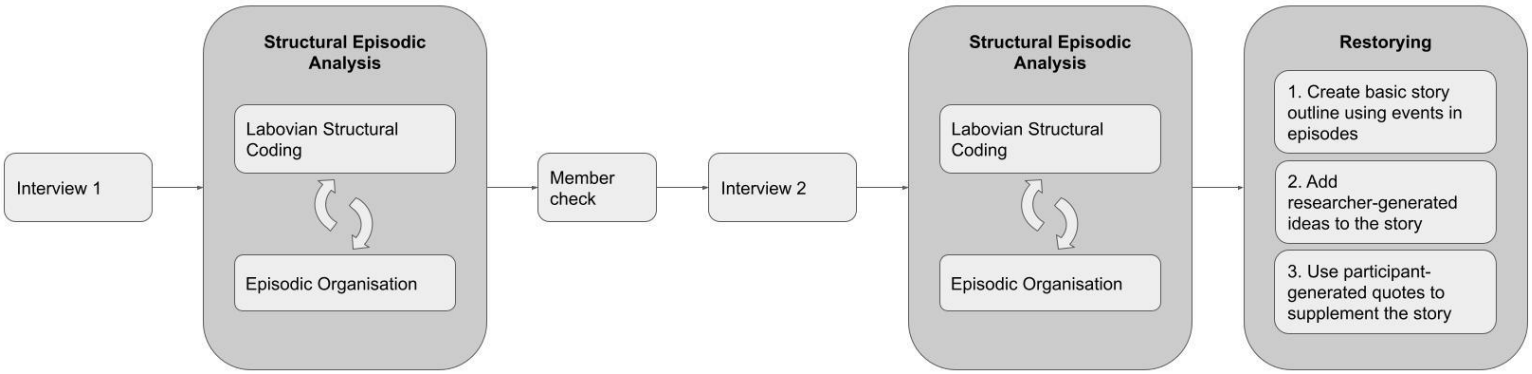
Rationale for Data Analysis

I used structural episodic analysis (Labov, 1972) and restorying (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991) to analyse the participants' stories. The integrated data analysis framework that I

developed is outlined in Figure 2. I will provide the details of these analyses next, but it is important to recognize in advance that together, these two types of analyses legitimate the study by juxtaposing one another, ensuring transparency throughout my analysis process, and providing products for different audiences. The first structural episodic analysis remains as close as possible to the participants' perspectives and description of the events and emotions in their story. The second restoried narrative strikes a balance between the participants' voice and my own interpretation of their events and emotions to enhance the meaning-making process of the narrative. Using multiple levels of interpretation in my study that each operate at different distances from the lived experience is what creates the legitimation of the study (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). In a postmodern frame of reference, there is no singular truth or criterion for legitimation (Wallace & Louden, 2000; Smith & Deemer, 2000); the openness of narrative inquiry as a methodology reflects this.

Figure 2

Integrated Data Analysis Framework



Structural Episodic Analysis: Labov

Andrews and colleagues (2008) distinguish between event-focused and experience-focused narratives. Event-focused narratives, which are the type that is present in this study, focus on how a storyteller remembers and retells events from their life in the form of

stories (2008). Labov (1972), who is a seminal researcher in event-focused narratives, developed the Evaluation Model of Narratives, which uses sociolinguistics to examine contextually specific and socially developed phenomena (Riches & Parks, 2021).

Structural Coding. I used Labov's (1972) Evaluation Model of Narratives to structurally code the interview data. In this model, there are six paradigmatic categories that establish an entire narrative episode. These are:

- The "Abstract" provides an overview of the upcoming episode. It is optional.
- The "Orientation" is the background information and contextual details needed to make sense of the story.
- The "Complicating Action" is the events that are tangible to the participant that move the story forward.
- The "Evaluation" is the "why" behind the story; it is the sense-making that the storyteller brings into their retelling of the story. In this case, emotional descriptions fall under "Evaluation" because they occur internally.
- The "Resolution" signals an end to the events listed in the "Complicating Action."
- The "Coda" connects the episode to the present time or the future and signals an end to the story.

To be clear, I applied each of these categories thereby creating stand-alone episodes within each participant's broader narrative. It is important to note that true Labovian coding has a stringent requirement that only independent clauses can be included in the structural coding (Labov, 1972). However, Polanyi (1985) points out that leaving out state clauses from the analysis altogether was a disadvantage of Labov's criterion. Therefore, Polanyi posited that both independent clauses and state clauses should be included in the structural analysis. More recent

research has put this idea into practice (e.g. Gounder, 2011), and I also utilised this less stringent method in the present study.

Identifying Narrative Episodes. Although Labov's categorisation was straightforward, identifying episodes within the large narrative to categorise was more complicated and thus I paired Labov's episodic analysis with several additional perspectives. I read ideas from Polkinghorne (2007) about analysing the data to look for common themes that could be teased apart into distinct narratives. I also considered Cortazzi's (1993) methods of temporally organising ideas presented in the data. Finally, I dove into the method that Parks (2023) suggests to identify narratives by sectioning the stories by how the stories were performed. Park's (2023) method uses sections of quoted dialogue to distinguish between episodes. For example, a research participant might recount a conversation that they had with a colleague about COVID-19 restrictions. Then, they might recount a different conversation that happened later with a student about how to use their Chromebook. These would be two separate episodes according to Polkinghorne (2007) because one is about restrictions while the other is about technology. These would also be separate according to Cortazzi (1993) because they occurred at different times. Finally, these would be two separate episodes according to Park (2023) because they would include dialogue from two different conversations.

Ultimately, I used a combination of all three of these methods to deconstruct the interview data into distinct narrative episodes and categorise the data using Labov's structural coding in an iterative process. Where my data had more performed or quoted content, I used Parks' (2023) method primarily. However, much of the time participants were talking about emotions, so many episodes actually contained little to no dialogue or performed content, making it impossible to use this method exclusively. Therefore, I added in aspects of

Polkinghorne's (2007) and Cortazzi's (1993) methods to supplement Parks' method. Where possible, I maintained the order in which the participant shared their experiences to remain close to their perception of their lived experiences. In these instances, I used Polkinghorne's (2007) idea of teasing the data apart using common themes, which in this case tended to take the form of emotional themes. Emotion themes were obvious titles for each episode. For the first interview data especially, I favoured Cortazzi's (1993) method of episode identification based on temporal ordering only for narratives that were significantly out of order because the participant had forgotten to mention them earlier. For the second interview data, I followed this temporal organisation method more closely because I was inserting new data into the existing episodes, and rarely had to add additional episodes.

Restorying: Connelly & Clandinin

The present study contains a single retelling for each participant's story which is analytically similar to both Mulholland and Wallace's (2003) first retelling and Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) description of restorying. The first objective of this process was to highlight the voices and perspectives of the participants in a narrative that draws from elements of myself as the researcher and my own perceptions of the participants' stories (1994). I was careful to strike a balance between remaining close to the Labovian linguistic styles of each participant and my own interpretation of the events and emotions that the participants shared. Therefore, my restoried narratives contain elements of both *description*, which are the participants' words and ideas, and *interpretation*, which are my own words and ideas. A second objective of my restorying process was to nudge the reader towards adding their own level of interpretation to the text by considering the experiences in the narrative as relative to their own potentially similar or dissimilar experiences (Ruthrof, 2017). My overall goal was to highlight that interpretation

comes from both the context and the person; it cannot be separated from either (Eisner, 1991).

Rigour in the Study

In this study, I employed strategies at several stages of data collection and analysis to ensure the study achieved the standards of rigour that are a hallmark of high-quality qualitative research. I took steps to ensure that my interpretation of the data was in keeping with the participants' voices. First, I used clarifying questions such as "when you say that, is this what you mean?" during the interviews to ensure that I was accurately understanding the ideas that the participants were sharing with me. Second, I developed a member check to ensure continuity between my preliminary analyses, the participants' perspective, and the second interview protocol. Each member check included shortened records of each narrative episode that I identified from the initial interview transcript. I also included an open-ended question under each episode to allow the participant space to briefly clarify their account of the episode and to open the conversation further between myself and the participant, facilitating the shift in conversation to the second interview. An example of the member check is in Appendix C.

Ideas of trustworthiness (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) remain the standards for rigour in narrative inquiry. I addressed the standard of trustworthiness in this study by consistently documenting the biases that I brought to my interpretation of the data and even to how I conducted the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of this narrative inquiry are presented as both structural episodes and restoried narratives. The structural episodes are summarised in this section of the thesis and the full results are attached in Appendix D. The restoried narratives are included in their entirety in this section. I chose to do this because the restoried narratives are meant to be read as stories whereas the structural episodes were both a stepping stone to get to these narratives and a point of reference for some audiences, but not all.

Structural Episodes

John

My analysis of John's narrative yielded ten distinct episodes that I entitled: 1. A Hopeful Beginning, 2. Relief Becoming the Monotony of Isolation, 3. Colleagues as a Light in the Dark, 4. Farewell, 5: Fatigue, Hope, and Frustration, 6. Empathy, 7. Helplessness, 8. Experiential Learning/Return to Normal, 9. Freedom from Exams, and 10. Pandemic News.

The full Labovian analyses are in Appendix D, and I have provided a short example in Figure 3.

Figure 3

A sample of Labovian coding for "John"

Betty

My analysis of Betty's narrative yielded eight distinct episodes that I entitled: 1. An Anxious Build to Resentment, 2. Sadness at Societal Contention, 3. A Shock and Two Saving Graces, 4. Excitement Becoming Defeat, 5. "A Terrible, Terrible Day," 6. Control Means Safety, 7. Losing Parent Volunteers, and 8. "The World has Really Changed."

The full Labovian analyses are in Appendix D, and I have provided a short example in Figure 4.

Figure 4

A sample of Labovian coding for "Betty"

Code	Quotes
Orientation	We found that rural Alberta, freedom fighters, we were really up against. All the mask mandates came in and the sanitising and all of that. That really started to materialise. It still is a really contentious issue, and very contentious in the schools as well. It's a big thing in rural Alberta, the freedom fighters.
Evaluation	I was very emotional. I was scared, I was so scared. I thought, this is gonna be it. If I get it, it's game over.
Coda	I did get it. I thank God I had a milder form. I've gotten every shot imaginable that you can get, four shots.
Evaluation	It still leaves you with that uneasy feeling, like so scared that I'm gonna get it again. How many times can you sanitise when you're wearing the masks? It just shows you it's everywhere, no matter what. The germs are just everywhere. What's really hard is, my best friend out here is part of that conspiracy group. It was really interesting.
Complicating Action	At the very beginning, she was really scared too. On top of it all she's a smoker.

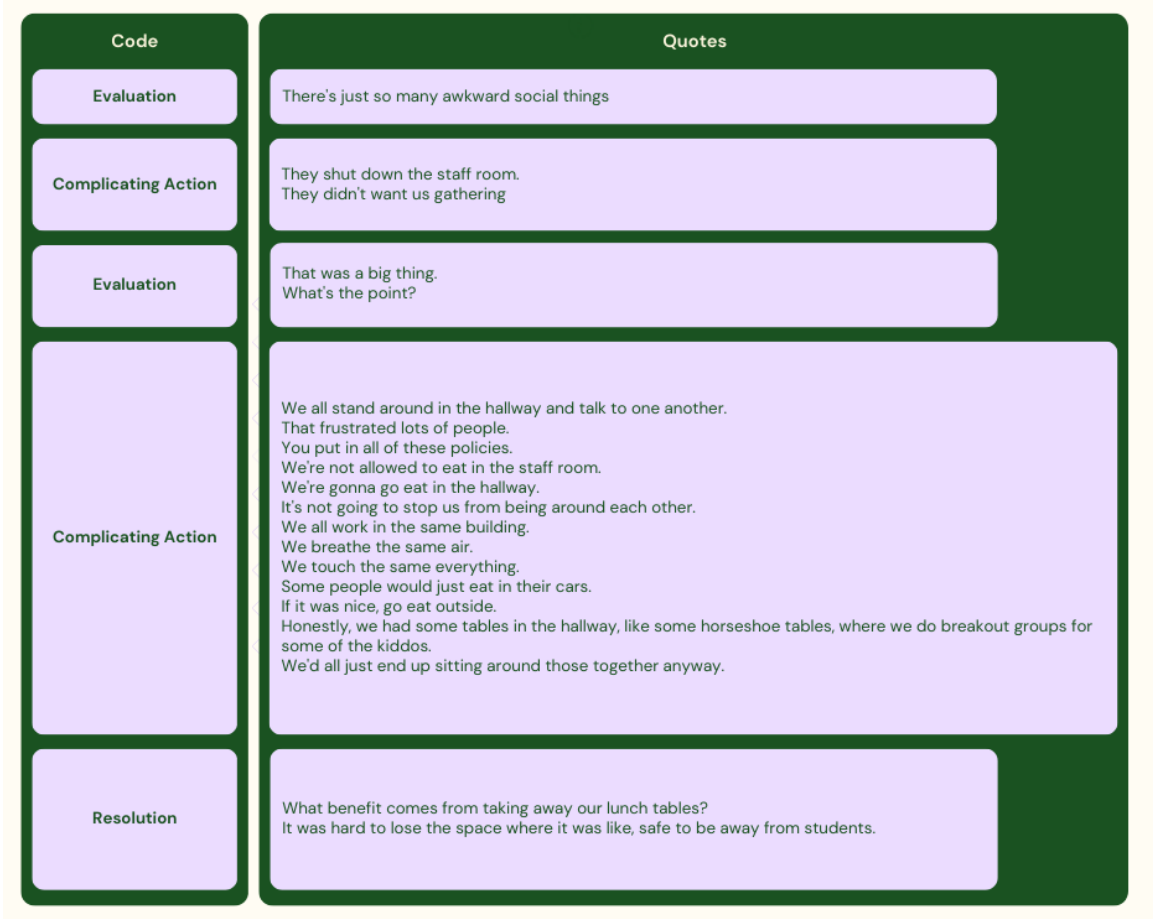
Samantha

My analysis of Samantha's narrative yielded thirteen distinct episodes that I entitled: 1. Grief and Loss, 2. Social Changes and Boundaries, 3. Colleagues Chipping In, 4. "We Didn't Do as Well as we had Hoped," 5. Bending the Rules, 6. Reaching a Point of Rest, 7. Conflict with Parents, 8. Balance through Choice Boards, 9. Awkwardness and Discomfort: Where Can I Eat Lunch?, 10. Frustration at Missing Out, 11. Grumbling, 12. Connecting with Students, and 13. Final Thoughts.

The full Labovian analyses are in Appendix D, and I have provided a short example in Figure 5.

Figure 5

A sample of Labovian coding for "Samantha"



Restoried Narratives

The following three narratives are intended to be read as distinct stories. I invite you to read them as if you were reading any story, keeping in mind elements of plot, character, and emotion. These stories exist independently of one another and I invite the reader to appreciate the previous story in its entirety before moving onto the next one.

John: Navigating Empathy and Monotony during COVID-19

John was a Grade 6 teacher at a private school in Alberta when the rumblings about a novel coronavirus began. There was a "sense of uncertainty" around the virus. John didn't know what this meant for him or his school at first. He wasn't a doctor. His principal wasn't either. How would they know how bad the virus was? John's administration had some events planned for March and April of 2020. They were planning a school-wide cultural food festival and a field trip to Fort Edmonton Park, both of which were postponed and finally cancelled.

With each press release from the government came a new wave of shock for John. Just when he was wrapping his head around new restrictions and procedures, a news report or email from his principal would leave him unsure about what to expect next. He felt lost.

That Friday evening, the day after these events were cancelled, John sat and watched the daily COVID briefing. That was it. Schools were moving online. No students were permitted to be in the schools from this point forward.

The surprise was palpable, but it wasn't long before a whole lot of curiosities came bubbling up. John's optimism took over. Maybe it's not such a bad thing to teach online. He could learn more about Google Classroom and come up with some fun new ideas about how to teach kids from home. Building an online course was a new challenge for him to take on.

John set off in his new role with this sense of idealism; kids like technology and they tend to adapt quickly. It'll be a few weeks or a month of something new and exciting. John's classroom became a video studio. He made YouTube tutorials and set up all sorts of online resources for his students to access from home. He was testing out lots of new ideas and he even planned on keeping a few extra-engaging resources even when his students returned to the classroom.

His principal gave him a lot of freedom. Normally, these types of endeavours moved very slowly within the school system. They liked to focus on evidence-based practices and trial any type of undertaking before allowing teachers to utilise it. It was a different case here. His admin knew the basics about Google Classroom and Google Meet, but a lot of John's new work seemed to go over their heads. There were no evidence-based practices about how to teach online during a pandemic and there was no time to develop and carry out a research trial before implementing these new practices: "They were leaning a lot on teachers to try new things. There was no specific program or manual that you could kind of refer to to do these new things." In fact, John's principal seemed to really appreciate that John was going above and beyond with his virtual classroom. This sense of purpose brought out feelings of enjoyment for John.

Although John was having a great time testing out new resources on his computer in his empty classroom, there was this little niggling sense of anxiety in the back of his mind. How was this type of education going to be sustainable?

John's sense of optimism lasted well into April, but the pandemic was still worsening despite the prohibitive restrictions. It was looking like students would remain online for the rest of the school year. "The shock wore off, and the monotony began." Like many other people during the early pandemic days, John had a little pit of anxiety in his stomach. For him, it was

from the not-knowing. Once he felt himself coming to the realisation that the world has a bit of a handle on how they're going to deal with the pandemic, he was able to accept that it was going to be a difficult time for everyone. He felt like the world would make this work, and that brought him some relief:

> A couple months in there was almost like a sense of relief in that I think maybe we have a handle on how we're going to approach this. It's going to be bad. It's going to be painful emotionally. It almost felt in my mind that okay, like, I feel like we kind of know what is coming in some ways. It kind of got into a little bit of a rhythm. This is going to go on probably longer than we expected. I think that we're going to be able to [make it work] education-wise.

Once John started to feel relief, a second unexpected emotion came up: frustration. John felt like he was able to complain about the situation now that he felt like he knew what was going to happen. Frustration came on so strong that it was on par with relief. He was frustrated that the engaging tools that had worked so well in the early days had dwindled in success. John was having a hard time getting his class interested in the resources he posted each day. Some students would log in and log right back out. Every day, it felt like a new hurdle existed; computers were glitching, the screen was freezing, and students stopped responding the way they used to. They'd blame it on their internet, but John felt them slipping away. He hadn't seen their faces for months. He used to hang out while supervising them and talk to them about their lives. Now he would see their names on the screen and teach from an empty classroom at the school. It wasn't the same. He couldn't keep those relationships up the way he used to. Somewhere along the way, it had become factory learning. Every day seemed exactly the same. John would deliver

his lesson, ask if there were any questions, and then everyone would sign off. Everything John loved about teaching was gone:

> I'm a pretty optimistic person but I guess even I have my limits in terms of like okay, I would like it to just be the job that I know, there's a reason I love teaching, and a lot of that is the classroom dynamic and the school events and all that kind of stuff, and so, after a while it kind of became a little bit more draining.

John had a lot of negative emotions at this time. Isolation, disconnection, and repetition were what he felt the strongest.

Although John's relationships with his students had become disconnected, his relationships with his colleagues actually flourished. Before COVID, John didn't really know other teachers beyond his grade level cohort. That changed. Supervision was a thing of the past, so groups of teachers went outside for walks during breaks. It was during one of these walks that John met Andy, one of the fourth grade teachers who he had said 'hello' to in passing, but never held a conversation with. John found himself chatting with Andy between classes and at lunch. Andy had a foosball table in his classroom. They spent their breaks playing foosball and making Netflix recommendations to each other. By the end of the pandemic, Andy and John had dinner together regularly. A friendship had been born. John sometimes thought about how nice it would be to work from home instead of having to commute to an empty classroom, but the time he spent building his friendship with Andy made it worth the drive. It was a time when people were "forced to be apart," but they came together. John reflected that without the pandemic, he wouldn't have had an opportunity to get to know Andy.

John's feeling of belonging extended beyond Andy to other members of his school and community:

> [There was] that sense of coming together. I guess whenever there's some sort of a crisis or something bad that happens, you kind of feel like you're part of a team. You have a common goal. No one really knows what they're doing in terms of past experience of pandemics. There's that sense of coming together and getting things done. Making the best of what is not a good situation.

This new sense of belonging carried John through until the end of the school year.

June arrived. John didn't get to see his grade 6 students off into junior high with a farewell. It wasn't the same. It felt anticlimactic: "I posted my last lesson online, the last assignment for them to do. I had them send messages to each other and create this video collage thing. I guess it's summer now."

John felt hopeful about what the upcoming school year would bring. He hoped that schools would return to normal, but he understood that this was wishful thinking. More realistically, he expected that the higher-ups would have made a formal plan and that the teachers wouldn't have to make things up as they go. Maybe there would be a regimented plan for attendance and some new strategies for student engagement. Even if school didn't return to in-person learning, he felt reassured that the year would be productive.

Unfortunately, it felt like "more of the same" when September came. Technology ran the classroom. Students were in person and online periodically. John "actually found that more difficult than just being online." He was frustrated by the constant switching. He would plan an in-person lesson that he thought would be really engaging, but then wasn't able to do it because the class had to move online. He planned field trips at the start of the year, but each one got cancelled as they approached the date because facilities weren't open yet. At this point, he would have just preferred to teach purely online:

> With the fully online at least I knew, I'm gonna be delivering this online so I have to adapt accordingly. That uncertainty I think made it a lot more difficult and a lot more frustrating because you just didn't know what to plan ahead for. Even though we were used to pandemic learning in a way, it was more frustrating because we were just jumping back and forth.

He felt torn between feeling happy that the students were able to get an in-person experience for some of the time, and feeling frustrated with the chaos of being unable to plan ahead. It was so unpredictable! John was flying by the seat of his pants every day. It was so different from the organised way he was used to working. John acknowledged that even pre-pandemic, you need to adapt to changing circumstances all the time, but this was so much worse. He planned out a collaborative newspaper article writing project where his students were going to interview other staff at the school. Not only were his students not allowed to interview staff members outside of the classroom due to restrictions, but his class was sent home to quarantine when he had planned to do the project. The whole project was thrown away. The unpredictability was made worse by the uncertainty of how long this model of teaching would last: "This isn't weeks, this isn't months, this could be years." John wondered if he would have to be prepared to "switch on a dime" for the remainder of his career. It was frustrating. John would develop something great and not even be sure if it would be usable in his classroom.

It wasn't all bad, though. One thing that John secretly appreciated was the cancellation of the Provincial Achievement Tests. He didn't realise how much of his year was spent teaching to the test until he didn't have to do it anymore. He could take more time on units that his students were interested in. He had the freedom to foster discussion instead of memorization.

Although his students were physically present in the classroom for part of the year, it was almost like they weren't there. They walked single file outside for recess. They had recess with their class alone in their quadrant of the field. They don't get to see their friends. They don't get to participate in events. Their desks were spaced out in rows. It was unnatural. No one could see each other's faces because they were covered with masks. Who were the people behind them? John understood the restrictions and supported keeping people safe. However, teaching felt impersonal and he was less excited to be in the classroom than he normally was.

John noted that his emotions are inherently "connected with the things that [he's] going through in the classroom." His teaching practice is incredibly important to him.

John felt sorry for them. He was supposed to give students a positive experience at school, but he just felt bad for the experience that he gave them. They didn't deserve to have those potentially negative feelings, so John took them on himself:

> I just remember feeling sorry for them. A lot of my own emotions are kind of tied up in my perception of what their emotions were. A lot of the negativity that I had was almost taking their potential negativity and bringing it to my own experience.

He couldn't control the factors that caused this experience for his students. He was helpless. Why can't things go back to normal?

Before COVID-19, John ran an after school writing club for Grade 6 students from any class to write stories together or discuss writing. Of course, it was cancelled during the pandemic. During the second year of COVID-19, John had a shy student approach him to ask about the writing club. Their sibling had been in the club a few years prior and this student had been looking forward to being in Grade 6 so that they could join the club. They were so sad when John said he wasn't running the club because of the pandemic. He felt terrible. This

student hung out alone and didn't have many friends at school. Clearly, they were reaching out for a connection. As a solution, John would invite the student to talk with him during recess. He would read their writing during lunch. John felt like he made a positive impact on this student:

> I felt like I was able to kind of provide a little bit of comfort for this student that was obviously struggling a little bit. I was able to kind of engage with them and kind of give them as much of that kind of experience of being in a club like that as possible.

The student was so happy to participate in this writing club experience with John. They would have their story out on their desk ready to go at lunch time. They would walk up to John in the school yard and ask, "what do you think I've written next?" John enjoyed this connection too. He missed building these types of relationships with his students:

> It sticks in my mind so much. It was at a time when I felt like I wasn't making the same kinds of relationships with a lot of students. [There was a] lack of stuff happening outside of the classroom. [It was] the type of student-teacher relationship that I hadn't been able to have, or didn't have nearly as much during COVID. It really did kind of stick in my memory for that reason.

Notably, John thought that the pandemic situation strengthened his memory of his relationship with that student: "If it happened in a pre COVID year, I mean, I would remember it, but it wouldn't stick in my mind in the same way."

John also noticed the impact that the pandemic had on his students. In 2023, he realised that the Grade 6 students hadn't had a regular school year since they were in Grade 3:

> That just seemed crazy. That's a huge amount of time for elementary students. It is interesting to think that they had spent that much time under COVID guidelines. In a lot

> of ways they adapt faster than we would. Their frame of reference for experiences is shortened. They're not set in their ways.

However, John also noted that "it's interesting how fast a new way of living I guess becomes so normalised in your mind," referring to adults as well.

Later on in COVID-19, John twice rekindled the reporter project that he had been so passionate about. John pointed out that he was able to adapt the project to still have it be an experiential learning experience while adhering to the restrictions:

> I kind of kept it more family based. I had them think back to a school event that we had done in the past. Instead of experiencing an event and reporting on it, they were reporting on something that they had experienced in the past. Instead of going around and interviewing tons of people around the school and stuff like that, I had them just focus on interviewing family members. That was something that I was able to kind of adapt for. The first time I did it, it was very rigid with the guidelines. They couldn't really go into other classrooms and talk to people. The second time I did it, it was a little bit more open. They were able to interview some other teachers and some other students. They didn't have the freedom to go into the other classrooms like they had before. It was just really about adapting and making small changes really. I liked sort of having them be able to become the reporter and create a news story that way.

John especially cared about learning experiences like these because they remind him of the memories that he made as a student. He had fond memories of being involved in the school community and the concepts that he learned about through these experiences. John regretted that his students missed out on these experiences during the pandemic. They are a lot of work to plan, and even more so during the pandemic, but they are worth it to John.

The last few months of the school year saw facilities being opened up and restrictions being dropped. He tried to pack as many experiential learning experiences into those couple months as possible. Unfortunately, it was next to impossible to book a spot for a field trip because everyone was trying to do the same thing.

The changes happened slowly. Students could be in groups with each other again. Less and less people wore masks. It was better for the students because they could have more of a normal school experience. With the sympathetic feelings starting to wane, John found himself feeling nervous about how fast things were opening back up. However, as soon as he saw his students sitting together in groups, he felt more at ease. This is what was right for them.

For the second time during the pandemic, John felt relief. The things that he loved about teaching were starting to reappear. After all the uncertainty that John had felt during the pandemic, it was a relief to be able to step outside of that anxiety. It was also a relief to literally step outside of the classroom to give students what he felt were valuable learning experiences. With this relief came a sense of refreshment too. It was the middle of the school year, which was an unusual time to feel refreshed.

These positive feelings were double-sided, however. His nervousness didn't entirely disappear. He was one of the last people to stop wearing his mask at school. He had a young child at home and wanted to do everything he could to protect him.

The small changes continued until they reached the final months of the school year. John hadn't realised just how monotonous his school year had been:

> You realise, when you strip everything else away, this is just the same thing over and over again. Okay, it's block two, we're starting our lesson, I'm talking at the front of the class. I remember feeling happy that we had that type of experience again.

One experience allowed him to reflect on how he took those experiences for granted before. He felt frustrated when time was taken away from his class because he would have to shift his lessons. It was inconvenient a lot of the time. After COVID-19, John realised that the loss of those experiences emphasised just how important they are.

One day, John's principal announced that the annual cultural food festival would be running this year. Usually it was in January, but they had scheduled it for June when they were hopeful that things would be open. On the day of the festival, John remembers feeling that it was nice to be out of the usual block rotation for the day. He was normally just in his classroom all day because there were no events and assemblies taking up that class time. This was something different.

John walked into the cafeteria with his class. His jaw dropped. This was not pandemic life anymore. Parents attended the festival. Usually, John knew his students' parents quite well because they would be in and out of the school on a regular basis. This year, he had done telephone parent-teacher conferences and had never actually met the parents in person. It juxtaposed the closer relationships he had with the students. The gap was so unique. It was so nice to finally be able to meet the families of the children he worked with every day.

At the end of the school year, all of the Grade 6 classes went on a field trip to a bowling alley together. A bowling alley isn't exactly the biggest and most exciting trip to go on, but it didn't even matter:

> It wasn't like a major trip. We weren't, you know, staying overnight. It was great to have that kind of experience outside of the school. You could tell just from their reactions. Being at the bowling alley with all of their friends and their classmates and just being on

a field trip. It almost seemed like it didn't matter where it was. They were just so thrilled to just be out and doing an activity that wasn't in the classroom.

Again, John's feelings mostly reflected the feelings of the students. He was "so happy to see how happy they were." They were able to be kids, running around, throwing balls, and laughing with each other. John listened to what the students were saying to one another and that lifted his spirits. He finds on any given day, if he has negative feelings in his classroom, the positive moods of students always lift him up. He "mirrors [students'] emotions' in this way. John himself also enjoyed the field trip for what it was. He enjoys breaking free of the monotony of the classroom, and a field trip is the perfect way to do it. It was also a time to break free of the "normalised way of living" that he had gotten used to over the course of the pandemic.

A smile broke out on his face as he saw one of his students hug a friend from another class. It felt normal, and normal felt good.

Betty: Resentment, Guilt, and a Loss of Innocence during COVID-19

Betty taught Grade 2 at a rural public school during COVID-19. She knew that the school closure was imminent. "Every single night we would go home, listen to Jason Kenney and his report, and then of course, the health reports," Betty recounted. She listened not only as a teacher but as a 60-year old immunocompromised woman with Chron's disease and asthma. "It literally became the focus of all of our lives." There was some question as to whether or not the closures would hit them in a small town. Betty saw bigger centres in the USA and places such as Toronto get shut down, but it felt like ages before the closure hit her community.

Before the closure, students started coming to school sick. Nobody was diagnosed with COVID-19 at that time because testing wasn't yet available. Betty had a hunch that COVID-19 was going around, though, because their symptoms were particularly bad and the illness seemed particularly contagious. She really started to worry about her own health at this point. She started wearing a mask at school.

Betty was angry that she was dealing with illness at school despite the increasing concerns about COVID-19. Because of Betty's worry about her health and anger at the illness, she was really "zoned into the kids that [...] had a sniffle, [...] were sneezing, [or] had a slight cough." Thankfully, Betty's administrator implemented a policy stating that if a student is sick and their teacher feels that they shouldn't be at school, he will phone home to have the student picked up.

One pre-closure experience stands out to Betty as a time she felt particularly angry. One nice little boy in her class had arrived at school feeling quite sick. He had a terrible barking cough and runny nose. The poor kid was laying his head down on his desk. Betty went to her administrator and said "listen, you know what, I'm gonna call it because he's coughing." Later, Betty's administrator said he had called home but there was no response.

Betty knew what the child's mother was like, and described her as "a wild card" or "quite a tiger." It seemed to her like her administrator was just intimidated to call her. This frustrated Betty, so she decided to take matters into her own hands and text the mother to contact her herself. Unfortunately, she didn't receive a reply either.

The next step in the health policy at the school was to remove the student from the classroom. Betty put him at a table outside of the classroom. In Betty's classroom, a special fun

activity was coming up, but to top things off, he was sitting outside the door unable to participate in the classroom activity that he had been looking forward to. Betty was furious:

> That was the first time I actually broke down and I cried. I was so angry. I can remember being reduced to tears. I thought, Oh, my God, you know, when I've taught for how many years and this is going to make me cry?

Later on, the administrator was finally able to contact the sick child's mother. She came to the front door to pick up her son. Betty planned to go outside and explain to her what the rules are about sick students at school. Betty was "all puffed up" and ready to confront the boy's mother.

The child's mother approached her. She was crying. She had just come from a doctor's appointment where she had received a poor test result.

That was it for Betty. Her anger dissolved into guilt. She had been so riled up with anger, and this poor woman "was dealing with really bad news from the doctor." Betty felt so self-consumed:

> Really, I hadn't even thought of the possibility. I was thinking all these other things. She's out shopping, going to have a coffee. She was definitely a no mask type of person. I think it made you stop and think. It's not just me out there trying to fight COVID and trying to fight the problems of the world. That helped to change some thinking, to get into perspective.

After this incident, Betty gave parents the benefit of the doubt when their children were sick at school. She said phrases such as "I don't know if they were coughing at home like this," and "it seems like their cough has picked up since you dropped them off this morning," to lessen how much her anger would show when communicating with parents. Betty tried to remind

herself that it didn't matter if the student was sick at home or not. No matter what, they're at school and sick so "there's no sense being mad about it now."

That was only the start of Betty's guilt: "Oh, my God, seemed like every time you turn around, guilt about something, right?" What had been white-hot anger before the incident with the sick boy's mother had turned to resentment that seeped out of Betty's body–and more guilt for feeling that resentment. She resented the parents that sent their sick kids and she started to resent the kids themselves, which broke her heart. They couldn't help being sick, but Betty had nowhere else to direct her emotions.

While illness in the classroom was worsening, so too was illness in hospitals. ICUs were getting overcrowded. No family visitors were allowed to visit the sickest patients, which left them on their own. Betty was afraid that she would end up in the devastating situation of being all alone on a ventilator and dying. There were cases where doctors and nurses would FaceTime their patients' families so that they could say goodbye. That was "absolutely heart-wrenching" to Betty. Stories like that resonated with her and made her frightened to go to school. She couldn't control much during these times, but she "kept praying and praying" that schools would be moved online before she contracted the virus.

Suddenly, mid-March, they got the mandate that they were going online. Betty was shocked, even though she had hoped for it to happen. She felt relief after the initial shock of the school closure wore off. Finally, she would be in her home, protected from COVID-19: "Oh my, thank God, I'm not going to die yet. I kept thinking, if I get this [COVID] baby, I'm gonna die." She was worried because it meant that the virus had gotten so bad even in rural communities that the province needed to shut it down. Betty was scared to leave her home; her "anxiety blew [her] mind" during this time. She felt like an island by herself. It was her and her husband against the

world. Betty had an elderly uncle that lived nearby and she wasn't able to see him to check on him anymore. Betty's 24-year-old daughter and older mother were living in a different city. Life had changed and these changes frightened Betty: "it just seemed like everybody was so separated. How are we going to keep them safe? I think it was a lot of anxiety at that time."

Feelings of safety and relief versus fear and anxiety were a constant interplay for Betty in the first wave of online learning. She felt both sides at the same time and she felt torn between the emotions.

Betty's overarching feeling of fear that came alongside the relief came from the belief that she would fail her students because of her lacking technology skills. She wasn't "techie." In fact, she was "the shits on the computer." Betty had never set up a Google Classroom or been on a Zoom meeting. Her experience of using computers was signing her students onto Raz Kids to read together as a group. She was afraid of the judgement she would receive from others:

> People probably thought, "well, you know, she should be knowing technology. Her kids should have been more adept at using the Chromebooks." We **did** use Chromebooks. It was more not so much independent work as a lot of group activities, group research, all of those kinds of things. My kids were not adept either at logging on and doing all that by themselves.

Betty was thrown into a "real learning curve" when she had to address her technological fears head-on. She started with the simplest tasks and built new skills from there: "How the hell do you put up a Google Classroom? How do you add things to it?"

Ultimately, the staff at Betty's school decided that the younger grades would receive paper packages instead of purely learning online for two reasons. First, many people in the community, including the teachers, did not have reliable access to the internet or computers.

Second, a fair number of the staff were unfamiliar with the technology needed to implement online learning. There were a lot of logistical barriers to sending out these packages. Staff entry to the school needed to be staggered so that only one person entered the school at a time. The parents would be the ones teaching the lessons, so it was a challenge to write them in a way that made sense to the parents. The staff at school also had to think about how the parents were going to pick up the paper packages from the school.

Betty felt like there was so much to consider and learn that it kept her mind off of her fear of the virus. She felt like this distraction helped keep her mental health intact because it gave her something productive to focus on: "That I think saved us. We had something to do that [...] could take your mind off of everything."

Betty recalled the "terrible, terrible day" that she realised she wouldn't see her students again:

> Our EAs came in. We had garbage bags. We had to go through everything, like the shoes we had to find. It was in primary with all their supplies or extra supplies, all of that kind of stuff. We put them into big garbage bags. We had a pickup time where our admin was the only one that came in. Parents, last names ending from A-M would go in. That was our very first paper package that we had ready to go. We walked into the gym. We had our pylons set up where we had to put our class. It was so emotional. We could see all the garbage bags. We knew that we weren't going to see them again. It was a really defining moment, I found. It was just very emotional. [It was] very sad, just so sad.

To build teacher morale, the administrative team decided to have a daily staff meeting over Zoom. Once everyone had the technology that they needed, the meetings began. Interestingly, they were a lifesaver to Betty and the other staff at her school:

> It was really therapeutic. We could talk about feeling insecure, feeling very inadequate, feeling like we were failing our students. It was a chance for us to really kind of express our worries and our concerns and our fears. Some of those meetings, I tell you, they got really in depth. We had people crying. A lot of people were feeling very alone if they were single and didn't have families. It was just so good, to kind of talk about our days. I think it was really one of our saving graces.

Betty's school also set up Zoom meetings with each class as a form of synchronous learning. Betty thought these meetings were hilarious:

> We had [laughs] this one family showing the cat right up into the camera. All the kids are going, "Oh, my God, look at the cat." You're trying to teach the lesson. We had one family, they would leave the mic on all the time. The mic was constantly on. So you have them screaming, "Aah!" The dad is swearing in the back. It was a zoo. It was so funny, because you really got to see inside some of those families.

Unfortunately, the humour of the situation wore off for Betty as she realised that her classroom management strategies were futile. In person, she had no problems controlling her class. She tended to just stop and reset the whole class if things were getting out of hand. Online, new classroom management issues arose like students sneaking their mics on and making silly sounds that distracted the rest of the class. Once Betty figured out whose microphones were on, many of the students "forgot" how to turn them off and Betty needed to wait for their parents to come and handle the situation before moving on with her lesson. She was defeated because her meticulously planned Zoom lessons were lost to what Betty saw as her lacking skills.

To make matters worse, students stopped attending Betty's Zoom classes. Pragmatically, it was easier for parents to sit at the table with them and complete their package than it was for

them to get their children signed into their Zoom class. In reality, most people in the area lived on farms. Some rural areas had good internet service and some didn't. Betty had to accept her declining student numbers by acknowledging these pragmatic issues likely prevented her students from attending class. Her acceptance didn't stop her from feeling defeated, though.

Declining attendance was only the tip of the iceberg for loss of student engagement. Betty described her innate ability to tell when her students are engaged when teaching in person: "I find if the kids are watching and they're interested, it just really kind of fires you up. [It] gives you that energy. Those lessons are just right on the money." Her usual landmarks of engagement weren't visible to her in the online setting. Students fell into four groups of engagement types that she noticed:

> You got the cat staring at the camera. [These students were distracted.] Some of them were just pumped and ready to share. You had the other guys that wouldn't turn on their bloody cameras so you can first of all see them, or even know what was going on. We had the kids that were right out to lunch. [These students didn't attend classes.]

Betty tried to think up novel activities that were out of the ordinary, such as a scavenger hunt around students' homes or taking photos of 2D and 3D shapes. Some students bought into these fun activities. Others left them incomplete without so much as a note. Betty felt so defeated because she wasn't able to hold student engagement the same way that she was able to in person. She would put so much time and effort into making these activities and planning her Zoom classes to have a miniscule group of students actually participate in it. Betty constantly asked herself, "gosh, I'm doing all of this for what, what am I doing this for?"

Betty couldn't put the blame for these issues on the students' parents, who were supposed to be supervising their children. These parents were trying to do their own jobs. They were burnt

out with juggling their work and trying to teach their children and ensure homework was finished. Plus, Betty knew that her students were different at home. They didn't like to listen to their parents. There was a lot more "whining and crying" that didn't happen in Betty's classroom. Because she didn't put the blame on parents, Betty took on a lot of the blame around disengagement and declining attendance herself.

With this absorption of blame for Betty came more anger, this time towards the provincial government. The government had strict guidelines for teacher accountability that included asking the teachers to provide a schedule of which students they were meeting with at which times throughout the week. Teachers were expected to be online with either their whole class, small groups, or individual students for the entire school day. That wasn't a problem for Betty, but it felt like a slap in the face to have to prove to the government that she was actually doing her job:

> I was thinking, you know, don't they trust us? We're professionals, right? We're not sitting on our ass watching TV at home. When the directives came down, I kind of thought, well shit, what the hell do they think we're doing? That was kind of my thought processes at that time.

Betty acknowledged that although *she* may not have been taking advantage of the freedom of at-home teaching, there were rumours in her district that some other teachers were. She believes that in every profession, there are "some flakes in there that are going to take advantage of some things" but people are innately able to see who puts effort in and who is "kind of skating by."

Towards the end of the first year of COVID-19, Betty and her colleagues finally had the opportunity to say goodbye to their students face to face. She was so excited for this day, but she hadn't anticipated it to be as hard as it was. Seven-year-old kids just want to hug their teachers:

> We had these tables. We stood at our boot rooms. We had a table [in front of us]. The kids would walk up to you to say goodbye. We'd say "oh gosh, we're just gonna miss you so much. I really can't hug you. I can't hug you goodbye." That was a killer day. Very emotional. Extremely sad. It's a relationship and you have them for the majority of the day, the big chunk of the day. There was no closure.

Betty's school did a "cool thing" for the Grade 6 students at the end of this year. Other years, the school did a "clap out" for the students who were moving schools to attend Junior High the following year. Since Betty's school was small and with low staff turnover, every teacher in the school would have taught most of the Grade 6 students by the time they were leaving the school. The "clap out" was a chance for the students to say goodbye to the school and the teachers while all the students and staff clapped them through the hallways of the school. Of course, the school was closed so the regular "clap out" wasn't possible. Instead, Betty's school contacted all the Grade 6 families and asked them to do a drive-thru past the school. All the teachers stood with signs saying "congratulations" or "we miss you" and waved at the students' cars going by. Teachers and students alike "were crying." Although Betty felt like it gave some closure to the school year, it was a "doozer" of a day.

During that summer, Betty debated whether or not she should return to school. She would be teaching in person, and COVID-19 still had "so many ups and downs." However, Betty "felt like [she] needed to" return to teaching. She wasn't sure if she could even still teach after being at home for the last four months of the previous school year. Her career felt unfinished: "I thought, is this it? Is this how I'm going to end? Am I going to be retired? I haven't even finished really teaching." Plus, vaccines started to come out around this time and Betty felt like her school had taken appropriate cautions to curb the spread of the virus:

> We had the sanitizer. We brought in the extra personnel to clean. We had people wiping doorknobs, wiping door jambs, everything. We had people coming into our classrooms and also in the hallways. I had the masks. I felt a little bit more confident that I could do it. I think we felt safer. I think we felt that, you know, we could fight it more. We had more of a chance to fight it. We kind of felt like we had a little bit of a defence system. We started to get the shots.

These defence systems made Betty feel less angry than she had the previous year. Anger gave way to confidence and gratitude. This confidence gave Betty the voice to tell her students that they need to sanitise and wear a mask. Everyone was very strict at the start of the year which made Betty feel safe. The policy from the previous year using just the teachers' discretion to send a student home was replaced by a written policy that stated that if students had two or more COVID-19 symptoms, they would be sent to a special quarantine room and wait to be picked up. Betty followed these guidelines so strictly that she was able to tell parents how many times per minute their child had been coughing. In fact, the whole staff followed them to a T:

> There were no ifs, ands, or buts. It became a machine that worked. I did feel much safer by that point. It's sad that we had to have that kind of a machine moving through our school. [But] in a way, it was so good. We were all working together. We all knew the expectations. There was no waffling of the admin or teachers. There was no bullshit. Nobody veered away from the rules and the symptoms. It was positive in that sense. [It was] sad in the other sense that we even had to. We were so strict. It was like a military type thing. It made everybody feel like we had control over it. We didn't really, [but] it felt like we were controlling it. We were controlling with the masks. We were quite assertive. We had the power to phone home if they were sick.

Other members of the community had different opinions on the pandemic, though. A group called the Freedom Fighters materialised during the pandemic. It divided Betty's small town and even divided Betty's family. It continues to be a contentious issue in rural Alberta even after the pandemic. An especially difficult aspect of this issue for Betty is that her best friend is part of the Freedom Fighters. Betty disagrees with this "conspiracy group" for a multitude of reasons and describes the group as insufferable: "They really bought into Trump, President Trump. They started to follow all of those news feeds. Their Facebook started to overload with this conspiracy theory. It is alive and well. And STILL alive and well in rural Alberta."

Betty felt like she was "walking on eggshells" when discussing health or the pandemic with parents because "some people just absolutely shocked the hell out of you." It was impossible to tell who was a Freedom Fighter or who was on board with public health. Some parents surprised her in terms of which side they were on. Betty had to hide her surprise and her own feelings about the importance of health restrictions. However, teachers were expected to monitor and report on the health of their students, which was staggering to Betty:

> There was another element then. It was one thing to report on a kid's behaviour and to report on how they're doing academically. Their health becomes part of another conversation. It gets dicey. It's so personal. [It was] overwhelming. We found that we had to be really careful too. Depending on the parent, some of them almost felt judged.

The students were not immune to the perspectives of the Freedom Fighters. Students regurgitate their parents' words, after all. Betty remembers a student at her school that had internalised his parents' beliefs about masking. Her school does a Halloween parade each year that everyone from town attends. The Grade 1 and 2 students walk over to the nearby Seniors' Lodge and the auxiliary hospital to bring the parade to those who couldn't make it there in

person. This year, there was a flu outbreak at the Lodge. The staff there requested that visitors wear masks to prevent more illness from getting into the Lodge. Betty and her colleagues sent notes home to their students' families to advise them of the mask requirement. A Grade 1 student was adamant that he would not be able to wear a mask:

> He said, "oh no, like, I won't be able to wear a mask."
>
> [His teacher] said, "Just take the note home." In *bold* letters on his agenda, "He will not wear a mask." It was just all the way across his agenda in these *big* capital letters. The little guy still walked over. [His mom] still sent him on Halloween. It was a chilly morning out here. He had to sit outside of the Lodge for, it must have been, 15-20 minutes with an EA. So an EA instead of going in and visiting, had to stand out there with him. There was no way he would wear a mask in the Lodge. When you're thinking of older folks, that's not even asking someone to wear a mask in the classroom, that's going into a building where they are so fragile.

Experiences like these made Betty's heart drop. She thought about the children of the Freedom Fighters often. What if they get sick? How do they go to the doctor, when you need to wear a mask to enter the clinic? The children had no control over their parents' beliefs but yet they suffered the consequences.

At the time, it really felt to Betty that this "was the new normal." It was "normal" in the same way that having no parent volunteers in the classroom had become "normal." Betty had learned to do her job well without the volunteers, despite having relied on their "extra hands" to facilitate one-on-one time with students before the pandemic. Betty had started to appreciate *not* having parent volunteers in the school anymore:

> [You're] not having to run around to find jobs [for them]. You just focus on your kids. It pushed us to get our "higher kids" or whatever, more independent. Our expectations, I think, have changed. We created our expectations of our classroom and our classroom climate. They had to work independently. They could do some jobs on their own.

As the pandemic waned, Betty still chooses to have fewer volunteers in her classroom than she did pre-pandemic. Betty feels confident that she can teach without volunteers, which she didn't feel before the pandemic: "We thought, oh my God, I'm never gonna get through. I'm never gonna be able to pull this group. You do, you just do. Because you got to."

Betty did end up contracting the virus, and thankfully it was a milder form. Contracting COVID-19 once left her feeling uneasy, because she had done absolutely everything she could to prevent it during the worst of the pandemic: she constantly sanitised her hands and belongings, she wore a mask, and she maintained distance between herself and others. It made her think that "the germs are just everywhere." Finally, in 2022, Betty felt comfortable not wearing a mask at school, because she had four vaccines by that point. Unfortunately, "November 3, [laughs] it starts with a cough. I can't fight the cough. I'm on the steroids. Anybody else, that would be like a five day cold. It becomes 10 to 13 days for me." Betty was quite disappointed that she had to return to wearing a mask because of her health risks. She wonders if her immune system worsened during COVID-19 because she wasn't exposed to any colds or flus.

A lot about Betty's job has returned to what it looked like before the pandemic. Parents still send their sick children to school. Betty finds it "kind of frustrating that people slip back into the old groove" in that respect. In other ways, she appreciates that COVID-19 worries have moved to the "backburner" so she can appreciate seeing her students attend school in person.

Segregated playgrounds and bathrooms are a thing of the past. Students can work with partners again. They're allowed to play tag. COVID-19 was no longer in the forefront:

> It's still there. It's not as strong, not as heightened, not as anxious. You realise how many things that you weren't able to do or you stopped doing. You were so worried that they're gonna get sick or you're gonna get sick. A lot of that, you push it back in your memory. Sometimes you never really deal with it.

One lasting change that resulted from the pandemic is the sudden prevalence of student and staff anxiety: "You'd be surprised at how many women on our staff need to be on anxiety medication." People have become emotionally unregulated because of the constant worry during the pandemic, so it makes sense to Betty why anxiety is more of an issue than ever before–but it doesn't make it any less sad.

Betty is heartbroken because she doesn't believe the world will never return to the way it was before:

> We've lost a lot. [We've lost] our, you know, innocence. We were naive on so many things. As long as we ate healthy, and we were healthy, none of these things would happen to us. Everybody's always worried about the really ominous things that you can get. I don't think anybody thought a virus could do it.

Samantha: Balancing Restrictions with Being a Good Teacher

Samantha was a Grade 1 teacher at a large K-4 school in 2020. She had taught Grade 1 for five years at that point and she loved so many things about her job. COVID-19 "sent it for a loop," however. Samantha thought that Grade 1 might have felt the effects of the pandemic more than older grades.

Samantha had heard about the possibility that schools were going to shut down in March. The teachers in her school thought that the government wouldn't actually do that. Would they?

Although her students were all of six years old, they felt anxious about it too and they spoke about it together on the Friday just before everything shut down. They knew there was a "bad virus." It was scary to them. Samantha tried to comfort them: "Don't worry; we're gonna do our best to take care of you. See you on Monday."

They found out that night. "It was just all done."

Samantha had a lot of "big feelings" to work through. Grief, loss, and disappointment were perhaps the most predominant. The school year wasn't done. The students weren't ready for Grade 2. They had lost a third of their school year. Not only is Grade 1 a fun year full of play and growth, it is a formative year for learning to read. Students normally made huge leaps from the middle of the school to the end. They felt so proud. Where would that learning go? How is it fair that they have to miss out on that growth and pride? Samantha had a binder full of lesson plans to teach the following week. She was excited about an upcoming art project. She lost the chance to teach those. She shoved that disappointment down deep, though; her own four children needed her to be there for them.

Her "whole world just really shrunk down to her family unit." There were no more activities. Youth group was a thing of the past. Samantha would normally host a few families for supper each month. They weren't doing that anymore. Despite the changes she was faced with, Samantha relished that time she spent with her children. She enjoyed spending time playing games and watching movies as a family. They weren't entirely isolated either; she kept cultivating her relationships with friends over text. She would speak with her neighbours over

the fence. She didn't want to lose the relationships she valued in life, so she felt motivated to keep in touch with those people.

However, she really felt that she lost her sense of connection with her colleagues and students. Without seeing them every day, she felt like she wasn't a part of their lives anymore.

Her own feelings aside, Samantha felt her emotions of grief and loss were reflected in her students. School was a space that was supposed to be safe for them. It was gone. They lost their relationships with peers and teachers.

She loved teaching because of the sense of purpose that being in a classroom full of students gave her. While she didn't necessarily lose that purpose, she needed to adapt it without having a classroom full of live students. Some parts of finding that fulfilment came easier than others. For example, her students had been in the middle of a read aloud book when schools shut down. They didn't know how the story ended. It was an easy solution to make a video of herself reading the remainder of the book out loud. "Ta-da! See how the story ends?" Adapting in these ways was a positive experience for Samantha.

Some aspects of the closure were more difficult for Samantha. With four of her own children, she found it difficult to strike a balance between work and her home life. She had a class that she was supposed to be teaching, but she also had four other kids to get on Zoom calls, to get into Google Classroom, and to get them actually learning. "Everything was all over the place" and Samantha's boundaries suffered.

On one hand, Samantha liked how she was able to have the flexibility to choose some of the hours that she worked:

> I would do sort of my bare minimum during the day in terms of what I had to do for my job. I'd be available when I needed to be available. We had staff meetings at certain times

> that I needed to be at. When I didn't have to be available, I wouldn't be. I'd be able to focus on helping my kids with their own schoolwork and their own learning and their own Zoom calls. Once my own kids [were] in bed for the night, then that's when I would do all of the other stuff that I didn't get done during the day that I normally would have done during a day.

On the other hand, this flexibility would leave Samantha overstepping what was normally a strict boundary for her—staying up until 10, 11, or 12 at night to prep lessons, mark student work, and answer emails:

> Teaching is one of those jobs, that it's really easy to have it go above and beyond your regular work hours. It's certainly not a job where you just show up to your job and then leave. There's so much extra that you have invested in it. [It] just makes it tricky to have those boundaries in place.

Samantha often asked herself if the work had to get done immediately: "Who's going to be disappointed if I don't get this done tonight? If the answer is six year olds, then they can wait." She felt it was worth the tradeoff to be able to help her own children when they needed it, even if she had to spend her evening working as a result. Plus, she didn't work every night. A few nights a week, she would put her work away and play a board game or watch a movie.

Parents and administrators were quite reasonable about the length of time it took Samantha to do her work. Samantha found it interesting to work with parents during this time. They didn't know what to do or how to respond to the shift to online initially. She spent a lot of time helping them navigate it. Samantha's administrative team was also supportive of providing reasonable boundaries with parent contact and guidelines about what that contact should look like.

Samantha felt unprepared to teach online. What is Zoom? Their online toolbox was so small. Luckily, her colleagues were alongside her during her lesson development process. They all gave the same lessons to their students during the pandemic. There were six Grade 1 teachers in the school, and Samantha felt that it was so nice to share the responsibility of lesson planning between them. Samantha's colleagues often met over Zoom to plan their lessons:

> We got to our meeting. Let's do the same literacy assignment. One person would offer to make the video. Another person would do a read-aloud. Everybody had already kind of chipped in and done something. We'd be like, "oh, look at that, we're done!"

Sharing the load made it much easier for Samantha. Her colleagues knew she had four kids at home. They were gracious in giving her time and space to work with her own children during the day. She felt so supported by them. It motivated her to want to chip into the lesson planning as much as she could. In fact, she felt like they would race to complete the lesson planning. They took turns doing the heavy lifting. This teamwork built a sense of cohesiveness within the group. Samantha felt that she wasn't alone in the pandemic. She and her colleagues had each other's backs.

However, Samantha felt that while the collaborative aspect of her teaching practice improved, her students' learning declined. Some families completely stopped responding to her. Those students did no schoolwork during the last four months of the school year. She felt inadequate because she was unable to engage them, and she was exhausted with trying to contact them. Some other families became too over-involved with their kids' work: "You're getting back journal writing from these grade one students. 'Wow, look at that, you know how to spell beautiful mountains perfectly now. A month ago, you still couldn't spell your beginning sight words.'"

Samantha tried to maintain her relationships with her students. They did a science unit on the needs of plants and animals during the shutdown. Samantha "physically mailed a packet of seeds to each of the kids" with a note welcoming them to send pictures of their growing plants. She wanted to let the students know that she was still here. If they needed her, she was here for them.

Another way that Samantha maintained her relationships with her students was through the website Raz Kids, a place where students can read assigned books out loud and have their teacher listen to the recordings and send one back. Samantha remembers fondly how the website gave her an avenue to maintain her connections with her students:

> Sometimes the kids would go to record a book. They wouldn't actually even read the book. They would just leave you a message and just talk. "Hi, I miss you, say hi to the principal for me. [...] I'm gonna go play Monopoly, and talk to you later." They were just excited to send a message.

Near the end of that 2020 school year, Samantha's school did a parade through their neighbourhood. Samantha and her colleagues didn't have the best attitudes towards it. The costumes were ridiculous, they had to put stickers on their vehicles, "the world is crashing and burning," and this is what they had chosen to do with their time. Once the parade began though, it was all worth it:

> You didn't realise how much you missed them. You see the value of school community and what we mean to some families. And what they mean to us! It was unbelievable. The number of kids that were parked out on the sidewalk with their little poster board signs that they made. "I love you, we miss you."

The second year of the pandemic brought more uncertainty for Samantha. She was back teaching in person, which brought her a lot of anxiety. The health restrictions meant that her carpet, an integral space in her classroom, was taken away. Everything had to be able to be wiped down. Nothing in the classroom could breed germs.

It was difficult for Samantha to come to terms with knowing that the environment she built for her students was not the most conducive environment to learning: "You can't sit together with a partner and play a phonics game. You can't play a math game to practise your skip counting. There's so much collaboration in the primary grades. That was taken away." Samantha didn't see how her students would learn sitting in rows doing independent work. Grade 1 is meant to be social.

The cherry on top was the masking requirement. Samantha has mild to moderate hearing loss and uses hearing aids in her day-to-day life. She learned through the masking requirement that she relied on a lot of lip reading to understand what others were saying. Even her students who did not have hearing loss struggled to hear each other and understand concepts about letter sounds and mouth formation:

> They can't see any of it. You're all muffled. They can't hear you clearly. I certainly could not hear them clearly. You're trying to teach them about the difference between the letters TH and F. They often get those sounds confused. "TH, you have to stick out your tongue. Look at how I'm doing this." They couldn't see that.

Because of the issues that the health guidelines prompted, Samantha felt that she and her colleagues "didn't do as well as [they] had hoped that [they] would have."

These health guidelines changed day to day, it felt like. Samantha would set up her classroom according to one set of guidelines. The next week, she had to move her students'

desks to ensure they were all three feet apart. A few days later, she moved them yet again to make sure they were all facing the same direction. She constantly had to pivot to meet these guidelines. It became a sort of theme in the school. You never knew when the next change would come around. There were so many procedures to try to listen to. It was impossible to keep up.

Some teachers in the school didn't follow these procedures to the same extent. Samantha's Grade 1 class was set up to closely follow the restrictions, even though Samantha didn't like it. Down the hall, the Grade 2 class had their desks set up in a horseshoe. Samantha felt a little in awe that the other teacher had the confidence to stand up for what she felt was important. She knew that this teacher had the same feelings and struggles with the restrictions that she felt. However, the resentment that came alongside this rule-bending "didn't do anything to strengthen school culture."

Samantha wants the school to be a safe space for students—a space for them to be at rest. If the "teachers aren't at rest, how can you expect the kids to be at rest?" The teachers were on edge about managing health in their classrooms. Every cough or sniffle made Samantha perk up her ears and start thinking about the stress of sending a student home and potentially upsetting their parents by causing them to have to leave work or find child care.

The students themselves couldn't be at rest either. Young kids needed hugs and physical and emotional closeness. Their teacher is their safe person while they are at school. They couldn't touch their teacher or one another.

Samantha found some of these physical restrictions ridiculous. She had to ask her students to line up with "zombie arms" to ensure there was space between each person. They were a few feet apart in the hallway, but still touched the same doorknobs, exchanged the same

home reading books, and brought their agendas back and forth between school and home. The many restrictions felt like a futile effort:

> This isn't gonna make a difference. It's gonna do what it's gonna do. That was tricky too. You're just never knowing. We're all gonna end up getting it. When's my turn? That underlying stress and anxiety that never went away is exhausting.

Samantha's anxiety, which was "pretty deep-rooted" in who she was, and her feelings of defeat, led her to finally make a decision with her students' needs at the front of her mind:

> I'm going to give these kids hugs, if that's what they need. If that's going to be what helps them feel safe and settled and secure, so be it. That is more important to me, than making them feel rejected and asking them to stay out of my space. These are six year olds. They don't get it. They don't need to.

Samantha felt a lot of frustration at the activities that her students missed out on. She believes that fun leads to engagement which leads to learning, but they kept skipping the fun and still expecting it to result in learning:

> There's no more tasting different types of food when we do our science unit on the five senses. [We were] learning about things that are sweet, salty, bitter, and sour. Now we're just going to talk about it and watch a video instead of eating unsweetened chocolate and sucking on lemons. We took out all the fun stuff.

It wasn't just fun that the students were missing–it was valuable learning experiences. Without peer interaction, students weren't learning what it means to be "a gracious winner and a gracious loser."

Samantha loathed her centre time. She prepared 30 individual dollar store bins with various small toys and objects in them. The students would take them to their desks and play

with their bin alone. Samantha kept track of the centres on a chart so each student would get to try all of the centres over the course of the school year. They would get the beads and rope one week, and a bin of LEGO the next week. That wasn't centre time for Samantha. When she watched her students play, she was reminded that "there's no social emotional growth happening when you're sitting by yourself building pictures on elastics and geoboards." She knew her students needed to learn socially by doing activities such as calendar or sitting on the carpet together.

Read-alouds in the classroom were another point of tension for Samantha. She would have to walk up and down the rows so everyone could see the book she was reading because they weren't able to share a carpet space. Eventually, she "resorted to doing most of [their] read-alouds over YouTube. [They] were watching stories online." There were both pros and cons to YouTube read-alouds. They were fantastic because it gave Samantha a wider range of access. She could do an author study if she wanted, even if she didn't have all of the books in her physical library. Videos were also great because they were easy; Samantha could prep the upcoming lesson while they watched the story. However, with this came a feeling of laziness. Samantha knows that YouTube stories aren't the best example for her students. She feels like the class should be "actually sitting on the carpet together and having a rich literacy experience together, where we're building vocab."

Upon reflection, Samantha understood that she was experiencing a tension between how she was "taught to be [a] good and effective teacher," and how she was told she needed to be teaching at that time: "The two don't jive with each other." Samantha tried to remain positive despite this tension. She understood why she had to teach in this way and she truly thinks that "people were doing the best that they could with any information that they had at the time."

For the sake of the students, she couldn't share negative thoughts and emotions with them. They needed to think that their time at school was just great. "You have to mask it," Samantha thinks. She tried to remain professional and do what she was asked to do. However, she felt like she could share her emotions with her team. Sometimes, she just needed "somebody to hear [her] out and know what [she] thought about something." Samantha had a few select colleagues that she trusted and felt safe with to express her true feelings. Other colleagues were more at "arm's length" and she was less vocal with them. She was worried about coming across to them as the person who "grumbles and complains about everything."

Samantha felt that her own perceptions about post-pandemic changes were shaped by those around her. In particular, Samantha recently worked with an older colleague who was about to retire. This teacher would say things to Samantha about new policies like digital portfolios such as: "That's stupid. I'm not going to do that. I've been teaching for 30 years. And now they're going to expect me to start building a digital portfolio for my students. That's ridiculous. I'm not going to [do it]." This teacher's perspective influenced Samantha's perspective and as a result, Samantha felt "crabbier" about the portfolios than she might have otherwise. She acknowledged that feelings of burnout influenced both her own emotions and her colleague's emotions about the digital portfolios. Their admin piled a lot of work on them all at once:

> Build these digital portfolios. And then you should be posting at least one or two things online every week, so that parents can have real time reporting. And four times a year, you have to fill out these learner profiles and give me data on all of your students' reading levels, their sight words, levels, their spelling of sight words, plus their Words Their Way inventory. [...] We're like way behind for all of these kids. So we need you to

> work extra hard to get them caught up. [...] Oh, but good job. Thanks. We appreciate you. Samantha found herself asking more and more often, "why can I not just teach these kids?"

All of these bureaucratic policies sucked "the little bit of joy out of the time" Samantha spent with her students. Ultimately, Samantha had to make a conscious decision to either grumble and complain about it and nothing changes, or just do the best she can with what she was given.

Social awkwardness was a bizarre side effect of the pandemic for Samantha. Gathering with others is an important part of Samantha's life and it was too difficult for her to give it up. When the restrictions caused the staff room to be closed, Samantha found herself gathering with her colleagues in the hallways instead. Much like the other futile restrictions that Samantha had to follow, this restriction made her feel frustrated:

> We're not allowed to eat in the staff room. We're gonna go eat in the hallway. It's not going to stop us from being around each other. We all work in the same building. We breathe the same air. We touch the same everything. What benefit comes from taking away our lunch tables?

Some staff would eat alone in their cars. Samantha, though, needed that check-in with her colleagues. It was an integral part of her day. So, Samantha and her colleagues sat in the hallway around some horseshoe tables that were intended for breakout sessions with students. At least she was able to eat with her colleagues this way. However, the hallway was not a place to be "safe" away from students. Samantha still had to be a teacher during that time:

> You will see half your class walk by and go use the bathroom. They want to say hi and come look and see what you're eating. They want to hug. You're like, "Okay, go back, eat

your food." There is no space where teachers can really just kind of let down their guard and be comfortable.

Samantha didn't only need to consider the needs of her students, however. Her students' parents had a lot of "frustration about decisions that were being made by the school board." Teachers became the point person to face these issues. Although most of the families "were fantastic," there were a few that made Samantha's job harder. She feels like this dynamic is there outside of COVID-19, but it became even more pronounced during the pandemic.

Parents especially had concerns about the masking mandates: "That was a big one. That didn't bring out the best in some of the parents that we had to deal with." While Samantha supported the mask mandates, she accepted that it was up to an individual whether or not they would adhere to them: "It doesn't matter to me. You do what you need to do." One student had a medical exemption for wearing a mask. At first, the parent just had to sign a form exempting their child from wearing a mask. It was their choice as a parent. However, the guidelines changed partway through the year to requiring a signed document from a doctor. The parent let Samantha know that they would be taking their child to the doctor in one week to get their mask exemption form. Unfortunately, the student was supposed to wear a mask for that week, and the duty fell to Samantha to enforce it. She had a poor experience on the very first day he had to wear a mask:

He's going, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe."

I'm like, "well, you can, you can breathe. I promise you, you can breathe. I know it's uncomfortable. Look, everyone else has them on. If you want, you can go to your desk. Take off your mask. Take a little breather." His desk was literally like the first row of desks beside my carpet. He was no more than four or five feet away from the rest of the class. I don't even think he would have been that far away. "When you feel more

> comfortable, come right on back. Have a drink of water. We'll keep going." The parent sent an email to my principal that night. His child had been mistreated and segregated in the classroom based on this masking issue. No, he wasn't mistreated. He wasn't segregated. He was given an option to help him feel more comfortable.

Not only was Samantha hurt that this parent went over her head to the principal, but she also felt like she had to walk on eggshells with that student after that day. She was worried about what he was going to say to his parent. She felt like she couldn't win no matter what she did. After multiple emails from the parent to her principal, Samantha contacted the parent herself:

> If you have a concern with something that is happening in the classroom, you need to come to me first. I'm the one who spends the day with your child. I can clarify anything for you that needs clarifying. You need to stop here first.

After this exchange, Samantha said proudly, "I didn't hear very much from him for the rest of the year." She acknowledged that conflict is difficult for her but working through it like she did here is helping her to get better at it.

Parents weren't only concerned with mask mandates; they were also worried about the lessons that their children would miss when they had to isolate due to a COVID-19 exposure. Two weeks was a long time to be away without any learning. Samantha wondered if it was worth setting up Google Classroom again or if there were other options that would meet the needs of the students. With a feeling of resignation, Samantha decided that it was impossible for her to communicate every single lesson to the parents of her absent students; even if she did, the chances of them actually doing it was tiny. The parents of her students disagreed that this was the best decision, but Samantha's admin team recognized that it was unrealistic to provide every lesson. As a middle-ground solution, Samantha made a bingo board with a variety of literacy and

math activities. Students could choose several things to do each day and work on the basics of reading, journal writing, and sight word practice to get them through their isolation. Samantha thought that "the choice boards were really helpful with finding a good balance of still providing work for people when they were away, but not having to do it all."

Overall, a lot of positive changes have resulted from the pandemic in Samantha's eyes. Samantha feels like the education system is much better equipped to deal with another pandemic or absences in general. Parent-teacher conferences are held over Zoom, which Samantha finds easy. She thinks most people are handling that change well.

Some things have returned to what they looked like before the pandemic too. For example, Samantha's work-life boundaries have returned to normal: she arrives at school shortly before her students and leaves by 4:30 pm.

Samantha is happy that field trips are beginning to return to normal now. In 2022, the Grade 4 classes at her school went on a few field trips. Samantha found it interesting that the students were "out of control" because they had never actually been on a field trip before. On one hand, because they have missed out on those experiences, they don't know how to behave in unstructured situations or how to sit on the bus and be bored for half an hour. But on the other hand, they were so excited to go on this trip. This story reminded Samantha that students will need a fair amount of pre-teaching before they go because field trips are "so foreign" to them.

There are still some unresolved issues that stem from the pandemic. Issues such as a substitute teacher shortage have made it difficult to engage in professional learning during the school day, even though they have access to funding for that purpose. To complicate things, Samantha's recent experience of professional learning has shifted to mostly over Zoom between the hours of 4 and 7 pm. She feels a tension between giving up more of her evenings and

weekends and time with her kids, versus potentially doing a disservice to her students by not engaging in professional learning. At this point, she has a very firm boundary that she feels excited to engage in after not being able to have those boundaries during the pandemic. She will not sacrifice her family for her job.

Another issue that resulted from the pandemic is the prevalence of Grade 1 students coming in who did not do Kindergarten, which is optional in Alberta. There are five or six students in each class at Samantha's school that skipped Kindergarten. It can be difficult to work with these students because they "have no concept of school." Some parents worked with their children in a similar way to Kindergarten at home, but some children arrived in Grade 1 missing basic Kindergarten skills such as holding a pencil or scissors and sounding out letters. Samantha's classroom used to have a smaller range of abilities. Now post-pandemic, she thinks that "it's just like you see everything under the sun" which makes her job more challenging.

Samantha has also noticed that she is itching for some of the community building that used to exist pre-pandemic to be brought back into her classroom. She remembers her Morning Message activity that she did before the pandemic: "I was having them come in and seeing them, like beeline to it. They would stand there and go, 'oh, look, I know that word, we practised that word last week!'" She almost mourns the continued loss of that Morning Message: "We're not sitting on a carpet and it's not…" She takes this feeling of loss and spins it into a sense of appreciation that wouldn't have existed without the pandemic:

> I can't wait until I get my carpet back. I'm going to make the most of it. We're going to do extra centre time next year when the kids can play together. I see the value so much more in giving them that play time.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In deciding how to discuss the retold stories of participants, rather than focusing on discrete elements within or across narratives, I chose to situate the findings within the broader emotions literature and to open a discussion around pandemic psychology. This discussion is guided by the theoretical perspectives of Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg et al., 1992), Experimental Existential Psychology (EEP; Greenberg et al., 2004), multiple theories of emotional coping, and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (BBT; Fredrickson, 2001).

Terror Management Theory and Experimental Existential Psychology Perspectives

TMT and its corollary, EEP, were both theorised by Jeffrey Greenberg and colleagues (1992; 2004). They are broad psychological theories that explain emotions, affect, cognitions, and behaviour through mortality salience–humans' awareness that they are going to die one day. Arguably, the pandemic was a mortality-salient experience as we all were reminded of the fragility of our lives through isolating restrictions, death reports, and a general interruption of normal life. Rather than discussing each emotion or affective state in this section distinctly, I have chosen to use TMT and EEP to analyse them more holistically.

Death is a certainty in life, but an awareness of death induces uncertainty (Van den Bos, 2001). We are uncertain about the time and place of death, the process of dying, our state of being after death, and the impact of our death on others (Van den Bos, 2004). Uncertainty was a theme that existed early on in the pandemic for my participants. John spoke about the postponement and eventual cancellation of school-wide events. He also described an ongoing feeling of "not-knowing" for the first month or two after his school moved online. Betty spoke about uncertainty over whether or not her small town would be impacted by the pandemic as

severely as larger cities. Samantha felt similarly; she was uncertain about whether the government would go to such drastic measures as to shut down schools.

This uncertainty is likely connected to feelings of fear (Moore, 2018) because it represents the truly unprecedented nature of the pandemic; not only did these teachers not know what would happen in the future, but neither did the authorities. With the government changing their policies as new information became available to them, it became difficult for members of the general public to predict their next move. The three participants did not describe fear directly, however. This is possibly because of teachers' unwritten display rules that cause one to consciously inhibit their expression of negative emotions (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 2013). Although previous studies on teachers' inhibition of fear are lacking, a study by Oplatka (2018) and another study by Niesche and Haase (2012) both found that school principals suppress fear in two ways: by mitigating the emotion or by hiding it. Therefore, it is possible that my participants either chose to hide this emotion from those around them in the moment as well as when they retrospectively discussed their emotions with me in the present study, or they regulated the emotion of fear enough that they truly believed that they only felt the affective state of uncertainty.

Uncertainty existed alongside anxiety. John felt anxious about how the education system was going to sustain online learning during the initial school closure. Once the pandemic became more certain, John's anxiety existed in the background. It returned to a head as pandemic restrictions waned because John was unsure about the government's motives for opening back up so quickly. Betty felt anxious throughout the entirety of the pandemic because she feared having to go on a ventilator and possibly die alone. This fits empirically; Santamaría et al. (2021) reported that chronically ill teachers were more depressed, anxious, and stressed during

COVID-19 than their healthy counterparts. Samantha acknowledged a struggle with anxiety that predated the pandemic. Her anxiety about being an effective teacher caused her to strive to meet the needs of her students even if it meant violating pandemic restrictions. She often felt like what she understood as to be a strong teacher was disconnected with the way the restrictions were forcing her to teach.

Theoretically, anxiety is tied to feelings of inadequacy. This can be explained by TMT which posits that self-esteem is an anxiety buffering function (Greenberg et al., 1992). In other words, when you think you're doing a good job, you feel secure, and when you know you have done something wrong, you feel anxious. Samantha felt that because of the restrictions, she was unable to be the type of teacher that she wanted to be. John had similar experiences of inadequacy during the pandemic, but he attributed the inadequacy to sources external to him, instead of a mixture of internal and external sources as in Samantha's case. For John, his general feeling of inadequacy was tied up in helplessness and empathy. He felt that the factors causing his inadequacy as a teacher were out of his control, such as quarantine periods causing hybrid learning and mask mandates causing feelings of disconnection for students. Therefore, it was not so much a failure on John's part, but a reflection of an inadequate learning environment. Betty's feeling of inadequacy, in contrast, was due to her perception of her own lack of technological skills. She feared failing her students because of what she described as her age-related unfamiliarity with current technology. One potential explanation for this decrease in self-efficacy is that mortality salience leads to lower self-esteem related to competencies (Van den Bos, 2001). TMT supports Betty's actions and emotions; when confronted with an awareness of their own mortality, an individual seeks to find an answer to self-preservation (Greenberg et al., 1997). Betty self-preserved through taking action to improve her efficacy which had declined with the

beginning of online learning. She committed herself to learning how to use technology in a confident and effective way. Betty's behaviour in this situation aligns with TMT research that posits mortality salience incites people to take action that has positive benefits for the self (e.g. Dechesne et al., 2000). During the following summer, Betty's feelings of inadequacy contributed to her feeling like her career was unfinished, which prompted her to continue persisting through teaching instead of retiring. Again, TMT supports Betty's actions in this situation because her persistence through the next year despite her low efficacy was a self-preservation technique that Betty used to affirm the efficacy that she had had prior to the pandemic.

Inadequacy is also associated with interpersonal conflict. According to Arndt and colleagues (2005), an individual reacts negatively to people who undermine their faith in their worldview or their feelings of self-worth. Betty had a general experience of worldview conflict during the pandemic. In the political landscape at the time, two groups of people arose: Freedom Fighters, who were against pandemic restrictions for political and ideological reasons, and the rest of society, who accepted pandemic restrictions to varying degrees. Interestingly, EEP provides a simple explanation for the appearance of these groups: mortality salience fuels support for simple, two-sided, good-or-evil worldviews (Greenberg et al., 1992). Mortality salience also causes people to like similarly-minded others and to defend their position against those with different beliefs (Greenberg et al., 1997), which sets up ideal circumstances for conflict to arise. This conflict overlaid Betty's relationships with the parents of her students. As a teacher, she is expected to be politically neutral. Since the issue of the Freedom Fighters was considered to be a political issue, Betty had to act neutral with regards to health restrictions and mandates in front of her students' parents, even though that perspective conflicted with her own worldview. As a result of the conflict, she felt anxious when communicating with parents and

students alike. Samantha also experienced conflict with a parent. When a previously mask-exempted student needed to wear a mask, he was worried that he couldn't breathe. Samantha offered what she saw as an opportunity for a break from the mask by sending the student to sit at his desk. The student and his father took Samantha's offer perhaps as an attack on their worldview or self-worth. This disagreement culminated in what Samantha might have felt was an attack on her own self-worth: instead of the parent addressing the issue with Samantha directly, he emailed Samantha's principal which served to humiliate Samantha in front of her administrator. Betty experienced conflict with a parent too. Her health was a priority for her. Betty had a conflict with the parent of one of her students because they showed her that they did not support her health-focused worldview. Betty was angry that students kept coming to school ill even with all of the pandemic warnings. Her anger at all of the other parents culminated in one incident. She wanted parents to stop sending their children to school sick and she thought a stark reminder of the health rules would solve the problem. However, to Betty's surprise, the parent had actually just received bad news from the doctor, explaining why she had not picked up her child earlier. This experience led Betty to reframe her thought processes about parents sending their children to school sick. She tried to consider the issue from the parents' perspectives before only considering her own worldview.

This experience of conflict elicited guilt, an emotion that is evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation (Tangney & Fischer, 1995), because Betty attributed the mistake that she made as being her own fault. This finding is in keeping with Cohier-Rahban and colleagues' perspective on guilt being a responsibility-committing emotion (2014). Indeed, Betty did tend to take personal responsibility for negative emotions and events that surfaced during the pandemic. Guilt functions to reduce the emotional load of these negative events and to enable one to continue

working (Cohier-Rahban et al., 2014). Guilt is a way to regulate these emotions and events by trying to prevent them from happening again. Therefore, guilt motivates a person to take reparative behaviour, which points to a person having an empathetic character (Tangney & Mashek, 2004).

Empathy was another emotion that prevailed during the pandemic. In particular, John showed true other-oriented empathy (Batson, 1990) by feeling vicarious emotions with others. He experienced feelings of vicarious loss on behalf of his students. He felt that they had missed out on a "normal" school experience and felt sadness on their behalves. EEP perspectives on fairness, morality, and justice can help us to make sense of empathetic affect and other related affective states. Mortality-salient conditions spark stronger affective responses to unfair events than non-mortality-salient conditions (Van den Bos, 2004). John's feelings of empathy stem from a perception of unfairness; he felt that the children did not deserve to have their positive school experiences taken away from them. A second example of unfairness arose in Samantha's narrative when her colleague was permitted to organise her students' desks in a way that violated pandemic restrictions while Samantha and the other teachers were expected to follow desk spacing restrictions. Fair treatment by authorities promotes obedience of policies (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), whereas unfair treatment has the opposite effect. After Samantha's experience with desk spacing, she began to feel like adhering to restrictions was futile. She even went as far as to begin hugging her students again, when they were actually not permitted to be within six feet of one another. She explained that she did so to give the students a sense of safety while at school, but it follows the pattern of disobedience of policy after an unfair experience as Lind and Van den Bos (2002) suggested.

Theories of Emotional Coping

Unlike the previous section that drew only from two broad theories, this section addresses the concept of emotional coping by identifying ideas across theories and applying them to the emotional narratives of the participants. The emotions in this section are negative in valence because they weighed heavily on the individual and required coping strategies or regulation to overcome. Teachers' emotional display rules require that negative emotions be inhibited (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 2013). These emotional display rules are one potential reason that some of the participants did not describe as many negative emotions or affective states in their narratives despite the pressure of the pandemic.

Coping with Anger and Anxiety through Displacement

For Betty, anger was woven throughout her narration of the pandemic, often in line with her perceptions of safety. She was angry at parents for sending their children to school when sick. After the school closure, Betty's anger waned slightly for a few weeks under the safety net of the stay-at-home directive. Betty's anger finally began to subside the following year when masks and vaccines became widely available. She felt safer from COVID-19 at this point. Anger is an unconscious maladaptive coping in response to trauma (Fenech & Thomson, 2015; Cramer, 1998). A defence mechanism such as anger functions to control anxiety (Cramer, 1991). In keeping with both Moore's ideas about known elements of the future eliciting anxiety (2018) and Cramer's ideas about defence mechanisms and anxiety (1991), perhaps Betty felt that it was a known element of the future that if her students came to school with COVID-19, then she would get sick too and ultimately die from the disease. This anxiety presented in the form of anger.

Betty resented the parents that sent sick students to school. She felt this emotion so strongly that she began to resent her students. This led to Betty feeling guilty that she directed

her resentment at her students. After all, her Grade 2 students were not able to control whether or not their parents sent them to school. This phenomenon is *displacement* (Freud, 1894), which involves taking out affect, such as frustrations and impulses, on people who are less threatening than those who initiated the feeling (Vaillant, 1992). Betty was angry at the parents of her students, but she felt those emotions towards the students themselves as a form of displacement.

Coping with Feelings of Loss through Social Connection

Loss was a prominent feeling for my participants during the pandemic. Knight and Gitterman (2019) describe loss as being death-related or nondeath-related. None of my three participants described a death-related loss during the pandemic, but they all felt grief and loss in nondeath-related events. Betty experienced ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006) when she packed up all of her students' belongings and realised that she wouldn't physically see them again, although they were psychologically still present in the virtual world. Previous pandemic research found that abrupt endings of social relationships is a theme that others have expressed, although this research was conducted on university students, not teachers (Scheffert & Parrish, 2023). Samantha also experienced ambiguous loss. She felt like her students were just starting to bloom. After the school closure, she felt like that growth would not happen, or at least she would not be able to experience it in the same way because she would not be with her students in person. This is a type of ambiguous loss that is similar to Betty's experience, with her students no longer physically present but still psychologically present. Betty also feels that the world has lost its innocence as a result of the pandemic. She feels that concerns about health used to be limited to rare diseases. Now, she knows a regular virus could kill her. This loss of innocence contributes to ongoing anxiety. Loss of innocence would fall under the category of abstract loss according to Scheffert & Parrish (2023). Samantha continues to feel an ongoing sense of loss post-pandemic

for the way her classroom used to be. She gives an example of a Morning Message, a classroom activity that she used to do. She feels like if she were to try and adapt the activity, it would not be the same because she still cannot have students sitting together on the carpet. Therefore, she sees it as a loss. This type of loss is a nonfinite loss (Harris, 2019), which is an ongoing loss that can cause a lack of ability to meet day-to-day expectations and requires consistent adaptation to overcome. However, Samantha is hopeful that this loss will become appreciation in the future once her carpet is returned to her.

Loss was intertwined with disconnection and isolation for my participants. John felt isolated from his students during online learning and in the following year. Once he no longer saw his students each day as he was teaching online, they began to feel distant. This disconnection made John feel exhausted with trying to keep up those relationships to no avail. The following year, pandemic restrictions caused John to feel disconnected from his students. John felt like his teaching practice was impersonal because he was unable to get to know his students to the same level that he normally would. Betty felt isolated from the rest of society and her family when schools moved online. She described feeling like an island alongside just her husband. She was unable to check up on her family members that needed her, which caused her to feel anxious about their health and well-being. Betty also felt disconnected from her students. She told a story about packing her students' school supplies into garbage bags and the meaning that she assigned to this act: she would not get to see her students again. What had been real children in her classroom were reduced to pencil cases in garbage bags. To make matters worse, she was able to see her students one last time at the end of the school year, but the disconnect was even more apparent. The teachers stood with a table in between them and the students. That table was a stark reminder of the disconnect that existed between teachers and students.

Samantha felt some level of disconnect from friends and family outside of her household. Her family was normally quite social outside of COVID-19; they attended and hosted dinner parties, her children went to youth group, and her children played with neighbour children on the weekends. Although those particular social interactions disappeared for Samantha's family, the resulting sense of isolation was buffered by how much Samantha valued social connections in her life, prompting her to maintain relationships in different ways that would not violate health restrictions, including via text message and across a fence.

As prevalent as loss and isolation were during the pandemic, these feelings were lessened through social connections (Berkman et al., 2000). Connections with people outside of the household and within the household protected from feelings of isolation during the pandemic (Okabe-Miyamoto & Lyubomirsky, 2021). Samantha was the only participant who described connectedness within her household: since she spent so much time with her own children, she felt like her relationship with them was strengthened. All three participants described social connections outside of their household with colleagues and students. John felt a sense of connection and belonging with his colleagues during the pandemic. Teachers in his school deliberately spent time together by going on walks outside while they were all teaching from their empty classrooms. John even gained a friendship through one of his colleagues. Betty also experienced a feeling of connection with her colleagues during the first months of the pandemic. Her teaching staff met over Zoom each morning for the purpose of building teacher morale. Betty recalled that these meetings were therapeutic. Betty's own feelings of inadequacy and insecurity were reflected in the other teachers, which made her feel less alone. It helped Betty maintain and deepen the relationships that she had with the small group of teachers at her school. Samantha also felt a sense of social support and belongingness with regards to her colleagues.

They worked together to develop weekly lesson plans. They were supportive of Samantha's need to focus on her own children during school days. Her teaching team specifically told her that they would handle the more difficult and time-consuming parts of the planning so that she would not need to worry. Because of this kind gesture, Samantha wanted to work even harder to contribute to the lesson planning as a thank-you for giving her that grace. Samantha also turned to her colleagues later in the pandemic to voice her frustrations about the impact that pandemic restrictions were having on her students' learning. These examples illustrate social support, a coping mechanism against loneliness and negative mental health outcomes when faced with a disaster (Ruzek et al., 2007; Wade et al., 2014; American Psychological Association, 2020).

The participants also connected with their students in various ways during the pandemic. John told a story about a student who wanted to join the after-school writing club that he normally offered outside of the pandemic. The club was not running, but John chose to connect with that student by essentially offering the club just for them. It was exactly the type of relationship that John had been unable to cultivate during the pandemic. Betty also felt a moment of connection with the Grade 6 students in her school when the staff held a drive-thru parade to send them off to junior high. Samantha worked hard to maintain her relationships with her students during the school closure. She described how she mailed a packet of seeds to each student as a symbol that she was still there. She also used the website Raz Kids to maintain relationships with students, where they would leave a personalised message for Samantha, and she could send one back to them. Samantha also told a story about a year-end parade around the school neighbourhood. Samantha realised that students and teachers alike missed each other. She could see that this connection prevailed even through virtual learning.

Coping with Frustration through Reappraisal

Frustration, an emotion caused by low control appraisals (Pekrun, 2006; Lazarus, 1999) was commonplace during the pandemic. John gave two clear examples of frustration. First, he felt like his technological skills were improving as the weeks on online learning went on, but student engagement was worsening, which frustrated him. Second, John became frustrated the following year when his class constantly switched between in person and online learning. Some lessons did not transfer well between domains or had to be scrapped entirely. John felt like his strong lessons were going to waste, which made him frustrated. Both of these examples highlight that John felt that the problem causing his frustration existed outside of himself. In his first example, the reality of monotonous at-home learning was to blame for his students' disengagement and therefore his frustration. His second example of frustration was caused by the government mandates to switch between in-person and virtual learning rather than John's own poor planning or inflexibility with transferring lessons between domains. In the full restoried narrative, these examples show John's attempts at problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), where he first tried to solve the problems by improving his technological skills to better engage his students and then by designing lessons that would more easily transfer between online and in-person. However, in both instances, the problem prevailed and was unsolvable by John. Therefore, he turned to emotion-focused coping by using his secondary appraisals of the situation to buffer his negative emotional response (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). John used positive reappraisal (Lazarus, 1999) to retrospectively buffer his negative emotions in the first example. He now utilises some of the technological tools that he learned how to use during the first year of the pandemic in his in-person classroom to foster student engagement. John now

views the frustrating process of losing student engagement as a process of growth as a teacher, which is the positive reappraisal.

The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

Fredrickson proposes through BBT (2001) that the purpose of positive emotions is to facilitate approach behaviour (Watson, et al., 1999). Uniquely, positive emotions have the ability to "broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 3). This positive psychology theory provides an explanation for some of the positive affective experiences of my participants during the pandemic and the theory extends my participants' narratives to highlight the motivational and behavioural ramifications of these positive emotions. Despite the pressure of the pandemic, all narratives involved positive emotions that helped the participants.

Curiosity Broadened Skills

Curiosity played an important role in the development of online teaching resources during the pandemic for the participants. For example, John was excited by the novel challenges that came with teaching online. He had wanted to dive into a role like this before the pandemic, so he was ecstatic that he had the opportunity to. Curiosity was more of a secondary emotion for Betty. She had a sense of curiosity around developing online and paper resources for her students. During a time when she was feeling intense anxiety and fear, this curiosity gave Betty a reason to be productive during a time when she felt like ruminating. Although curiosity is not an emotion directly addressed by Fredrickson in BBT, curiosity gave John the impetus to begin learning skills to develop his online classroom; it plausibly fits into BBT because it has the same purpose as the positive affective state of interest, which promotes exploration and self-expansion (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Joy Broadened the Definition of Work

All three participants described the joy they felt while teaching prior to the pandemic, but the ways in which they experienced joy during the pandemic differed. John felt joy with his newfound freedom and the sense of purpose that he had with his digital classroom work. John also felt joy as he began to engage in experiential learning again. It broke up the monotony of the day, it was good for student learning and engagement, and it was nice to see how happy the students were. Betty experienced joy in the form of humour as she began her Zoom teaching journey with her Grade 2 students. Although it seems like she was not feeling joy while she was in the situation, it is clear that she retrospectively sees this time as a more joyful part of the pandemic. Samantha described her joy during the pandemic as stemming from the extra time that she got to spend with her family unit. It was a break from the business of pre-pandemic life to step back and reconnect as a family. Joy broadens an individual by generating motivation to play, be creative, and push limits (Fredrickson, 2001). Social behaviour, as in the case of Betty and Samantha, and intellectual behaviour, as in the case of John, are impacted by joy (Frijda, 1986).

Implications

There are important implications for researchers and other audiences that can be derived from this study and its results. First, I recommend that other emerging narrative inquiry researchers engage in their research with a specific analytical approach in mind, whether it is the framework that I proposed in this study or another approach to analysis. In trying to balance different approaches to and levels of analysis and abstraction, I created a framework for an integrated data analysis process that engages in sense-making by first deconstructing and then reconstructing participants' narratives. Approaching narrative inquiry with a more structured approach, such as following the analytical approach of another researcher, could make this

methodology more accessible to emerging qualitative researchers. The openness of narrative inquiry limits which researchers will actually engage in this type of research; if they are already daunted by qualitative methodologies, they are unlikely to choose narrative inquiry when it is even further away from their comfort zone of more prescribed quantitative methodologies. Ultimately, the benefit of making meaning through story makes it worth the arduous task of designing a rigorous narrative inquiry study, so the analytical approach that I used in this study could be of use to researchers who are looking for more direction with their narrative inquiry research.

Second, I recommend that school principals and administrators take the time to listen to the stories that their teachers share. Stories provide rich insight into experiences and they are accessible in a way that is different from quantitative research or formal reports from school boards. Administrators can make an active choice to encourage storytelling by asking their staff to share stories and by sharing stories of their own. The results of this study paint an emotional picture of teaching during the pandemic. The reality is that this job was hard during the pandemic and even though classrooms are beginning to return to normal, the stories of pandemic education live on within the teachers.

Lastly, researchers should explore narrative inquiry as a therapeutic process for their participants. The participants in this study all opened discussions with me about how sharing their stories made them feel validated. Thinking about their own emotional experiences helped them to make sense of them. Betty even described her participation in this research as letting a load off of her chest. While the idea of narrative inquiry being therapeutic to participants has been developed in the literature (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), the present research did not specifically intend to have this effect. My conversations about the therapeutic effects of narrative

inquiry with the participants in this study underscored the potential that this methodology has to validate emotions and help people make sense of their experiences.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study should be considered in light of several limitations that provide direction for future research. First, data was collected during the 2022-2023 academic year–more than two years since the onset of the pandemic. Asking participants to recall and retell experiences from so long ago has drawbacks because of the inevitable shifts in memory that occur over time (Dudai & Morris 2013). However, allowing time to pass in this fashion ensures that I did not collect a knee-jerk reaction, but true, cognitively appraised emotion and affect. Future research could examine both narratives collected during an event and retrospective narratives to obtain a more complete picture of the experiences being researched.

Second, the study design did not include any form of fact-checking to ensure what participants reported aligned with the health and educational policies in place at any given time. However, since their narratives that they shared were well-developed and plausible, this limitation did not reduce the interpretability of the data. Future research using narrative inquiry could incorporate more forms of data beyond participant interviews, such as diaries, photo logs, or interviews with other sources who could speak to the participants' stories.

Third, this research was limited to the province of Alberta. This is a limitation in that the political, medical, and educational contexts exist only within that province. Readers from outside the province might find less relatable content in these narratives for that reason. However, because education and health are provincially regulated, this context created a similar experience upon which the stories were based.

Another direction for future research could involve the consideration of personality. Applying personality psychology to this type of narrative inquiry would provide a perspective beyond the ideas of context and emotions to address the inherent and stable aspects of a person that are reflected through their emotional experiences. My discussion was quite broad, reaching across several fields of psychology, but did not include any personality psychology perspectives.

Conclusion

The present study deconstructed and reconstructed three teachers' narratives of their emotional experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of narrative methodology in this research allowed me to establish a deeper, more nuanced understanding of teachers' emotions during the pandemic. Unlike existing quantitative research that examines emotions or emotion-adjacent constructs without diving into teachers' emotions (e.g. White, 2022; Yazici & Yuksel, 2022; Pressley et al., 2021; Pellerone, 2021; Sokal et al., 2020), the use of narrative inquiry revealed moments of optimism and curiosity amongst complicated experiences of loss and hopelessness. In other words, this research served to provide teachers with a voice and a platform to share their emotional experiences of the pandemic. Rather than discussing each emotion or narrative on its own, the stories are discussed within the broader field of psychology showing how teachers' emotions during the pandemic are deeply personal, psychological, and meaningful to them as individuals, professionals, and citizens.

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Appendix A

Sample Second Interview Protocol for "Betty"

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to narrate the emotional experiences of teachers during COVID-19. It is your own story and your own understanding of these experiences that I wish to capture. Do you have any questions about the interview process before we begin? I would like to remind you that you can choose to end the interview at any time. Do you consent to do this interview?

We are here today to discuss in further detail some of the emotions and events that emerged from your first interview. My hope is to gain a deeper understanding of your experiences related to emotion.

Interview questions

- What were some of the hospital "horror stories" that you were hearing before the school closure?
- Anger: when did you feel it? When did you not feel it? What did it look like to you?
- You mentioned that you felt like you were on an island for the first week after the school closure. Can you elaborate on that?
- What emotions do you feel during this school year as we are exiting the COVID-19 crisis?

Probing questions

Ask deepening/clarifying questions to encourage elaboration on events described and to keep the conversation going, such as:

- Can you tell me more about this event?

- What else did that event make you feel?
- Why do you think that this event had that effect on you?
- What stood out to you during that time?
- What do you mean when you say that?

Closing

Are there any other stories about your emotions during the pandemic that you would like to share? Is it alright if I end the interview here? Thank you for participating in this research. You gave me a lot of insightful information. Do you have any questions about the research or interview process?

Appendix B

Research Ethics Board Approval Letter

Notification of Approval

Date:	**August 3, 2022**
Study ID:	**Pro00120876**
Principal Investigator:	**Kendra Wells**
Study Supervisor:	**Lia Daniels**
Study Title:	**Teachers Emotions during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Narrative Study**
Approval Expiry Date:	**August 2, 2023**

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

Approved Documents:

Recruitment Materials
Recruitment flyer August 2.pdf
Recruitment email.pdf
Letter of Initial Contact
Inital email.pdf
Consent Forms
Informed consent form.pdf
Information pdf
Questionnaires, Cover Letters, Surveys, Tests, Interview Scripts, etc.
interview script
Protocol/Research Proposal
Protocol

Any proposed changes to the study must be submitted to the REB for approval prior to implementation. A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the REB does not constitute authorization to initiate the conduct of this research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring required approvals from other involved organizations (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, community organizations, school boards) are obtained, before the research begins.

Sincerely,

Carol Boliek, PhD
Associate Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

Appendix C

Member Check Sample for "John"

Episode 1: An Optimistic Beginning	**Episode 2: The Monotony of Isolation**
What I remember most I think at the very beginning was the sense of uncertainty. They asked us to come in to try and come up with a game plan. We had google classroom, but we didn't really use it that much at that time. It was kind of fun to be able to come up with something completely new that we hadn't tried before. What we had to do was create almost like a studio in our classroom. We'd have youtube style tutorials for students. They'll all join on google meet. We'll have these cool interactive technological type classrooms. I was quite happy with the fact that I was able to try something like that. Schools are sometimes reluctant to dive into new technologies. This was an opportunity where the school district didn't really know anything more than we did. They were willing to give the teachers a lot of leeway to experiment with things. I felt that sense of freedom. That part I definitely did enjoy.	It was hard to get students engaged. There were lots of technology issues that came up, glitches, things freezing. You feel disconnected. Talking through a screen and a lot of times just working from an empty room, even though you're with the students in a google meet, it doesn't feel the same. I felt like I couldn't build the kind of relationships I wanted to with students. It made me feel [...] definitely isolated. It felt like factory learning. I would literally see them at 9:00 for the beginning of their class, and if that one class was done at 9:40, then they would log out at 9:40 and the next class would log in. There was no room for any kind of the normal social interactions that you would have during the day. I would just sit at my computer. I'd give my lesson. I'd ask if there were any questions. A lot of what I enjoy about teaching is not necessarily what goes on in the classroom lesson but what goes on throughout the day. [Students] come to talk to you after school about something, and you get to talk to them. The relationships that you build with the students that you don't really get to [during covid].
Can you give me some synonyms for this idea of "freedom" you were feeling as you got to try new things in your classroom? Feeling a sense of autonomy in terms of teaching practice. I felt a sense of empowerment and definitely valued that ability to try new things.	Think about one relationship with a student that WAS good during COVID. List some words that come to mind. Comfort, reassurance, support

Episode 3: Connectedness with Colleagues	**Episode 4: Planning Frustration**
Of the whole pandemic experience, I think that building relationships with the other teachers would be the one big positive that remained throughout the entire experience. I worked at a K-12 school. I was grade 6. I didn't necessarily know the teachers that taught, you know, grade 11 or 12. For a lot of the week, we would be working from our own classroom. We would take breaks. We'd go outside and just sit in a field or go for walks with you know, the masks. With the pandemic, in between classes, like when we gave them a lunch break, we didn't have any supervision. I actually got to talk to teachers more at that time. It made me feel more connected, that sense of community, that sense of belonging in the school. Oddly enough, during a time when we were supposed to be apart, it did feel like we were bonding a little bit more. I guess whenever there's some sort of a crisis or something bad that happens, you kind of feel like you're part of a team. Making the best of what is not a good situation.	We got back in September and it felt like more of the same. We came back in person periodically. To be honest, I actually found that more difficult than just being online. In terms of planning, I remember feeling always frustrated. I would plan things and then I couldn't do them. It's kind of like, well they could be back next week, then someone has covid so now you're quarantining. We'd plan a field trip, but then things wouldn't be open again by the time we got to that date, and so we'd have to cancel it.Whereas with the fully online at least I knew, I'm gonna be delivering this online so I have to adapt accordingly. Even though we were used to pandemic learning in a way, it was more frustrating because we were just jumping back and forth. By that point I was just kind of done with it. You just realise, I don't know how long this is going to go on for, like this could be years. That becomes a little bit more mentally draining. I was happy that they were able to be in the classroom at points, but from the teaching side of things, it made it a lot more [frustrating]. I'm a person that thrives on organisation and predictability. Just kind of flying by the seat of your pants is not really my style.
It seems like building these relationships with colleagues was surprising to you because it was generally a time of isolation in society. Does the word "surprise" work for you here? Yes, I think it was surprising, or unexpected (I guess they are basically the same thing). Definitely not a dynamic I was hearing about elsewhere.	Do you have any extra thoughts to share about planning and frustration? I think that I pretty much covered it there. On the positive side, I think that the unpredictability will help me in the future as a teacher in terms of "going with the flow" a little bit better, and being more flexible in terms of my own teaching practice.

Episode 5: Empathy for Students Being able to see the students at times was nice. They were there but it was almost like they weren't. We'd have to walk our class single file down for recess, and they'd have a recess with just their class alone in a certain quadrant of the field. It was very unnatural feeling. I was totally fine with all of the restrictions and keeping people safe. But on the flip side of it, it's just not a natural learning environment. I wasn't as excited to be in the classroom for that reason. It just felt impersonal in a way. All of the students and teachers were wearing masks. Not being able to interact with other classes cause the classes just stayed as a cohort all day. They're not getting the same social experience at school. I felt bad for their experience. I just remember feeling sorry for them. A lot of my own emotions are tied up in my perception of what their emotions were. A lot of the negativity that I had was almost taking their potential negativity and bringing it to my own experience.	**Episode 6: The Refreshment of Normalcy** It felt kind of refreshing, the middle of the school year when you don't normally feel refreshed. I knew that they wanted to lift restrictions because it was maybe better for the students. Are we actually ready to do that or is everyone gonna get covid right away? Masks weren't mandatory in schools anymore and right away a lot of the people–most people–weren't wearing masks in the schools. I was probably one of the last people in the school that was. Some of that was related to having a young child at home. Experiential learning took a huge hit during the pandemic with restrictions. Experiential learning is kind of what I as an educator am most excited about. Our school had a big cultural food festival. They pushed it to the end of the year. Being able to have that kind of an event at the school kind of made me realize that oh, this is an event, there's crowds of people. This is not something that we were able to do during the pandemic. I was happy and excited about that. Just seeing those types of events again at the school kind of made me feel that sense of normalcy.
It seems like you felt sorry that your students were missing out on social experiences. Was this just in the social domain? I also felt bad about potential gaps in their academics, but to me that was a little less important at the time, especially for that age group. I think that building social skills is so critical for their development, and I feel more confident in being able to catch students up with concepts in a program of studies, as it is more under my control within specific lessons, whereas the social aspect is more about providing them with the opportunities to learn and grow.	What did this sense of refreshment feel like to you? What did it look like? It felt like a weight lifted off my shoulders, and I was able to experience the kind of teaching that I went into education for. I began to look forward to each day in the classroom again. There was/is always still that sense of impending doom when it comes to possible issues in the future, as is being experienced now with such high absenteeism in schools, but when the restrictions were first lifted, the relief I felt definitely overshadowed that.

Appendix D

Structural Coding and Episodic Organisation

John

Episode 1: A Hopeful Beginning	
Orientation	What I remember most I think at the very beginning was kinda the sense of uncertainty. Nobody had been through anything like this before. Nobody knew what was happening, how bad the virus was or anything. We were still, I think at the very beginning, gonna have school events.
Complicating Action	You're seeing the news reports. You're getting emails from your principal. The principal who, you can tell, doesn't know anything more than we know. I remember getting emails from the school about covid restrictions. They're trying to wrap their heads around how they were gonna do school events with covid restrictions.
Evaluation	I just remember it being shocking in a way. [I was] feeling, I wouldn't say overwhelmed, or scared, or anything like that, but just kind of unsure about everything.
Complicating Action	A day later, 24 hours later, is when everything got fully put online. You could tell everyone was kind of taken by surprise with that. They asked us to come in the next week to try and come up with some sort of a game plan. We had google classroom, but we didn't really use it that much at that time.
Evaluation	I just remember kind of feeling this sense of what's gonna happen, how is this all gonna go? It was kind of fun to be able to come up with something completely new that we hadn't tried before. I wouldn't view that part of it as negative, the whole idea of building an online course. I think everything that came AFTER when you kind of started to see the challenges with online learning. First, I was maybe overly optimistic about how kids would be when they were online especially in an elementary school setting. I kind of had these grander ideas of how all that would work out. At the beginning it was definitely a sense of optimism–uncertainty, but definitely optimism. I like using technology. This'll be a couple weeks online. Everything's gonna go back to the way it was.

	We'll just carry on with the year.
Complicating Action	What we had to do was create almost like a studio in our classroom. [We set] up resources online. We'd have youtube style tutorials for students. I found out after a while, just being interested in technology doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to be engaged in a classroom context.
Evaluation	I would consider myself to be a pretty optimistic person just in general. I was overly optimistic, number one about how long things were gonna last. I was optimistic and positive at the beginning There was still always that kind of sense in the back of your mind. What exactly is going to happen? I really didn't have in my mind that this would be the rest of the school year plus the next. This'll be a few weeks of something that's kind of interesting. The other sense of optimism would have come from, students **like** technology. I think that they're going to adapt really quickly. They'll all join on google meet. They'll all be paying attention. We'll have these cool interactive technological type classrooms. I'll make little videos and tutorials using google classroom and the kind of collaborative software that came up. It was something new for them. I always like trying out new technologies. I was quite happy with the fact that I was able to try something like that. Schools are sometimes reluctant to dive into new technologies. Things kind of move slowly.
Complicating Action	This was an opportunity where the school district didn't really know anything more than we did. They were willing to basically try new things. They were willing to give the teachers a lot of leeway to experiment with things. The principals, the administrators, they didn't know what was gonna happen any more than us. They were definitely willing to say, if you wanna try something, try it, cause we don't know. None of us have any experience with what's happening here. They were leaning a lot on teachers to try new things. There was no specific program or manual that you could kind of refer to to do these new things.
Resolution	I kind of enjoyed that part of it. I felt that there was definitely that sense of freedom. That part I definitely did enjoy.

Coda	I was kind of excited about the fact that this was something that we could take bits of beyond the pandemic and use in order to kind of improve engagement.
Episode 2: Relief Becoming the Monotony of Isolation	
Orientation	The sense of relief came early, like quite early in the pandemic. At the very beginning, we didn't really realise what COVID was. We didn't realise exactly how bad it was going to get. You kind of had that feeling like that pit in your stomach. I don't know what we're entering into.
Evaluation	A couple months in, there was almost like a sense of relief. I think maybe we have a handle on how we're going to approach this. It's going to be bad, it's going to be painful emotionally. It almost felt in my mind that okay, like, I feel like we kind of know what is coming in some ways. I remember feeling maybe a little bit of a sense of relief. It got into a little bit of a rhythm. This is going to go on probably longer than we expected. We're going to try and make it work. I think that we're going to be able to do that education-wise. I think part of the sense of relief came from that. I was feeling both pretty heavily at the same time. I wouldn't say that one was overriding the other one. It was just kind of this weird mixture, I guess, of emotions. Maybe feeling relieved, almost gave me the ability to start complaining about the situation When you're in like this unknown crisis, you're not necessarily complaining about it You're almost kind of in shock about it. The shock wears off, and the monotony begins. You kind of have those other feelings that kind of come up as well.
Complicating Action	April/May is when I realised, I don't think we're going back in person this year. This is obviously not a two-week or one month thing. This seems to be getting worse. I don't think we're gonna be going back. I was realising at that time, a couple months in, that it was hard to get students engaged. There were students that we weren't hearing from. They would just log in and then log out. I was finding it hard to get through lessons or check for understanding or do any of that. The summative stuff was fine. I could post a quiz or test or something. In terms of the formative learning, it was really hard to assess where students

	were at. There were lots of technology issues that came up, glitches, things freezing, that sort of thing. Students not responding when you asked a question. They'd say their computer wasn't working. They're not responding to you in the same way. You're not seeing them at lunch and recess outside of the classroom context.
Evaluation	I think that made a big difference too. You feel disconnected in a way. Talking through a screen and a lot of times just working from an empty room, even though you're with the students in a google meet, it doesn't feel the same. I felt like I couldn't build the kind of relationships I wanted to with students. I started to feel a little bit more negatively about things. I wasn't dreading going to work each day. It was definitely more negative emotions that I was feeling at that point. It made me feel [...] definitely isolated in a way. Every day seemed exactly the same. It felt a lot like factory learning. Each day was kinda the same.
Complicating Action	I would literally see them at 9:00 for the beginning of their class, and if that one class was done at 9:40, then they would log out at 9:40 and the next class would log in. There was no room for any kind of the normal social interactions that you would have during the day. I was logging into the computer, doing the class. There wasn't a lot of interaction back and forth. I would just sit at my computer. I'd talk. I'd give my lesson. I'd ask if there were any questions.
Evaluation	A lot of what I enjoy about teaching is not necessarily what goes on in the classroom lesson but what goes on throughout the day. Being able to talk with students, um, at recess. They'll come to talk to you after school about something, and you get to talk to them about something, or you share something with them. The relationships that you build with the students that you don't really get to [during covid]. My emotions were a little bit more negative. [A] couple months in is when I started to feel like, okay, I was excited about this at first. I'm kind of ready to be back in the classroom so I can actually have the students in front of me.

Coda	I don't normally feel like teaching is repetitive.
Resolution	That made it [...] more isolating, more disconnected, and that part definitely wasn't as enjoyable. It was a lot more repetitive. When you're doing it online in front of the computer all day every day, it does kinda feel like you're doing the same thing over and over again.
Episode 3: Colleagues as a Light in the Dark	
Abstract	I felt I actually got to know [other] teachers. Of the whole pandemic experience, I think that building relationships with the other teachers would be the one big positive that remained throughout the entire experience. One of the things that came out of the pandemic was that, like, I really became a lot closer with one of the grade four teachers in the school.
Orientation	Technically, we're in the same division at the school. There was never really much of a reason for us to interact, grade four and grade six. Sometimes I would interact with grade five, or grade seven, if there was things about students or whatever. With grade four, I never really interacted with that group of teachers much. I worked at a K-12 school. You kinda just stayed in your own area. I was grade 6. I didn't necessarily know the teachers that taught, you know, grade 11 or 12.
Complicating Action	For a lot of the week, we would be working from our own classroom. It would be an empty room, but we would work from our own classroom. We would take breaks. We would go on walks outside. We had groups that would go outside and walk around. I'd have conversations. With the pandemic, in between classes, like when we gave them a lunch break, we didn't have any supervision.
Evaluation	I actually got to talk to teachers more at that time. In a regular school day, you're focused on the kids, you are supervising. If I was at home the whole time, um, then that would probably be different. I actually felt like I was more connected with teachers. I got to know teachers two grades or three grades above or below that I never would have talked to otherwise. It made me feel more connected and part of a school community. It made me feel more connected, that sense of community, that sense of belonging in the school. Sometimes in a regular school day you go in, you stay in your classroom all

	day, you're with the students, and then you leave at the end of the day. You realise, I don't think I've really talked to another adult today. That can happen more than you might think. You realise it's like recess, or lunch or class break, or whatever it might be.
Complicating Action	I guess I should just talk to one of the other teachers, because I don't really have anyone to supervise right now. We'd go outside and just sit in a field or go for walks with you know, the masks.
Evaluation	I just felt that sense of community, that sense of belonging in the school. Which is kind of interesting in a way, or maybe not what one would expect. It was a time when we were all forced to be apart. Oddly enough, during a time when we were supposed to be apart, it did feel like we were bonding a little bit more. I guess that sense of coming together. I guess whenever there's some sort of a crisis or something bad that happens, you kind of feel like you're part of a team. You have a common goal. No one really knows what they're doing in terms of past experience of pandemics. There's that sense of coming together and getting things done. Making the best of what is not a good situation.
Complicating Action	Over the course of the pandemic, through our little walking club and stuff with the teachers, I became quite close with one of the grade four teachers. That was something that kind of continued through the pandemic. It was somebody that I had said a few words to here and there, I'd say hi to if I saw them. I would never engage in a conversation. By the end of the pandemic, we were going out for dinners. He had a foosball table in his classroom. We would go in, like, during breaks or after school. We'd play foosball. We'd be recommending, like, shows on Netflix to watch. We weren't really working from home for most of it. We were in the classroom, but like broadcasting from our classroom, from an empty classroom. Maybe my perspective would be a little bit different because I had an opportunity during those breaks, recess, lunch where I'd normally be supervising students, to have those interactions with teachers.
Resolution	I wouldn't have had the chance to kind of develop a friendship with him if it hadn't been for the kind of strange scenario of the pandemic. I think that maybe being in a private school, it was a bit unique.

	The teachers were still coming into the school into their classrooms during the pandemic. In one way, I would have rather just been able to be home during that time, especially during the height of things. On the other hand, it was nice to be able to maintain those connections and even make new connections and friendships.
Coda	We still send messages back and forth. He gives me updates, what's happening at the school.
Episode 4: Farewell	
Orientation	You always kind of build up to the end of the school year with students. They get all excited. You have a class party.
Complicating Action	I posted my last lesson online, the last assignment for them to do. I had them send messages to each other and create this video collage thing.
Evaluation	I guess it's summer now. It's just not the same. It felt so anticlimactic.
Resolution:	Usually you feel like you've gone through this kind of running through the year, and at the end of that year, it was like, oh, I guess it's done. I remember it feeling very strange that they didn't really get to have that farewell, with my class and students. It felt very strange.
Episode 5: Fatigue, Hope and Frustration	
Orientation	At that point cause it was summer, cases had dropped a bit. There was this sense of, maybe schools can go back to normal the following year. I kind of ended the school year. The summer break was ahead. The next school year is two months away. I swung back to that sense of optimism.
Evaluation	I'm gonna use this time to decompress. Going into the summer, normally by this time I'm exhausted every morning and everything. I didn't feel that way. The physical fatigue part of it wasn't really there. Obviously sitting at the computer all day every day probably helped with that a little bit.

	I didn't feel the sense of physically just being tired because like I'm running around supervising kids. I don't think I was more tired than I would have been otherwise. Thinking about it, the mental fatigue, I don't think it was really any different than it would have been otherwise. I felt maybe the same sense of mental fatigue. When we go back, things are gonna be a lot more prepared. We're not gonna have to make things up as we go. There's gonna be a formal plan. That kinda made me feel more reassured. Even if things weren't back in person, the school districts and teachers and administrators would have that time to come up with that more formal kind of plan of attack. I ended the year with a little more optimism. I was definitely I guess hopeful again, that things would be better again in September. I was hopeful in June because I'm like, well, there's gonna be the whole summer. Hopefully over the summer, things get developed, and it's better in September. Things will either be better, or there's gonna be a regimented plan for making sure things like attendance and making sure that students are more engaged, and strategies for that sort of thing. I definitely felt different coming back.
Orientation	We got back in September and it felt like more of the same. It seemed like we're gonna be relying heavily on technology again. We came back in person periodically, so we were kinda back in person, then we'd get sent back online. Then we were in person, then online.
Evaluation	To be honest, I actually found that more difficult than just being online. Because there was always, in terms of planning, I remember feeling always frustrated.
Complicating Action	I would plan things and then, I couldn't do them because, oh, we're gonna be switching to an online model, and we're gonna be switching back to in person. It's kind of like, well they could be back next week, nope we're still gonna be online for another week, now they're back for a few days, okay now someone has covid so now you're quarantining, the whole grade is quarantining or whatever it was. At the beginning of the year, we're gonna have to plan field trips, so we'd plan a field trip, but then things wouldn't be open again by the time we got to that date, and so we'd have to cancel it.
Evaluation	I remember feeling that sense of frustration like I couldn't plan ahead because I didn't really know what was coming. Whereas with the fully online at least I knew, I'm gonna be delivering this

	online so I have to adapt accordingly. That uncertainty I think made it a lot more difficult and a lot more frustrating because you just didn't know what to plan ahead for. Even though we were used to pandemic learning in a way, it was more frustrating because we were just jumping back and forth. By that point I was just kind of done with it in a way. I'm a pretty optimistic person but I guess even I have my limits in terms of like okay, I would like it to just be the job that I know, there's a reason I love teaching, and a lot of that is the classroom dynamic and the school events and all that kind of stuff, and so, after a while it kind of became a little bit more draining. You just realise, I don't know how long this is going to go on for, like this could be years. This isn't weeks, this isn't months, this could be years. That becomes a little bit more mentally draining because you're like well I guess I just have to be prepared to switch kind of on a dime, not really knowing what's coming up. And that being said, I was happy that they were able to be in the classroom at points, but from the teaching side of things, it made it a lot more [frustrating]. I'm a person that thrives on organisation and predictability and so with a unit plan, I like to have everything. Stuff always changes as you go, even in a regular kind of learning period. You kind of have to adapt to it, but I like to have everything kind of regimented and planned. Just kind of flying by the seat of your pants is not really my style of organising and teaching. That part was definitely, definitely, tough. I think frustrated would be the best word to describe it Every time I was coming up with something that I didn't know whether it was actually going to be usable or not.
Complicating Action	So in grade six, newspaper article writing is one of the writing foundations or touch points in English. That was a big focus for grade six. I had this whole idea of a collaborative project. They're learning about newspaper articles and so they're gonna be reporters and interview other teachers. A lot of times, I'd plan it all, and then we couldn't do it. They were sent home for a couple of weeks. A lot of the things I like to do in the classroom we couldn't do because of covid restrictions anyways.
Evaluation	My emotions are kind of connected with the things that I'm going through in the classroom. A lot of my emotions were frustration about what's going on in the classroom, having to redo a lesson plan or feeling disorganised because I wasn't able to plan ahead like I normally do, and it is all really connected to teaching

	practice I guess.
Complicating Action	During COVID, I was able to do a kind of pared down version of a reporter project. I kind of kept it more family based.
Coda	Normally, what students would do is they would be a reporter for a school event.
Complicating Action	We weren't really having school events. I had them think back to a school event that we had done in the past. Instead of experiencing an event and reporting on it, they were reporting on something that they had experienced in the past. Instead of going around and interviewing tons of people around the school and stuff like that, I had them just kind of focus on interviewing family members. I did it twice during COVID. It was in the second half of each year. The first time I did it, it was very rigid with the guidelines. they couldn't really go into other classrooms and talk to people and stuff like that. The second time I did it, it was a little bit more open. They were able to interview some other teachers and some other students. They didn't have the freedom to kind of go into the other classrooms like they had before. In the first year, I had them think about a past event. There's just absolutely no way we could focus on an event that the school wasn't doing. The second time I did it closer to the end of COVID. I had them do it on a bottle drive that the school had done. It wasn't really like a gathering school event. It was just a fundraiser that the school had done.
Evaluation	That was something that I was able to kind of adapt for. It was just really about adapting and making small changes really. I liked sort of having them be able to become the reporter and create a news story that way. Looking back on my own school experience, the things that I remember from being a student were not the things that were kind of like the normal day to day lessons. It was things that we did that were connected to the classroom, but were just different. When I was in elementary school, we had this project, we were studying habitats. we're studying streams and fish habitats. At one point, we went out and we're painting, like little fish on storm drains. People would be aware that stuff they dumped down would affect fish

	populations. Something like that sticks in my head so much when I look back. It was never really like, "oh, I remember giving a report on this." I remember going out and doing this and becoming involved. Not that every student will necessarily have the exact same outlook or same types of memories.
Complicating Action	Stuff was opening back up. Everything seemed to be booked up.
Resolution	I like to make sure that all students also have those kinds of experiences where they get to do something a little bit different. It was hard to kind of get those experiences all packed in for the last few months of the school year. That was something I kind of regretted at the end of the year. I wish we could have done more of that.
Episode 6: Empathy	
Orientation	We came back in person periodically, so we were kinda back in person, then we'd get sent back online. Then we were in person, then online. A lot of the things I like to do in the classroom we couldn't do because of covid restrictions.
Evaluation	Being able to see the students at times was nice. There was maybe a little bit of normality in that sense. They were there but it was almost like they weren't in a way.
Complicating Action	We'd have to walk our class single file down for recess, and they'd have a recess with just their class alone in a certain quadrant of the field. We had to lead the students everywhere they went and so, it wasn't like they could just go out in the hallway and we had to be walking in a line around the school.
Evaluation	It was just very, I don't even know how to say it, very regimented, very unnatural feeling. That part was a bit more, a bit more, kind of, draining. I'd view that more negatively than I did, the fully online stuff. Obviously, I understood all of the restrictions. I was totally fine with all of the restrictions and keeping people safe and all that kind of stuff. But on the flip side of it, it's just not a natural learning environment. I wasn't as excited to be in the classroom for that reason. It just felt really, I don't know, impersonal in a way. I was happy that they were able to be in the classroom at points.
Complicating	All of our desks were put into rows.

Action	They were spaced apart. All of the students and teachers were wearing masks throughout the day. Wearing the masks all day. Not being able to interact with other classes cause the classes just stayed as a cohort all day. They didn't get to see their friends at school. They're not getting the same social experience at school. They're not getting to participate in certain events. They don't get to go on field trips. They are having to quarantine constantly.
Evaluation	With the students, you could tell that it wasn't a regular school year for them. I kinda felt sorry for them too. I felt bad for the students, their experience. What I remember more looking back is kind of just a sense of feeling sorry for the students, that they just weren't getting a normal kind of school experience.
Coda	Before COVID, I had an after school writing club. It was for grade six students. We sometimes would write stories together. I would give them prompts to talk about. It's just students that were interested in writing. [They] wanted to come after school and do some kind of activities. I obviously cancelled it because we weren't able to have any after school stuff during COVID.
Complicating Action	At the beginning of last school year, I had a student that was kind of a shy student. They'd had a sibling with me a couple of years earlier. I remember them being really, really sad that I wasn't able [to offer the club]. Their sibling had told them all about this writing club. They really wanted to be involved in it. They loved writing.
Evaluation	I felt bad.
Complicating Action	It's a student that kind of hung out by themselves a lot. They didn't really have a good kind of friend group at the school. Even though I wasn't able to do the After School Club, we would sort of talk at recess times. I would encourage them to bring in, like a story that they had written. I would kind of look at it during, you know, lunch or something like that.
Evaluation	I felt like I was able to kind of provide a little bit of comfort for this student that was obviously struggling a little bit [They] probably would have been able to make friends at this after school writing club

Complicating Action	[They] would have really loved to be a part of an extracurricular activity. It's all people, all students from different classes that like writing. I was sort of maintaining this relationship with the student throughout the year. I was able to engage with them and kind of give them as much of that kind of experience of being in a club as possible. Obviously, it was just the two of us.
Evaluation	That's something that stands out to me. I remember feeling really bad for them.
Complicating Action	They said they were so looking forward to being a part of something like that. You could tell how happy they were, every time I gave them feedback. They would always be ready to talk at lunch. Whatever they had written, they would have it out. They were ready to say, "okay, what do you think I've written next?" At one point, they were going to be trying to write a novel. As you know, younger kids are very motivated for a time. They wrote like, a couple short chapters. They were so excited to show me the next part for a while. They're like, "oh, I have the beginning of chapter two for you!"
Resolution	It was great. It sticks in my mind so much. It was at a time when I felt like I wasn't making the same kinds of relationships with a lot of students. [There was a] lack of stuff happening outside of the classroom. If it happened in a pre-COVID year, I mean, I would remember it, but it wouldn't stick in my mind in the same way. The type of student-teacher relationship that I hadn't been able to have, or didn't have nearly as much during COVID. [It] really did kind of stick in my memory for that reason. Last year, when things were a little bit more normal, we were realising that the grade 6 students that came in that year hadn't had a normal school year since grade 3. The last time my grade six students had a regular school year they were in grade three. That just seemed crazy. That's a huge amount of time for elementary students. It is interesting to think that they had spent that much time under COVID guidelines. I just remember feeling sorry for them. A lot of my own emotions are kind of tied up in my perception of what their emotions were. A lot of the negativity that I had was almost taking their potential negativity and bringing it to my own experience.

Coda	In a lot of ways they adapt faster than we would. Their frame of reference for experiences is shortened. They're not set in their ways.
Episode 7: Helplessness	
Orientation	If I'm looking at the pandemic as a whole, it's kind of like a roller coaster. I started off optimistic. I kind of got negative a couple months in. I kind of got optimistic at the end of the school year. I would say that next year was pretty consistent all the way through in terms of the emotions I had. I didn't know what was going to happen.
Complicating Action	I could kind of feel that students were still not particularly engaged. They were going into quarantine and then coming back. We had students that were struggling. All of a sudden they were gone for two weeks. Their family had covid and they had to quarantine. I could send home stuff for them. I wasn't able to actually be there to help them through it.
Evaluation	I remember just feeling helpless. There was only so much I could do. I had kind of this feeling of helplessness with not being able to provide the sort of learning experience that I wanted to.
Resolution	For that full second year, that sense of optimism that I had when it came to what would happen next became a sense of, can things just be the way they were before. That was the feeling that I had.
Episode 8: Experiential Learning/Return to Normal	
Abstract	I guess that second half is really when I felt the things that I like about teaching, the things that make me really excited to get into the classroom, we're really getting back to those now. And I felt a sense of relief after all the uncertainty and everything that had come before. There were two times that I distinctly remember feeling a sense of relief. The last time was, I guess, probably the more obvious one. Things were opening back up again. I was just relieved that we were able to, to kind of get outside that, get outside of the classroom and do new things. There was definitely a sense of relief about that. The students are going to be able to have these types of experiences again.

Evaluation	It felt kind of refreshing, the middle of the school year when you don't normally feel refreshed as a teacher. Things were kind of going back to some semblance of how they were before.
Orientation	Stuff really started to kind of open back up. We were putting kids back in groups and the students didn't have to wear masks anymore. I knew that they wanted to lift restrictions because it was maybe better for the students and based on case numbers and all that kind of stuff.
Evaluation	My experience was so negative in terms of going back and forth online and in person. I would say that at first, I was almost kind of apprehensive or nervous because I wasn't sure how safe it actually was at that point. I guess maybe there was that sense of apprehension like "are we actually ready to do that or is everyone gonna get covid right away now that we have taken off the masks and are back in groups?" There definitely was that sense of nervousness that I felt after this long. This is happening too quickly. Should we be doing it in stages? I do remember kind of that [...] sense of nervousness and that was probably the first time I really felt a sense of nervousness during the pandemic was during that time. I guess my sense of being happy that things were back to mostly normal kind of overcame any other sense of nervousness or unease that I had.
Complicating Action	After a while, we got to kind of do field trips and things like that again. Masks weren't mandatory in schools anymore and right away a lot of the people–most people–weren't wearing masks in the schools. I was probably one of the last people in the school that was. I was wearing it right through to the end of the year.
Evaluation	I guess that's maybe representative of the nervousness that I felt. Some of that was related to having a young child at home. I was nervous I would bring something home. It was kind of double-sided. I was nervous. I was also happy that students were able to socialise and do things that they weren't able to do before. Experiential learning is kind of what I as an educator am most excited about. Some of my projects are maybe like interviewing people in the schools, so they'll be a reporter and interview teachers and everything, so any type of experiential learning or having a guest speaker coming in and speaking with them. If they're doing the trees and forests unit in science, [...] do a walk around the school and investigate the plants in the school yard, and things like that.

	I'm really big on experiential learning. Maybe part of that is because the things I remember from when I was in elementary school are not like sitting in the classroom and sitting in a math class. I remember when we were able to do this activity or I was able to see this.
Complicating Action	Experiential learning took a huge hit during the pandemic with restrictions. It was very traditional. I give the lesson. They listen. They ask questions. Even when they were back, having them in rows instead of groups that they could collaborate in and talk amongst each other.
Evaluation	That, for me, made me feel more negative about the experience I was giving them. I wasn't able to give them those kinds of experiences. It happened gradually.
Complicating Action	They always hold this big festival, a cultural food festival. They celebrate the different cultures of the students and share food and all that kind of stuff. They usually have it in the middle of the school year. They pushed it to the end of the year. It was sometime in the spring that we had the festival, closer to the end of the year.
Evaluation	I remember it feeling really nice to not just be in the regular block rotation for classes that day. Without school events,you just have the regular block rotation. You're in your classroom all day. I remember it just feeling nice to be somewhere else in the school and doing something that was a little bit different. It didn't feel quite so monotonous. You don't sometimes realise how monotonous a school day can be if you're always doing the same thing. You kind of don't think about all the events and things that happen in the course of a regular school year that kind of change things up until that's all taken away. When you strip everything else away, it's just the same thing over and over again. Okay, it's block two. We're starting our lesson. I'm talking at the front of the class. I remember feeling happy that we had that type of experience again. Before COVID, It would always frustrate me thinking about oh, like, we have

	this school event. I only see half of the students today. Now I have to shift this part of the lesson. I just always remember it being like, "ugh, like, why do we have to?" I wish that this could just be all day so I didn't miss these classes it was always just something in the back of my mind. It was all taken away. I think it just emphasises how important those experiences are. Being able to have that kind of an event at the school kind of made me realise that oh, this is an event. There's crowds of people. This is not something that we were able to do during the pandemic. I maybe felt a little nervous about it because of all the crowds at the beginning.
Evaluation	I was happy and excited about that. This feels like what things felt like before. Maybe I'm just very big on the experiential kind of events. I feel like a lot of my experiences are tied to those types of things during the year. Just seeing those types of events again at the school kind of made me feel that sense of normalcy. It was nice to kind of have that sense of normalcy. I think the biggest thing for me is that it was just so nice to see parents again.
Complicating Action	They were allowed to come in. They hadn't been allowed to come into the school for a period of time. This was the first time that parents were just invited. It was just kind of like parents can come into the school to be part of the festival.
Evaluation	I remember thinking it was so strange. I had been with these students all year. I usually knew the parents.
Complicating Action	I would meet these parents. I didn't know what they looked like. I had maybe talked to them once at the parent teacher conferences, but it was over the telephone. I hadn't even seen them or anything. I just heard their voices a couple of times. I know the students so well I've known them all year. I'm basically just meeting you now.
Evaluation	That's what I remember from the cultural food festival.

	It was nice to kind of be able to properly meet them. That's what I remember most.
Complicating Action	It was near the end of the year. We went on a bowling excursion with our grade six students. We just took them all to a bowling alley that was kind of close to the school.
Evaluation	It wasn't like a major trip. We weren't, you know, staying overnight. It was great to have that kind of experience outside of the school. You could tell just from their reactions. [They were] at the bowling alley with all of their friends and their classmates and just being on a field trip. It almost seemed like it didn't matter where it was. They were just so thrilled to just be out and doing an activity that wasn't in the classroom. The thing I remember most about my own kind of feelings was, I was so happy to see how happy they were. I was really happy to see them just kind of be, I want to say like, just be kids again. It just was nice to see them outside of that classroom environment just running around, you know, throwing balls, laughing. It was just nice to see them in that kind of environment.
Complicating Action	A lot of them hadn't done something like that for a while. I remember hearing some students mentioning, "I haven't really been out with a group of people out anywhere for, you know, like, year and a half, two years."
Evaluation	It had been quite a while. So that was kind of nice too, for me. I liked hearing kind of how much they were getting out of it. I like going on field trips and stuff too. It's nice to get out of the classroom and kind of change things up a bit. I just remember feeling really happy listening to the things that they were saying to each other and how happy they were about it. That made me feel good.
Coda	I'm coming to school and I'm having a bad day. Seeing students that are in a really good mood kind of brings my whole mood up. I'm able to kind of look past any negative feelings that I might have. I'm kind of mirroring that emotion. I'm seeing them be happy and that makes me feel good too.
Evaluation	I don't think it was the first time I had been out with a big group. I had done things that were a little more kind of usual.

	I can't remember whether we went to the Butterdome craft fair. I had done some of that stuff like outside of the school context. I hadn't really been out with a big group of people that I know, for a long time. I hadn't really been in that sort of dynamic. I had been in crowded places. I hadn't been, like, somewhere with a big group of people. That was a bit different. It felt almost kind of strange.
Complicating Action	I was with all the other grade six teachers. There'd be six of us on the field trip. I was sitting with a group of teachers outside of the school in such a kind of normal type of setting
Evaluation	It just felt weird. It definitely felt a little bit strange. Over the course of the pandemic, it had almost become so normalised in my mind not to. It wasn't as if I was like, necessarily anxious, like, I need to get out with a group of people. Once I was there, I'm like, "oh, yeah, like, this is nice." It's interesting how fast a new way of living I guess becomes so normalised in your mind.
Resolution	It felt like it was just nice to get out and do something normal. Overall, it was, again, nice to have that sense of kind of doing something that we had done before and feeling a bit more normal.
Episode 9: Freedom from Exams	
Orientation	I'm not really a big standardised test person in a lot of contexts. I think they're okay in certain contexts but overall I feel like there's a lot of pressure and stuff. I feel a lot of pressure. I know the students feel a lot of pressure with standardised tests. That was kind of an interesting dynamic for me personally.
Complicating Action	The first year, once PATs were cancelled, it was close to the end of the year.
Evaluation	I don't feel like that had a big emotional impact on me.
Complicating Action	The second year when there were no PATs, we were bouncing back and forth.
Evaluation	Aside from the actual covid restrictions, I felt like I could take more time to do things that I wouldn't normally do.

	I didn't feel like I was being pressured for a standardised test. I could take more time on a unit, or discussions. It was a little more positive for me. I enjoyed that aspect of it.
Resolution	I think I had a little bit more freedom to address student interests and not worry about them having to know this specific thing for the standardized test. There was a little bit more freedom involved.
Episode 10: Pandemic News	
Orientation	I was one of those ones who, when they had those daily briefings, I would always make sure I'd watch the recording. I wanted the information of how many cases, how many deaths. It became this fixation that I had.
Evaluation	Just being able to get through the teaching side of things and the professional side of things, I had to not get into too negative of a headspace and keep obsessing over cases going up by 25 yesterday and thinking about it. It's going to happen whether or not I'm watching and tracking the numbers daily or not.
Complicating Action	I had to kinda let that go after a bit for my own kind of mental wellbeing. That was partway through the second year of covid.
Evaluation	I just remember that sense of anticipation, waiting for the briefing. What is she gonna say today and how many cases is she gonna say? What does that mean for me and teaching? I would look at it and think okay, cases doubled. Okay, now I don't know what's gonna happen with the classroom. Maybe with teaching, I felt more connected because everything that happened in the pandemic affected what was going to happen in the classroom. People who work from home in an office job, maybe didn't have that same sense of unpredictability because they work from home. With teaching it was more like, okay they're back in the classroom, now they're not, now they're gonna keep students home before Christmas break, that sort of thing. Everything just changed so much.

Betty

Episode 1: An Anxious Build to Resentment	
Orientation	I'm gonna start from the very very beginning. Before we even had school closures and that. Of course, we knew it was coming. We were, of course, listening to the news at home. There was so much talk, so much unknown. We kept thinking, well you know, we're in a small community. We're listening to the bigger centres. We were paying attention. I think at the very beginning we almost felt, would it really hit us? Would it affect us? I think at the very beginning, we were very naive to it. It was happening to all these bigger centres, Toronto, you know. It seemed like all the bigger cities.
Complicating Action	It started to filter in. We didn't have anybody diagnosed with covid right away. All of a sudden we started to get a lot of kids with very bad symptoms.
Orientation	I love teaching. I teach grade two. [I] had an awesome class at the beginning, and actually all the way through. I'm immunocompromised. I have Crohns. I had experienced health issues. Initially I was on really heavy medications to control the Crohns, crazy steroids. On top of all that, I'm asthmatic. There were so many factors. I really started to worry.
Complicating Action	Watching kids even though they weren't diagnosed with covid, or we didn't know if they were or not. We didn't have any of the kits at the very very beginning. We started to watch these kids coming into school. I really really was zoned into the kids that if they had a sniffle, if they were sneezing, if they had a slight cough. The cases kept building. No one was wearing masks yet.
Orientation	We have one male and he's our administrator. We love him to pieces. He's very good. He was the one who was kinda running the show.

Complicating Action	He said, "listen, if you feel that someone is in your classroom that is sick that shouldn't be here, you know we're gonna phone to get them to go home." Days went on.
Evaluation	I'll never forget that one experience. One of the times [I felt angry] definitely. I can remember this little boy, and he's, like, a really nice kid right.
Complicating Action	The one little boy came in. He was so sick. He was just coughing, barking, coughing, barking. He was just coughing and coughing and coughing sicker than a dog. We had very strict guidelines. I went to the administration. I said: "Listen, you know what, I'm gonna call it because he's coughing." He doesn't have a mask. He's runny nose. He's laying his head down at the table. Nothing was done. The admin said that they had phoned, there's no reply back.
Evaluation	That I thought was bullshit. I felt that the principal was intimidated to phone the parent. She was quite a wild card, really quite a wild card. I became very frustrated.
Complicating Action	I was texting and tried to contact them. No reply, no reply, no reply. I talked to [the student] a couple of times. We were doing a special activity, and it was something fun. The next thing was that we were to remove him from the classroom. I sent him out in the hallway. I put him at the table outside of the classroom He's still coughing, coughing, coughing.
Evaluation	I thought, Oh, my God, this kid is so bloody sick, and having to sit outside of the classroom. On top of it all, watching us all doing the fun activity. I was just so upset, and furious. [The student is] sick. We've got to get going on this.
Complicating Action	I'd been back and forth a couple times. [My admin], I don't know, maybe he hadn't phoned yet. I kept saying, like, no one like, God, we've gotta phone, like, we've got to. That was the first time I actually broke down and I cried.

Evaluation	I was so angry. I can remember being reduced to tears. I thought, Oh, my God, you know, when I've taught for how many years and this is going to make me cry? I just thought, no one is listening. I'm immunocompromised. I've got asthma. No one is phoning. All these things that we supposedly have in place. Nobody ever had to act on it. I'm going to be stuck here with these kids that are so sick. What will happen to me if I get covid? That was kinda the start. That was still in the initial stages. We, you know, just kinda continued through. Everybody was scared. Everybody wondered, would we be able to fight it? What is it going to do to us? Parents are sending their kids to school Your relationship with a parent once you phone them saying, "Hey, listen, you sent your kids to school, they're sick," that relationship with a parent would really disintegrate.
Complicating Action	We did eventually get a hold of Mom.
Evaluation	Mom was a real tiger. She was a real vocal, love to fight and argue. I was thinking he's scared to phone her. [I was] like literally reduced to tears. It was amazing how quickly that changed.
Complicating Action	She came to the door.
Evaluation	I am not confrontational. If I have to leave the cards on the table, like, I will. I don't go out to be confrontational.
Complicating Action	She came to pick up her son at the main doors. Nobody could come into the school. I thought, you know, I'm gonna go and talk to her and say, "Listen, like, these are the rules." I was all puffed up and ready to go out there and set her straight. She steps out of the car, out of her truck. She comes over. She's crying.

	She had been at a doctor's appointment. One of her test results had come back. There was a worry with her like, she was worried about these test results. Here she was dealing with, you know, really bad news from the doctor.
Evaluation	I was so scared that I had the potential of getting in a fight. There's a real ying-yang on that one for sure. I felt so guilty. I just felt like I was so self-consumed. Really, I hadn't even thought of the possibility. I was thinking all these other things. She's out shopping, going to have a coffee. She was definitely a no mask type of person. I think about the little guy with his mom crying. I think it made you stop and think. It's not just me out there trying to fight COVID and trying to fight the problems of the world. That helped to change some thinking, to get into perspective.
Complicating Action	When kids are sick, I still made a point. I would always kind of approach it like, "boy, I'm not sure." "I don't know if Sally was coughing like this at home." I tried to make it sound like, "oh, maybe you didn't realise that she was coughing like this at home, but boy, something's gone on and it's really picked up, her coughing at school." I would give them the benefit of the doubt. A lot of times, it's like, "oh, my gosh, no, she wasn't that way when they left for school."
Evaluation	Whether they faked it or not, who knew at that point. it kind of gave them an out too rather than backing them in a corner. No matter what, they're at school, so we're gonna have to deal with it. There's no sense being mad about it now. Oh, my God, seemed like every time you turn around, guilt about something, right?
Complicating Action	We're hearing all the horror stories in the hospitals through the news. That was kind of our main source. They were talking about people having to go in with COVID. Everything was getting really overcrowded. There could be no family visitors. They were basically on their own. We really talked about how devastating that must be to be so frightened and having to go on a ventilator, and not know that somebody was there with you. I heard those stories of the nurses or the doctors actually having to phone and

	contact the family members so that, you know, they possibly had to say goodbye. They really aren't gonna make it off the ventilator.
Evaluation	I just found that absolutely heart-wrenching. I can't imagine not having my family surrounding me, you know, if I needed them. That was some of the stories that really stuck with us. They just resonated with me. I can't imagine, you know, having to say goodbye on FaceTime. I was frightened to go to school. I knew I had to go to school. I just kept praying and praying and praying that something would happen that would get us online. I felt like that's what I could control. I would be safe.
Resolution	It was really really kind of wrestling around emotional-wise. I found that it really detracted from teaching and the message that I wanted to get to the kids. This sounds so horrible as a teacher: I resented the people that were sending the kids that were sick. I was resenting that we had to phone. I started to resent the kids that were sick. They couldn't help it. The colds and flus, things were going around. At the very beginning, a lot of frustration, really emotional, and resentment. We just couldn't fathom that people, that parents would send the kids.
Episode 2: Sadness at Societal Contention	
Orientation	We found that rural Alberta, freedom fighters, we were really up against. All the mask mandates came in and the sanitising and all of that. That really started to materialise. It still is a really contentious issue, and very contentious in the schools as well. It's a big thing in rural Alberta, the freedom fighters.
Evaluation	I was very emotional. I was scared, I was so scared. I thought, this is gonna be it. If I get it, it's game over.
Coda	I did get it. I thank God I had a milder form. I've gotten every shot imaginable that you can get, four shots.
Evaluation	It still leaves you with that uneasy feeling, like so scared that I'm gonna get it

	again. How many times can you sanitise when you're wearing the masks? It just shows you it's everywhere, no matter what. The germs are just everywhere. What's really hard is, my best friend out here is part of that conspiracy group. It was really interesting.
Complicating Action	At the very beginning, she was really scared too. On top of it all she's a smoker.
Evaluation	We were shocked actually. That really, was really contentious. It was very interesting. This is my kind of take on them.
Complicating Action	They really bought into Trump, President Trump. They started to follow all of those news feeds. Their Facebook started to overload with all of this conspiracy theory. They really felt that everything they were watching, THAT was true. They really felt that we were like sheep. They'd say, "You gotta stop! You gotta stop and think about this!" We've had some explosive arguments. Finally we had to get to the point that we had to agree to disagree. We went to social gatherings, like birthday parties. We cannot talk about it. Someone has to back down. We just cannot talk about it. They truly believe that we are putting poison in our body. We have a neighbour that feels that the injections are microchipping us. "They" are able to follow all of our movements and activities. "Big Brother" is watching us. It truly is all of the things you see on TV, that is out in rural Alberta. They have welded flagpoles into their back of their trucks, I'm not talking, not like those little Oilers flags that are on your window. I'm talking about huge flags that are probably the length of your kitchen table. [They're] flying behind them in the wind. They go down main street. We had an acquaintance that actually went to the big truck rally down in Ottawa. We had the big Fund Me pages so he could go and stay in Ottawa and fight the fight, and the cause.
Coda	It is alive and well. And STILL alive and well in rural Alberta. Now the big thing is they really feel that they've been stripped of their freedoms. The whole travel thing with your passport, if you were vaccinated or not.

	That literally sent them off the deep end. My girlfriend, totally off the deep end. Danielle Smith made that wonderful [sarcasm] comment about how she equated that to like racism. They're totally now into Danielle Smith. I said "Oh my GOD! I can't believe that she got in!"
Evaluation	Of course I'm a teacher. I hate Danielle Smith.
Complicating Action	I said "Oh my GOD! I can't believe that Danielle Smith got in, I mean, barely, but she still got in." [My friend] said "Yes! She absolutely should be in." She said "Why?! Why couldn't you like her?" I said, "Oh my god, her comment about the whole racism and how we were racist against [unvaccinated people]" She said, "Well, we were! I was not able to travel! I was shut down because I did not have a vaccinated card." [laughs] "And I could not travel." That's their thinking.
Evaluation	In a small town, you know everybody. We have never had a division in our town at all. you might have had people who are like kinda on the other side of the law type of thing. That was basically it. In a small town, everybody's basically the same. [COVID caused] huge divisions in our town. Huge divisions within our families.
Complicating Action	[The students] just regurgitated everything in our classes too. We do a Halloween parade. Everybody comes into the gym. Everybody from town comes. They all watch the kids parade around their halloween costumes. At that point, the Grade 1 and 2s, we go over to the [Seniors] Lodge and to the auxiliary hospital. We walk the kids over so they can go and see. There was a flu outbreak at the Lodge. They asked, "Listen, would you make sure like, we're gonna sanitize the kids when they come in, would you just make sure that they wear a mask?" We sent a note [home]. A little boy, not in my room–but in grade 1, said "ahhh, oh, oh no. I won't be able to wear a mask." His teacher said, "oh, well, you know we want to make sure the older people are safe." "They haven't been around little kids for such a long time."

	He said, "oh no, like, I won't be able to wear a mask." She said, "Just take the note home." In BOLD letters on his agenda, "He will not wear a mask." It was just all the way across his agenda in these big capital letters. The little guy still walked over. [His mom] still sent him on Halloween. He did do the school parade. He walked over. It was a chilly morning out here. It wasn't snowing. It was chilly. He walked over to the Lodge. He had to sit outside of the Lodge for, it must have been, 15-20 minutes. With an EA. So an EA instead of going in and visiting, had to stand out there with him. There was no way he would wear a mask in the Lodge.
Evaluation	When you're thinking of older folks, that's not even asking someone to wear a mask in the classroom. That's going into a building where they are so fragile.
Complicating Action	The parents did try, MOST of the parents I should say, did try to start to keep the kids at home. Time wore on. We were back and forth with teaching.
Evaluation	It was hard.
Complicating Action	Some of the parents' mindsets started to change. That's when things slipped. They started to slowly get into the whole conspiracy vaccination thing People were not getting vaccinated. You were being so careful with how you approach parents. You didn't really know.
Evaluation	Some people just absolutely shocked the hell out of you. They were conspiracy theorists, and freedom fighters. Other people that you kind of thought, oh, yeah, they're gonna be a freedom fighter. They were totally vaccinated. They were totally on board with everything. There was a lot of walking on eggshells. PR is huge. There was another element then. It was one thing to report on a kid's behaviour and to report on how they're doing academically. Their health becomes part of another conversation.

	It gets dicey. It's so personal. [It was] overwhelming. We found that we had to be really careful too.
Resolution	Depending on the parent, some of them almost felt judged. You had to make the call to say "listen, John has been coughing."
Coda	I often think, so how do they go to the doctor? How do they go into a clinic first of all? How do they go into a hospital to outpatients? That's our big thing. We mainly go to outpatients if you're sick or whatever. So what do you do? It's sad.
Episode 3: A Shock and Two Saving Graces	
Orientation	We went into the new year. That was when we were getting really close to the school closure. The majority of us were just so angry. We were angry that we were still having to deal with kids coming to school. By that point, we had already pulled out the masks.
Complicating Action	The teachers had started to wear the masks. We didn't have masks for everyone. Some of the kids did wear masks. That was before any of the mandates. [It was] before any of the masks were sent out to the school. Every single night we would go home. We would listen to you know, Jason Kenney and his report. And then of course, [we would listen to] the health reports.
Evaluation	It literally became the focus of all of our lives.
Complicating Action	In our schools, we were always just waiting and waiting. We got the mandate that we were going online.
Evaluation	We were just so shocked. We weren't prepared to go online. We had heard rumblings. It shocked us. We actually never thought that it was really going to happen. I don't think we ever really thought it was gonna get that bad out here. We were worried. I think it still shocked us. We couldn't believe it.

Complicating Action	We had to phone our [students'] parents. We had to contact our class lists. Everybody had phone lists.
Evaluation	There was just so much relief. This sounds so foolish. Oh my, thank God, I'm not going to die yet. I kept thinking, "Okay, if I get this [COVID] baby, I'm gonna die." I think that was kind of a relief. I was scared that we were going online. I was not techie. I thought, oh my god, I'm gonna be a dinosaur. I'm gonna fail these kids. I'm the shits on the computer. I was relieved. I'm gonna be able to stay home. I'm going to be safe now. I'm going to be safe in my own home. I was really torn between feeling safe and feeling scared that I wasn't gonna be able to do my job well enough.
Complicating Action	Then we went online. I had never set up a Google Classroom. My experience of computers was getting my class onto Raz kids. We would all log into Raz kids. We all did it together. I never had been on a Zoom meeting ever.
Coda	I hate Zoom meetings. I always feel like I look like I'm 400 pounds.
Complicating Action	The first week, we were just kind of on an island by ourselves. Everybody was so scared to do everything or to see anybody.
Evaluation	That was a very scary time, full of anxiety, a lot of anxiety. Before, like, if you want to go shoe shopping, if you want to do your schoolwork, just that human contact. My anxiety when we were first shut down, it blew my mind. We couldn't believe it. It was just really frightening. I would say really high anxiety, very frightened, and feeling that it was just me and my immediate family against the world.
Orientation	There's just me and my husband. My son was living very close by, like, a mile. There was always us together. How many people on the fringes like my Uncle.

	He lived three miles away, and he's 85. I had my daughter, who was 24 at the time. She was all the way in Edmonton with my mom, who was in her late 80s.
Evaluation	It just seemed like everybody was so separated. How are we going to keep them safe? I think it was a lot of anxiety at that time. Job-wise, we weren't sure really what we were expected to do.
Complicating Action	We still were not online with the kids. We said, "we need to check in every day." The first week was nothing. We were just kind of floundering around in our houses. Our admin team said, "You know what, we need to set up a Zoom meeting."
Evaluation	Everybody was scared. What the hell are we gonna do? People probably thought, you know, "she should be knowing technology." "Her kids should have been more adept at using the Chromebooks."
Complicating Action	We used Chromebooks. We did use Chromebooks. We'd all help them get on and we'd all help. It was not so much independent work as a lot of group activities, group research, all of those kinds of things. My kids were not adept either at logging on and doing all that by themselves.
Evaluation	We didn't know if we were gonna see them again. Everything was so up in the air.
Complicating Action	The kids in our class that we knew no one even had a chance to say goodbye. It took a while before we decided, "okay, you know what, we need to get paper packages together for these kids." A lot of our families around where we live don't have the Chromebooks. We all went in and we started making packages.
Evaluation	That became a big thing. Our staff is a little bit older. We've got some young teachers there, too. We thought, "oh my god, what are we going to do?" What are we going to send home? What are the parents gonna be able to handle? School was up in the air as well, like we just didn't know. We've never done anything online before.
Complicating Action	What do we do? We sit. At that point, nobody had a Chromebook at home.

	None of us had anything at all. Our admin team set up so that we would have to have a Zoom meeting. I think it was the second week, we started that. Every morning, we would get on at nine o'clock.
Resolution	That was our lifesaver. It was really interesting. We all taught together for a lot of years. We all know each other very well. It was really therapeutic. We could talk about feeling insecure, feeling very inadequate, feeling like we were failing our students. It was a chance for us to really kind of express our worries and our concerns and our fears. Some of those meetings, I tell you, they got really in depth. We had people crying. A lot of people were feeling very alone if they were single and didn't have families. It was just so good, to kind of talk about our days. I think it was really one of our saving graces.
Evaluation	What the hell were people going to do to prepare these paper packages? We knew we had to go back into the school. HOW are we going to go to school? We're still gonna be like, with all the germs. There was a few dinosaurs. I'm one of them there. We had to go and think, okay, what can these kids do on their own? How can we explain it to the parents to get them going so that they could do it? How are they going to come and pick up this work? There's all these little things that we have to solve. We got better.
Resolution	In a way THAT kind of saved us too. We had something to focus on. How the hell do you put up a Google Classroom? How do you add things to it? It became a real learning curve for all of us. That I think saved us too. We had something to do that you could take your mind off of everything,
Episode 4: Excitement Becoming Defeat	
Orientation	We got really into it. We set up zoom meetings.

Evaluation	Oh, my God, those damn meetings with the whole class.
Complicating Action	We had [laughs] this one family showing the cat right up into the camera. All the kids are going, "Oh, my God, look at the cat." You're trying to teach the lesson. We had one family, they would leave the mic on all the time. The mic was constantly on. So you have them screaming, "Aah!" The dad is swearing in the back.
Evaluation	It was a zoo. It was so funny, because you really got to see inside some of those families. It was hilarious. It was on display. It was so interesting, the family dynamics.
Complicating Action	[You were trying] to control everybody so they were watching the damn screen and whatever the hell you were doing. [You would] try to show them a math thing on the document camera thing. The parents would message you afterwards. Initially, it was like, "Oh, wow, we're on a computer and we're meeting on the computer." That was so exciting. It got old. It started to unravel. We still did it. We had some kids that just totally didn't come on. They would just do their package. The primary [grades], we offered paper packages all the way through.
Evaluation	People just found it was easier to sit at the table with them, rather than trying to get them online. We're on a farm. Some of us have good service, some of us don't. Some places have great service and some don't. It was interesting. [I felt] just kind of defeated. It was really hard. I felt a lot of anger towards the government.
Complicating Action	They really wanted to make sure that everyone was accountable. [They were] setting up schedules, which actually in the long run was a good thing. Initially, they first said, you'd have to basically be online with these kids all day and be accountable. [You need to be] showing a schedule of who you're going to see when you're going to see them.

	Like, when are you going to do your guided reading with that group? The directives came down.
Evaluation	I was thinking, you know, don't they trust us? We're professionals, right? We're not sitting on our ass watching TV at home. I kind of thought, "well shit, what the hell do they think we're doing?" That was kind of my thought processes at that time. On their side, they were trying to be accountable. Not everybody is a great teacher. I'm not saying I'm a great teacher. Not everybody is a good, responsible, conscientious person. We do have some flakes in there that are going to take advantage of some things. You always have the deadbeats no matter what job you're in. Our school's fantastic. First, being a small town, we really don't change our teaching staff that much. It was all hearsay. Of course, we really didn't know. Gossip, because nobody really knew for sure. I guess being their principals would, but yeah. We saw I think it was kind of rumour gossip. It sounds so vain. I wonder if you see it too. You're around a group of people. Whether you're around a group of people at school, or a group of people at work, you kind of know, the ones that bust their ass and the other ones that are there on a ride, you know? Innately you can figure out pretty fast, the people who are kind of skating by.
Complicating Action	We tried to do so many cool [activities], like a scavenger hunt for this concept. [We would] try to think of things that were a little bit out of the ordinary, something unusual that they could do at home, or they could take a picture of if we were doing 2 and 3D shapes, things like that.
Evaluation	It was hard. Some of the kids were great.
Complicating Action	Some of the kids loved it and bought into it.
Evaluation	When you're teaching in front of a group of kids, that really fires you up. I find if the kids are watching and they're interested, it just really kind of fires you up. [It] gives you that energy. Those lessons are just right on the money. It was hard.

Complicating Action	You got the cat staring at the camera. Some of them were just pumped and ready to share. You had the other guys that wouldn't turn on their bloody cameras so you can first of all see them, or even know what was going on. We had the kids that were right out to lunch.
Evaluation	It was kind of defeating. You felt like, "gosh, I'm doing all of this for what, what am I doing this for?" When you're in your school, you can control them. Most of the time you could control them. You could just STOP, and you could make sure that everybody's listening.
Complicating Action	Getting them to turn off those bloody mics was a killer. Some of them were like, "I don't know where." They have to get the parents to come and turn off the mic and turn on the camera.
Resolution	It was defeating in a lot of sense. You put so many hours into it. You couldn't control whether they were going to be with you or not. It seemed like in every classroom that, you know, parents were trying to work *themselves*. They were trying to get things done for their own jobs. They were great parents I think they were burnt out. Their kids home for that length of time, to get them to do homework. A kid at home a lot of times is a lot different than a kid in school. A lot of times they don't listen to the parents. They're whining and crying and won't do things that they're supposed to do.
Episode 5: "A Terrible, Terrible Day"	
Abstract	[I saw the students again] at the very end of the school year, not till the very end. That was a really emotional day.
Orientation	We had to pack up their stuff.
Complicating Action	Our EAs came in. We had garbage bags. We had to go through everything, like the shoes we had to find. It was in primary with all their supplies or extra supplies, all of that kind of stuff. We put them into big garbage bags. We had a pickup time where our admin was the only one that came in. Parents, last names ending from A-M would go in. That was our very first paper packages that we had ready to go.

	We walked into the gym. We had our pylons set up where we had to put our class.
Evaluation	It was so emotional. We could see all the garbage bags. We knew that we weren't going to see them again. That was a terrible, terrible day to just see that. At that point, we only had about probably 280 kids in our school. It was a really defining moment, I found. It was just very emotional. [It was] very sad, just so sad. We need a day where we can have some closure. We [needed to] give them a report card. We can say goodbye. It was really hard. That day was a horrible day too. Everyone was quite excited. We were all excited to see the kids. But what do primary kids want to do? Hug you.
Complicating Action	We had these tables. We stood at our boot rooms. We had to set it up. We had a table [in front of us]. The kids would walk up to you to say goodbye. We'd say "oh gosh, we're just gonna miss you so much." "I really can't hug you." "I can't hug you goodbye."
Evaluation	That was a killer. That was a killer day. Very emotional. Extremely sad. Extremely sad. That is devastating. It's a relationship and you have them for the majority of the day, the big chunk of the day. There was no closure. We did kind of a cool thing.
Complicating Action	They came to get the report cards.
Orientation	When our grade sixes leave, they go over to the Junior High and High school. At that time, we always did a 'clap out.' The very last day of school, the grade sixes come.

	Everybody's taught them. That's our last chance to see them. It's their last chance that they get to walk through the hallways at the school.
Complicating Action	Of course, the school's closed. We got a hold of all the grade six parents. We stood just with signs. The parents did a drive thru.
Evaluation	I mean, it wasn't the same.
Resolution	Everybody was crying. We held signs saying "congratulations," or "we miss you." We yelled and waved. They drove through and they honked the horns.
Evaluation	That was very emotional for the kids. It was very emotional for all of us too. It was a terrible time. It really was. That was a doozer.
Coda	When you think of COVID, COVID really stripped a lot of emotions bare. It really is amazing. I can see why there's so much anxiety. Many people are emotionally unregulated.
Episode 6: Control means Safety	
Orientation	My husband and I argued a lot about whether I should go back to school. I would have been in my late 50s. I'll be turning 60 this year. He said, "why are you putting yourself in this situation?" "Why are you going back?" I felt like I needed to. There had been so much time off, from March all the way through to June.
Evaluation	It's so funny. So much time has passed, like, God, can I still do this?
Orientation	We had troubles on the computer. Some lessons were good. Some were like, oh my God. I wanted to go back.
Evaluation	I thought, is this it? Is this how I'm going to end? Am I going to be retired?

	I haven't even finished really teaching.
Complicating Action:	He was worried that I was gonna go back. There were still so many ups and downs with COVID. I wanted to. That was the first time we could get our vaccinations. That was when we first started to get vaccinated.
Evaluation	I was worried. I was nervous. I was worried about things.
Complicating Action:	We had the sanitizer. We brought in the extra personnel to clean. We had people wiping doorknobs, wiping door jambs, everything. We had people coming into our classrooms and also in the hallways.
Evaluation:	I was nervous. I had the masks. I felt a little bit more confident that I could do it. I started maybe, to, you know, not get so snarked up about things. I think we felt safer. I think we felt that, you know, we could **fight** it more. We had more of a chance to fight it. We kind of felt like we had a little bit of a defence system. We started to get the shots. I started using the masks.
Coda	Still to this day I sure as hell, you know, oh my god, still hearing people that have COVID. It's still a worry. Honest to god, I hate the masks. I hate sanitising. I think those two years of COVID, I've been the healthiest I've ever been through flu season. It just seems like a lifetime ago.
Evaluation	The outside circumstances of getting our shot and mandatory masks made me less angry. I appreciated the mandatory masks. When they came to school, they had to wear the mask. Everybody had that. Everybody, I guess, felt they had that other layer of security. That kind of buoyed me. I thought okay, I can do this.

Complicating Action	I've got my mask on. We all bought these fancy chain things. We could take our masks off. We wouldn't ever have to touch it. My God, we were just buying those damn mask holder things from Etsy.
Evaluation	I was scared initially. I saw things happening in our school. I knew that I was feeling comfortable with a mask. I can do it with a mask.
Complicating Action	I just became more assertive in telling kids, "Nope. Okay, I need you to sanitise, you gotta go sanitise." "If I'm at the table, you gotta have a little mask on." We started to get the masks, and the sanitising.
Evaluation	I did feel safer. We were really strict by that point. There was no messing around.
Complicating Action	We had a policy. We had the steps set. If you had two or whatever of the symptoms, it was game over. We actually had a special room. They would sit there to come and get picked up. No one could come into the school unless you were a teacher or staff. We were phoning people. "He's coughed 10 times in the last minute" or whatever. You have to make the phone call. We were ultra ultra symptomatically. We are watching everything.
Evaluation	It's amazing that we didn't bring the old thermometer guns in there. I guess the office did have it.
Resolution:	There were no ifs, ands, or buts. It became a machine that worked. I did feel much safer by that point. It's sad that we had to have that kind of a machine moving through our school. In a way, it was so good. We were all working together. We all knew the expectations. There was no waffling of the admin or teachers. There was no bullshit. Nobody veered away from the rules and the symptoms. It was positive in that sense. [It was] sad in the other sense that we even had to.

	We were so strict. It was like a military type thing. It worked. It made everybody feel like we had control over it. We didn't really. It felt like we were controlling it. We were controlling with the masks. We were assertive with the masks. We were quite assertive. We had the power to phone home if they were sick.
Coda	We were really on it there for a while. It's amazing. It was a new normal, right? It just really became like a new normal.
Episode 7: Losing Parent Volunteers	
Orientation	We have always been big on parent volunteers. We have parent volunteers coming in. Of course, they loved to come into primary. We would have parents doing things like flashcards. You know, so much help. It was so much hands on. We really were able to use all these extra hands. It was really good for the kids. It was great extra practice, one on one practice with the kids. We had grandmas and aunties and everything coming in. It was the same throughout all kindergarten, grade one, grade two, and actually grades three and four, too. We're all in the same hallway. The grade fives and sixes hardly had that many parent volunteers. Everybody used to be so jealous of kindergarten, grade one, two. We had like a bazillion parent volunteers. We all thought, "oh, yeah, we're just so great down here."
Complicating Action	All of a sudden, bang. We have nobody. You don't have an EA in your room.
Evaluation	We thought, "oh my god, like, what are we going to do?" You still have all these little kids. There's only so much time you can give them. You still have to kind of keep them moving along. Initially, we felt really like, "oh my God, I'm not gonna be able to do this." I can remember feeling like, "oh my God, how am I going to do all this extra practising with the kids?"

Complicating Action	Time went on.
Evaluation	It was funny.
Complicating Action	We started to appreciate NOT having parent volunteers. There's some people in the hallway that watch you or listen to you teach, and appreciate all the things that you're doing. There's other people that seem to be able to find different things that they could comment on. If we had to haul old Johnny out into the hallway, and give him a talking to before, you're very aware of people listening. You could take them out and I mean you can still give him the what-for. You didn't have to worry about anybody else listening to you down the hallway. It was just the other staff.
Evaluation	You start to really think, "oh, you know what, it is nice not to have somebody." [You're] not having to run around to find jobs. You just focus on your kids. It pushed us to get our higher kids or "higher kids" or whatever, more independent. Our expectations, I think, have changed. We created our expectations of our classroom and our classroom climate. They had to work independently. They could do some jobs on their own. [We are] using technology in a really constructive way. They were already used to going on. They could do it by themselves. It was something that was engaging. I think it forced us to get creative. [We had to] think of other things that we could do that we didn't do before. It forces us to be more creative. [We have] to figure out different ways to do it. It's a positive change.
Coda	THAT has changed even our number of volunteers that we have this year. We used to say whoever wanted to come in, if you wanted to come in and there were five parents who wanted to come in on Tuesday afternoon, absolutely come on in. You would run your ass off and you'd find all these jobs. Now we're just saying, okay, like, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. We're going to alternate because I have three people. Those are just the dates that we're gonna use for volunteers.
Resolution	Now we know we could do it.

	We can do it without. We came reliant on the parent volunteers. We thought, "oh my God, I'm never gonna get through." "I'm never gonna be able to pull this group." You do, you just do. Because you got to.
Episode 8: "The World has Really Changed"	
Orientation	It's interesting. We started the year. Everything's normal. We have no symptoms. We have no rules.
Evaluation	It's been interesting. It's kind of yin and yang. It's still frustrating. It's frustrating. I don't get parents sometimes. You always have the people that consider us babysitters. You always have the people that consider us that.
Complicating Action	They're sending kids that are sick. We still phone. The kids are literally laying down their heads, dying on their desk. That's basically when we're phoning home.
Evaluation	It's not like we're counting coughs. It's just so interesting. Most parents are pretty good at coming and picking them up.
Complicating Action	They're coming, and by 9:30, they've got their heads down. They were probably like that at home.
Evaluation	There's some frustration. There's some parents that have slipped back into the old babysitting thing. I would say maybe 50/50. There's still people that are very vigilant. They maybe have loved ones at home. They want to take care of the colds. They don't want to spread it around. I would say it's 50/50. It's kind of frustrating that people slip back into the old groove. It was so funny.

Complicating Action	My husband said, "okay, are you gonna wear a mask?" I said, "Well, no, you know what, I've got all these shots for God's sake, I've got my fourth shot now." "I'm starting off without a mask." My asthma specialist asked if I'm going to wear a mask. "No, I think I'm gonna give it a whirl." "I'm still gonna sanitise." I started the start of the year. November 3, [laughs] it starts with a cough. I can't fight the cough. I'm on the steroids. Anybody else, that would be like a five day cold. It becomes 10 to 13 days for me.
Evaluation	I was disappointed.
Complicating Action	I'm back to wearing, I do wear masks now. I do not when I'm teaching at the board.
Evaluation	I like how my voice projects. I've got a loud voice anyways. I like how that projects when I'm at the board.
Complicating Action	I work with kids, one on one. I'm back to wearing masks. I'm actually telling them to sanitise. They're sniffing around and blowing their nose all over the place. We're also sanitising our desks more often.
Evaluation	We've kind of got back a little bit into it. I had high hopes at the beginning. I thought, you know what, I think I can do it back to normal. It's disappointing. I don't think I can.
Coda	Maybe it's because we've been so long with the masks and the sanitizer. My immune system is really low.
Evaluation	It was disappointing. It is nice to see the kids being able to come to school. It's normal. It's not in the forefront right now. At the time, everything centred around COVID. Every thought centred around COVID. Now it's more on the backburner. It's still there. It's not as strong, not as heightened, not as anxious.

	It drove us to be closer with, closer than we probably ever would have been. When you have to live with somebody, it's a different kind of relationship. Rather than going in to visit them for a few hours on a weekend. After the pandemic I think we still watch those kids come that are so sick. Maybe there's a little bit of judgmental business in there too. I think we're more judgmental in saying, "Why the hell would you be sending Sally to school, she's sick, ya know."
Resolution	We used to have segregated playgrounds. We had segregated bathrooms. Everything was so regulated. It's nice. They can have partners. They don't have to wear masks with a partner. It's nice to be able to see them to be able to be normal kids again. They're able to go to the gym. They're able to play tag or pass the ball. You realise how many things that you weren't able to do or you stopped doing. You were so worried that they're gonna get sick or you're gonna get sick. A lot of that you push it back in your memory. Sometimes you never really deal with it.
Coda	I really noticed a huge change in the kids. Anxiety is huge. Anxiety is a huge thing on our staff. I have anxiety too. You'd be surprised at how many women on our staff need to be on anxiety medication. It makes me sad. The world has really changed. We've lost a lot. [We've lost] our, you know, innocence. We were naive on so many things. As long as we ate healthy, and we were healthy, none of these things would happen to us. Everybody's always worried about the really ominous things that you can get. I don't think anybody thought a virus could do it.

Samantha

Episode 1: Grief and Loss	
Orientation	I teach grade one. I've been teaching grade one for five years now.

	I've really enjoyed it. COVID definitely sent it for a loop.
Abstract	I'm in grade one. I may have felt it more deeply. I think we had to adapt and make a few more changes.
Complicating Action	We first shut down in March. We knew that it was maybe a possibility. We were like, "they're not actually going to do that, are they?" We didn't really think that they would actually come to that. The kids were talking about it on that Friday, before everything shut down. They're like, "this bad virus is here."
Evaluation	It was interesting.
Complicating Action	We're all just like, "it's gonna be okay." "Don't you worry." "We're gonna do our best to take care of you." "Your parents are doing everything they can to take care of you." "We'll do the best we can to keep everyone safe." "I'll see you on Monday." We found out like that night. It was all just done.
Resolution	It didn't necessarily blindside us. [There were] lots of big feelings, when that happened. [There was] a sense of loss. [Loss and grief], that was probably the biggest feeling. The feeling that we weren't done. There was no closure to that school year. It was like, "But I'm not done with them." They're not **ready** to go to grade two. Look, I've got all of these lessons planned for next week. I have this unit where I just found this really cool art project to go with it. We're not going to get to do it. It was just a lot of unfinished business. [I was] just realising that this particular group of kids has now **lost** a third of their grade one year. I may be biassed as a grade one teacher. It's one of the funnest years, I think. They grow so much. They learn so much, and so much changes. They're just so proud of themselves, even with their reading. [You see] where they can go from the middle of the year to the end of the year. Those pieces finally click. They just take off.

	I'm just so disappointed that they didn't get to experience that. It was grieving the learning that they didn't get to do and the closure that we couldn't have and the celebrating of all of their great things. That's kind of probably the biggest feelings of loss and grief.
Episode 2: Social Changes and Boundaries	
Orientation	It felt like our whole world just really shrunk down to like our family unit. That's who we were around all of the time. The kids didn't have their activities to go to anymore. There was no youth group for them to go to. We weren't going out and having dinner at other people's places. We still have lots of friendships that we kept in touch with over text. We would still talk with the neighbours and things like that, too.
Evaluation	It wasn't completely on our own. It was important to keep cultivating those relationships. you didn't want to lose the people who value to you. We liked to have lots of people over for supper. We usually have one or two families over a month, at least, just to come and hang out.
Complicating Action	We weren't doing that anymore.
Evaluation	A lot of those things all just kind of got pushed to the side. It was just our tiny little group. I enjoyed it. It gave us more time together. I'm definitely more of an introvert than an extrovert. I was quite happy with all of the time that we were able to spend together. We didn't know what it meant. We knew that students were already anxious about it. We had no idea what was happening at that point in time.
Complicating Action	They heard parents talking. They heard all these adult conversations about something that they saw as big and scary. Their safe place where we told them we'd do our best to keep them safe was gone. I definitely think there was some [grief and loss] for the kids they lose those relationships, right, like their point of connection with their peers and their connection with the staff at school.
Evaluation	That was super hard to adjust to.

Complicating Action	We had a couple of weeks of just kind of sitting and waiting and not knowing what was going to happen.
Evaluation	Being told that we were online for the rest of the year was really tricky. We were so unprepared. What do you mean online? What is Zoom? How do we do this? We didn't have a very big toolbox. You lose that sense of connection with your colleagues. You don't see each other every day. You're not in each other's lives. That was part of it. I didn't lose my sense of purpose. It was more of a need to adapt and change it. It definitely changed what that looked like. I do feel like teaching and being in a classroom is my sense of purpose. I don't have a classroom. I don't have kids to teach. I have to try to figure out the other ways in order to find fulfilment in the same way, I guess. Some parts of it came easier than others. I really enjoyed making videos for the kids.
Complicating Action	[One video was] finishing the read aloud book that we had gotten halfway through. They didn't know how the story ended. "I'll just make some videos and post them so that you can listen to the last few chapters." "Ta-da, see how the story ends?"
Evaluation	It was good to learn how to adapt in those ways and just find other ways to do it. The purpose was still there, it was just how it was presented that changed. I'm a mom to four of my own kids. How now do I do this work-life balance?
Complicating Action	I have my own class. I have to be teaching. I still have four other kids at home. I need to be teaching. I need to get them on Zoom calls, and in the Google classrooms and Google meets.
Evaluation	Everything was all over the place. [I was] trying to figure out how to keep that balance. My boundaries, in a sense, almost got worse when I had kids at home.

	It was nice to have the flexibility to change them.
Complicating Action	I would do sort of my bare minimum during the day in terms of what I had to do for my job. I'd be available when I needed to be available. When I didn't have to be available, I wouldn't be. I'd be able to focus on helping my kids with their own schoolwork and their own learning and their own Zoom calls. My own kids are in bed for the night. That's when I would do all of the other stuff that I didn't get done during the day that I normally would have done during a day. I couldn't because I was helping my kids. We had staff meetings at certain times that I needed to be at. Of course I would go. There was stuff that could wait until after my kids were done for the day. [I would] do them after. I would work on marking and school and emails until 10, 11, 12 at night, sometimes.
Evaluation	In that sense, it was almost worse. It was worth the tradeoff to be able to spend the time with my kids during the day that they needed. It was nice to have that flexibility. My balance and boundaries were a lot more fluid because they were so intermingled. [I was] helping everybody who needed it. It would ebb and flow.
Complicating Action	There would definitely be some days where it was all day, every day. There would be some nights where I'm like, "you know what, I don't have anything that I need to mark tonight." Put it away. "Let's watch a movie or play a board game." Maybe two nights a week, I would be working quite late. The other nights, I would just shut it down at the end of the day. I'll do it tomorrow or, you know. It's definitely not like every night.
Resolution	It's enough. I feel like teaching is one of those jobs, that it's really easy to have it go above and beyond your regular work hours. I know there's lots of other jobs that do that, too. It's certainly not a job where you just show up to your job and then leave. There's so much extra that you have invested in it. Just makes it tricky to have those boundaries in place. [There was] a little more flexibility with it.

	Also just coming to realise, like, what is really important? Does this stuff have to happen tonight? Who's going to be disappointed if I don't get this done tonight? If the answer is six year olds, then they can wait. It was okay. It's more of the pressure I put on myself than anything. Parents were really reasonable about how long it would take to do things. Admin was good with having realistic timelines. A big part of that time too was helping parents navigate it. Parents didn't know what to do. Parents didn't know how to respond to this online shift initially as well.
Coda	I do think that's actually one of the positive things that has come out of it. We are much more equipped now. Now we're doing our parent teacher conferences on Zoom. It's easy to set up the meeting. Everybody seems to be handling that pretty well. I think it showed us new ways that we can tackle some challenges. I'm still at school, maybe 10 minutes before the kids and try and leave by 4:30. New isn't always better, for sure. I still quite don't know how I want to handle the shift to a lot of professional learning over zoom. The shift to professional learning in, "we're gonna host the workshop from four to seven o'clock tonight." We do have some access to sub funding. We get like $1,000 a year to put towards professional development. You can use some of that to pay for your sub to go somewhere. There's this little sub shortage. We can't keep and retain enough of them. They're not even offering [PD during the day]. It's really complicated. I'm not going to give up my evenings and weekends, and take **more** time away from my kids in order to do this. I also feel like, am I doing a disservice to my students, by not teaching and learning to be a better teacher. Not at the cost of my family. I've been excited to have a very firm work life boundary around that. That's not an option. This year we went back to in-person convention. There are a lot of people who wished it would have stayed online. You could go to so many more sessions. You could go back and rerecord and watch recordings of other things. If you popped into a session, and it turned out to be awful, or not what you expected it to be, then you could discreetly leave a Zoom call and go jump on another one instead of standing up in the middle of a room of people and walking out the door.

	There was one session at convention this year, all about structured literacy, which is a huge push in early elementary right now. It was in a conference room that held maybe 25 people. There were 125 people who had already clicked off just on the scheduling app that I'm interested in, I want to attend this one. We tried to go and we couldn't. If this was over Zoom, you could have easily accommodated all of us. We could have been a part of it. It was nice to see people. It was fun to shop at the vendors and stuff. Pros and cons there.
Episode 3: Colleagues Chipping In	
Orientation	Our school is pretty big. It's only K-4 We have 600 plus kids. This year we have like six grade one classes. It was really nice to have a group that we could work together with.
Evaluation	What are we doing this week? Have us all make sure that we do the same math assignment. It was a really nice shared responsibility.
Complicating Action	Lots of times we would meet. We got to our meeting Let's do the same literacy assignment. One person would offer to make the video. Another person would do a read-aloud. Everybody had already kind of chipped in and done something. We'd be like, "Oh, look at that, we're done."
Evaluation	It made it a lot easier to kind of share that load. I was thankful that we didn't have, you know, a bunch of individual things that we had to do.
Complicating Action	My colleagues all knew that I had four kids at home. They were like, "You just worry about surviving at home and keeping them." "We've got so much stuff we can throw together and do."
Evaluation	That was really nice. That felt super supportive, actually. That was really good. It made it easy to want to try to chip in, right.
Complicating Action	We were almost trying to race each other to see who could be the first to put together the assignment for the next week.

	They're like, "Oh, but you did so much of it last week." "Let me take a turn and let me contribute and do it."
Evaluation	It was awesome. It really built, I think, our sense of teamwork and our cohesiveness as a group. It was tricky. Our expectations for the kids was so much lower than what we would have expected had they been in class. We didn't even know what we were doing necessarily. That was a lot of learning for them to lose for March, April, May, June. That's still a GOOD chunk of the school year. In grade one, there's so much for them to do and learn. You can't make that up by doing a choice board of different activities at home. They need so much direct and explicit instruction that we tried our best with.
Complicating Action	We had some families that were just completely non-responsive. The kids did no schoolwork at all during those four months. We had some that were WAY too over-involved. You're getting back journal writing from these grade one students. "Wow, look at that, you know how to spell beautiful mountains perfectly now." "A month ago, you still couldn't spell, like, your beginning sight words."
Evaluation	That was tricky. [I was] seeing what is actual student work versus parents work. I do like that we did our best. That's all anybody could really ask for at that time.
Resolution	Our admin was supportive of that. [They] gave us, you know, good boundaries and reasonable guidelines of what that needed to look like. That was good. It was just so nice, that feeling of you're not knowing that you're not alone in something. So having that community, where we knew we had each other's backs.
Episode 4: "We didn't do as well as we had hoped"	
Orientation	We went back in person next year. I felt anxious. We're back in person. We don't know what this is gonna look like.
Complicating Action	They took away our carpets. We were not allowed to have anything soft that could breed germs.
Evaluation	That was the hardest thing.

	Everything had to be wipeable and cleanable. It was really hard. We know that the environment that we built for those kids was not the best, most conducive environment for learning. They're not going to learn sitting by themselves in rows, in desks all day long. That's what it was the whole time that I went through high school. That's what you did. You sat there. You took notes. You wrote your exam. I know it's not necessarily all like that anymore. A lot of it is.
Complicating Action	You can't sit together with a partner and play a phonics game. You can't play a math game to practise your skip counting. There's so much collaboration in the primary grades. That was taken away. We had to get incredibly creative with how we tried to do that. They're telling us that we need to teach these kids in rows.
Evaluation	That's not how they learn. Maybe in grade four, you can stick them in rows. They can sit there and do their independent work. **So** much of grade one is social. It's really tricky. That makes it super hard.
Complicating Action	We were masked as well. We're working on letter sounds and mouth formation. They can't see any of it. You're all muffled. They can't hear you clearly. I certainly could not hear them clearly.
Orientation	I have mild to moderate hearing loss. I wear hearing aids. I had no idea how much lip reading I did.
Complicating Action	All of a sudden I couldn't see any kids' mouths ever.
Evaluation	The masking was really tricky too. We could take it off if we were a certain distance away from all of the kids. That's pretty hard to do too.
Complicating Action	You're trying to teach them about the difference between the letters TH and F. They often get those sounds confused.

	"TH, you have to stick out your tongue." "Look at how I'm doing this." They couldn't see that. I couldn't catch them if they were making mistakes of that.
Resolution	I feel like there were lots of things that we maybe missed. [We] certainly didn't do as well as we had hoped that we would have done as a result of all of that.
Episode 5: Bending the Rules	
Orientation	We were told certain things one day. It changed. "No, actually, you can't do that." There were so many different policies and procedures. You'd set up your classroom. You'd be like, "Oh, wait, but you can't do that." Desks all need to be facing forward three feet apart. It was so uncomfortable.
Complicating Action	There were so many times that we were asked to pivot to do something. We can't do that anymore. Let's switch that. You can't do that anymore. Now you've got to change it. You have to try and just say, "Oh, no, they've told us that this needs to change."
Evaluation	If we had a theme word, it was just "pivot pivot pivot." You never knew when they were going to change it. You never knew when they were going to update some procedure. It was tricky. We had so many things to try to listen to.
Complicating Action	Not everybody within our school community adhered to it, to the same extent. We'd have our grade ones sitting in rows in their desks facing forward, three feet apart. You'd walk down another hallway. You'd see one of the grade two classes with their desks in a horseshoe. "I thought I wasn't allowed to do that."
Evaluation	It certainly didn't do anything to strengthen school culture. "How come she's doing that?" "I can't do that." She couldn't do it. She just didn't care. [She] did it anyway, for the benefit of her kids.

Complicating Action	She's like, "well, they're still facing the same direction." She got her hand slapped.
Resolution	I think everyone was doing it with good intentions. How could we bend these rules in order to make it as beneficial for the kids as possible? Some of them were super hard to work through.
Episode 6: Reaching a Point of Rest	
Orientation	We want to have the kids at rest, at school. We want schools to be a spot where they've got their clear expectations. They can settle. They can just drop their shoulders. Whatever's going on at home, you can just come to school. They can be at rest. These are like six year olds. They want to hug you. They want to hold your hand. They want to be as close to you as possible. You're their safe person while they're there.
Complicating Action	The teachers aren't at rest. How can we expect the kids to be at rest? All of the teachers were on edge. You're on edge about kids in your classroom coughing and sniffling. You're on edge about having to send them home. You're on edge about having parents upset. They have to leave work or find somebody else to come take care of their kids. You're stressed with sub plans. At first it was kind of like, "Ooh, don't touch me." "We're not supposed to break this six foot bubble!" We were lining up. You have to be able to stick your arms out like zombie arms. You have to have a bit of a bubble between you and the person in front of you. "Walk down the hall so you're not too close to the person in front of you."
Evaluation	It was ridiculous.
Complicating Action	We're told we need to try to spread them out. They're still touching the same doorknobs. They're still exchanging the same home reading books. Agendas are still going home and coming back.
Evaluation	There were restrictions on so many things that we couldn't do. This isn't gonna make a difference.

	It's gonna do what it's gonna do. That was tricky too. You're just never knowing. We're all gonna end up getting it. When's my turn? That underlying stress and anxiety that never went away is exhausting. It's pretty deep rooted in just who I am. I don't think it's something new. It's something that I have often struggled with in the past and just kind of a little bit of who I am hardwired to be. I can see it very prominently in one of my kiddos. I can also see it quite prominently in my mom and my sister as well. It's definitely, definitely, hardwired in there.
Complicating Action	You work all day. You're just in that heightened state. You're not at rest. The kids aren't at rest.
Resolution	I'm going to give these kids hugs, if that's what they need. If that's going to be what helps them feel safe and settled and secure, so be it. That is more important to me, than making them feel rejected and asking them to stay out of my space. These are six year olds. They don't get it. They don't need to. It's taken a long time to get to a spot where we feel like we're at resting.
Episode 7: Conflict with Parents	
Abstract	It was interesting. [Teachers were] that point person for parents. They had frustration about decisions that were being made by the school board. You were the first one to face it. You have to deal with it.
Orientation	Most of the parents were fantastic. There's always a few that make things really tricky. That dynamic is kind of there all of the time. [It was there] certainly around the masking mandates. That was a big one. That didn't bring out the best in some of the parents that we had to deal with. The majority of them wore them. They were fine. There was one that wasn't.

Complicating Action	This little guy went for a medical exemption.
Evaluation	At first the medical exemption form for the masking was just that parents just had to sign a form saying my kid doesn't have to wear a mask. That's my choice as a parent.
Complicating Action	He filled out the form. We went on with our year. They changed the expectations. Oh, well, now we have to do this. I thought we were not doing this anymore. Now we have to do this. It became an AHS approved masking thing to get out of. [The parent] got him an appointment at the doctor. The doctor signed off. No, he doesn't have to wear one.
Evaluation	It doesn't matter to me. You do what you need to do.
Complicating Action	That period between when they changed the masking exemption and when he could get into the doctor's appointment was about a week. He was supposed to wear it for that week. I'm supposed to now enforce this to a parent who is very adamant that he doesn't want it. [He] made it very clear. "My child will be going to the doctor." "He will not be subjected to all of this!" It was like the first day he was trying to wear one. He's going, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." I'm like, "well, you can, you can breathe." "I promise you, you can breathe." "I know it's uncomfortable." I said, like, "Look, everyone else has them on." "They figured it out." "It does take some getting used to." "I understand that you're uncomfortable." I said, "if you want, you can go to your desk." "Take off your mask." "Take a little breather."
Evaluation	His desk was literally like the first row of desks beside my carpet. He was no more than four or five feet away from the rest of the class. I don't even think he would have been that far away.

Complicating Action	"So you can totally go sit there." "Take a quick breather." "When you feel more comfortable, come right on back." "I'll still turn the book so you can see the pictures." "We're just listening to a story." "You'll be okay." "I promise." "Have a drink of water." "We'll keep going." The parent sent an email to my principal that night. His child had been mistreated and segregated in the classroom based on this masking issue.
Evaluation	No, he wasn't mistreated. He wasn't segregated. He was given an option to help him feel more comfortable. The parent didn't bother to come and talk to me about it. He didn't bother to send me the email first. He just went over my head straight to my principal.
Complicating Action	He went off on an extra rant about masking. "It's completely useless." "Vaccines are terrible." "If the school board ever decides that they need to vaccinate my kid against my wishes…"
Evaluation	[It was] so far above and beyond. You're dealing with that kid. You're walking on eggshells. What is he going to say?
Complicating Action	He would be fine all day. He would go home. He would cry about how hard it was. Dad would get stirred up. He would bypass me. He would go straight to the principal.
Evaluation	You can't win. What are you supposed to do in those types of situations?
Resolution	It eventually got to the spot where I emailed him. You have a concern with something that is happening in the classroom. You need to come to me first. I'm the one who spends the day with your child. I can clarify anything for you that needs clarifying. Our principal is busy.

	She doesn't know what's going on in here. You need to stop here first. I didn't hear very much from him for the rest of the year.
Coda	Conflict is certainly not my favourite thing. I'm definitely not super comfortable with it. I'm getting better at dealing with it.
Episode 8: Balance through Choice Boards	
Orientation	I wouldn't say teaching during COVID was easier. I would just say it was different. Your time was spent with other things. That's another thing with the pivot, pivot, pivot, change, change. If anybody is in your household now you have to be away from school for two weeks. If anybody in your class tests positive, then everybody goes online.
Coda	That's not a rule anymore. Now, it's only if you have a certain percentage of your class that tests positive.
Complicating Action	All of those kids are away. You have the parents who are emailing: "What did we miss? What do we need to work on?" Do we have to set up and do the whole Google Classroom thing? Are there other options that we can do that will help us to still meet the needs of these kids? We'd have parents who'd be like, "Oh, we're out for the next two weeks, what are we going to be working on?"
Evaluation	There's no way you can communicate everything in every lesson that you're going to do. Even if you did, the chances of them doing it was tiny. It's like, anytime a family goes to Disneyland for two weeks. They want to take a bunch of schoolwork with them. It's never done, it never comes back. It's not worth the effort to try to do that. Our admin was really good in recognizing that that's an unrealistic ask. We really appreciated that.
	We ended up just making a bingo board with a whole bunch of different literacy and math activities. "Go to the choice board, pick two or three things a day." You can always work on your home reading. You can always practise your sight words. You can always write in a journal. Give them those basics to keep them always doing something.

Resolution	The choice boards were really helpful with finding a good balance of still providing work for people when they were away, but not having to do it all.
Episode 9: Awkwardness and Discomfort: Where can I eat lunch?	
Orientation	I remember when everything was just kind of getting going like way back at the start. We had to have our distanced staff meetings. We would literally be standing in rows, six feet away from each other. It was usually just like "everyone pile out in front of the office, here's your two quick announcements that I didn't want to send over email." "Off you go,"
Evaluation	That was just so bizarre, to like, stand six feet away.
Complicating Action	Somebody, of course, would cough or sneeze. Everyone would look to see who it was. They're like, "I promise I'm not sick."
Evaluation	There's just so many awkward social things.
Complicating Action	They shut down the staff room. They didn't want us gathering.
Evaluation	That was a big thing. What's the point?
Complicating Action	We all stand around in the hallway and talk to one another. That frustrated lots of people. You put in all of these policies. We're not allowed to eat in the staff room. We're gonna go eat in the hallway. It's not going to stop us from being around each other. We all work in the same building. We breathe the same air. We touch the same everything. Some people would just eat in their cars. If it was nice, go eat outside. Honestly, we had some tables in the hallway, like some horseshoe tables, where we do breakout groups for some of the kiddos. We'd all just end up sitting around those together anyway.
Resolution	What benefit comes from taking away our lunch tables? It was hard to lose the space where it was like, safe to be away from students.
Complicating Action	You're still eating. Now we're eating lunch in the hallway.

	You will see half your class walk by and go use the bathroom. They want to say hi and come look and see what you're eating. They want to hug. You're like, "Okay, go back, eat your food."
Resolution	There is no space where teachers can really just kind of let down their guard and be comfortable.
Episode 10: Frustration at missing out	
Orientation	It's stressful enough thinking about how I'm going to meet the needs of all these kids in a classroom environment that I know is not optimal. We've taken away all of the fun stuff. There's no more tasting different types of food when we do our science unit on the five senses. [We were] learning about things that are sweet, salty, bitter, and sour. Now we're just going to talk about it and watch a video instead of eating unsweetened chocolate and sucking on lemons. We took out all the fun stuff. End of year, grade one, we always go to the zoo. We couldn't.
Evaluation	It is too bad. It's interesting. It's hard to bring that stuff back now. We've gotten out of the habit of doing [laughs] fun stuff. You realise how much work it can be to sometimes put those things in. We haven't done it for a couple years. Maybe their siblings don't remember. They won't tell them about all of that. It's easy to kind of get lazy. It's interesting, for sure.
Complicating Action	You're not playing as many games. You don't have those opportunities to learn how to be a gracious winner and a gracious loser. They didn't have nearly as many opportunities to learn how to socially interact with each other. At the start of grade one, we do so much free play and centres. I mean, I still do it a lot. "Okay, well, yeah, you're both fighting over the train tracks. What are you gonna do about it? How can you be kind to one another? How can you solve the problem, so you're both happy?" They never had to do that.
Evaluation	I hated our centre time.

Complicating Action	We made 30 individual little dollar store bins, with things in them. They had to take them to their desks and play with them by themselves. they would each have to take like their own stupid little bin to their desk and play by themselves. It's like, "you get the beads and the rope this week." We had to write it down on the charts. That's their centre for the whole week. "You get a bin of Lego." "Don't worry, I have three of them." "You can also have a bin of Lego to take to your desk."
Evaluation	How is this fun? For anyone? That's not centre time. There's no social emotional growth happening when you're sitting by yourself building pictures on elastics and geoboards. That was tricky. [We were] feeling that conflict of, this is not how we were taught to be good and effective teachers. This is how I'm being told I need to be teaching right now. The two don't jive with each other. We need to do calendar. We need to sit on the carpet together. Frustration would be part of it. Disappointment? Yeah. You couldn't share it with the kids. They needed to think that this is just great. "Hurray, look, I got to take a bin to my desk, how fun." You have to mask it. You couldn't share that with the kids. You really couldn't even share it with parents. You had to put on your professionalism and do what you were asked to do. I understand why they asked us to do what they did. I really do think people were doing the best that they could with any information that they had at the time. You just kind of do what you have to do.
Complicating Action	You're trying to do a read-aloud. You're like walking up and down the rows so everybody can see your book.
Evaluation	That's not fun, either.
Complicating Action	We ended up resorting to doing most of our read-alouds over YouTube. We were watching stories online.
Evaluation	I think it's fantastic. I have way more, like, such a wider range of access.

	It's not just the books that are on my shelf. We can look up any topic we want. We can listen and watch the same author for two weeks and see all of their different stuff. We can kind of do an author study almost. I maybe don't have all of those things in my classroom.
Complicating Action	After lunch: here, you're gonna watch a story on YouTube. That'll give me 10 minutes, just five minutes, whatever. I can kinda make sure to take that breather and get everything all ready to go.
Evaluation	That's opposed to actually sitting on the carpet together and having a rich literacy experience together, where we're building vocab.
Coda	Now, it's easy to keep just throwing on YouTube books. This isn't the best example for them I need to model for them. I need to, you know, teach them things. It was easy.
Complicating Action	Last year, we finally were able to go to the zoo at the end of the year.
Resolution	It is nice now. Things seem to be back to normal. Last year, our grade fours went on a couple of field trips. The teachers were like, "they were out of control." "They had no idea what to do." They've actually never been on a field trip. They missed out on all of those other experiences too now. They don't know how to sit on a bus for a half hour and be bored and be okay with it. How to behave when you're out in these unstructured environments. They were so excited to go.
Coda	Next time, we're gonna have to do a little bit of pre teaching on what this needs to look like. It is so foreign.
Resolution	There were way more kids who didn't do kindergarten. There are at least a handful, like a solid five or six of them in each class that didn't do kindergarten the year before. You have these kids coming into grade one who have no concept of school. They've never been away from their parents. They've been home through all of the COVID stuff. That was a huge adjustment for them. It really came down to how much parents had worked with them beforehand.

	Whether or not you're getting kids who come to school who don't even know how to hold a pencil and a pair of scissors. You could tell the ones whose parents were like, well, we're staying home from kindergarten but we're pretty much doing our own. They could come in sounding things out and know their letters. It was a real range of kids.
Coda	The range of kids that you see in a classroom used to be smaller. You'd have maybe a few outliers on each end. Now it's just like you see everything under the sun.
Complicating Action	[There's something about] doing a morning message on the chart paper every morning at the carpet. I was having them come in and seeing them, like beeline to it. They would stand there and go, "oh, look, I know that word, we practiced that word last week!"
Coda	I didn't do morning message at all this year. We're not sitting on a carpet and it's not… There were so many little aspects of community building that were lost. Sometimes we have to go back to them. I remember I used to do that a couple years ago. We really should do that again. It just gives me a chance to, like, really think about why we do what we do. To remember, all of these positives. I can't wait until I get my carpet back. I'm going to make the most of it. We're going to do extra centre time next year when the kids **can** play together. I see the value so much more in giving them that play time.
Episode 11: Grumbling	
Orientation	A lot of the emotion, you could share it with your team, with the teacher across the hall. you could go grumble and complain and go, "this sucks." I just needed somebody to hear me out and know what I thought about something. Back we go. This is what we got to do.
Evaluation	In that sense, I didn't have to mask what I was thinking about things to a few select colleagues who I knew I could trust, and were a safe place. Some other colleagues, who were more arm's length, I wouldn't have been as vocal with them. You don't want to come across as "Oh, that's the one that grumbles and complains about everything," right? I don't think I am a grumbler about everything.

	We all have our moments. It just needs to be heard. Usually, I'm pretty positive about things. It's really interesting to see how much the people around you can impact that.
Complicating Action	One of the ladies that I worked with last year, she was on the verge of retiring. She was very much like, "that's stupid." "I'm not going to do that." "I've been teaching for 30 years." "Now they're going to expect me to start building a digital portfolio for my students." She's like, "That's ridiculous." "I'm not going to write."
Evaluation	It's really easy when somebody shares their perspective to let it influence your perspective. I find sometimes I'm getting a little crabby or and grumpier than I would maybe like to be, when it comes to that stuff. It's also tricky. I feel like they're constantly putting more on our plate. I think everybody is just tired and worn out. Our resources are not unlimited.
Complicating Action	We're gonna get grumpy and frustrated when: "Well, yeah, build these digital portfolios." "You should be posting at least one or two things online every week, so that parents can have real time reporting and know exactly where it is." "Four times a year, you have to fill out these learner profiles and give me data on all of your students' reading levels, their sight words, levels, their spelling of sight words, plus their words their way inventory." On top of all of that, "there's this other thing that we need you to do and fill out the spreadsheet." You're just like, "why can I not just teach these kids?" We need to make a behavior support plan for this kiddo who is now losing his marbles. Something is not as easy as he wants it to be. "Can you fill out more paperwork?"
Evaluation	Or I could just get down and play Lego with the kid and meet him where he's at, and go from there instead of more and more paperwork. There's so many other things that kind of come at us and kind of suck that little bit of joy out of the time that you actually get to spend with the kids. I do think it's gotten worse [as a result of the pandemic].
Complicating Action	The first year, they were really gracious with us. I think they're like, "Okay, I know that was hard." "We're way behind for all of these kids."

	"We need you to work extra hard to get them caught up." "They're all behind." "We need to do all of these extra things." "Oh, but good job. Thanks. We appreciate you." There's a lot of language that says, "we appreciate you and take care of yourself and your mental health comes first." "Here's a spreadsheet." "Please fill this out by Friday."
Evaluation	I'm sure it serves a purpose for somebody somewhere. It doesn't necessarily serve a purpose for me in the classroom.
Resolution	I can tell you exactly which of my three kids are reading way below grade level, who are really struggling with retaining their phonics. I can tell you which girl still doesn't know her numbers to twenty. I can also tell you which kids are excelling and are just taking off. I can tell you that without having to give them a 40 word spelling test on whether or not they can spell sight words. A lot of our instructional time just gets backed up doing assessments. There's a big push that we have to identify all these kids who need support and get them caught up. That's just on you to do. I don't know how to help these kids. I don't have any EA time this year. I have some that would definitely benefit from it. I can either grumble and complain about it and nothing changes. Or we can just go "okay, well, let's just do the best that we can."
Coda	I'm sure we've all grumbled a lot over the last few years about things here and there. We should say, "you know what, this wasn't too bad." We've figured this out, we adapted here, we were able to make this change. Trying to have that positive mindset. Things might suck right now. Here are the benefits of it, right. Just trying to put a positive spin on it.
Episode 12: Connecting with Students	
Orientation	We do a science unit on the needs of plants and animals. I physically mailed a packet of seeds to each of the kids. "Let's see how they grow. You can send me pictures." We tried to really keep that communication open to let them know that we're here. We're still here. If you need us you can send me an email of a picture that you drew. I'll try and respond.

	We did a school parade through our neighbourhood. We're like, "Are you kidding me?" We have to dress up in ridiculous costumes and put stickers on our vehicles. The world is crashing and burning. Here we are going to be…" I don't think we perhaps had the best attitudes maybe going into it.
Complicating Action	One of my colleagues that year had some very strong opinions on how it was the most ridiculous thing. She was gonna refuse to participate. We did it. We saw the kids.
Evaluation	Okay, this is totally worth it. You didn't realise how much you missed them. You see the value of school community and what we mean to some families. And what they mean to us! It was unbelievable.
Complicating Action	The number of kids that were parked out on the sidewalk with their little poster board signs that they made. "I love you, we miss you." My kids travelled in my car. They loved it. They were seeing all of their friends too.
Resolution	That was really nice to have that closure.
Complicating Action	We have access to Raz kids. We found out that they have a voice recording option. We were able to get the kids to read books to us. We could assign them a book. They could record themselves reading it. We had the option to either just type a message, or we could send them a voice message back.
Evaluation	That was neat. Stay connected that way.
Resolution	Sometimes the kids would go to record a book They wouldn't actually even read the book. They would just leave you a message and just talk. "Hi, I miss you, say hi to the principal for me. "Yeah, and I'm gonna go see this." "I'm gonna go play Monopoly and talk to you later." They were just like, excited to send a message.

Episode 13: Final Thoughts	
Evaluation and Coda	The emotions just kind of ended up all over the map. There were really good days. There were awful days. They may have followed one after the other. I feel like the highs were higher and the lows were lower. It was either one or the other. There was not a lot of just steady Eddy, through the middle. It was either really high or really low. It's kind of evened out a little bit. There's still obviously those ups and downs. We're teachers, and that's what we deal with all the time. I don't feel like they're as extreme as it used to be. I definitely think it has made all of us a bit more flexible. I'm hoping has made us more understanding. [We should] assume positive intent in people. [We should] realise that there are things outside of our control. We have to learn to roll with it and to not take things personally [We should] just be a little more understanding. Learn how to look for the good in things.