

The Process of Transitioning from Teacher-Centered Learning to Student-Centered Learning

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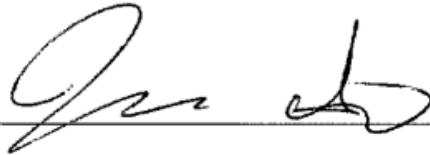
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand how four middle school teachers in an urban area in the south experienced and made sense of the transition from teaching in a predominantly teacher-centered learning (TCL) environment to one that was a predominantly student-centered learning (SCL) environment in relation to the shared culture of the classroom (Quinn, 2005). Three interviews were conducted with each participant. Analysis included in vivo and emotion coding alongside the creation of narratives for each participant. Emotion coding yielded the following categories of data: sadness and joy from the K-12 experience, confident and challenged from the college years, assertive and overwhelmed from the transition toward SCL, and undermined and passionate from teaching during the COVID era. In vivo coding pointed to discussions of success and achievement, fear and frustration, resisting change, and focusing on students. Four themes were prominent in the narratives: (1) Participants needed clarity on daily routines, expectations of roles and learning, and support from a variety of sources to be successful and believe in themselves when changing instructional styles. (2) The education system is grounded in expectations from parents, teachers, and students that participants believed created pressure on them to use specific instructional styles and behave in a certain way. (3) Participants believed that nonacademic skills were an important part of the K-12 student experience and should be emphasized alongside academic content skills. (4) The culture of the classroom was an important part the connection that participants shared with their students and impacted the instructional choices participants made every day.

Keywords: teacher-centered learning, student-centered learning, culture of the classroom, hidden curriculum

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Why does it seem teachers and students struggle to transition to a student-centered format of learning and instead prefer an old model of acquiring knowledge? This question began to form in my education career soon after receiving my first teaching assignment in the fall of 2012. I started my career in education holding a non-education bachelor's degree, equipped with no teaching certification or formal training, and a passion for working with students. In my first year, I worked as both a special education teacher and a regular education sixth-grade science teacher. I relied on my favorite techniques from my time as a student in middle school and high school, which were primarily lecture-style teaching. Then I learned on the job how to handle classroom management, large class sizes, and difficult parents.

At the conclusion of my first year of teaching, I signed up for a pilot program that would use a new style of learning that the county where I worked deemed as “personalized learning.” Personalized learning falls under the category of student-centered learning (SCL), where teachers are no longer in complete control of the classroom (Cattaneo, 2017). This type of learning increases student agency by adding to the level of autonomy that students have in their work. My second year of teaching launched me into a new world of education. I discovered that as Gardner (1983) posited, my students acquired knowledge in a variety of ways. I discovered that students could help create, monitor, and assess their own learning. Finally, I discovered that this was

not a “new” idea. I began my research into SCL during this second year of teaching, which was 10 years ago, by reading authors such as John Dewey (1964) and Paulo Freire (1998).

Fast-forward and I am now beginning my third year in a district office role in a rural southern school district. Between the 2013-2018 school years, I identified a school district of interest where each school in the district developed and implemented a process to make learning more focused on students and to increase student agency and individualized instruction. Due to the challenges placed on the school district during the pandemic and hiring a new superintendent, there was a decreased emphasis on SCL in the 2021-2022 school year compared to before the pandemic.

The target school for my research completed a school-wide transition toward creating primarily SCL classroom environments between the 2013-2018 school years. As I began to research potential topic ideas for my dissertation, I realized that my passion for SCL and my previous transition from primarily teacher centered learning (TCL) to primarily SCL in my own classroom provided me a unique opportunity to explore the experiences of teachers in their previous transition toward primarily SCL.

The deepest sentiment for my research topic was the struggle I faced when I attempted to shift my classroom from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. I constantly struggled with shifting back to TCL for several key reasons. First, I found that I was unequipped and struggled to find help with the shift. Finding theoretical research on the shift was possible (Hanson & Imse, 2016; Lee & Hannafin, 2016), but documents that clearly articulated steps to follow were hard to find. Second, I struggled with helping my students understand the new processes that I wanted to employ. I found that many of my

students were not receptive to a new style with which they were not familiar. I believe this is because most change seems to be resisted by students in school. I learned as I worked in the classroom that students like to do things the way they did them in the past. Finally, I struggled with finding the time to plan and be prepared each day for a new style of teaching. Teaching in a student-centered capacity involved a high level of preparation, especially before the unit began, in order to allow students the “room” to work in a new way.

The setting for the research was John Smith Middle School (JSMS) (pseudonym), in a rural district in a southern state. The school was composed of approximately 1,100 students in grades 6 through 8. The demographics of the school were 49% White, 36% African American, 10% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% more than one race. Approximately 16% of students at JSMS had an individualized education plan (IEP), while 18% received gifted services. Approximately 26% of the student population was economically disadvantaged (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2021).

The administrators, staff, and students at JSMS made a cognitive and practical shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL and when I targeted them for this research, appeared to have successfully accomplished the transition phase. Between the 2013-2018 school years, teachers at JSMS planned and piloted SCL classrooms with the goal of making a school-wide shift toward changing the instructional styles and focus of everyone in the building. However, my observations and conversations with teachers and students showed me that they still struggled with adjusting their practices away from traditional learning styles of the 20th century. A limited number of teachers created effective and pervasive student-centered classrooms, although many agreed the newer

style of teaching and learning had value. The lack of teachers willing to transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL early in the process created a deep sense of interest in me. I saw that unwillingness remain even as others completed the process of transitioning their classroom toward primarily SCL. I wondered of those who were really trying to shift, what experiences of teachers were as they transitioned, and how these experiences related to the research on SCL classrooms. Further, I wondered why the positives set forth in the research literature on SCL (Cattaneo, 2017; Hansen & Imse, 2016; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Lee & Hannafin, 2016;) did not induce the teachers who resisted the transition to attempt teaching using primarily SCL practices (Conti, 2004; Dupin-Bryant, 2004; Kovačević & Akbarov, 2016; Liu, Qiao, & Liu, 2006). To address my curiosity, I developed three core questions about the shift from TCL to SCL and how teachers experienced the process to use for my dissertation research: 1. What were the teachers' experiences as they shifted from predominantly traditional methods to a student-centered focus? 2. How did teachers make meaning of their experiences within the deeply ingrained culture of the classroom? 3. How did the emerging *revised* culture of the classroom influence teaching and learning and the behaviors of teachers? These questions guided my research into the literature, and consequently the development of the methods I used to carry out my research to answer the questions. I carried out a narrative analysis qualitative study (Clandinin, 2013; Maxwell, 2013) and answered each of these questions in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this dissertation.

The development of the ideas and reasons to change from teacher-centered to student-centered education surfaced many decades ago. Several educational theorists (Dewey, 1964; Friere, 1998; Giroux, 1997) discussed the need for change and the reasons

change was needed. There are also state and government policies (IDEA and ESSA), which influence the current style of education. Understanding the reasons why traditional or industrial forms of education were created and still exist today is a key component to understanding the need for this research. These mechanisms and the movement towards SCL are discussed here to provide the needed background for readers.

Background

Multiple styles of classroom instruction exist in schools today. These styles differ on several key tenets, impacting the delivery of material, the products created by students, and the experience for both student and teacher. Traditional styles of pedagogy built on TCL were rooted in preparing students for industry (Dewey, 1964). Foundations of TCL are based on century-old theories of education. According to Jules Henry (1972), the history of American education “shows that education has not considered the child’s interest but that of industry” (p. 23). Many schools remained stuck over time in an efficiency-based format of education instead of one that places student needs and student learning value at the center (Conti, 2004; Dupin-Bryant, 2004). I believe that some teachers prefer this format because they can prepare as if all students learn the same way, and there is less work involved in their planning. I also believe that schools operate in this fashion because it is the way they have always operated, and not because it is what is best for all students. John Dewey (1964) articulated that instruction in the education system moves between two extremes. On one side is free expression, which manifests spontaneity and enthusiasm. On the other side is a regulation of ideas by someone who is experienced and delivers to students what they need (Dewey, 1964). Dewey expressed

his belief that schools use regulation over free expression because of its ease and previous usage.

Another reason I believe the traditional model of schooling prevails is that statewide testing is the primary way that the public and governing authorities monitor and assess school performance. In recent years, this practice advanced through laws such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), introduced in 2001 during the Bush administration (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). NCLB created a metrics-based system for measurement of school efficacy based on knowledge-based test scores and attendance. Lawmakers claimed that NCLB would increase accountability in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). To test hundreds of thousands of students in a short period of time, statewide testing needed to be efficient. To that end, questions were typically multiple-choice and matching and the basis of the questions were standards of knowledge or information. The focus of tests created through the NCLB Act was on the amount of content experienced by students, rather than a deep knowledge focused on materials about which students were passionate. Thus, I believe the result of these tests forced teachers to cover large amounts of material in the frame of a school year, instead of allowing students to learn skills such as communication and collaboration, which are more difficult to assess.

In December of 2015 during the Obama administration, the federal government passed a law titled Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). According to the U.S. Department of Education, the enactment of ESSA was put in place to alter previous laws because NCLB's prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators (U.S. Department of Education,

2017). Some of these reasons included that previous administration's targets were that all students would score above grade level and that all students would graduate high school on time in four years. These targets were aspirational, but proved to be unrealistic in the real-world setting of public schools. This change allowed the government to hold schools accountable and to maintain their focus on achievement gaps. The focus on achievement gaps was a step in the direction of SCL classrooms and education where student growth was more important than before, however, the metric for measuring all growth and achievement was still a statewide and high-stakes test to gauge student performance related to state standards; thus, the measurement was still at a very basic knowledge level. Tests of this variety do not challenge students to understand themselves or apply content at a deep level and these tests forced school administrators to offer traditional styles of instruction. These traditional styles of instruction provided teachers the ability to move faster and focus on content coverage instead of student learning or mastery of the content.

For decades educational theorists like John Dewey (1964), Paulo Freire (1998), and Henry Giroux (2011) proposed new models for learning and acquiring knowledge, yet the basic system remained the same. Conti, an educational theorist, developed the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) Inventory in the late 1970s to gauge the style of instruction and the practices used in classrooms across high school and college levels of the education system (Conti, 2004). From his research, he determined that TCL was the dominant teaching style in all levels of education in North America (Conti, 2004). However, the bulk of the work that I found that used PALS was done at the college level with adult learners. Kovačević and Akbarov (2016) used the PALS scale with 52 university teachers and determined that they had a strong tendency and preference for

TCL. Dupin-Bryant (2004) also conducted a study using the PALS Inventory with 203 higher education instructors and they displayed a strong tendency toward TCL in their classrooms as well. Liu et al. (2006) performed a study of 21 college instructors and 81% of them preferred TCL to SCL. Although none of these studies were done with P12 teachers in classrooms, it does demonstrate how those teachers were taught and possibly influenced how they chose to teach. In contrast to the aforementioned research listed above, Dewey, Friere, and Giroux advocated for learning through hands-on and real-world scenarios. They challenged traditional education methods and believed that students understanding themselves and becoming valuable members of society were just as important goals for educators as knowledge of academic standards. Conti's work focused on teachers at all levels of education and the primary current learning styles and preferences of the instructors (Conti, 2004). Regardless of the level of education, the foundation for this study stems from the prominent styles of teaching and learning over the past 40 years. Henry Giroux (1997), stated that,

Despite the important outpouring of work in the last decade on such topics as the hidden curriculum, class and gender reproduction, ideology and culture, and of the state and schooling, educational theorizing remains trapped in a dualism that separates issues of human agency from structural analysis. (p. 71)

Dewey, Freire, and Giroux each argued that a curriculum must incorporate more than just standards and intellectual knowledge. Their ideas align with several of the core tenets of SCL, including student-driven ideas and understanding of themselves, an education of the whole-child through individualized learning, and an emphasis on goals that drive instruction. However, traditional models of instruction still prevail. One possible reason,

according to the literature, is that the transition from TCL to SCL is often a difficult process (Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Osman, Jamaludin, & Iranmanesh 2015; Schwartz, 2000). Osman, Jamaludin, and Iranmanesh (2015), completed a qualitative study using survey data from 58 lecturers and 128 students at a university in Malaysia. The survey included questions about transitioning from TCL to SCL at their school, and they cited poor infrastructure, a lack of resources, and a lack of preparation and training as major issues in the transition.

These issues with the transition toward SCL led me to recognize a primary problem in some school systems that I deemed worth investigating to yield information that could be helpful to systems of education on a larger scale. Therefore, in this work I determined how the transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL was experienced by teachers in a medium-sized school district in the rural south who successfully transitioned their teaching style to primarily SCL from primarily TCL, and how these teachers made meaning of their experiences. The experiences of four teachers from JSMS are detailed in narrative format and analyzed through coding strategies in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively in this dissertation.

The background information on SCL provided context to the reasons why current education models rely on a primarily teacher-centered style of instruction, which may not be the best model for students. The related problem that I chose to research was the lack of awareness of the unique transitional experiences teachers have when trying to maintain an effective learning environment and make such a drastic change at the same time. Many factors of the complex school environment, including the culture of the classroom, impacted the way each one made meaning of those experiences and subsequently

influenced their future decision making related to instructional strategies in the classroom.

Explanation of Related Problems

My experience as a teacher led me to believe that federal law and high-stakes testing, as well as the deeply ingrained culture of the classroom, influence the traditional teaching styles and methods of middle school teachers today. As I will discuss in greater depth in Chapter 2, each students' unique K-12 journey and the environment of their classroom is impacted by the *traditional culture of the classroom*. This culture, which I defined for my research as the unique set of roles and routine practices for the student and the teacher, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and the goals and expectations for student learning and the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills, is created and impacted by all members of the group. This group includes teachers and students and the roles, attitudes, values, and goals and expectations they create together.

Many of the same influences are noted as far back as Phillip Jackson (1990) in his book *Life in Classrooms*. Jackson (1990) stated that students in a classroom are “exposed to a stable and highly stylized environment” (p. 7). The fact of prolonged exposure increases its meaning as we begin to consider the elements of repetition, redundancy, and ritualistic action that are experienced there (Jackson, 1990). He further noted the culture of the classroom and the unspoken cues such as when students should talk and how students relate to each other, as well as subtle information given by teachers, impacts how students and teachers think and react in their classroom. This information includes how to act, on what to focus, and what things are ok to say to each other (Jackson, 1990). A question that I entertained as I read Jackson's book was how do teachers describe this

culture in relation to their experiences in the school building? I addressed this question in my research through interviews and analytic memos, which I coded as a part of my research methodology. I discussed the impact of the culture of the classroom on each of my participants and their experiences in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Although theorists acknowledge SCL has many positives, from my observational experience as well as the observations of others, traditional styles of instruction are more common in the teacher and student experience. These TCL strategies do not benefit students in the same way as SCL instructional strategies, yet they do support classroom management and increase some student outcomes (Cattaneo, 2017; Hansen & Imse, 2016; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). When teachers do not include SCL strategies in their classroom instructional style, their students may miss the opportunity to make authentic connections in their learning, miss an opportunity to learn the skills of communication and collaboration, and display decreased engagement in their learning environment (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Cohen & Riel, 1989; Çubukcu, 2012; Estes, Liu, Zha, & Reedy, 2014; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Yet teachers resist this instructional transition due to difficulties including a lack of clarity, support, and insufficient training (Osman et al., 2015). Additionally, based on a search of multiple databases using four key terms (e.g. student-centered learning, personalized learning, teacher experience, student experience) there is a gap in the literature in describing the teacher and student experience with SCL in an in-depth qualitative style of research such as narrative inquiry, which was my approach. There also is a lack of information on the impact of the culture of the classroom on shifting teacher instructional styles documented from the teacher perspective based on a search of the same databases.

In this dissertation, I provided information that can not only contribute to filling the gap in the literature but also provide ways administration could better support teachers in the transition from primarily TCL to SCL ensuring students do not miss the opportunities described previously that SCL instruction provides. I also described how teachers can better prepare themselves to transition instructional styles. I provided details on how teachers experienced the cognitive and practical shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL; how the interactions of student to teacher, student to student, teacher to content, and student to content shifted; as well as addressed the culture of the classroom and how it affected the meaning teachers assigned to their experiences during this transition in instructional style. I addressed each of these components through in-depth interviews with four teachers who previously successfully transitioned to primarily SCL instruction. Additionally, I created analytic memos to collect my reactions and responses to my participant's experiences and explanations. My dissertation and conclusions add to the understanding of the teacher experience through an instructional shift and demonstrate the significance of the work.

Significance of Study

The information from this research added to the body of knowledge on the experience of the transition from TCL to SCL. The conclusions from Chapters 4 and 5, and the themes found in Chapter 6 facilitate the understanding of what factors and perceptions contribute to the experience of transitioning instructional styles in a K-12 classroom. Much of the previous research on this topic was quantitative and those researchers sought to determine the impact of SCL on achievement or engagement to determine the usefulness of the teaching style (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Estes et al.,

2014; Ive, 2017). Through conducting this narrative inquiry study, I informed readers of the unique experiences that four teachers had as they transitioned from primarily TCL to primarily SCL in a middle school in the south during the same educational school years with the intent of discovering ways administration can provide better support and make the transition easier. Through better support, administrators could help teachers provide learning environments where students master the skills of communication, collaboration, and problem solving through SCL instruction (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Cohen & Riel, 1989; Çubukcu, 2012; Estes et al., 2014; Lee & Hannafin, 2016).

I provided educators and students who are trying to make this shift or transition from traditional pedagogy styles to SCL with readable, accessible, descriptive, and detailed narratives of experiences from teachers in the same school to account for school culture and be as descriptive as possible so others can determine how the situation relates to their own and use these lessons to help better prepare them for the transition process. Further, I used my data to explain how teachers in one school changed their thinking and practices and subsequently inspired, as well as informed other teachers in their pursuit of changing their teaching style. I identified key concepts and events that occurred for my participants and described a better starting point for other teachers who may be planning to transition their instructional style.

Personally, I gained a better understanding of the intricacies of the shift into the SCL mindset and what that looks like in practice. As a district leader, I gained knowledge that I can use in the future to facilitate shifts in pedagogy or behavior in a school system. I learned that communication, clarity, and consistency from school level administration is an important support structure for a school-wide change in instructional

style, and I believe these understandings would support a smoother transition for administrators who are supporting an instructional change. I also gathered more information on what influenced the attitudes that surfaced during this transition from each teacher's perspective. My findings support communities to better understand the process of SCL and how teachers experienced it. I introduced a research approach that had not previously been applied to this transition, narrative inquiry, which was used to help stakeholders understand the role of culture in the school and the classroom. This approach was not found in the existing literature and it is hoped it will help teachers, school administrators, and district level administrators identify how the culture of the classroom impacts instructional choices and help them to better support teachers and students in a transition in instructional style. The findings from my dissertation also help stakeholders to understand the transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL, the challenges that teachers face as they transition instructional styles, and the value of communication and clarity from school and district administrators during an instructional shift. I identified two overarching research questions that guided my work in this dissertation. Each research question was answered through data analysis of the transcripts of my participant interviews, the creation of connecting narratives, and the analytic memos created during my research. The answers to each research question are found in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively of this dissertation.

Research Questions

The research questions and sub-questions for my research were:

RQ 1. How do middle school teachers describe their experience and make meaning of the transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning in a rural middle school?

RQ 2. How do these teachers describe the process of going from a predominantly teacher-centered learning model to a predominantly student-centered learning model in relation to the shared culture of the classroom?

Sub 2a. How do the thoughts and opinions of the teachers impact their experiences?

Sub 2b. How have their previous teaching and learning experiences influenced their opinions of the culture of the classroom and their shifting style of instruction?

Sub 2c. How do these teachers describe their experiences in relation to the hidden curriculum?

Guiding my plan for achieving answers to these questions was a conceptual framework that blended my life experiences and background with the content and theory that addressed my goals and ideas. In the following conceptual framework, I discuss current literature on SCL and TCL and review a pilot study I previously conducted pertaining to this research.

Chapter II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Maxwell (2013), there are four components of a conceptual framework. These pieces include the researcher's experiential knowledge, existing theory and research, a pilot study or exploratory research, and thought experiments. These four components allow the researcher to examine and link together relevant information on a topic of interest. I begin my conceptual framework with my experiential knowledge based on the nature of my study, because as Maxwell stated, experiential knowledge "is both one of the most important conceptual resources and the one that is the most seriously neglected in works on research design" (2013, p. 44). I will then discuss previous literature and theories dealing with TCL, SCL, and the transition between the two. Finally, I will detail preliminary results from my pilot study and thought experiments in which I participated.

Experiential Knowledge

My experience with this work stems from the educational experiences in my career thus far. As a classroom science teacher, I began 11 years ago in a rural middle school in the middle of a transition towards what my district called personalized learning. I used the word *rural* to describe the lack of technology that existed compared to more urban or city schools, and because of the prominence of blue-collar jobs of families in the surrounding community. Many of the parents of students in my class worked in agriculture, service, or for a local government organization. During my first year, the

teachers at my school taught in a traditional style using primarily lectures and guided notes. I responded positively to this from the teacher perspective because it was familiar to me. However, I quickly noticed that not all my students were engaged and that not all my students were learning the material. Through a series of trial-and-error attempts at adjusting my teaching, I slowly redirected my teaching toward a student-centered approach, which was happening in other classrooms in my school at the same time. At its core, the idea that if students were given the right environment they could be in control of their learning guided our work. SCL became the focal point of my classroom, and I began a 3-year journey with my students to attempt to create a learning environment where students had more control over their learning than they did before the shift.

The teachers at the middle school where I worked moved away from direct instruction as the sole method of content delivery by adding styles such as project-based learning and authentic learning experiences, and our students learned that there were different ways they could acquire knowledge. One of the difficulties the teachers at my school encountered as we attempted to shift toward SCL was the process of knowledge acquisition. Our students were used to teacher-led instruction where teachers disseminated information to the students, and they were tasked with listening and learning this information. When we began the shift towards a knowledge acquisition style that required a different type of work from our students, students resisted the change. Although there was still structure to the classroom, the new instructional approach required students to find information rather than be given it directly, and to apply this information in ways they created. They completed investigative activities and gathered information as a part of their research on a topic instead of primarily being told

in lectures and notes from their teacher what was important. Students used technology to complete web-quests or other web-inquiry activities to gather information on their own or in small groups and then reported this information back to the group to share acquired information. Students gathered information based on their unique styles of learning and had choices about what activities they completed or did not complete when learning the material. Additionally, I found that students were not aware of their unique attributes or characteristics that helped them learn. I was part of a group of teachers in the school who volunteered to pilot SCL as the primary instructional style in our classrooms. We used learning style inventories to make choices about instructional styles that would work best for each student. I do not have any quantitative data to distinguish the differences in my students over the years for whom I taught science at this middle school. Although, in my opinion over the 3 years that I worked to shift my classroom from primarily TCL to primarily SCL, I saw a higher percentage of my students become more engaged in the work and more aware of themselves as learners when compared to the first year of my teaching career. I also began to meet individually with students to discuss their strengths and weaknesses related to their acquisition of knowledge in my classroom.

After committing to be a part of the “roll out group”, we realized that class sizes were too large to differentiate instruction for individual students. We were unable to work with small groups of students while also keeping other students engaged due to the high number of students in the classroom. To combat this problem, we used an Internet-based learning management system and other technology platforms to create groups and differentiate instruction in class. This infusion of technology allowed teachers to engage multiple groups of students while working in small groups or individually with others.

Our group of teachers worked with students to create projects to spark their interest and motivate them to learn. Through the analysis of teacher surveys and feedback from both teachers and administrators, that group of teachers determined that students and their learning was the primary motivation for change within the school. Teachers strongly believed that smaller numbers of students in the classroom led to a better learning environment and allowed for more feedback and communication with students. I believed this to be true as well.

As teachers and students became more comfortable with the new class structure and technology infusion, we began to introduce projects for students that incorporated real-world scenarios. We worked with our students to create these projects based on driving questions that were drawn from our academic standards. Using these projects, our students began to see how they could collaborate to create summative products that would display mastery of the content. Additionally, each teacher had more time to work individually with students due to the smaller number of participants in each class.

Throughout the process of our school-wide transition towards primarily SCL, I was a member of two different teams that met to debrief and discuss our progress and any needed adjustments to the system. The leadership team met monthly to review feedback from teachers and review survey data and common formative assessment data. These common formative assessments were quizzes and small activities that were completed in each similar class so that data could be compared between students. This information allowed us to determine which practices should stay and which practices could be removed from our daily work. The second team, the design team, was a steering team

that determined the future direction of our school and how the school could collectively focus on the same instructional practices.

I enjoyed teaching through this format and found it more rewarding than the classes I taught previously in a primarily TCL style of instruction. I experienced more one-on-one conversations with students, and I determined that in my classroom, students had a better understanding of themselves than my students did in previous classes that I taught using the primarily TCL format of instruction. My students also acted like the work we did was meaningful, and this appeared to motivate them to a higher level of engagement. Many of our teachers shared a common belief that teaching using primarily SCL had a positive impact on learning at our middle school. A smaller number of teachers, who worked in our building and struggled with the transition toward a primarily SCL classroom, did not support the idea that these practices had a better impact on student learning than primarily TCL. In my opinion, many of these teachers were comfortable with TCL and the ease of planning and delivering lessons and were hesitant to change their practices. Although I do not have the data to support my beliefs, there was a slightly higher increase in achievement for students who participated in the SCL classrooms during that school year than for students in TCL.

One change that I helped to make in conjunction with the other teachers was the transition from lesson plans that teachers used to guide instruction to unit plans that students used to guide their learning. The unit plans were learning guides for several weeks of class time that allowed the teachers to individualize the learning that took place. These documents had multiple purposes including increasing student autonomy, providing a document for data tracking and progress monitoring, and allowing students

options for their work. These documents were based on a pre-test students took to provide information on the instruction they needed and allowed students the opportunity to set goals and assess their progress towards these goals through their formative assessments.

The basis of my interest in performing research on the transition and the successes and struggles associated with changing from a primarily traditional style of instruction to a primarily student-centered style of instruction originated as a result of the struggles I personally worked through in an SCL classroom. I witnessed the difficulties of creating my own documents for students to perform learning in a way with which I was not familiar. I had trouble acquiring documents and artifacts that were reliable and valid that I could use to teach in an SCL classroom.

I also witnessed the resistance that came from parents, students, and community members because they were not familiar with the purpose behind the change. When we changed our school towards a more personalized environment, our students struggled with the change. Students did not want to learn in a way that was not familiar to them. They felt like we were changing too much at one time. Our teachers had a clear understanding of the purpose of the change, yet our students and parents wanted things to stay the same. I learned that they often did not have a reason for such ideas; however, they did not like doing anything different. Parents often stated they wanted their children to experience school in the same way that they had. I was very interested in this piece of the transition toward student-centered learning, and I wanted to understand what obstacles teachers face when they transition to a primarily SCL environment, as well as

what successes and positive experiences resulted that kept them working to accomplish this task.

I believe that education must shift towards a personalized approach in order to prepare our students for the world that they will enter upon graduation. As an administrator and as a classroom teacher, I have observed the engagement of students when they learn to take control of their learning. I discovered that students often resist this process because of the challenges it provides, but that in the end, students are capable of extreme amounts of growth due to the SCL process. In addition to my personal experiences, existing literature supports the idea that transitioning from primarily TCL to primarily SCL improves student achievement and engagement, student advocacy, and student skills such as communication and collaboration in education classrooms (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Cattaneo, 2017; Cohen & Riel, 1989; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Shieh & Chang, 2014).

I conducted a narrative inquiry research design which allowed me investigate the experiences of four teachers who completed a transition from TCL to SCL. I wanted to know how my experiences and the knowledge I gained from them compared to the experiences of other teachers who went through a similar transition in instructional style. My previous experiences also allowed me to ask better follow up questions during each interview due to my understanding of the language used in schools and the expectations for teachers in the classroom. Additionally, I used my previous experiential knowledge to inform my section on validity, which I discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

In addition to my experiential knowledge, my conceptual framework includes a review of key constructs that influenced my research design and data interpretation and

or analysis. I define and explain each construct and connect the construct to my research and explain how it is an integral part of my study.

Literature Review: Existing Theory and Research

The literature review for my dissertation first includes an explanation of the culture that exists within the classroom and how this culture impacts teachers and students. I then discuss the hidden curriculum that teachers and students work by in classrooms and schools today and how that impacts teaching and learning. A breakdown of multiple theoretical ideas that relate to SCL and their proposed strengths and weaknesses follows the discussion of the hidden curriculum. Finally, there is a review of previous research studies and an explanation of my previous experiences and work with this research.

Culture of the classroom. The first construct of importance for my research is the culture of the classroom. In this section I will define culture and then explain how it is defined and describe the components of the culture of the classroom. I will unpack the components of the culture of the classroom as discussed by several researchers and educational theorists. Additionally, embedded throughout the discussion of the construct I will make connections between the culture of the classroom and elements of my research.

According to Naomi Quinn, a former Professor Emeritus of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University, culture “encompasses the largely tacit, taken-for-granted, and hence invisible assumptions that people share with others of their group and carry around inside them, and draw upon in forming expectations, reasoning, telling stories, and performing a plethora of other ordinary everyday cognitive tasks” (Quinn,

2005, p. 3). Inside the school classroom, this culture is shared between active participants including the teacher and all students engaged in the learning process. This culture that exists in the school classroom is developed and influenced by the unique qualities of the public school and the classrooms that exist therein. Phillip Jackson (1968) was a researcher who spent many years examining the complex inner workings of the school classroom. He served as the president of the American Educational Research Association. In his landmark work, *Life in Classrooms* (Jackson, 1968), he discussed that there are subtle intricacies to the classroom setting that separate it from other groups or organizations.

1. The classroom is a stable physical environment.
2. The classroom has a social intimacy unmatched elsewhere in society.
3. The ritualistic and cyclic quality of activities carried out in the classroom.
4. The fact that students are forced to be in schools.

Each of these variables impacts the unique culture in the classroom.

The stable physical environment of the classroom is where students spend more time than nearly any other place during their lifetime. Jackson (1968) posited that the classroom is so familiar and stable, that even the smells are standardized and if “a person stumbled into a classroom blindfolded, his nose alone, if he used it carefully, would tell him where he was” (p. 7). I believe this characteristic is important because many of the assumptions and expectations of the members of a classroom are built on years of standardized styles and structures of the environment. Classrooms are filled with seats, normally in rows, and teachers provide information to be learned by the students. The

stability of the classroom creates assumptions and expectations about the participants of the group.

Second, the social intimacy of classrooms is unique in that only in schools do “30 or more students spend several hours each day literally side by side” (Jackson, 1968, p. 8). I believe this intricacy is an important part of the classroom environment because students learn from each other and with each other, and together they develop a connected set of shared expectations and assumptions through the multitude of everyday tasks conducted together. Students perform daily tasks in the company of the same group of students, every day, for more than 150 days each year. Students and their teachers create the culture that exists in the classroom through their interactions with each other and through learning to get along with each other. Together, students and teachers develop shared attitudes and decide what they value as a group.

The third intricacy that Jackson (1968) detailed was routines and activities that take place in the school classroom. I believe this intricacy is unique to the school classroom as students and their teacher collectively create established routines and procedures and the roles of both groups are defined. Teachers develop routines for how class begins, how students participate in the learning, and how students should behave during instructional time. The expectations for the group are created during these routine activities each day. Finally, students are subject to compulsory attendance and are forced to be a member of the group. There are few, if any, other groups whose culture is created of members that do not make a choice to be a member of the group. This characteristic influences the roles established for the teacher and student as well as the attitudes and values of the group.

For my research, I combined the definition of culture from Naomi Quinn with the unique characteristics of the classroom and their discussions from Phillip Jackson to create my definition and components of the *culture of the classroom*. This culture of the classroom for my research is defined as the unique set of roles and routine practices for the student and the teacher, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and the goals and expectations for student learning and the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills (Quinn, 2005). I was also interested in how the culture shifted during the instructional change my participants experienced. According to George Spindler in his text *Education and Culture* (1963), culture is not a static element. He stated that “cultural norms are in a constant state of flux.” And that cultural norms are “affected and changed” by behavioral events (Spindler, 1963, p. 6). These components of the culture of the classroom allowed me to analyze and search the stories and the meaning my participants made of their stories and experiences for the impact of the culture of the classroom. Specifically, I used the components of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013) to determine how the components of the culture of the classroom were impacted through the transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. Additionally, I used portions of each participant’s transcripts to determine how the components of the culture of the classroom were influenced by the transition and I captured this information in Chapters 5 and 6.

The unique characteristics of a classroom are discussed by other educational researchers such as Buzzelli and Johnston (2002), who identified morality, power, and identification as key themes of the K-12 classroom. Each of these concepts are a part of the shared attitudes and values of the members of a K-12 school classroom. In their text, they analyzed data from a variety of school levels and interactions in classrooms and

dissected the recorded dialogue to determine the themes within. They commented that teaching is “above all else, a moral activity, which influences the social, emotional, intellectual, and moral development of others in one’s care” (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 10). I recognized this element of the culture of the classroom in my research when my participants told stories that detailed their impact on the social, emotional, intellectual, or moral development of their students. Specifically, I sought out places where during the transition toward primarily SCL, my participants detailed how they felt learning in any of these four areas changed. These portions of my data allowed me to identify and then further analyze experiences in the transition in instructional style where my participants experienced the components of the culture of the classroom and its impact.

Noddings (2013), an educational philosopher and researcher, corroborated the idea of teaching morality as a component of K-12 education in her text *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* when she explained that “moral education is a community-wide enterprise and not a task exclusively reserved for home, church, or school” (p. 181). Further, she explained that developing the morality of students is an expectation for teachers. Nodding’s work connects to two components of the culture of the classroom used in this research. First, she defined one of the roles of the teacher was to teach not just the standards-based curricula of subjects such as math and English, but also ideas such as morality. Second, morality aligns with a shared value of the group of students and their teachers, created through the multitude of tasks and activities they conduct together each day. I recognized this component of the culture of the classroom in my analysis when my participants discussed any values that were altered

or impacted by the transition or when they discussed the changing roles of the teacher or students during the shift in instructional style.

Another component of the culture of the classroom discussed in the literature are the roles and expectations of the student and the teacher. In a qualitative study (Jackson, 1990) of 50 highly skilled teachers where Jackson interviewed every teacher at least twice, he determined that teachers saw their role in the classroom in several key ways. He determined that these teachers focused on their relationships with students, their style of teaching, as well as their individuality when gauging their ability to teach and engage students effectively in the classroom. In a more recent text on power and education, Manke (1997) used educational ethnography to observe and determine the power relations between teachers and students. Through her observations of multiple K-12 classes, she determined that power is a unique construct that early researchers stated was all in the hands of the teacher, but she observed that it was a more organic structure in classrooms. Manke (1997) described how students and teachers worked together to develop power and authority through relationships. Her study connects to the roles and the expectations for teachers and students because she discussed who defines the roles in the classroom and who is expected to be in charge of different aspects of the learning environment. In my study, I looked for stories from my participants that described a change in power in the classroom and I listened for how this change was experienced and explained by the participant.

Henry Giroux (2011), an educational theorist, described some of the same components of the culture of the classroom in his text *On Critical Pedagogy*, when he explained the impact on students of their pursuit to understand power, knowledge, and

experience in the classroom. His work aligns with the components of the roles of teachers and students, as well as the expectations of what behaviors are typically carried out by teachers and by students in the classroom. Giroux (2011) posited that the classroom experience should lead to a better understanding of power and struggle and how these topics can be related to the current lives of students.

Alongside the culture of the classroom is the curriculum and knowledge that is learned by students in the classroom that is not a part of the formal content-related curriculum. This other or non-written curriculum is absorbed but not stated outright through the ways teachers instruct, what they discuss with their students, and how students are treated for acting in certain ways and is often referred to as the *hidden curriculum*. This hidden curriculum can be traced over the past 60 years as educational theorists and researchers sought to discover, measure, and explain its impact. It is pertinent to my work because I wanted to understand and explain how the transition toward primarily SCL instruction impacted my participants and their interactions with students in the classroom. I wanted to understand and explain if the change in instructional style and the roles of students and teachers in the learning would interrupt the hidden curriculum and how it was perceived by teachers.

The types of skills students learn, the roles of the teacher and student, and the proper behaviors needed are often different in a classroom structured by primarily TCL compared to primarily SCL strategies. I assessed the impact of the transition toward primarily SCL through creating an in-depth narrative for each participant and by using categorizing and connecting strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) to identify when the hidden curriculum was experienced by my participants and their students.

Hidden curriculum. There is a curriculum of standards mandated by the state for which teachers are responsible for teaching to their students which includes items such as learning the parts of the cell in a science classroom and understanding what the setting is in a fictional story in English class. However, educational theorists described additional skills and knowledge that students learn during their time in the classroom as the hidden curriculum that encompasses things learned but not directly taught or learned through experiences that differ across groups of students (Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1990; Dewey 1964; Henry, 1972; Martin, 1976). For example, during a learning game where student captains are chosen for classroom competition, students who are picked last learn that not understanding the material makes you less valuable in a competition and could lead to motivation to increase their progress in class. These learned but unspoken rules make up the core of what is called the hidden curriculum. It is described as *hidden* because it is not explicitly taught or assessed in schools, but is nonetheless expected and is connected to many teachers and parents unspoken expectations students will learn social and soft skills, power dynamics, and proper behaviors while at school. These soft skills include students ability to collaborate, communicate, resolve conflicts, and solve complex problems.

According to John Dewey (1964), “the child must be educated for leadership as well as for obedience. He must have power of self-direction and power of directing others, powers of administration, ability to assume positions of responsibility” (p. 113). For example, students should have the opportunity to learn to lead a group of students in a task and also to be responsible for completing tasks in alignment with the directions shared by the teacher. Dewey further clarified that without this alternative to industrial

styles of instruction that push students to learn more about themselves and their environment, students become “drones, a hanger-on, or an actual retarding influence in the onward movement” (Dewey, 1964, p. 114). Dewey (1964) went on to discuss that the student cannot be prepared for any “fixed state” of life but must be prepared socially and mentally for the world as it changes. Or in other words, that students must develop social skills and soft skills needed to be successful as adults.

Although he did not use the phrase hidden curriculum in his work, Jules Henry (1972) perpetuated the idea that the hidden curriculum exists when he explained that the American education system functions to decrease the intelligence level of its students for control. Henry (1972) stated that, “our children get the best education compatible with a society that requires a high level of stupidity in order to exist as it is” (p. 22). He explained that our system of education deters difficult questions and thinking for order to occur. Henry’s assertions connect to the expectations that students understand power dynamics and that they learn proper behaviors for the classroom. This hidden curriculum of social aspects and personal characteristics exists within schools, although not as clearly visible as the learning of standards that are explicitly taught.

Over the next several decades following Henry’s description of the hidden curriculum, educational researchers and theorists continued the work of defining and explaining this alternate curriculum in schools. In an article by Martin (1976), she described the hidden curriculum as items that “are learned, but not openly intended” (p. 137). For my research, I used Martin’s definition of the hidden curriculum because her work was built on the foundation of Jules Henry and Phillip Jackson, and also succinctly described the hidden curriculum in straight forward terms. She detailed that there were a

variety of different hidden curriculums that existed dependent on timing and setting of the learning. She went on to explain how to determine what hidden curriculum elements were being taught in classrooms and what the response should be for educators and researchers when these curricula are found (Martin, 1976). She explained that in the 1960s and 1970s public education curriculum seemed to have heterosexual bias, Christian doctrine, or speciesism. However, she stated that one had to seek for these non-written curriculum elements with a level of raised consciousness. Martin (1976) discussed that the setting of the learning and details such as the social structure of the class, the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student, and how the teacher exercises his/her authority can all change the hidden curricula experienced by students. Martin's findings align with the previously stated components of the hidden curriculum, including power dynamics and proper behaviors.

In 1980, Jean Anyon wrote a research paper on her work with the hidden curriculum, and she posited that in our public education system different educational experiences and curriculum knowledge are administered to students in different socio-economic levels of society. She performed a qualitative study of students in five different elementary schools that were each in different socio-economic communities (Anyon, 1980). She explained that "different knowledge and skills leading to social power and regard (medical, legal, managerial) are made available to advantaged social groups but are withheld from the working classes to whom a more practical curriculum is offered (manual skills, clerical knowledge)" (Anyon, 1980, p. 67). Further, she explained that what teachers said and didn't say, along with the style of instruction, impacted what was implicitly learned by students in the classroom. Anyon's assertions align with the

development of social and soft skills learned by different groups of students depending on their socioeconomic level. Her work also connects to power dynamics and how they are experienced in the classroom as an element of the hidden curriculum. In my research, I asked my participants what they thought students learned implicitly, and I also asked them if different groups of students needed different skills to be successful after their K-12 experience.

Phillip Jackson (1990) described the hidden curriculum by explaining that there are things that motivate students that are not obvious to the casual observer. He grouped these into three categories of crowds, praise, and power. He shared that students learn to live in a crowd, take evaluation for all that they do, and struggle for power within the walls of the classroom. Michael Apple (1990) discussed in his text *Ideology and Curriculum*, that the hidden curriculum was “the norms and values that are implicitly, but effectively, taught in schools and that are not usually talked about in teachers’ statements of end or goals” (Apple, 1990, p. 78). Apple referenced Jackson (1990) and his work with the hidden curriculum and the concepts of crowds, praise, and power. He went on to define how the hidden curriculum and “incidental learning” have a stronger impact on the political socialization of students than deliberate classes such as civics (Apple, 1990). Apple explained how conflict has a negative or positive connotation based on the hidden curriculum and how students encounter the day-to-day actions of classroom life. He discussed that the hidden curriculum impacted how students think and reason based on how they experienced the curriculum (Apple, 1990). His work ties directly to the components of social skills and power dynamics experienced by different groups of students as they learn in the classroom.

In more recent years, the hidden curriculum has been discussed in relation to specifically how it influences ideas such as racism (Ghosh, 2010) and how tacit teaching (Burbules, 2008) impacts learning in the classroom. Ghosh (2010) made the point that the hidden curriculum could be destructive and insidious. He highlighted John Dewey's ideas on the hidden curriculum and described it as "the socialization process in schooling – a curriculum that is taught without being formally ascribed" (Ghosh, 2010, p. 28). Ghosh further indicated the effects of the hidden curriculum were "not casual or unsystematic but rather a reflection of the sociocultural and economic-political structure of society" (Ghosh, 2010, p. 28). Ghosh supported the ideas from Anyon's (1980) research that the socio-economic status of the school or community impacts what is implicitly learned, specifically in terms of the social skills and behaviors needed for students based on their student group. In a separate article, Burbules (2008) reminded us that in a time where "teaching is being governed by an increasingly constrained and standardized model of instruction" understanding the tacit dimension of teaching where "things that are taught which are not taught directly or intentionally" is extremely important (Burbules, 2008, p. 669). Burbules posited that this tacit knowledge or hidden curriculum is "picked up or learned over time through a combination of observations, imitation, correction, and involvement with some ongoing pattern of practice" for students (Burbules, 2008, p. 669). These discussions, over several decades of educational research and theory, were important to this study as the intricacies of the classroom impact the learning that takes place on multiple levels. The school classroom and its unique impact on its constituents was a key lens used in this research to view teachers' experiences and the meaning they gave to those experiences as well as how the

components of the hidden curriculum described above were experienced by my participants.

Each of these theorists attempted to put into words the unique learning that occurs in the classroom. For the purpose of this study, identifying the hidden curriculum and noting the nuances and interactions with the hidden curriculum in my participant's experiences took careful questioning strategies. I asked specific questions about the hidden curriculum to each of my participants, specifically connected to the components of the hidden curriculum discussed above, and I used analytic memos to determine how each of my participants responses alluded to the hidden curriculum as a part of their experiences. These responses are discussed in my participant narratives and in my conclusions and discussion in Chapters 5 and 6.

Several researchers attempted to determine the impact of the hidden curriculum in K-12 classrooms. Paul Willis (1978) completed an ethnographic qualitative study where he followed 12 American boys from 1972 to 1975. He used interviews, observations, and group discussions over these years to determine why children from working-class families get working-class jobs. Willis determined that working-class students did not participate in school in the same way as middle-class students. He noted differences in their interactions and determined that the hidden curriculum influenced the decision-making and experiences of the students that he observed. These students learned and developed different social and soft skills. They experienced and learned about power dynamics with their teachers in different ways, and different appropriate behaviors were praised or deterred depending on the social grouping to which students belonged. In my research, I searched for stories and experiences from my participants where they

discussed social or soft skill development, or their feelings of a loss of authority or control during the transition toward primarily SCL. These passages in the transcripts helped me identify when my participants and their students experienced interactions with the hidden curriculum.

In a study of 9th grade students, Çengel and Türkoğlu (2016) determined that interactions were different in classrooms in Turkey within the same school depending on the positivity or negativity of the class environment. They completed their qualitative study by using interviews and observations to collect data on two different classrooms. They reported that students' interactions in the positive classroom were at a much higher frequency than the negative classroom, which led to feelings about the quality of their school experience. Students in this study learned different social skills and learned what types of behaviors were expected dependent upon the classroom environment created by their teacher. I asked questions in interviews 2 and 3 with each participant to determine how my participants conducted their classrooms before, during, and after their transition toward primarily SCL to identify what types of social skills, soft skills, and learned behaviors their students acquired and how these skills and behaviors were impacted by the transition in instructional classroom style.

Although research on the hidden curriculum is vast, the role it plays when transitioning from a traditionally, teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom was one not yet seen in the literature, but was a key focus of this research. Recognizing instructional transitions and changes in the culture of the classroom are difficult to employ due to deeply ingrained social structures and classroom environment, much consideration of the types of student-centered learning that could be deemed

beneficial needed to be carefully scrutinized before any changes were recommended. The works of three educational theorists, Dewey, Giroux, and Friere, all broached different types of student-centered learning, yet each one hearkened back to components of constructivism – an educational philosophy grounded in the idea that learning is constructed by doing and experiencing rather than simply depending on the teacher to transmit the knowledge (Brown, 2008).

Constructivism and Student-Centered Learning. SCL is a style of instruction where the student, instead of the teacher, makes choices about a student’s education (Brown, 2008; Ive, 2017; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). The central idea of constructivist theory is that learning is more important than teaching (Cattaneo, 2017). In my research, I analyzed my participant’s stories and experiences to determine if their classroom strategies were teacher-centered or student-centered during the transition toward SCL. I also used data analysis to determine the impact of my participants' instructional strategies on student learning. Educational theorists described constructivism and its connection to student-centered learning. I reviewed their discussions and then provided examples of the types of SCL detailed in the literature and what instructional strategies are utilized in SCL classrooms. The types of strategies I looked for in my data are included at the end of this section.

Paulo Freire (1998) and John Dewey (1964) believed that learning was a social and personal exploration for the learner. According to Dewey (1964), who was a philosopher of education, “the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself” (p. 427). Dewey asserted that learning through real experiences and situations was the truest

form of learning. In his opinion, the school was an organization that must create social learning structures alongside the curriculum of knowledge. He went on to propose that “education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality, and tends to cramp and to deaden” (Dewey, 1964, p. 430). This belief shapes SCL in that the roles of the teacher shift from the main distributor of knowledge into a facilitator of the knowledge (Cattaneo, 2017).

This shift does not negate the need for the teacher. Yet, it does rely on the teacher changing priorities and developing a model of learning where the student is in control, at least in part, of what they learn and how they learn it. Within SCL there are a variety of styles and instructional formats such as project-based and personalized learning, which are all connected to constructivism. Each type has specific characteristics and uses in the K-12 classroom and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The primary mode of instruction in the past in K-12 education was TCL, based on an industrial model of learning where students learned things in sequential order and gained information through their teacher (Richardson, 2017). However, transformational approaches to current K-12 education ideas have brought about a variety of instructional styles, including personalized learning, project-based learning, and student-centered learning (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). The differences between traditional and student-centered styles of instruction and learning are vast. The traditional model prepares students for traditional industry, while the more recent, student-centered models, prepare students with a wide range of skills including communication, collaboration, and problem-solving (Lee & Hannafin, 2016).

Within active learning pedagogies to which the constructivist theory ascribes, there are different models of learning that are pertinent to understand for this study. These models include case-based, problem-based, inquiry-based, project-based, and discovery-based styles of learning. Cattaneo (2017) explained that each of these SCL styles is built on the belief that students should be in charge of their learning, yet each has different roots in the constructivist theory. For example, problem-based learning places an importance on reflection while discovery-based does not; however, both styles place a high importance on the process of learning and are student-centered (Cattaneo, 2017).

In the active learning pedagogies of SCL, several other styles surfaced in the research. Estes et al. (2014) described project-based learning as a style of SCL where students use real-world assignments and projects to learn the material and then to demonstrate their mastery of the content (2014). In a study of 20 faculty members at the university level in a science, technology, and math (STEM) lab, Estes et al. (2014) found that SCL in the format of project-based learning improved student learning and skills in collaboration. Further, they discovered that teachers desired more training and redesigned spaces to enrich the learning using this SCL style (Estes et al., 2014). This style of instruction fits into the model of SCL because students learn information and incorporate this knowledge into their final product. In project-based learning, students create original project ideas, which have an impact on the wider scope of knowledge about a topic and become contributors to the knowledge instead of just obtaining the knowledge (Estes et al., 2014).

Lee and Hannafin (2016) explained that SCL identifies students as the owners of their learning. This style of knowledge acquisition is drastically different from the

education system of the past. The industrial model fuels traditional education, whereas SCL is built with styles of learning that fall under the ideas of constructivism and focus on the student and the learning process. This process is unique to each student in the classroom. Autonomy, the use of personal goals, and the use of the unique tools and characteristics that each student possesses drive SCL (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Although SCL alters the role of the teacher, a diminished classroom role is not a characteristic of SCL classrooms, and some teachers actually preferred it. In a survey-based study of 260 elementary school teachers at 10 different schools by Çubukcu (2012), the researcher found teachers preferred SCL over TCL for student growth and achievement. Also, Çubukcu determined that SCL required a different role for the teachers than traditional TCL, but teachers still had an active role in their classroom. In a study of 140 randomly selected students from the university level, Ive (2017) determined that students saw the usefulness of TCL but preferred SCL in their learning. More specifically, 47% of the respondents agreed that TCL was effective in some ways, but unhelpful in others according to the two questions from the survey that pertained to TCL. When the 140 students were asked about SCL, 100% of students held a positive attitude toward the SCL approach. Students from the survey admitted that the “student-centered teaching approach led them to master the materials” (Ive, 2017, p. 62). The students in this study agreed that SCL had a positive impact on their learning (Ive, 2017). Ive’s work demonstrated that when teachers became an active piece of the learning process instead of the keeper of the knowledge, participants began to learn in a different way. The use of university-level students’ data on the topic of SCL is beneficial because it allows me to see educational trends between K-12 and post-secondary school models. However, there

are limitations in using university-level students because the culture of the classroom in a college level course is different than one in the K-12 setting. Students are at different places in their lives and use different learning processes, and this must be taken into consideration when using these data sets.

Another commonly used component of SCL is that it often requires the use of tools, such as technology and learning management systems, to support student learning. In a naturalistic case study of 100 students in grades 6 through 12, Aslan and Reigeluth (2016) used semi-structured focus group and individual interviews and determined that technology platforms and integration systems played an important role in SCL. They also used questionnaires to gain information from students, which further supported their assertions that technology supported SCL in classrooms (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016). Although they did not list the specific questions from the questionnaire that supported the major themes and findings from the interviews, Aslan and Reigeluth stated that the answers supported the outcomes from the interviews. According to the interview data, nearly all of the teachers indicated that project-based learning, a form of SCL, was difficult to implement before they began using the online platform (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016). Using technology is paramount to the success of SCL as the change in how knowledge is delivered to students allowed the teacher to work in a support role needed to advance the SCL environment (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016). This technology served as a new way for teachers to deliver instruction and as a new way for students to collaborate and communicate with each other. In this case, this style of learning was facilitated in a positive manner by technology because of the need for individual processing and creation of work and tasks throughout the learning process (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016). Aslan and

Reigeluth (2016) also summarized that the responses to their interview data supported the idea that teachers and students needed updated and efficient technology systems and hardware in their classrooms. Additionally, ineffectively designed and improperly maintained technology was a weakness for SCL and a concern for teachers in the study according to the responses to focus group interviews (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016). In my research I asked my participants questions about the technology used in their classroom and in their school as a part of the transition toward primarily SCL instruction. In my personal transition toward SCL, I experienced the positives and negatives of technology usage and I was intentional in my interviews to gather this information from my participants. I believe it is also important to state that using a technology platform or resource does not create an SCL environment. The SCL strategies indicated in the literature can be used with or without technology.

There are additional commonly utilized components of student-centered approaches to learning discussed in the literature. According to Lee and Hannafin (2016), autonomy, scaffolding, and audience are the three additional constructs of engagement for SCL (2016). These three characteristics mark the shift from traditional instruction to student-centered instruction. Autonomy is the characteristic in SCL where students begin to own their learning. Through this construct, the learner uses goals that have been set by the teacher and the student working together as well as information about themselves such as their learning style and learning preferences, to determine what they need (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Classroom environments that support teachers and students allow for autonomy and choice in student work. The literature supports the idea that SCL should not be completely student-driven but should be geared more toward the

learner than TCL and focused on developing the individual student and increasing his/her use of communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Estes et al., 2014; Ive, 2017; Shieh & Chang, 2014).

The second characteristic that facilitates SCL, scaffolding, is a common practice across education in the traditional system. Lee and Hannafin (2016), described scaffolding in relation to the process of building a structure. Just as the scaffolding of a building supports the basic structure of the whole, student learning is a process, which requires structure and support until the practices or knowledge is firmly established (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). This process relies on peers, teachers, and other professionals who can support and bolster the knowledge of the students in question. This scaffolding takes place through a variety of measures. Supporting students in how they set goals and how they measure their progress towards these goals is another important piece of scaffolding. Students also must have scaffolding for the content they are learning in order to understand the basics of the material before they dive deeper into the complexities of the subject (Lee & Hannafin, 2016).

The last practice described is using an authentic audience to increase the level of work from students and support an SCL environment. In a study of 44 middle school students in the Middle East, Cohen and Riel (1989) created a research environment where students completed two separate writing assignments. In the first assignment, students were tasked to write something that would be turned into their teacher for a typical midterm evaluation. In the second assignment, students wrote to peers in other countries (Cohen & Riel, 1989). The instructors then graded both papers and scored them on a 0-100 scale, and gave each paper a score of 1-4 in the following categories: content,

organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. According to Cohen and Riel (1989), students scored higher on the papers that were written for an authentic audience ($M = 75.11$) compared to those written for a grade by their instructor ($M = 69.66$).

Several studies found in the research indicated that SCL classrooms benefited students in a variety of ways, including an increase of student goal setting (Estes et al., 2014; Lee & Hannafin, 2016), self-direction (Çubukcu, 2017), and problem-solving (Shieh & Chang, 2014). In a qualitative study of 24 middle school students in Taiwan (Shieh & Chang, 2014), students were interviewed, and this data supported the idea that students in SCL classrooms had increased problem-solving abilities. Shieh and Chang (2014) also purported that based on the results they observed and from interview data, collaboration and communication were better in students who learned in an SCL classroom compared to their peers in TCL environments. In a study of 140 randomly selected students from the university level in the Philippines who were in SCL classes, Ive (2017) used observation of video recordings to determine that students communicated better and were more self-directed in their learning than their peers in TCL classrooms. Additionally, in an experimental study of 70 10th-grade students in East Java, Buditama (2017) determined that students' confidence in their work and engagement was increased as a result of being in a SCL classroom. Other studies previously discussed support the idea that students grew in their autonomy and their ability to communicate and collaborate as a result of the SCL classroom (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Çubukcu, 2017; Estes et al., 2014; Cohen & Riel, 1989; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). Several of the previous studies took place outside of the United States, which can have an impact on how I use the results from these studies. Although the culture of school may be different in each of

these classrooms, their data are helpful to me as I seek to understand how SCL is used in comparison to TCL in a variety of different contexts and situations in classrooms.

This previous research and the explanation of the different forms of SCL and their strengths and weaknesses was an important element for my research study. Understanding the components of SCL, the different strategies that exist in this instructional style, and how each one impacted students and teachers helped me understand how a classroom actively engaged in SCL functions. I asked questions during my data collection to determine the types of strategies that my participants used, and I analyzed the data to determine the impact of these strategies on the culture of the classroom and on student learning. These experiences helped me determine the impact of SCL strategies in my participant's classrooms. For my research, TCL strategies included: direct instruction, whole group instruction, limited or no choice for students, and an assessment structure where assessment occurred on the same standards for all students at regular intervals. I determined that SCL strategies included: student autonomy in learning style, student choice in assignments, student choice in style, timing, or audience of an assessment, and the inclusion of real-world or authentic learning experiences where students were tasked with solving problems with their peers.

As the researcher for this work, I completed a pilot study to gather initial information from teachers and their students about their understandings and perspectives on SCL in a middle school environment. This work informed the design of my study and served as a starting point for my research and helped me develop further questions and identify lenses through which I wanted to understand the shift toward SCL.

Pilot Study

As a part of my advanced qualitative research class, I tried out my interviewing strategy with a secondary teacher who experienced a transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. I conducted a 90-minute interview, which I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the process coding technique. Process coding is a technique where the researcher creates gerunds from the participant data and according to Saldana (2016), is applicable when searching for “the routines and rituals of human life” (p. 111). I chose process coding as the analysis strategy for my pilot study transcript because it was one of the coding strategies I was interested in utilizing to analyze the data in my study due to the routine and ritualistic nature of the school classroom. In addition to my 90-minute interview, I observed a summer teacher work session where teachers were constructing unit plans and materials for the upcoming year in a school that was actively implementing SCL strategies in all classrooms. I created field notes in my research journal during the observation and I completed a detailed reflective memo after the observation to determine the concepts and theories discussed in the teacher work session.

Maxwell described that pilot studies are beneficial because they allow the researcher to “develop an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying” (2013, p. 67). My primary goals were to determine how teachers described the experience of transitioning from primarily TCL to primarily SCL and to understand what concepts or theories were important to these experiences. I wanted to know what teachers who experienced the transition thought was important to their successes and detrimental in their failures in their transition.

After conducting the interview and analyzing the transcript, I identified several areas of discussion that were important to the interviewee that related to TCL, SCL, and

the transition from one to the other. Through process coding, I identified actions that were described in the interview (Saldaña, 2016). Some of the codes that resulted from the analysis were adjusting without resources, incurring change, and altering methods from the past. These codes were connected to findings from the literature and supported my research questions and research design. Adjusting without resources was discussed several times by my interviewee and I connected this code to the discussion in the literature of the need for professional development for teachers to ensure a successful transition toward SCL (Estes et al., 2014). Incurring change and altering methods from the past were connected to findings in the literature that TCL persists as the dominant style of instruction in North America (Conti, 2004). The concepts discussed in my pilot study interview confirmed the need for my research.

As this was a single pilot interview limited in time and scope, I did not seek to determine the impact of expectations that were grounded in the longstanding culture of the classroom or the hidden curriculum of unstated objectives on the efforts to change my interviewees learning environment. I did, however, find it was going to be easier to record descriptive behaviors and environmental conditions than it would be to reach my goal of seeing culture, especially without being able to access the classrooms to see it for myself. I revisited my interview questions and reviewed Naomi Quinn's (2005) text to ensure my interview questions would lead to stories from my participants where they experienced changes in the elements of the culture of the classroom. Specifically, I included questions about social interactions, the role of the teacher and student, and the implications of instructional style on student learning that my participants experienced. I also determined as a result of the pilot interview that an analysis of the elements of

temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013) was needed in my analysis strategies to determine the impact of culture on my participants. I described these elements in detail in Chapter 3.

After I observed the interactions in the teacher work session and created field notes based on the discussions and work completed, I determined that SCL was polarizing within the staff population. Teachers who were present at the workdays were creating unit plans, which aligned with the school's goals of incorporating student-centered learning into each class. However, during the work sessions, the teachers discussed other teachers who taught at their school who were not present and indicated many were opposed to this instructional style and wanted to use a traditional style of teaching. I determined that the relationships between teachers could be an important element of the transition experience for my participants. Further discussion detailed student opinions of SCL and the teachers described students as having mixed emotions. Teachers cited specific students who they believed flourished in the new design of instruction. Other teachers described students whom they thought struggled when the alignment of courses was changed and the learning path was less restrictive. This difference in alignment was created as more choice and variability were added to content acquisition. The mixed opinions of teachers and students on SCL supported the need for more information on the transition from TCL to SCL and a narrative inquiry investigation of the differences in the way that different teachers and students experienced the transition. The teachers lacked an understanding of why not all teachers in the building supported SCL, while previous research showed it to be beneficial for all learners (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Cattaneo, 2017, Richardson, 2017).

As I reflected on both pilot study phases, I learned several important things and made corresponding adjustments to my research plan. First, as I discussed previously in this section, identifying the elements of culture and the hidden curriculum in my participant's experiences would take careful questioning and analysis strategies. I adjusted my interview questions to gather more data on the social interactions my participants experienced. I also needed to analyze my data using categorizing and connecting strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) to determine where these constructs impacted participant experiences. Second, the reflective memos I created after the interview and observation of the teacher work session helped me see that my bias toward SCL surfaced during the pilot study. I did not ask follow-up questions in the interview when I assumed I knew the answer, and I let my personal experiences and background influence the data I collected. I determined that I needed to ensure the validity section of my research design included strategies to reduce the impact of my bias. Due to this realization, I incorporated new strategies in my research design, including memoing about my bias and reactivity before I began interviews with my participants and creating a reflective memo after each interview to ensure my background experiences and opinions strengthened my data through increased awareness (Maxwell, 2013).

The design of this study, including the narrative inquiry approach and data collection and analysis techniques, was supported by researchers, theorists, and previous work in the field. My conceptual framework impacted each element of my research design, and informed the choices made in my research plan. Each portion of the research design was important for the credibility and usability of the findings.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research studies are separated into different formats based on their intended purpose, scope, and participant group. The following sections detail methods implemented for participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and validity checks. Each component of the research design for this study was determined with the goals of the research in mind. An overarching narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013) approach was employed and subsequently explained in the section that follows.

Narrative Inquiry

My original research design was an ethnographic study that allowed for an exploration of observed culture of the classroom. I planned to observe classrooms, interview teachers, and then conduct focus groups with student participants of the classrooms. However, after approval of my dissertation proposal by my dissertation committee, the COVID-19 pandemic began and altered the research options for the school district where I was planning to conduct my research. Due to COVID-19 precautions, no research was permitted to take place in the school district during the 2020-2021 school year. After a discussion with the chair for research in the school district, I was informed I needed to change my research methodology to remove observations and student interviews from my research plan, which made focusing on observed culture using ethnography impossible. At that point, I became frustrated. I needed to shift my research design from ethnography to a different form of qualitative

research that would still allow me to address most of the research questions about which I was curious and continue to focus on the teacher experience in transitioning from primarily TCL to primarily SCL, and the meaning they made of this transition even though the cultural components were compromised. I created the following memo after a discussion with my committee researcher, Dr. Richard Schmertzing, while I researched other potential qualitative inquiry methods for my research.

I am relieved after my discussion by phone with Richard. His questions and wonderings helped me to process through my thoughts and always help me to more clearly see my options. He recommended several sources for me to review for narrative inquiry and phenomenology. I will purchase resources from the authors he suggested for both qualitative research methodologies and identify the approach that I think will help me to answer my research questions and continue my research.

I need to determine which style of research will support an in-depth analysis of interviews. I am concerned that I won't be able to adequately answer my research questions now that I am only able to interview teachers and I won't have other data sources to compare with the data from interviews. I need to analyze the interviews in multiple ways or through multiple cycles of coding to ensure I get every bit of usefulness from each interview. I also need to ensure that my questioning strategies and listening skills are ready for this challenge.

(Reflective Memo, August 25th, 2020)

After my discussion with Dr. Richard Schmertzing and my review of the two styles of research, I determined that narrative inquiry would be my new qualitative

approach for my dissertation, and I immersed myself in understanding the process of narrative inquiry. According to Merriam (2002), “the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). Qualitative research uses the researcher as an instrument to discover how people experienced a process and then how they make meaning of the situations around them (Merriam, 2002). The process I investigated in my research was the shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL instruction. Merriam further discussed how several key concepts connect multiple forms of qualitative research, including the product as a richly descriptive explanation of the phenomenon in question and that the researcher seeks to understand the meaning people construct about their experiences. While quantitative research often deals with statistical data to connect two or more variables, qualitative research uses an exploratory method to allow the researcher to understand a phenomenon from the participant’s perspective (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2002).

According to Clandinin (2013), narrative inquiry is “an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p. 17). Further, he stated that “narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience” (p. 17). Adams and Van Manen (2008) noted that the term *lived experience* is derived from the German language to mean “experience as we live through it.” They went on to describe that one of the primary possibilities of interviewing human lived experiences is “how the teacher experiences the pedagogical encounter” (p. 616). Although typically discussed in phenomenology, narrative inquiry also involves lived experience to prioritize stories deciphered from the

multitude of daily interactions and occurrences in a routine area, such as teaching in a school. Narrative inquiry research requires in-depth and thorough interviews in order to gather rich information from participants. Additionally, my research topic called for me to explore and investigate the experiences of those who successfully transitioned to primarily SCL in order to determine the meaning that teachers made of the transition. I also explored the influences of the hidden curriculum, an implicit component of the culture of the classroom, and how it influenced the transition from one longstanding and deeply ingrained instructional model (TCL) to a new and significantly different model (SCL), during the transition. I further explored how the hidden curriculum and the culture of the classroom impacted each teacher's perceptions of this transition. I included questions about the impact of both of these components in research question two. I used my participant's narratives and the analysis using coding to answer these questions in Chapter 6.

Narrative inquiry is an ideal research method for understanding the impact of culture on a participant's experiences. According to Clandinin (2013), the focus of narrative inquiry is not just focused on the participant experience, but "also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 12). Narrative inquiry provided me the opportunity to understand how teachers experienced and made meaning of their previous shift in pedagogical style in the context of the school environment.

According to Maxwell (2013), designs are flexible and research questions are adjustable as data is analyzed during the study. This style of study allowed me to adjust and interpret the information gathered in order to understand how different influences

were affecting the phenomenon as teachers described their previous transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. Specifically, I wrote reflective memos at the conclusion of each interview, and I used these memos to highlight interesting discussions or stories from the previous interview and to make notes to follow up with that participant about those stories in subsequent interviews. I also reviewed my research questions after each interview to ensure the data I collected was in alignment with my research goals. Within this flexible tradition of qualitative research design, I specifically used Clandinin's three elements of narrative inquiry; temporality, sociality, and place to guide my work (2013).

Clandinin described a specific form of narrative inquiry where in-depth interviewing allows the researcher to retell a participant's story. In the text, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*, Clandinin described three major elements of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. In each of these contexts, participants are shaped by and make meaning of their experiences and are influenced by their surroundings.

When considering temporality, participant experiences were examined for how they were influenced by the specific time that an event occurred. In my study, I recognized that this element of narrative inquiry led me to focus on the past, present, and future of the participants and the events they described in our interviews. Adhering to Seidman's three-part interview structure provided me opportunities to review participants' stories as far back as childhood in interview one (past), to explore experiences with the phenomenon in interview two (present), and to solicit meanings that can impact their future in interview three (future). In each narrative I indicated passages that were associated with the design component of temporality by placing a (T) in

parenthesis. Table 1 displays two examples of passages from my data marked for temporality.

Table 1

Temporality Sections of Participant Interviews

Participant	Narrative Inquiry Element	Transcript	Comment
Brianna	Temporality	We had to memorize the entire [Gettysburg Address]. I remember that we had to memorize that and stand in front of the class, and I was terrified. And I remember, I remember that I was almost in tears and my voice was shaking so she made me turn my back to the class. And as soon as I did that I could say it. (Brianna Interview 1, Pos. 26-28) (T)	I noted this section with the element of temporality as the experience from Brianna's past included an instructional choice made by one of her middle-school teachers. Brianna was describing a public speaking assignment where each student memorized and recited the same passage to the class.
Jessica	Temporality	I loved reading groups with Ms. Towers. We used to run and push and shove to sit by Ms. Towers. And she would make us all go back and sit down, so we could walk. She taught us like how to read, with inflection, you know? And how you know to read with tone, and you know read like the character and are they excited or are they upset or scared, she taught us to read like that. (Jessica Interview 1, Pos. 20) (T)	I noted this section with the element of temporality as Jessica recalled an experience related to an instructional choice by one of her elementary-school teachers. Jessica described the passion and enthusiasm her teacher had for reading and how that passion was experienced by her as a student.

The passages in Table 1 are sections of transcripts from Brianna and Jessica that I marked with elements of temporality. These sections included stories from my participant's past experiences where they recalled instructional strategies or instructional styles of their

previous teachers. My comments for why the passage was marked for temporality is included in the table.

When considering sociality, the influence of the school and classroom environment and of the relationships formed within the school influenced each participant. Clandinin (2013) stated that “these social conditions are understood, in part, in terms of cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives” (p. 40). In a school classroom, as previously discussed, social interactions and the culture of the school can have significant roles in participant experiences and how they explain their stories. In my study, I recognized this when my participants described experiences of interactions with any stakeholder at the school. I used these portions to support my answers to my research questions pertaining to the culture of the classroom and/or the hidden curriculum. These experiences provided me with information on how the culture of the classroom impacted the descriptions of the experiences and the meaning that each participant assigned to these experiences. Specifically, I searched for places where my participants discussed a change to their roles or routines, their shared values with their students, or their expectations and goals in the classroom in alignment with my defined culture of the classroom components discussed in Chapter 2. In each narrative I indicated passages that were associated with the design component of sociality with an (S) in parenthesis. Table 2 contains examples from narratives marked for sociality.

Table 2

Sociality Sections of Participant Interviews

Participant	Narrative Inquiry Element	Transcript	Comment
Rebekah	Sociality	I was in a conference and one of the kids was, you know, he'd been struggling in class, and we asked him why he was struggling and one of the teachers said, you know just go back and watch the video over again. The kid said "I went back and watched the video over and over again, but she's still not answering my question." (Rebekah Interview 2, Pos. 20) (S)	I noted this section with the element of sociality as Rebekah described an experience during a parent-teacher conference with one of her students.
Kim	Sociality	I think the teachers on the other side [the portion of the school not beginning their transition toward primarily SCL until the following school year] felt like, left behind and all the stuff we just put towards [the learning management system] and students in their learning. (Kim Interview 2, Pos. 45) (S)	I noted this section with the element of sociality when Kim recalled the relationship between different groups of teachers during the first year of the transition toward primarily SCL instruction at JSMS.
Jessica	Sociality	I went to him one day and I said, "if you needed clean clothes, and you said to your wife, hey do laundry whenever you feel like it. Do you think you would ever have clean clothes to wear?" I said "no." You have deadlines. Everybody has deadlines because if you don't have deadlines and there is not an expectation of a deadline, nothing will ever get done. (Jessica Interview 2, Pos. 30) (S)	I noted this section with the element of sociality because Jessica described an interaction between her and the principal at JSMS during her transition toward primarily SCL.

Table 2 includes passages from the transcripts of Rebekah, Kim, and Jessica where they discussed social interactions with their students, their peers, or their administration at

JSMS. I included a comment for why each section was connected to the sociality component of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013).

The third element of Clandinin's narrative inquiry style, place, had an impact because of the underlying meaning and understanding of the school building as a place where specific incidents take place. Place was described by Clandinin as the "specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 41). The physical space of the school classroom and the implicit ideas that are understood there influenced the experiences and meaning that participants gave to their stories. In my study, I recognized this when my participants described specific physical places in their descriptions of experiences at any point in an interview. I indicated passages that were associated with the design component of place with a (P) in parenthesis. Although many of the experiences discussed in participant interviews were in the school classroom, several other specific locations were included such as a college/university, a business or other location within the community, or a unique location within the school that was not my participant's classroom. Table 3 includes examples of passages marked as place from my participants.

Table 3

Place Sections of Participant Interviews

Participant	Narrative Inquiry Element	Transcript	Comment
Kim	Place	I graduated high school and that fall I started [college]. [College] was a new experience as I thought it was a huge campus and I was worried about not knowing anyone and not knowing any teachers. I remember thinking that college was going to be a new experience for me, and I was apprehensive about it. (Kim Interview 1, Pos. 42) (P)	I noted this section with the element of place as Kim describer her college and how the physical building and campus impacted her opinions of the college experience.
Brianna	Place	Looking back people were like you're teaching at Johnson Middle (pseudonym)? And I'm like yeah. I did my first three years there. And I was like I loved it, I mean I didn't have anything to compare it to except my student teaching and it was very similar. (Brianna Interview 1, Pos. 97) (P)	I noted this section with the element of place when Brianna described the reactions of other teachers to the school where she first taught. Although she did not give in-depth details of the school, I gathered information about this physical place through how her friends asked her about the location.

The passages in Table 3 from the transcripts of Kim and Brianna display examples of sections marked as containing the element of place. Two different locations are displayed in the examples, a college campus in Kim’s transcript and a previous school where Brianna served before teaching at JSMS. These transcript sections provide the reader with examples of the type of transcript sections I marked for place. These sections

were used to determine how specific buildings and locations impacted the experiences and stories of my participants.

I used *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place* to mark passages in each narrative to provide a connecting strategy for analysis between each participant. Since I was unable to observe classrooms or interview students due to the pandemic, I relied on interviews to “observe” culture from the stories and experiences that each participant described. In her text, *Finding Culture in Talk*, Naomi Quinn (2005) examined how discourse and narratives can be used to perform cultural analysis. She stated that culture included “largely tacit, taken-for-granted, and hence invisible assumptions” and that people within a group use these assumptions when “forming expectations, reasoning, [and] telling stories,” among other routine tasks (p. 3). Quinn identified interviews as the primary way to discover culture from discourse as “interviews can provide a density of clues to cultural understandings that is virtually unobtainable in any other way” (2005, p. 7). In my study I used interviews to gather data, I then analyzed the data to answer my research questions. Specifically, the questions pertaining to the culture of the classroom were answered by applying the *connecting strategies* to my narratives (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). *Categorizing strategies* of coding, code mapping, and code grouping further helped me discover overarching code groups across participant interviews (Saldaña, 2016). My previous positionality as a teacher who made the same transition and experienced the phenomenon of interest allowed me to interview each teacher as a participant-researcher who could share candidly in conversations and listen empathetically to each participant. I was also able to speak the language as a previous participant in the phenomenon of interest.

According to Jackson (1990),

The sights and smells become so familiar to students and teachers alike that they exist dimly, on the periphery of awareness. Only when the classroom is encountered under somewhat unusual circumstances, does it appear, for a moment, a strange place filled with objects that command our attention. (p. 7)

Jackson implied that the culture of the classroom is deeply rooted and developed through hours of student presence and monotony. Within this culture, the hidden curriculum impacts students as a multitude of interactions shape their thoughts and actions. Over time, teachers and students subconsciously create a culture and an environment within the classroom that takes its shape, in part, from the larger culture of the school.

The data collection techniques needed for my narrative inquiry were a focused exploration into the stories that my four participants told as they explained and made meaning of their experiences in the classroom and a carefully constructed researcher journal filled with memos where I wrote my thoughts, suppositions, questions, and biases. Before moving into the data collection strategies, I obtained IRB approval (See Appendix A) and carefully selected my participants.

Participant Selection

Following Merriam's suggestions, I used multiple participants and conducted a narrative analysis for each, which allowed me to support my findings through a rich set of discourse (Merriam, 2002). I used purposeful sampling to incorporate teachers who had previously transitioned to successfully using primarily SCL techniques in their classroom as a mode of instruction at JSMS and thus transitioned away from a predominantly TCL style of instruction. According to Patton (2015) in *Qualitative Research and Evaluation*

Methods, purposeful sampling is beneficial when participants are “selected because they are information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 46). In my study, the phenomenon of interest was the transition in teaching style from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. I submitted and received approval from a school district to conduct research at a school where the teachers previously completed a successful transition toward primarily SCL instruction. My next step was to communicate with the principal of JSMS to discuss my approved research and the possibility of using teachers who taught at the target school during the transition to SCL, which was a few years prior to his tenure. The transition toward primarily SCL instruction began at JSMS in 2013, but was not considered complete until the 2017-2018 school year. I wanted to interview teachers who had been at the school through the shift and were still teaching there 3 years later. I believed them to be the teachers best positioned to discuss the shifting culture of the school before, during, and after the phenomenon of a school changing from TCL to SCL in the majority of its classes.

I talked with Principal Clarence (pseudonym), and he recommended eight teachers who met my initial criteria. I sent my participant request email (see Appendix B) for teacher volunteers to Mr. Clarence, and he shared it with his staff at JSMS, but they then responded directly to me to express interest so the principal would not who volunteered and who did not. In this email I asked several questions including: What subject/grade do you teach? How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been at this school? I was searching for participants who not only previously transitioned successfully toward primarily SCL, but who also were experienced teachers

who would be able to discuss their teaching experiences before the transition. I also wanted participants from multiple content areas and who taught at multiple grade levels.

In the first week after I shared the email with Principal Clarence, I was contacted by three teachers at JSMS who were interested in volunteering for the study. I spoke with each of these potential participants by phone in the evenings over the 3 weeks that followed to discuss my research in greater detail, how much time would be needed for interviews, and the ways that I would protect their identity if they chose to participate. Each of these three agreed to participate in my research. After quickly securing three participants, I thought more of the remaining staff who met the initial criteria would contact me for more information, but they did not. I waited more than a month without hearing from anymore teachers at JSMS. I was discouraged at this point in my participant selection process. I thought it would be easier to attract participants from teachers at JSMS and that participant selection would be a faster process. I was excited to begin my interviews after being forced to put my research on pause for the 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic. I decided to complete a reflective memo about my next steps.

I thought more of the staff at JSMS would volunteer to participate in the study, and I need to determine some next steps for beginning conversations with teachers whom successfully completed the transition toward SCL but may be unwilling to volunteer due to their busy schedules or because of how crazy the previous 2 school years have been. I wonder if they all saw the email from the principal. I wonder if my participants who have already committed could be helpful in securing more potential candidates. Maybe they are unwilling because

they don't want to talk about the years of transition toward SCL because they did not enjoy the transition. I hope to record stories of dissonance and struggle and I really want to secure another participant or two from the remaining pool. I need to make contact and discuss the study with more teachers. (Reflective memo September 15th, 2021)

After reflecting on my lack of interest from teachers after my initial communication attempt, I asked my three committed participants to assist me in contacting other teachers at JSMS who met the initial transition criteria. While I worked to secure more participants, I began my first round of interviews with one of the three committed participants. I wanted to conduct each of the three interviews with a single participant before moving on to another participant. I knew that Seidman (2013) noted that the three-interview structure worked best “when the researcher can space each interview from 3 days to a week apart” (p. 24). I needed ample time to memo and process my reactions to each interview to be prepared for the next interview in the sequence.

After asking my committed participants to discuss the research with other colleagues who were at JSMS during the transition toward primarily SCL, three additional teachers at JSMS who were interested in the study contacted me. I spoke with each of these potential participants by phone to discuss my research in greater detail, how much time would be needed for interviews, and the ways that I would protect their identity if they chose to participate. I was excited that three more participants agreed to participate. However, one of those stopped responding to text messages and phone calls after initially committing to the study, and another called me to change her mind after talking over the commitment with her husband. My six participants dwindled down to

four, however, I believed the four participants who committed to the study had the level of experience and the diversity of grade levels and content areas taught to provide rich data for my research. The following table contains information about each of my participants.

Table 4

Participant Characteristics

Participant	Total Years Teaching	Years Teaching at JSMS	Grade Levels Taught	Subject(s) taught
Brianna	24	10	6, 7, 8	Language Arts and Social Studies
Jessica	27	13	6	Math
Rebekah	27	13	6	Science, Math, and Social Studies
Kim	27	13	6 and 7	Language Arts and Social Studies

Table 4 includes information for each participant from JSMS who was interviewed as a part of my research. Each teacher provided me with the information for their total years in education, total years teaching at JSMS, and their grade level(s) and subject(s) taught. This information is provided to inform the reader of the previous experience of each participant.

After successfully securing participants for my research from JSMS, I began collecting data through in-depth interviews with each participant and I continued my journaling and memo writing alongside the interviewing phase of data collection. These

interviews were constructed using Seidman's (2013) interview structure during the fall and spring semesters of the 2021-2022 school year.

Data Collection

Researchers in narrative inquiry studies collect data through in-depth and focused interviews. According to Quinn (2005), interviews are the most beneficial data source for narrative inquiry as they allow the interviewer to actively grant control to the interviewee, to allow interviewees to pursue their thoughts in their own way, as well as provide unique insight and special knowledge of their experiences. In my interviews I used open-ended questions as a starting point for providing participants with freedom to discuss stories and experiences of importance to them. I was also careful during the interviews to take lengthy pauses to give them space and time to add, interject, or continue expressing their ideas, thoughts, or memories. After each interview I memoed and created follow up questions for the next interview to gain more knowledge about these meaningful stories from each participant.

Interviews. In his text, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, Irving Seidman (2013) explained that multiple types of data collection are important for qualitative research. He explained that each of these data collection methods serve a unique purpose and should be used in different scenarios. Seidman further stated that "if the researcher's goal, however, is to understand the meaning people involved in education make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry" (p. 10). In my narrative inquiry research, my search to determine the meaning of the experiences of the teachers in their previous transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL made interviewing the primary component of my data collection.

For my interview method, I used Seidman's (2013) protocol and I conducted three 90-minute interviews with each teacher participant. In the first interview in this three-part series, Seidman detailed that the researcher's task is to "put the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (p. 21). This interview allowed me to determine similarities and differences in the educational backgrounds of the teachers. I was specifically interested in each participant's schooling in the K-12 setting, experiences in teacher preparation courses in college and the instructional techniques that they experienced and learned (see Appendix C). In my mind, I was seeking answers to questions like: What instructional and classroom experiences stood out from their schooling in the K-12 setting? What instructional and classroom experiences were the least impactful to their growth as a learner? What techniques and strategies were discussed in their teacher preparation courses to prepare them for the profession? What was the ratio of categories of instructional strategies they were taught in relation to TCL and SCL, and how were these styles explained to them?

According to Seidman (2013), the purpose of the second interview is to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (p. 21). The second interview allowed me to detail the daily experiences of the participants as they transitioned from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. I was interested in gaining insight during these interviews into the events that took place each day as they provided instruction to their students (see Appendix D). I also used interview two to understand the teachers' relationships with their students. Sample questions: What does a typical day in your classroom look like? What kind of

interactions do you have with students? What are the typical behaviors of students in your classroom?

The final interview in Seidman's three-part protocol was about teachers reflecting on "the meaning of their experience" (2013, p. 22). In this interview, I asked teachers questions about the meanings they gave to their work and their instruction (see Appendix E). Some of the questions I asked in my study in interview three included: What do you see as the reason behind the transition from TCL to SCL? In what ways does SCL give meaning to the education field and to your profession? What did it mean to you when the style of learning in your classroom changed? What do you see as the future for SCL and how do you see education changing? I focused on questions where my participants could explain how they made meaning of the previous stories and experiences they described to me in interviews 1 and 2. I completed a reflective memo after the third interview with Rebekah where I discussed what I experienced in prompting my participants to discuss the meaning they made from their stories and memories, it is included here.

The third interview in the protocol is unique in that instead of my participants explaining their experiences and telling me what happened to them, I wanted to understand what those experiences meant to them. I believe that I have had more difficulty so far getting my participants to tell me their specific stories with details in interview 1 and interview 2 than getting their meaning of the experiences in interview 3. I think this is because my participants knew that I completed a similar transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL and they assumed that my experiences were similar to their experiences. I believe this is why they left out details when describing specific stories and why they discussed the meaning they

made from the experience more openly with me. I also believe my participants were more reflective of their own experiences because multiple school years have passed since they completed the transition toward primarily SCL. As I moved further away from my own transition toward SCL, I found that my understanding and thoughts about my experiences were more firmly established, and I believe this impacted my participants as well. (Reflective memo December 17th, 2021)

The three-part interview process led to a long-term relationship with the teachers who participated in the research study. The three-part interview protocol provided me with a wealth of interview information from which I constructed key themes from the data. The 12 interviews I conducted ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. Table 5 provides details on when and how long each interview was with my participants. The duration for each interview is listed in minutes and participants are listed in the order that interviews took place and how my narratives are shared in this dissertation.

Table 5

Participant Interview Schedule

Participant	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3	
	Date	Duration	Date	Duration	Date	Duration
Kim	10/4/21	70	10/8/21	90	10/15/21	75
Jessica	10/18/21	90	10/25/21	85	11/1/21	90
Rebekah	12/2/21	70	12/9/21	65	12/15/21	85
Brianna	1/28/22	65	2/4/22	90	2/10/22	75

Note. Time shown in minutes.

Table 5 includes information for each interview I conducted during data collection for this research study. My participants are listed in the order that I completed their interviews. Each interview was intentionally spaced several days apart to provide time for transcription, reflective memoing, and preparation for the next interview with each participant.

I stored all materials in my office at home in a locked filing cabinet. I had an electronic copy and a paper copy of the transcripts, each of which used codes and pseudonyms to identify participants. I selected a six-digit code to identify each teacher participant with their interview transcripts. This provided a system for alignment between the three interviews completed for each teacher participant.

In addition to transcripts created through in-depth interviews, I created a detailed memo journal during my research. This journal included reflective memos after each interview, memos about my reactivity and subjectivity, and memos about my research process throughout this dissertation.

Memo Journal. I used memoing to create a journal of notes to provide insight into the culture, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that I noticed immediately after each interview and while I was transcribing each text. I determined what follow-up questions I needed to ask each participant and about what experiences to ask more in future interviews. Additionally, I wrote memos to reflect on my biases and the validity of my research based on Peshkin's (1988) Is, which I discussed in the validity section of this dissertation later in this chapter. I wrote memos during my data analysis process while I completed categorizing strategies and created codes from each transcript. Finally, I memoed about theme creation and what connections I could make from my themes to

current theories in education. I include memos throughout the dissertation to demonstrate my thoughts as I explored the transition phenomenon the teachers experienced as well as the growth and challenges I traversed in the research process.

This journal allowed me to gain valuable insight into participants in the contexts of their classroom environment. I created detailed notes of my reactions to each interview. These notes provided me with information to compare with the themes that I created after analyzing the interview data. The following excerpt is from a memo I wrote after I completed interview one with Kim, and I included it here as an example from my memo journal.

I completed the first of my interviews with Kim today, and I am very excited about how I will grow as an interviewer over the next few months and how my interview data will help me answer my research questions and eventually complete my dissertation. I have waited so long to get started, and I am glad to be at the beginning of this work. Kim's answers to my questions and her reflections on her K-12 educational experiences were very interesting to me. Kim paused and sounded ashamed or embarrassed at her lack of connection to her school environment. She stated multiple times that she was not the best student or that she did not give her best effort to school. I plan to come back to this during her second interview and discuss how she creates connections with her students and ask her if she does this intentionally because of her previous experiences. Kim reflected on several specific experiences of learning from her K-12 experience, especially in high school, where her teachers either connected well with her or totally failed at connecting with any students. Kim discussed at length that she

remembered the qualities of her teachers from her K-12 experience more than the instructional strategies they used. She attributed this to her current phase of life. I will come back to this during her second and third interviews to discuss how this impacts her instructional choices and the meaning she gives to her classroom. I noticed multiple times that Kim referenced the social interactions of her school experience and how she viewed each one. I marked these as potential culture of the classroom reference points for future analysis. (Reflective memo October 4, 2021)

After I collected data, I used categorizing and connecting strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) to comb through the data. These strategies helped me identify key components of my four participants' experiences and create descriptive explanations of them as well as articulate how they made meaning of experiences they had in their shift toward primarily SCL instruction.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis occurred from the moment I started gathering data as I thought about the data and memoed routinely. The more formal components of analysis began once an interview was completed. I started my data analysis process by transcribing each interview as soon after it occurred as I could and used MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software package to do so. Once the transcripts were created, I followed a pattern of first applying categorizing strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) through coding, and then multiple rounds of code mapping, and recoding (Saldaña, 2016). I used two different styles of coding, in vivo and emotion, which I describe in detail later in this chapter. I then used connecting strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) to create a narrative

for my participants and I used the elements of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013) to analyze and connect the narratives together and determine similarities and differences between the narratives and the experiences described by my participants. I combined the categories created from both styles of coding and the connecting ideas to create themes. Figure 1 details my system used for data analysis.

Figure 1: Overview of Data Analysis

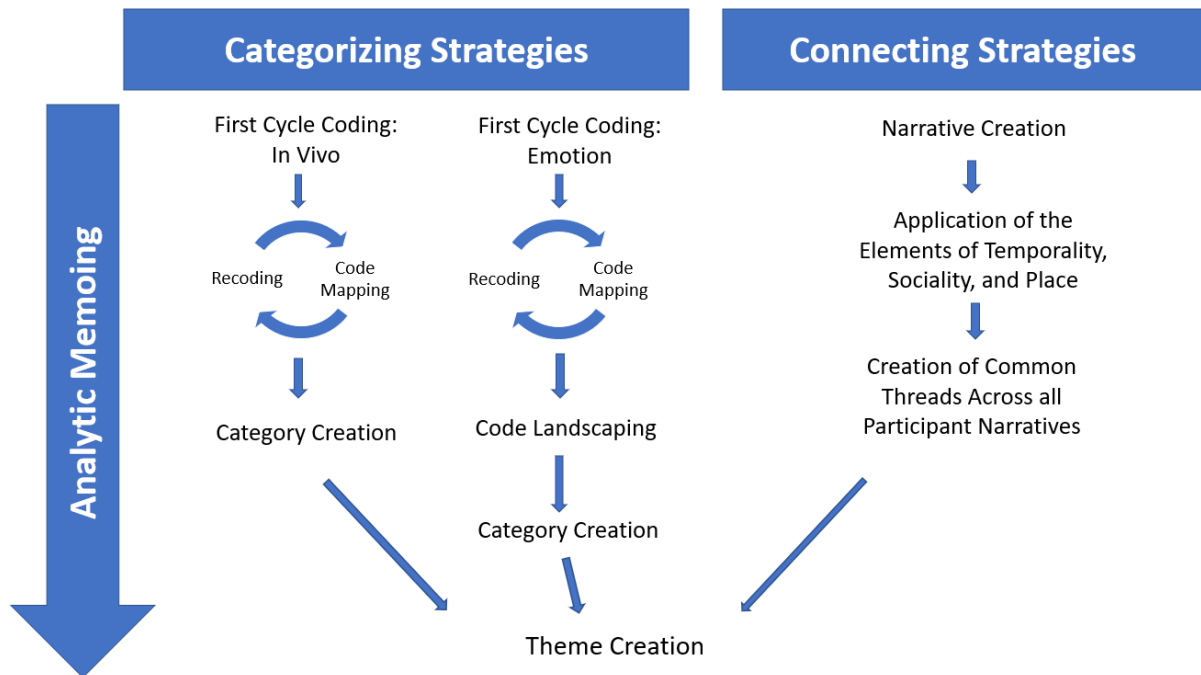


Figure 1 is a visual representation of the data analysis process completed for this research. Both categorizing strategies utilized are listed on the left side of the visual. For each coding style, I completed a first pass at the transcripts and then completed multiple rounds of code mapping and recoding the data using the same coding style. Following the process of code mapping and recoding, I completed a code landscaping process for emotion coding to provide more information on the emotions of my participants during each time period of their journey. I then created concise code categories for both coding

styles. More information on the categorizing process is included later in this chapter. In addition to categorizing strategies, the right side of the visual displays the connecting strategies used in this research. I created a narrative for each participant, applied the elements of temporality, sociality, and place to these narratives, and then created common threads that connected my participant narratives together. Throughout the data analysis process, I created analytic memos. I combined the code categories from both coding styles and the common threads from my connecting strategies to create themes from the data.

The data analysis process started with the transcription of participant interviews. I created each transcription and listened to each interview recording multiple times to create reflective memos about the contents of each one.

Transcription. I recorded each interview using an Olympus WS-852 voice recorder, and I used my cell phone as a back-up recording device. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school district did not allow me to conduct interviews in person. I discussed with each participant that I could conduct interviews with audio and visual features or with only audio features. I wanted my participants to be comfortable during our extended interview sessions together and to feel safe with the chosen style of interview platform. Each of the participants was more comfortable with only audio for our interviews. As a result of their decisions, I conducted each of my interviews using a Skype virtual number through my home computer. I transcribed each interview and created two copies of each. Seidman (2013) suggested recording each interview so that “researchers have their original data” (p. 117). He also suggested transcribing because “interviewers who transcribe their own recordings come to know their interviews better”

(Seidman, 2013, p. 118). I then transcribed each interview, making sure each interview 1 was transcribed before conducting interview 2, and interview 2 was transcribed before conducting interview 3. I completed these transcriptions and began analyzing them with the categorizing strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) of coding after each interview and before the next one began.

I listened the first time through and transcribed the specific words used in each interview session. I highlighted stories or experiences that were unclear and noted pauses, laughter, or other emotions with text inside of brackets in my transcripts. In my transcriptions and in the narratives, I created from the transcripts, punctuation did not follow grammar rules, but was used to indicate the way things were said by my participants. For example, in Brianna's narrative she introduced one of her K-12 teachers by stating, "I remember struggling and it was an older guy and he had a long gray beard and everybody called him Papa Smurf." I believed this made the narratives easier to read and understand. After each interview, I created analytic memos to make notes about stories I wanted to ask more about or to ask about the meaning my participant's gave to those stories in the next interview. I also wrote memos about my reactivity and biases, which I discuss in detail later in this chapter, to ensure I was aware of the impacts of validity in my interviewing technique.

Due to the changes made to my data collection processes because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I wanted to investigate additional ways to analyze my participant transcripts. Without observations and student interviews that I originally planned to conduct, I discussed with my dissertation committee members strategies to perform a deeper analysis of my interview transcripts and stories of their experiences. Dr. Richard

Schmertzling shared an article from Joseph Maxwell and Barbara Miller (2008) with me that detailed using two separate analysis strategies to discern more from qualitative analysis. According to Maxwell and Miller (2008), qualitative researchers typically employ either categorizing strategies like coding or creating themes, or connecting strategies like writing narratives or profiles, but rarely use both strategies in their analysis. They went on to discuss that there are advantages to combining categorizing and connecting strategies for analyzing qualitative data (2008). I used both strategies in my research to analyze sections of the transcripts for common codes and themes across each participant and also to create a narrative, in each participant's own words, to describe each participant's experiences and the meaning they assigned to these experiences. In upcoming sections I will first explain categorizing strategies, then connecting strategies, before concluding with issues of validity related to my research methods.

Categorizing Strategies. I relied heavily on coding to break down all transcripts in my research to determine the meaning and explain the experiences of the research participants. Saldaña (2016) explained that a code is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). LeCompte and Shensul (1999) described coding as a way to organize data and to determine themes. I used coding in this research to help me understand and give meaning to each transcript from each participant. Saldaña (2016) further detailed that a code is a “researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or translates data” (p. 4). He described a variety of different coding strategies and information on how different types of coding provide researchers

with different types of information needed to categorize and construct themes from the data (Saldaña, 2016). After reviewing his multiple types of coding, I chose in vivo coding because it allowed me to capture the specific dialogue of my participants and emotion coding because it allowed me to explore the connections to other people my participants described, which I believed could facilitate my understanding of the experiences of my participants and the impact of the culture of the classroom on the instructional shift my participants experienced at JSMS.

Saldaña discussed applying coding in cycles. For my research, a cycle referred to applying a coding technique to an entire interview transcript and creating codes. I chose to complete a first coding cycle using the in vivo technique for each of my transcripts. In *in vivo* coding, the researcher uses the specific dialogue of the participants to create codes (Saldaña, 2016). I created in vivo codes to group together multiple lines of text, beginning the process of lumping together my participants words. Lumping is a technique Saldaña described as grouping together sections of transcripts to get to the essence of categorizing a phenomenon (2016). Table 6 includes examples of first cycle in vivo codes I created from my participants.

Table 6

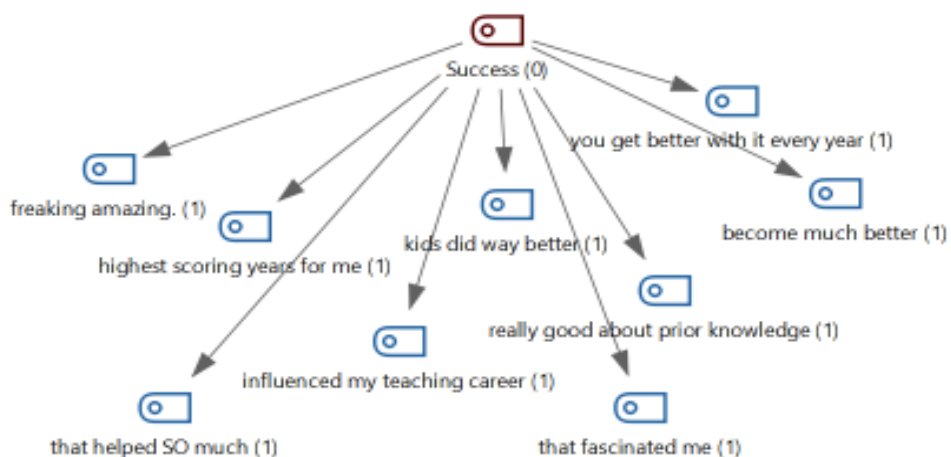
Examples of In Vivo Coding

Participant	In Vivo Code	Transcript
Kim	I am here to teach; you have to know this stuff	I will never forget, she sent all her students a Christmas card, with a handwritten message on it. That is unique. But isn't that funny how little things like that stand out to you. And it was a picture of her family, and she didn't really talk a lot about her family in class, um, because she was one of those where <i>I am here to teach, you have to know this stuff</i> , I expect you to know this stuff. So that was one class I did do my work in. And was always prepared because you did not want to let her down. (Kim Interview 1, Pos. 54)
Jessica	This is exhausting	I said OK <i>this is exhausting</i> ; I cannot do this. And he was like what's <i>exhausting</i> , and I said I cannot, I am having to teach the children, like the same thing 140 times because I can't teach it all at once. So, instead of me doing direct instruction for 10 or 15 minutes at the beginning of class, I am having to teach is 140 times over three days because they are all going at their own pace. (Jessica Interview 2, Pos. 16)
Rebekah	Untapped Potential	I just see students that have strengths and <i>untapped potential</i> that we are not doing a good job of recognizing and growing. Through my classroom strategies, I have learned so much about what kids want to be when they grow up and also how they see the content that we value as teachers and as an education system as not important to them. (Rebekah Interview 3, Pos. 4)
Brianna	They built the trust and expectations	I don't remember like discipline like when the procedures or the process they used to. It was just sort of like <i>they built the trust and expectations</i> , and the kids just did it. It wasn't an issue if that makes sense. (Brianna Interview 1, Pos. 82)

Table 6 includes the transcript section and the in vivo code associated with that transcript section. The in vivo code is italicized in the transcript passage to note the code I created. Each section of the transcript was attached to the associated code in the qualitative analysis software program so I could review the in vivo codes I created during code

mapping and recoding my transcripts. After I completed the first cycle coding process for in vivo coding for each interview transcript, I used MAXQDA and the visual and analytic tools in the program to assist with code mapping. I used code mapping to enhance the organization and credibility of my work (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña discussed that code mapping is “a straightforward technique that gives you a condensed textual view of your study, and potentially transforms your codes first into organized categories, and then into higher-level concepts” (2016, p. 222). I added the in vivo codes I created during the first time I analyzed each transcript to a blank page in the qualitative analysis program, MAXQDA, and I began my code mapping process by grouping codes together that were similar and creating small groups of common codes, or categories. I formed new categories after I sorted and resorted my initial in vivo codes to ensure that I formed the most logical code groupings. Figure 2 includes a sample of an initial code mapping in MAXQDA after my first cycle of in vivo coding.

Figure 2: Initial in vivo codes grouped together.



In the code mapping example in Figure 2, I grouped together nine different in vivo codes that were created during the first analysis of transcripts into a larger group that I named success. The number in parenthesis next to each code displays how many times that in vivo code was created across all participant interviews. I completed this process of grouping and regrouping initial in vivo codes into groups until all of the in vivo codes were grouped with at least one other similar code.

I considered that after creating codes for all transcripts and code mapping with these codes to create groups of codes, that a round of coding was completed. After completing a first round of in vivo coding, I reviewed each transcript again and the in vivo codes created in a second round to continue the process of creating more concise code categories. In some places I created new codes and in others I changed a word in an existing code to align better with my participants words. Saldaña (2016) referred to this as recoding, which he described as applying an initial coding technique to transcripts again with an attuned perspective.

After each round of code mapping and creating new code groups, I memoed about the codes I created and my thoughts and reactions to them. The following excerpt is from a memo I created during the code mapping process I completed for the in vivo coding style.

After completing a first round of code mapping, I found the MAXQDA software program to be intuitive and flexible to use in my code group creation. I created initial code groups such as expectations, support, and missed opportunities to connect first cycle in vivo codes created from the transcripts of my participants. After I add all in vivo codes into a group in the qualitative analysis platform, I

will complete another round of in vivo coding to read through codes I created and the group they are aligned with and make adjustments or create new codes to create the clearest and most aligned code groupings possible. After the first round of code mapping, it stands out to me that my participants felt strong emotions of joy or frustration during their experiences and they remembered very specific instances from their past. I am looking forward to continuing the code category creation process over the next several days. (Reflective Memo, February 15th, 2022).

I continued this process of code mapping and recoding to group these larger code categories together and I created four overarching categories for the in vivo coding analysis. These four code categories were created from 1,040 in vivo codes created from the 12 interview transcripts from my participants. The final in vivo code categories were:

1. Success and Achievement
2. Fear and Failure
3. Resisting Change
4. Focusing on Students

The second first-cycle coding format that I used was emotion coding. In emotion coding, I assigned emotions to sections of interview transcripts to connect participants stories together. Instead of creating codes from the entire transcripts as I did with in vivo coding, I created four distinct time periods from the stories and experiences of my participants, and I created emotion codes that aligned with each time period. These time periods were: K-12 experience, student teaching/college experience, transition to SCL, and teaching today/during COVID. I created these time periods so that I could see how

the emotions of my participants changed during their journey from a student in their personal K-12 experience through the completion of their transition toward primarily SCL as a teacher, which enlightened me on the temporal components called for in narrative inquiry. I wanted to capture the emotions of my participants as each of their journeys in education progressed over time.

Emotion coding allowed me to explore the connections to other people my participants described in their stories and through these emotional connections and conversations, I tentatively defined the culture of the classroom and its impact on my participants as they shifted instructional styles. Analyzing the emotions and the classroom energy teachers described through specific stories from each participant allowed me to determine identifying characteristics of each teacher's classroom. Table 7 details examples of emotion codes created from my participants.

Table 7

Examples of Emotion Coding

Participant	Emotion Code	Transcript
Kim	Scared	I think he was very; this is what I want you to do, I explained it now do it. And I don't know maybe I was <i>scared</i> because it was a male teacher, and I didn't have much experience with male teachers. And he was very intimidating. Because I felt insecure, and he was not, you know as open to I didn't feel like he would answer my questions. But I don't remember his teaching style at all. (Kim Interview 1, Pos. 12)
Jessica	Proud	Um, I have taught in similar, but I did teach in a smaller school when I taught in another district. We were the <i>second poorest</i> school in the county, but we were also the, we were the second poorest middle school but the <i>second highest achieving</i> school in the county. And there were seven middle schools in the county at that time. (Jessica Interview 2, Pos. 54)
Rebekah	Frustrated	The students <i>still need someone</i> to guide them. The majority of them do, not all of them but the majority of them still <i>need that guidance</i> um, sometimes on those assessments they can google those answers, so you still need that accountability from the teacher. (Rebekah Interview 2, Pos. 42)
Brianna	Shocked	All of the parent conferences I think we sat in a bunch, but we weren't really able to participate you know we were just observers. Just all the parent communication in the meetings in the paperwork, that was a big <i>shocker</i> . (Brianna Interview 1, Pos. 88)

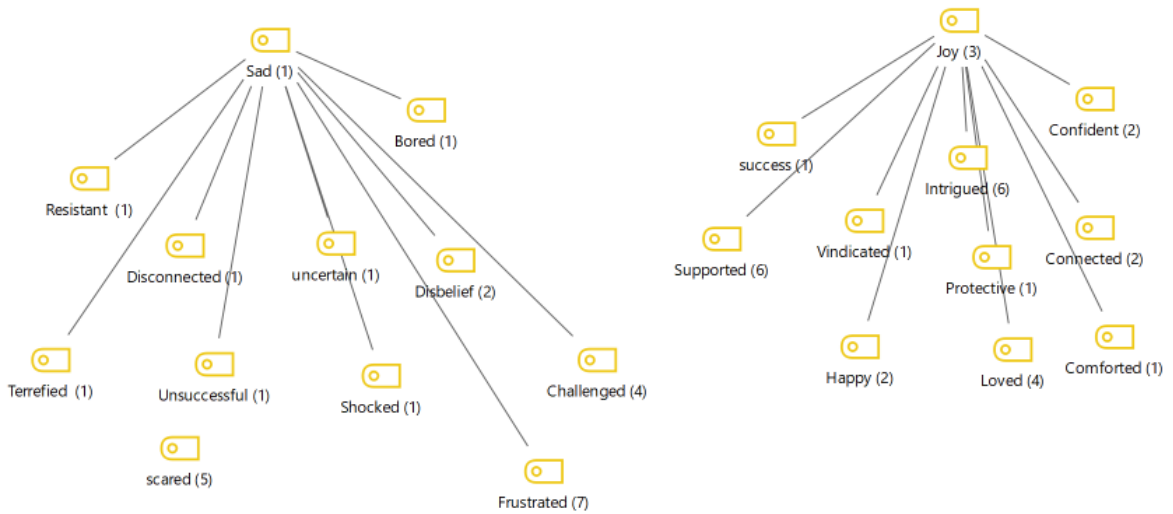
In Table 7, I displayed an excerpt from each participant, along with the emotion code created for the section of the transcript included in the column on the right. For some emotion codes that I created, the emotion was directly stated in the transcript section, like the section for Kim that I coded as scared in Figure 7. In other sections, the emotion was

derived from the words and context of the story and not specifically stated, like in the section for Rebekah.

I used code mapping after the creation of my initial emotion codes to enhance the organization and credibility of my work (Saldaña, 2016). I completed the same process of conducting rounds of code mapping and recoding with emotion coding as I did with in vivo coding discussed previously in this chapter. I considered that after creating codes for all transcripts and code mapping with these codes to create groups of codes, that I had completed a round of coding. After completing a first round of emotion coding, I reviewed each transcript again and the emotion codes created in a second round to continue the process of creating more concise code categories. In some places I created new codes and in others I changed the existing emotion code to better align with the experiences of my participants. After each round of code mapping and recoding and creating new code categories, I memoed about the codes I created and my thoughts and reactions to the code categories.

During each round of code mapping, I placed the emotion codes from each time period onto a creative coding sheet in MAXQDA, and I grouped them together into categories of like emotions. Figure 3 displays my code mapping process for emotion codes in MAXQDA.

Figure 3: Initial emotion code grouping process for K-12 Experience of each participant



In Figure 3, I included examples of code mapping with emotion codes for the K-12 experience time period of my participant’s transcripts. The word at the top of each visual is the emotion code category to which the connected emotion codes underneath it are assigned. The number beside *sad* represents that there was one transcript section across all transcripts from my participants where the K-12 experience was discussed and *sad* was the associated emotion code. There are 26 emotion codes that were grouped together into the category for *sad*. These emotion codes included emotion codes such as disconnected, bored, and disbelief. For the second visual grouping in Figure 3, there were 29 emotion codes grouped together into the category for *joy*. I determined the emotion codes used as categories based on the context of the transcript sections of codes in the group and my understanding of the emotions my participants described for each time period.

Additionally, I used code landscaping, which is a visual representation of codes for deeper analysis, for emotion codes and created a wordle of the most common emotion

codes from each time period of participant experiences. Code landscaping differs from code mapping as it does not group or connect codes together. Instead, it provides a visual display of the codes and their frequency. The wordle for each time period is presented in Chapter 5, with the discussion of categories created through my coding processes. In each wordle, the larger a word is in the image, the more frequently it appeared in the emotion coding for that time period across all participant interviews. I grouped the emotion code categories together and created two overarching code categories for each of the time periods of the participants' educational experiences. The time periods and the emotion code categories are listed below.

K-12 Experience: Sad and Joy

Student Teaching/College Experience: Confident and Challenged

Transition To SCL: Assertive and Overwhelmed

Teaching Today/During COVID: Undermined and Passionate

I used the four in vivo code categories and the eight emotion code categories combined with the connecting strategies of analysis from my narratives to create four themes.

These themes are:

1. Participants needed clarity on daily routines, expectations of roles and learning, and support from a variety of sources to be successful and believe in themselves when changing instructional styles.
2. The education system is grounded in expectations from parents, teachers, and students that participants believed created pressure on them to use specific instructional styles and behave in a certain way.

3. Participants believed that nonacademic skills were an important part of the K-12 student experience and should be emphasized alongside academic content skills.
4. The culture of the classroom was an important part the connection that participants shared with their students and impacted the instructional choices participants made every day.

Categorizing strategies allowed me to determine how my participants described their experiences in their transcripts, determine larger patterns between code categories, and determine what emotions were described for each time period of their journey, but that left a void in understanding the key relationships between my participants as they discussed and made meaning of the experience of transitioning toward primarily SCL and how the culture of the classroom impacted this transition. Therefore, I turned to connecting strategies to create narratives for participants using primarily their own words. I used Clandinin's elements of narrative inquiry including temporality, sociality, and place to create connecting ideas between participants and to support my answers to the research questions of my study.

Connecting Strategies. In my analysis, I created a narrative for each participant. Maxwell and Miller (2008) said of narratives, they “are often included in qualitative research reports as an accompaniment to categorizing strategies” (p. 467). My narratives were not created to preserve the data but used to “analyze and reduce data” (p. 467). The narratives were not created from codes, but kept in the original words of the participants from their transcripts to protect their stories and the language they used to describe their experiences. Each narrative was put together to retell the stories in chronological order

as the events transpired as opposed to the order in which they were told to me. This order provided an organized and common layout for each narrative. Additionally, I marked passages in each narrative for temporality with a (T), sociality with an (S), and place with a (P). I then used these marked passages to further analyze and connect the narratives and support the answers to my research questions discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

I created my narratives in alignment with Seidman's suggested steps for analyzing transcripts and creating profiles. He recommended marking passages of interest, labeling those passages, and then putting together those passages of interest into a single transcript (2013). I printed copies of each transcript and completed the process of marking, labeling, and combining these passages by hand. Seidman described that during this stage of analysis, researchers are "exercising judgement about what is significant in the transcript" (2013, p. 120). I used analytic memoing during this analysis to confront my anxiety about selecting the "right" passages from each transcript. Seidman posited that "there is no model matrix of interesting categories that one can impose on all texts" (p. 121). I used this as my guide, and I trusted my ability to recognize what was important based on my experience with the topic and each participant.

Throughout the process of data collection and data analysis, a researcher must be conscious of the validity of the study. I had to be aware of validity as I conducted my research to collect data that was a descriptive representation of the situation as it was described to me and depicted participants' experiences without letting my own experience with transitioning from TCL to SCL taint their stories.

Validity

According to Maxwell (2013), “the concept of validity has been controversial in qualitative research” (p. 122). He went on to explain that some researchers think validity is only a quantitative measure and that controlling it in qualitative works is impossible. However, Maxwell is clear that validity is relevant and applicable to qualitative studies and that through calculated measures, threats and ways to address them can be used to strengthen the data (Maxwell, 2013). Both threats that Maxwell described, researcher bias and reactivity, were important threats to this research, and I had to be aware of and control them throughout the study.

My background as a teacher in a classroom that shifted from primarily TCL to primarily SCL influenced my bias in the questions that I asked in interviews. Although my biases could not be completely removed from my work (Peshkin, 1988), I was conscious of my connections to the research and took steps to reduce my bias. My background helped me to better understand the stories and experiences described in the teacher interviews. I knew how the transition to primarily SCL from primarily TCL worked in my classroom, and I was conscious of seeking to understand the experiences and perceptions of the teachers in this research without imposing my own experience into the work. Finally, my opinions of SCL and its uses for students of all ages influenced my researcher bias. I was aware of my opinions and guarded against letting those opinions influence my findings in the research by checking the codes, categories, and themes that I created from the work to ensure they were not formed without a foundation in multiple interviews and memo excerpts. These influences could have appeared in my research through how I responded to participants during interviews when they made a statement I

agreed with or only asking follow up questions for stories that supported my personal beliefs about SCL. When any influence of my personal bias arose in my data analysis and data collection, I noted them and explained them in my writing through memoing. This added to my general memoing completed throughout the data collection period.

I was also aware of my subjective I's, as described by Peshkin (1988). Subjective I's are the values and beliefs that a researcher brings to the research. Each subjective I that I realized and named was a personal bias that could influence the way I analyzed and reported the data of my dissertation. I needed to determine how my personal subjectivity could influence my work to ensure my codes, narratives, and themes were authentically created from my participants, and not from my views and beliefs. My primary I's of subjectivity included: My Value I, which is a bias toward the type of instruction that I found was most valuable for students, my Preparation I, which is a bias toward the type of instruction that teachers received that I believed does not prepare them for SCL instruction, and finally my Autonomy I, which is a bias toward the type of SCL work that included authentic work and student autonomy that I wanted to see drive exceptional results for students. Each of these subjective I's was a potential threat to my research; however, Peshkin explained that through understanding one's subjectivity, "subjectivity can be managed instead of unwittingly burdensome" (Peshkin, p. 20, 1988). Saldaña (2016) shared several questions to consider when coding in order to ensure the researcher does not influence the codes created and the analysis of data with the researcher's personal biases or beliefs. Some of these questions are: "What surprised me (to track your assumptions), what intrigued me (to track your positionality), and what disturbed me (to track the tensions within your value, attitude, and belief systems)" (p. 23). These

questions allowed me to ensure that my codes and their subsequent categories were firmly rooted in the experiences and meaning given from participants, and not from my own assumptions.

The second major threat to validity according to Maxwell is reactivity. Reactivity, or the influence that the researcher has in observations or interviews, is impossible to remove from qualitative research and my study in particular (Maxwell, 2013). Yet, researchers can minimize the effect of reactivity in several key ways, including using open-ended questions and being aware of responses and reactions to interview participants. I allowed my interview participants to describe their own specific experiences and the meaning they attached to the experience through my questioning strategies, while being conscious not to inject my own opinions and experiences into their responses. I did this through carefully wording follow-up questions to support each participant's direction and thought, and intentionally not helping them answer or finish their thoughts during the interview process. Transcribing each interview, myself, instead of using an outside transcriber, also minimized my reactivity and bias as I could listen for bias in my responses and words used in interviews. Additionally, I memoed after each interview to review my reactivity toward the ideas of my participants. Below is a memo I created after my second interview with Rebekah while reflecting on my personal bias.

I completed my second interview with Rebekah today, and I caught myself wanting to agree with parts of her responses and confirm her opinions instead of using more open-ended questions to let her guide her responses and recollections about her transition toward primarily SCL instruction. I found that when I asked Rebekah for specific stories she remembered from her transition experience, I was

reminded of several of my own experiences, and I had to work to not let my own opinions of the transition influence what I said during the interview. I will remind myself before each interview to remain neutral during. I know this will lead to the most honest and factual representations and stories about the transition from each of my participants. When I conduct the third interview for Rebekah, I will make sure that I do not reinforce or agree with parts of her experiences that I agree with. I will try to support and ask deeper questions about all parts of her story to support her in telling her story. (Reflective memo from 12/9/21)

Maxwell identified several ideas for decreasing reactivity including,

1. Intensive long-term involvement.
2. Rich data.
3. Searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases.
4. Use of open-ended script in interviews.

I obtained rich data from each participant through open ended script interviews. Utilizing open-ended interviews, instead of structured interview protocols, increased my validity by decreasing reactivity. Seidman (2013) stated that open-ended questions “establish the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants” (p. 87). He went on to explain that open-ended questions allow the researcher to determine more about the participants’ individual experiences within a situation instead of the external structure. Additionally, I memoed about stories or experiences that a participant shared that did not align with the stories and experiences of my other participants. I used participant answers to guide the discussion of individual interviews to create authentic transcripts and data.

After I conducted each of my interviews and completed an analysis of my transcripts using connecting and categorizing strategies, I created a narrative for each participant using Seidman's description of how to write a profile. Each narrative was crafted in chronological order of the events discussed by each participant and tells the story of each teacher's transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. These profiles are presented in the next chapter in the order that the interviews were completed.

Chapter IV

NARRATIVES

According to Maxwell and Miller (2008), connecting strategies are often used in narratives, profiles, and case studies and are present alongside categorizing analysis such as coding. However, these are often “largely presentational rather than analytical” (Maxwell & Miller, 2008, p. 467). In my research, I created a narrative for each participant, and I used these narratives to further analyze my data in combination with the categorizing strategies I employed. In this chapter, I described the school setting where each participant successfully transitioned to primarily SCL instruction in their classroom between the school years of 2013-2018. Each participant was still teaching at this school during the 2021-2022 school year after students came back from the mandated online schooling they were doing as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Following the description of the target school, I presented the narrative for each of my participants. Finally, I described the connections and conclusions I created from the narratives, including a discussion of the impact of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013).

School Setting

I provided the setting for my research to give better context to the reader. As stated previously in Chapter 1, the setting for the research was John Smith Middle School (JSMS) (pseudonym), in a rural district in a southern state. The school was composed of approximately 1,100 students in grades 6 through 8. The demographics of the school

were approximately 49% White, 36% African American, 10% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% more than one race. Approximately 16% of students at JSMS had an individualized education plan, while 18% received gifted services. Approximately 26% of the student population was economically disadvantaged (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2021). JSMS opened its doors to the community in 2009 and remained clean and inviting from the outside when I completed my interviews during the 2021-2022 school year. Inside the building, there were three hallways with classrooms lining both sides. Currently, each hallway is used for one grade level of students. There is a hallway for students in sixth grade, a hallway for students in seventh grade, and a hallway for students in eighth grade. JSMS also had large rooms for fine arts, a gymnasium for health and physical education classes, and a large recreational field on one side that all teachers could access. Between the school years of 2013-2018, JSMS began a pilot program to shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. During the 5-year transition, every teacher at JSMS was expected to conduct their instruction using primarily SCL instruction.

JSMS started a pilot program in the 2013-2014 school year to begin creating classrooms where SCL was the primary instructional strategy instead of primarily TCL. Teachers at JSMS were asked to volunteer for the pilot program, however, specific teachers were asked to join the pilot to ensure all grade levels and courses were taught. Nearly half of the teachers at JSMS chose not to participate in the SCL instructional pilot program. These teachers were considered the *traditional side* of the school, because they continued using primarily TCL strategies with their students, while the pilot program teachers were considered the *personalized learning or SCL side* of the school during the

2013-2014 school year. This terminology of *sides* was created by teachers at JSMS during the 2013-2014 school year. At the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year, administration at JSMS determined that all teachers in the building would implement classrooms where teachers instructed their students using primarily SCL strategies.

The school model for SCL at JSMS included students rotating each day between learning in their classroom with a teacher and 15-18 students for 2 hours, and completing work on a Chromebook device during another 2-hour section of time in a large learning lab with 65 to 90 students. Students attended two of their core content courses (English language arts, math, science, and social studies) in class with their teacher each day. Students attended each class every other day. For example, a student might have science and social studies in class with their teacher on Monday, and then have math and English language arts in class with their teachers on Tuesday. Students completed work in the learning labs on a technology platform called Edgenuity, a learning management system (LMS) selected by the school district, where students watched instructional videos and completed assignments and assessments for each of their four content courses. The units that students completed in the LMS were built by content teachers at JSMS from a collection of optional units for each course in the platform that were aligned to state curriculum standards. Additionally, if a student failed a unit assessment twice, they required additional support from their classroom teacher before they could attempt the assessment again and were paused in their online course until this support was provided.

The LMS provided reports and information to teachers on how their students were progressing through the curriculum in the learning lab. Although this infusion of technology was a component of the SCL model at JSMS, the SCL strategies were

employed by teachers in their classrooms with small groups of 15-18 students. During this time, teachers used the data from the LMS to instruct students. Teachers at JSMS utilized choice boards to support student autonomy, performance tasks to challenge students to solve real-world problems, and small group lessons to provide additional support or acceleration when needed. At the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year, the school district where JSMS is located hired a new superintendent who promoted a more TCL style of instruction for JSMS. In the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years the COVID-19 pandemic caused major interruptions to all schools in Georgia and an even greater emphasis was placed on TCL strategies at JSMS. At the time I conducted interviews with my participants during the 2021-2022 school year, some teachers at JSMS continued to use SCL strategies, but there was no emphasis from the school district or the school administration to use SCL strategies for student learning.

My participants taught at JSMS during the transition toward primarily SCL instruction from 2013-2018 and were still teaching at JSMS during the 2021-2022 school year when I conducted my interviews. The narratives that follow are the stories and experiences of four teachers from JSMS who successfully transitioned from primarily TCL to primarily SCL between the 2013-2018 school years.

Narrative Structure

I created a narrative for each of my participants in their own words from portions of the interview transcripts that were helpful for analyzing the time, social, and place components of the data. Each narrative was written in chronological order, beginning with the participant's K-12 experience and ending with a discussion on lessons learned from the transition toward primarily SCL. Each narrative includes denotations for

passages that address temporality (T), sociality (S), and place (P). These passages were used as a *connecting strategy* for analysis at the end of this chapter. In addition to my participant's words, the following additions were made to each narrative. An example follows each type of addition. For each narrative, I added words in brackets that were not italicized to provide context or better understanding for the reader.

He [the teacher] also said that the class needed to begin their warmup as soon as they sat down each day.

I added my own words and thoughts in italics throughout each narrative to provide clarity or my reasons for including a passage in the narrative.

This story from third grade helps the reader understand one example of a TCL experience that was both comfortable and enjoyable to this participant.

Finally, I added italicized words in parenthesis to highlight emotions or actions, such as pauses, from each participant to provide more context for the reader.

Honestly if I try to think back (*pause*) I can't really remember what her response was to my question.

Before each narrative I provide a brief introduction to the participant. At the conclusion of each narrative, I included my personal reflection on the interviews with that participant and my realizations and thoughts on that narrative. I read each participant the consent to participate in research before each interview session (see Appendix F).

Kim

I first met Kim when I was a middle school student, 20 years ago. She is a phenomenal teacher who cares deeply about her students. In the 2021-2022 school year, Kim taught English language arts and social studies as a part of a two-teacher team. She

shared roughly 60 students with another teacher who taught their students science and math. Kim's classroom was very orderly and was always full of books. She had an extensive library for her students and there was always someone reading if you entered Kim's room during the school day. Kim's education career spans over 2 decades, but she remained curious to find the best way to instruct her students and to prepare them for their future.

As I completed my interviews with Kim during the 2021-2022 school year, she was thoughtful and took long pauses to reflect as she explained her stories and experiences. I was impressed and appreciative of how Kim shared her stories with me in an honest and transparent way. In the following narrative, Kim shared stories from her personal K-12 schooling and college experience, her teaching experiences before, during, and after the transition toward primarily SCL, and finally reflected on these experiences and how she created meaning from these experiences.

K-12 Experience

Kim's experiences in kindergarten through 12th grade provide context for how she learned and what typically happened in her elementary, middle, and high school buildings. Her experiences with her peers and her teachers molded her understanding of how learning takes place and what the roles for students and teachers are in the learning experience.

Kim started her discussion of her elementary experience with a story about Ms. Summers. A teacher she remembered for how she structured the classroom. I remember [for] fifth grade, Ms. Summers, she was discipline. Oh, she was discipline. I don't really remember her teaching style; I just remember her being hardcore (S). We were in rows,

and we did not speak out of turn or talk unless she gave you permission. I don't recall asking any questions or fun, you know, artsy type of experiences with her. [In] sixth grade, Mr. Smith and Ms. Ball [were my teachers]. That was probably my first experience having a male teacher. I remember that Ms. Ball was the science and math teacher. I remember how much she (*emphasizes*) loved what she did. She was all math and all science. You know, just constantly pushing us. Asking us those thought-provoking questions, like, "does a rainbow ever end?" I remember calling my grandfather and asking him because I looked up to him. I don't remember what his answer was (*pause*). But that was just the type of teacher she was, asking questions like that. I remember her thinking I did well in math and there was a group of us and if we finished our work [early], she had this box of cards, and they were like, math problems. But then I remember getting to seventh grade and sitting in a high-level math class and I (*pause*) oh I was terrible at it. She [Ms. Ball, her sixth-grade teacher] saw something in me, but when I got to seventh grade, I didn't see that in me, because I did terrible in math. (S)

Kim had a much different experience in the same subject where she found joy and success during the previous school year. I asked her to explain what was different and why she felt that she was unsuccessful. Kim discussed her seventh-grade math teacher, Mr. Miller, in whose class she first struggled in mathematics. He was very old, [at least] in a seventh-graders mind. I just remember not doing well in that class. I think I had to retake the class. I don't think I failed it, but because it was an advanced class I had to move down a level and that was embarrassing. I just remember [Ms. Ball] having more of a passion for the subject than we [her students] did. I think he [Mr. Miller] was very

“this is what I want you to do, I explained it, now do it.” I don't know. Maybe I was scared because it was a male teacher, and I didn't have much experience with male teachers. He was very intimidating. I felt insecure and he was not, you know, I didn't feel like he would answer my questions. Mr. Miller didn't describe how to solve problems in different ways. He never made math fun at all, it just felt like something we had to do, and he wanted us to be quiet and do our work. (S)

Although Kim did not recall many stories of learning or instruction from her K-12 experience, she discussed two connections to language arts teachers and their ability to make learning relevant for her. When I was in eighth grade, I can't remember her [the teacher's] name, but my language arts class was exciting, and she made us think about life and what emotions we felt as we read novels in her class. We read about Anne Frank, and that was the first time that I can vividly remember feeling sad and emotional about a book. When we finished the novel, we had to get a permission slip signed to stay after school and watch a video about the holocaust and the survivors. It was very graphic images, and I am very emotional, and I remember crying looking at those images. I know that is when I realized how moving a book can be and how a story can really pull at your heart. (P)

In 11th-grade language arts, I had a teacher who was wonderful at discussion and analyzing poetry. I remember sitting there thinking, “How do you know this stuff?” I'm like, “How do you know that author was thinking that when she wrote that?” I recall from her class that she would let students share what they thought the poet meant by something [the author said] in the poem, and she never made anyone feel silly for an idea

that probably was off the wall. This was a more student-centered classroom I would say, and I didn't have many of those experiences back when I was in school. (S)

She not only spoke about the teachers and experiences that stood out to her from her personal school experiences, she also discussed what made those teachers, and their classroom experiences, stand out to her and what type of instruction, TCL or SCL, she felt like she received the most of in her K-12 school years. I wanted to understand what made these memories significant and whether it was a teaching strategy or the characteristics of the teacher that stood out. Looking back at this stage of my life, it's more of looking at the individuals themselves, not the material [or] the content that was taught. The math teacher [Ms. Ball] who believed in me, I really had a lot of respect for her. She was such a nice lady. I don't really ever remember having too many teachers that I didn't like (S). I also think I was not really involved in student activities, clubs, or organizations so I think maybe that has a lot to do with [my lack of] memories as well. I went in, did what I needed to do, and I left. I think students that have more of an attachment to their school may remember more things. But I just remember, you know, in and out. Come in, this is what you are going to do, let me tell you a little bit and then you do it. (T)

The majority, probably almost all of my experiences were teacher focused [TCL]. My teachers cared, but it was just different back then and the way we learned was the, I guess you would say old school way. For example, I remember I had a math teacher my senior year when I was taking trigonometry and the teacher saying, "seniors, if you don't want to learn. You just go to the side, but I'm here to teach the ones that want to learn." And my perspective is that she wasn't being ugly, she wasn't being, you know, but I do

remember that comment. That is the type of, high school especially, the kind of learning I experienced.

Kim described a mix of negative and positive experiences from her childhood, but her strongest memories and the stories that she was the most enthusiastic about retelling were about the qualities and characteristics of her favorite teachers. There seemed to be a connection between the type of classroom environments that she cherished and the qualities of the teachers leading those environments. She enjoyed being challenged, both intellectually and emotionally, and could discern which teachers were passionate about their craft. We discussed the impact of the culture of the classroom and the hidden curriculum that she experienced later in our interviews.

Kim also discussed her college and teacher preparation experiences which prepared her for a career as an educator. I wanted to gain a better understanding of what instructional strategies Kim learned and developed during her college experience and how her training impacted her instructional choices prior to the transition toward using primarily SCL in her classroom.

College/Student Teaching Experience

I graduated high school and that fall I started [college]. [College] was a new experience as I thought it was a huge campus and I was worried about not knowing anyone and not knowing any teachers. I remember thinking that college was going to be a new experience for me, and I was apprehensive. (P)

Kim didn't remember much about her first two years of core courses. However, she recalled several stories about her teachers and the instruction she received after she was accepted into the teaching program and began her final two years of study. The first

year, we were just trying to figure out what was going to be your major and minor concentration. I knew that language arts would be my major. And then of course social studies just falls [in line with language arts]. We did take science and math courses at the beginning too. I remember lots of (*pause*), lots of group work. Lots (*with a sarcastic emphasis*) of group work. I probably did not pull my weight in those groups like I should have. Once again, I was not always the best student. [In one of my math classes] we had a project, and I got grouped with [a student] that was a math genius. She said, "I got this, I'll take care of it." We met together several times to create a performance task for a hypothetical math class, but she didn't ask me to contribute anything to the project. She showed up with a nearly completed project and just shared what she had done. As I look back, I could have done a better job of investing my time and energy into my work. I have some regrets about my choices back then. (S)

Kim recalled a specific story of connection to one of her professors. She discussed the high expectations of this educator, but also discussed the culture of this teacher's classroom, created because of the characteristics of the instructor. Then there was another one, Dr. Jones (pseudonym). That woman knew her stuff and she expected you to know your stuff. And you did not want to disappoint her, because she had very, very high expectations. And I will never forget, she sent all her students a Christmas card, with a handwritten message on it. That is unique. Isn't that funny how little things like that stand out? It [the Christmas card] was a picture of her family, and she didn't really talk a lot about her family in class. She was one of those where I am here to teach [and] you have to know this stuff. So that was one class I did do my work in and [I] was always prepared because [I] did not want to let her down (S). *I asked Kim what type of*

instruction Dr. Jones used in that class and she reflected on the learning environment as very traditional. There were not any student-centered experiences in there. We didn't have group work or much flexibility in her [Dr. Jones'] class. She lectured, and then we took assessments and that was that. (S)

[We also] had to write lesson plans, of course lesson plans would be individual, then you would have to present those lessons in front of your cohort. It was a very small cohort. Once you decided your major and minor, those were the only people you worked with [during] your senior year. [I] never saw the math and the science people. You were pretty much in those groups. (T)

Additionally, Kim shared experiences from her teacher preparation courses and she discussed her student teaching experiences during her undergraduate teacher preparation program. She discussed the styles of instruction she saw and the types of environments where she observed and supported teachers. In [my] junior year, the first one in the program, we visited lots of different schools. And you would have a teacher, who would teach lessons about what it's like to be in the classroom. We saw some good teachers at each one of those schools. Sometimes we would go to the media center, and they [teachers at the school] would present a lesson. [The teachers would discuss] what their best practices in the classroom [were] and they would share those with us. And then I'm sure we had an activity or something we had to do after those visits. I remember a lot of traditional styles of instruction in those best practice discussions. They discussed how to structure a lesson with a beginning, middle, and end for student learning. There were not discussions about supporting students for collaboration or providing unique experiences for kids based on their learning styles or anything like that. These

discussions were aimed at teachers who had zero previous experience in the classroom. Classroom management was [a] big [topic of discussion]. [Teachers] would share, you know, just their tips and tricks of the trade. Some of them would focus on vocabulary strategies or a math strategy that worked well with their students. (T)

In one of those experiences, they talked about using more advanced strategies with accelerated or advanced students, and that some lower-level learners would not be able to take on as much responsibility. That stood out to me because I don't believe that is true [now]. I believe that if the right environment and supports are in place, that students at all levels can thrive. At the end of our junior year, you [students in the program] put down your top three teachers [for placement as a long term student teacher], and they had to come from the schools that we had visited. We could request schools in [surrounding counties]. They [her education program staff] would place you with a teacher at one of the schools [where] you said you wanted to go to. (P)

[During her senior year] we were placed with the same teacher for the entire year [for student teaching]. We started with that teacher the very first day of school, and we stayed with that teacher until the end of [the] school [year]. Actually, I think for us it really wasn't the end of school because we graduated before school got out. [Her teacher preparation program] wanted [us] to eat, sleep, and breathe their program. You could not work [a part-time job] your senior year. And if you did, it was like a night job and it was hard to juggle both of those. The teacher I was assigned with was a seventh-grade language arts and social studies teacher. [Our students] had homework every night. Every (pause) single (pause) night. [Each morning] we [Kim and the teacher she was assigned to] would stand outside the door, and they [the students] had to fold their paper

in half and put it into a bucket. She was very organized, [and] very strict with behavior. I did like her a lot, but I had to switch to a different teacher because she adopted a child [during the school year]. I [switched] to an eighth-grade class, and then came back to [the seventh-grade teacher's class] at the end of the year. This was a long time ago. I mean we didn't have computers, so it was all textbooks. I observed in this classroom for the first few weeks and then I taught my first lesson, in September of my senior year. I can remember being very nervous when I was supposed to be the lead teacher. I stayed up late practicing my introduction and reviewing the material because I was afraid a student would ask me something I didn't know, and I didn't want to look unprepared. That was a shift for me, I guess I felt like I was supposed to be in charge. (S)

Kim explained that during her student teaching experience she observed and taught in different types of learning environments in her junior and senior year. [Her senior year] the two teaching styles were very different. But the kids responded well to both of them. The one that I was with most of the year [the seventh-grade teacher], no group work, very quiet, very structured. The other one [the eighth-grade teacher], would allow group work, but they were working on the same thing in each group. I would say both were teacher-centered environments. Neither group really was student centered, but their behavior management and what they were ok with kids doing was very different.

Most of the environments [from student teaching her junior and senior year were] heavily traditional with similar teaching styles in each building. Lots of direct instruction and teacher-guided lessons, then homework and a new type of activity the next day. We were able to go into schools of different income levels, race/ethnicities, and high achieving vs. low achieving [schools]. I remember very similar types of teaching taking

place [in each one]. I would say all the schools that we went to, looking back, had high expectations for their students. (T) *Kim's experiences as student teacher were very positive and the types of instruction that she observed and trained to employ were primarily teacher centered. Kim discussed the stories and experiences she remembered from her transition toward primarily SCL instruction. Kim shared her stories below.*

Transition Toward SCL

[Before the transition toward primarily SCL] I always start[ed] out with a warmup, "teacher does", that it is the language that we use in our county [right now]. I used to call it a prime-time or a warmup, either way it is the same thing. It can be something as simple as a review of what we did the day before, or it could be just trying to see what kind of background knowledge they [her students] have going into a new topic. Then, we [would] do a mini lesson where the students are doing work. Then we come back together as a whole group to kind of check over and see what the students [learned]. Finally, most lessons would end with a ticket out the door. This would be a formative assessment to make sure the kids were able to understand what we did during the day. I enjoyed the warmup section of my classes, probably more than any other section. That time was my time to build relationships with some of my students. I had one student named Jenny (pseudonym) during my first year at JSMS who was a voracious reader and could not wait to tell me how many pages she read the night before in whatever novel she was currently reading. I also felt confident as a teacher when I taught using those [teacher-centered] strategies. I felt like I was an effective teacher. There were of course days where I would get worn out teaching the same lesson multiple times in the day, but I really love teaching students to write and that brought me a lot of

joy. I have taught primarily gifted students now for more than 10 years. Honestly, the number of kids who struggled in my class was small each year when I taught using that traditional format. My kids were successful, and I think they learned a lot, I hope they did at least. (S)

Kim's description of her experiences during the school years where she taught using primarily TCL strategies were full of confidence in herself as a teacher. During her discussion of experiences during the transition toward using primarily SCL strategies, her demeanor and confidence in herself clearly changed. During the school-wide transition toward primarily SCL at JSMS, she used an online learning management system, where each student completed work at their own pace on their personal computer. The learning management system (LMS) was called Edgenuity. Kim used the term Edgenuity to describe the years of transition in teaching style throughout her discussion. During our Edgenuity days, this is where the memory fails me, because it was somewhat of a nightmare at times. Before we even started that first school year we worked all summer to create the new lesson plans. We were very confused about what was needed and how to plan for something new. We had to have these elaborate plans and all of the stuff, and in reality, I don't think any of us used anything that we created. At least I know that I did not. I don't think we were, I mean, you have all these great plans, and the students weren't with us [when we created the plans] but once they're in the classroom you're like, this isn't going to work. Or you know other things happen and you just can't [do it]. I just remember those plans being very elaborate and thinking this is not going to work but we had to do it because we had to do it. I wish we had the opportunity to talk with teachers in another school that were doing the work [teaching in a primarily

SCL style] that could have prepared us for how hard the switch was going to be. You know? I felt like [when she was teaching with] Edgenuity, my role in the classroom was diminished. It was really the students, you know, went through the lesson and if they had questions, [then] it was like watch what Edgenuity has and then if they didn't get it, that's where I came into the picture. *Students completed lessons in the learning management system, Edgenuity, where they watched a video of a lesson taught by a teacher on the computer. They would then complete assignments and take assessments in the platform. The LMS tracked a completion percentage for each student that was used to determine if they were up to date on their work.* I feel like it was more of them teaching themselves and me just kind of monitoring them and saying “you need to work on your percentages”, or “you are behind where you need to be”, that kind of thing. I spent so many hours of those years logging in [to Edgenuity] and checking to see if students were ahead or behind with their work. I didn't enjoy that at all. (T)

I asked Kim to describe what her daily experiences were like during the transition toward primarily SCL instruction. At our school, each content teacher has four segments during the day. I would start my morning off by checking each of my classes in Edgenuity to make a list of what kids were behind [on their progress bar]. During each of my classes I would teach a mini lesson, and I would focus on writing because there wasn't much content for that online [in Edgenuity]. And even during Edgenuity days they [administration] wanted [us] to do small groups, you know, once you have all that data and looked at the kids who were struggling. So, I would work in small groups, pretty much most of the class during that first year [2013-2014].

My students would spend half of their academic day in a learning lab, and half of their academic day in two of their classes with their in-person teacher. *The learning labs were large spaces created at JSMS where 90 to 120 students could work on their personal computers in the LMS. Students worked in these labs each day on their online content.* I didn't see my students every day like I did during our traditional schedule. That part was tough. I had way more students struggle in my class than I had ever had before, and a common reason they [her students] gave me and their parents was that they didn't see me everyday. That was very eye opening to me [and] I learned that [some students] did well with technology and liked to learn that way and some did not. [The ones that did well] were the kids that were self-motivated.

During the next several years of the transition, I do think we got progressively better each year. That first year was such a shocker and some of the frustrating moments from that year are like, burned into my memory (laughs). Not having the answers to students' or parents' questions. Not having control of my classroom. That first year was so hard. In the years after that first one, we started using short whole-group lessons to add more teacher voice back into the learning. We also started using unit plans where students tracked their progress through both online and in-classroom work and had to get signatures from their teachers before they could take assessments. We found a good groove during those next few years. I still missed some of the normal moments of teaching during those years compared to before the transition. I guess like, it was strange when a student had a question about something and the vocabulary they learned it with was not the correct vocabulary, that happened a lot. Edgenuity didn't always match out

standards word for word, so we had to address those misconceptions and that slowed us down. (T)

I will say that Edgenuity worked [for us when] we started looking at smaller class sizes. [Half of our students on each academic team] would get pulled out to go to the [learning] lab and that was kind of refreshing to have those smaller groups. I would say we had 15-20 kids in a classroom during personalized learning [another term for SCL used at JSMS], and before that we had probably 25 to 30 would be a normal class size. I would sit with a small group of students who were writing, like four to five kids, and there were only 10 or so other kids in the room. It was very easy to create a task for those other 10 students to do while they waited to work in a small group setting with me. I would sit with those kids for 20-30 minutes, which just wasn't possible when there were 30 kids in the room. [I] had those higher achieving students, you know, some of them could just go through [the work in the LMS] and never really need that much assistance with some of the lessons. But then there were times that they did [need help with their online work in the LMS] and those are the times when I guess you would use that data and pull back. (T)

I asked Kim to tell me more about the students that did not do well during the years of primarily SCL strategies. I would say those are probably the ones that did not embrace technology or the ones that needed that more one on one or small group instruction with the teacher. Maybe they were just better equipped for the traditional classroom. I think some of them were just unmotivated, it could have been [learning] through Edgenuity or [learning] through a regular classroom. They still wouldn't have done the work. [My] students were gifted and so several of them did very well, but I had

a lot of students that were very smart but also very unmotivated to do the work. I knew that Edgenuity could teach them the reading strategies, but I have always said that a computer could not teach a student how to write. When we would [reach the time in the pacing guide] for [our students] to write their essays, it was more teacher driven than computer driven. Like I said, a computer could not teach a student how to write or craft their [writing] style. Writing is much more subjective [to grade]. Where I may give someone a three [on a writing rubric] someone else might give them a four or vice versa. Or my writing expectations [could be] higher or lower than someone else's. There is not a class in college that teaches you how to grade an essay. You just have to learn that skill of using rubrics. *Kim was very enthusiastic during this portion of our interview. She described that SCL was a danger to the value of a teacher in the classroom and reiterated multiple times what the kids could not learn through the LMS.*

I asked Kim what other experiences stood out to her from the years of transition toward primarily SCL instruction at JSMS. During the 2013-2014 school year, half of the teachers at JSMS began their transition toward teaching with primarily SCL strategies, while the other half of the teachers continued teaching using primarily TCL strategies. The following year, all teachers at JSMS were actively transitioning toward primarily SCL classrooms. Kim discussed the impact of the transition on the school culture at JSMS. Well and this may sound (pause), this doesn't really have to do with teaching. But I feel like there was a major division in our school with teachers doing the student-centered learning part and teachers doing that traditional side do you remember that? But I think the teachers on the other side [teachers using TCL instruction during the 2013-2014 school year] felt like, left behind. All the stuff we just put towards Edgenuity

and students and their learning. There was such a strange feeling in faculty meetings or in professional developments because we [teachers in the first group transitioning toward primarily SCL] were on the "good side" and everyone else in the traditional side did not get any attention for their hard work. There were teams that came into video and observe, and to see all of the things we were doing, and I think people that were working really hard on the traditional side felt left out of the school environment. I don't think we planned that out very well. *Kim briefly reflected on the impact of the transition years on her instructional choices in her classroom now.* I think those years definitely had an impact on my teaching career and how I see education. Does that impact the choices I make in the classroom today? I would say that I learned several things that I did not want to do with technology, and I learned how valuable it is to be able to work alongside students as their teacher and not just monitor their progress. (S)

Kim also discussed some of her uncertainty about her effectiveness during the transition years. We were able to pull back from Edgenuity and not use it as much as we were [during the last two years of the schoolwide transition toward primarily SCL]. I know it [the transition toward primarily SCL] probably didn't happen the way it was supposed to. I got really frustrated with the Edgenuity platform and I used some heavy [primarily] traditional learning strategies during the first few months [of the 2019-2020 school year] because I felt like my kids were missing out on instruction. Looking back, they probably didn't need that but that was my coping mechanism. *By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, there was a new superintendent who increased the emphasis on more traditional instructional strategies.* But like I said, it was a bad time in a lot of people's lives. (P)

In the final portion of Kim's narrative, she discussed the impact of the transition in teaching style on her as an educator and some of the things she learned. This section of Kim's narrative helped me determine how Kim made meaning of the experience of transitioning styles of teaching and whether those experiences impacted her views on education today.

Reflections on the Transition

Kim reflected on her transition toward primarily SCL instruction and what those experiences mean to her as she looks back on those years of her career. For me, probably intimidated would be one way to describe it. Just because it was a computer-based program, and I'm not (pause), I'm not comfortable with that. So, the first [thing] for me would be the intimidation factor of, [I] cannot do this. And I think earlier, I said like, my role as a teacher was not as important [during the primarily SCL instructional years], because the kids have the computer. They could work at their own, you know, speed or progress and so for some of them you learned really quick[ly] that they didn't really even need you. They're [her students] pretty self-motivated and they can teach themselves and watch these videos and teach themselves. I think you saw the different types of Learners pretty quickly with that [observing kids learning through the LMS]. I know that I missed the connection with kids. I didn't really put my best foot forward when I was in school, and I always aim to help students find their place in school. Since I didn't see my students every day, it just felt different. I didn't think I was able to build the same relationships with my students in the different format of learning. (S)

Kim discussed that she didn't have many positives to share about the transition experience, but that she did enjoy one component of teaching during those years. I'll say

probably the small group instruction [was a positive of the years of primarily SCL instruction]. Because like [I] said before, with Edgenuity, it was easy to get that data pretty quickly and to form those groups when you needed them. Did I take anything from that [the primarily SCL years and] still use it today? Maybe the small groups, but I don't think it was as if anybody taught me how to do small groups, I think I just saw the benefits of small groups during that time [the years of transition toward primarily SCL instruction]. Outside of the smaller groups, I can't really think of anything else that was easier and that I incorporate today directly because of the experience, you know what I mean?

Kim said that looking back she wished she would have asked for more help. I mean nobody wants to say that they need more help, I think most teachers are just like oh yeah, I got this, I can handle it. When really, they're probably not, and I do think we were pretty much thrown into the Edgenuity [the entire SCL system of teaching], that there could have been a whole lot more training than what we received. And I also, I don't think it was a Edgenuity's fault. I think it was a bigger undertaking than what everybody thought it was going to be. We just didn't know what we were doing, or what we were supposed to be doing so many times during those years. I would sit in parent-teacher conferences and listen to students and their parents discuss how much they wanted us to "just teach the kids like we used to." We had to invent new ways of teaching and of engaging with our students, and I just think we didn't have the right training or support to be successful in that style of teaching. (T)

I think I am a better teacher and [I am] more successful in the classroom using the more traditional style. It could be just because it's my age and how long I've been

teaching. Students, you know, they're resilient. They are bold and adapt to whatever situation is thrown their way. I just felt like my role was not as important as it was prior to [the transition toward primarily SCL] in the more traditional style. I will also say this, I mean we still have teachers in our school who, every grade comes from [an online assessment platform]. Maybe my problem is with the technology platforms, I don't know. I just think that the teacher can't be replaced and so we have to be sure that students have choices, that also fit within what we know is best for student learning, and that needs teachers. How do you really know how the students are doing if you only use grades from the computer? I just think you have to know your kids in order to know what they are learning and what they need to know. My school experiences and how I was prepared in my student teaching and college courses did not prepare me for student-centered learning. No chance (laughs). I was taught how to structure a lesson to help students learn the standards of a course. I was taught how to create a classroom environment that was safe and had order. I just didn't have any experiences or training in teaching in that style.

Kim reflected on the type of instruction that she thinks is best for students, primarily TCL or primarily SCL. She detailed that she felt that a balance between the two styles was needed. I mean I think there has to be a balance because you can't just, you just have to have guidance and the teachers are the ones that provide that guidance. Then it's also the teacher's job to say, "hey, I mean these are the options that you have, you don't have to do it my way, you can do it in a different way." Maybe giving [students] suggestions. But I feel like if you just throw it [control of their learning] to the kids, then there won't be clear expectations about what they're supposed to do. So, I think

there has to be some, there's got to be some teacher-centered in there. I think that was one of the things with the student-centered learning experience was the kids felt like we [their teachers] couldn't help the way we were supposed to because everything was on the computer. I mean I know my daughter's experience was like that. I don't know, I'm sure in my mind the teacher can never be replaced by a computer. (S)

Kim concluded the final portion of our last interview by discussing what students need most from their K-12 experience. I used this portion of her narrative to determine if what she felt was important were all a part of the explicit curriculum she taught in her content. I also wanted to know which style of instruction she thought worked best to meet the needs of her students today. You know there's a part of it, I think there's that, just being able to socialize with one another so they can build relationships and work with one another. I think being able to work together and talk to one another and being able to share their ideas in [a] manner that doesn't hurt each other's feelings [is important]. And where they can be honest with each other. Not all jobs are going to be behind a computer screen, you have to be able to work with others. I think that is one of the biggest [things kids need through their K-12 experience] is being able to work well with one another. And then the other pieces just kind of fall into place. Like [if] I'm not being a team player, if that's the word, it is going to be a long road ahead. Working together, conflict resolution. I think if you can't collaborate, if you can't work together, you're not going to be successful. (S)

[Second] I think they need to have the basic writing skills. They need to be able to speak correctly and write [and] have good grammar skills. Well not just grammar but be able to write well. I mean when you go for a job interview you have to be able to

present yourself, and the first thing, you know, they're looking for what comes out of your mouth and if you can't project that well then that's going to hinder you trying to get a job. And I don't really know what jobs (*pause*), I mean even a police officer has to write reports. [Finally] I think being able to read and think about what you read [is also important]. [In order to] work with people today, [you] have to be able to read things and have discussions with them and understand what you're reading. One of my favorite things to incorporate [in lessons] is like one of the takeaways from what you read. [They might say] the author was terrible, or the author did this. Or, I like how the author did that, or I didn't understand something. For them, it goes back [to] them having ownership for what they read, not me trying to guide their discussion. (T)

In the final statement of Kim's narrative, she described that things implicitly taught have real value in school and provided a final reflection on the impact that the transition in teaching styles had on her as a teacher. I definitely think that those years reinforced for me that there is so much to teaching and preparing kids for the real world. I think about how I was challenged as a teacher during those years. I was often frustrated, overwhelmed, I felt unsupported, and I wonder if I was truly prepared for an experience like that from my [personal] K-12 experience[s]. I think about how we challenged our students and what they were faced with during a major change in the structure of their school experience [the transition toward primarily SCL instead of primarily TCL], and I think they became more resilient, more equipped, and had better student autonomy than other years of kids that I have taught. I think that I realized how important those pieces are for kids, and I don't think I would have that perspective without going through the transition, but I still didn't like the transition (laughs). [I

wonder] is there a better way for us to tap into each student, because I mean every student is gifted. Some of the most important things that kids learn during their time in school are not a fact from social studies or a part of the cell in science, but they are the skills that kids need to live a long and happy life. They are the things that kids need to know how to do and the skills that kids need to work with others. During those years of transition toward Personalized learning [SCL] we really did teach kids valuable skills that were not a part of the curriculum. Now, I think we also taught them some things not to do because of our missed steps and mistakes, but that is a different conversation entirely. I think that kids learn so much during their time in school, but the things that are the easiest to measure are the ones that we focus on right now. I hope that changes in the future. There has to be a better way. (S)

My Reflection

Kim's experience in transitioning from a predominantly TCL environment to a predominantly SCL environment was challenging for her because she didn't feel as connected to her students as she did previously in her teaching career. She has strong negative emotions about the process of the transition.

Kim's K-12 experience was less memorable than any of the other participants in this study. She struggled to remember elementary or middle school teachers and her strongest memories came from her shortcomings and missed opportunities as a student. However, her college experience was more detailed than her K-12 memories, and she had a stronger connection to her college of education professors and peers than the other participants in this study. Kim's beliefs about the transition toward student-centered learning were often linked to her dislike of the learning management system that was

used, Edgenuity, or the virtual mode that the asynchronous instruction was delivered through. In her interviews she referenced Edgenuity often and even called the entire system of student-centered learning “Edgenuity” multiple times.

Kim also taught gifted and advanced students during the transition toward student-centered learning, and this influenced many of her answers throughout the interviews. She felt that many of her students didn’t need her during those years and that bothered her that her connection to her students and their relationship was different during those years. Kim is clearly a teacher that thrives on an individual connection with her students and seeing them grow. She discussed that the professional development and planning played a role in her struggles to transition effectively. When Kim explained how she makes meaning of the transitional years and her experiences, she discussed the value that student-centered learning can have, but she prefers to rely more on teacher centered learning in her classroom today for the control and connectivity that she believes it brings to her classroom. The unique culture of the classroom had an impact on Kim’s opinions of the transition toward primarily SCL. Many of her stories involved connections with students and that her students and parents missed the traditional style of teaching to which they were accustomed.

Kim’s experiences during the transition toward SCL between the 2013-2018 school years shaped her opinions about the impact of SCL and about what type of instruction was best for students. Kim described several nonacademic skills that she thought students needed to gain during their high school experience but seemed hesitant to embrace that style of instruction as her primary mode of teaching out of an abundance

of caution that technology and a learning management system can never replace a teacher.

Jessica

Jessica can help any student, no matter what their ability levels, become a better mathematician. She teaches 6th grade math and has served in a co-taught classroom, serving both general and special education students, since she began teaching at JSMS over 10 years ago. She has taught with the same special education teacher as her co-teacher since the 2012-2013 school year. Her classroom is warm and welcoming, while also rigorous and thought provoking for her students. She has fun with her students, while also setting clear expectations and creating an environment that is focused on learning.

She has a huge personality and makes exceptional relationships with both her peers and her students, which makes her an impactful teacher. She typically greets her students at the door with a smile and a welcome. In our first conversation about my research and the potential that she would be a participant, she stated, “you don’t want my opinion, I am going to tell it like it is.” In my opinion, this honesty and candor are some of her best qualities. Her interviews made me laugh and smile as she recounted her K-12 and college experience, and I was encouraged by her faith in kids even in the face of adversity. Her transition toward teaching using primarily SCL strategies was different than the other three participants in this research. During the 2013-2014 school year at JSMS, Jessica was on the traditional teaching side, separated from SCL teachers in the school. Her teaching remained primarily TCL during the 2013-2014 school year and her transition toward primarily SCL began a year after my other participants. I was excited

before her interviews began to discuss her experiences during that year of the transition to understand her perceptions of the school culture compared to my other participants. I also was interested if her experience in the transition was different because her peers in the building had some experience with the strategies by the time she attempted to implement those same techniques in her classroom. Jessica's experience in transitioning from a predominantly TCL environment to a predominantly SCL environment is described authentically in her narrative that follows.

K-12 Experience

Jessica's stories from her K-12 experience provided me with information on the style of instruction and the type of relationships she shared with her instructors and her classmates when she was in school. These experiences helped shape her understanding of the role of the student and the teacher in the school environment. I will review these experiences to determine how they impacted her teaching style and her instructional choices later as she made the transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment.

We can start at the beginning. All right, so before I even went to school, like, let's talk about preschool. So, preschool, I went to my aunt's preschool. How about that? Well, she really is not my aunt. I called her aunt Jennifer (pseudonym) because she was married to my dad's first cousin. So, I went to my aunt Jennifer's preschool. I would cry, just about every day. (P) Then I remember in kindergarten, and Ms. Garcia (pseudonym). I remember that she was older than dirt. She wore dresses every day. She wore heels every day. I remember that we took a nap every day and she would walk around with a yardstick with her clickety clackity heels on those 12 by 12 tiles, and if we were not asleep, she would pop us on the behind with her yardstick. I got popped a lot. (S)

[In second] grade I had Ms. Towers (pseudonym), and she was freaking the most beautiful woman ever. She was so pretty. Ms. Towers (*pause*), I loved reading with Ms. Towers. I loved reading groups with Ms. Towers. We used to run and push and shove to sit by Ms. Towers [during reading groups]. And she would make us all go back and sit down, so we could walk [back to sit near her]. She taught us like, how to read with inflection. And how, you know, to read with tone and, you know, read like the character and are they excited or are they upset or scared. She taught us to read like that. We [also] had the best librarian at Washington Elementary School (pseudonym), her name was Ms. Wilson (pseudonym). Ms. Wilson could read a story like you could not believe. Like we used to go in there and we would fight to sit on the front row in front of Ms. Wilson too. She could read like nobody's business. She would love on us and hug on us and she was just the best ever. She died not too long ago, and I got very upset, it hurt my heart so bad, because she was just the best ever. (S) *Jessica's early memories of the connections she shared with her teachers and even instructional strategies from these years was more specific and detailed than my other participants. She discussed her experiences with more elementary teachers.*

Then I left [her home] and Washington Elementary School and I went to Johnson Elementary School (pseudonym). And I went to third grade and had Ms. Morris (pseudonym), who was a piece of stone. She was a freaking mean old rock. She had like zero emotion; she was just like there. We used to have this spelling workbook that we used to have to do all the time. It was like the same wrote thing all the time like every Wednesday write the sentence, every Tuesday write the questions. It was like every week was the same thing every stinking week about spelling. (T)

Like Kim's narrative, in early elementary school Jessica primarily remembered the characteristics and qualities of her teachers. Jessica described her later elementary years and her secondary experiences, and she began to recall specific learning strategies and classroom academic experiences. Ms. Gladwell (pseudonym), I had her for Math and Science.... And every morning we had in homeroom we had devotions. We had the Bible devotion every morning with Ms. Gladwell, in her class. (pause) Every morning. And God, Ms. Gladwell, was so amazing. And then she was a fantastic math teacher too. I remember in science; she taught us about the blood flow of the heart and she talked about the chambers of the heart. She had like these transparencies like for the overhead [an instructional tool in the classroom] and she had the different color pins. She showed us with the blue and the red, like she traced over it and [said] "this is when the blood turns to a purple", and she wrote over it with the two different colors so it would be kind of like purple [for] when the blood starts to change after it goes to the pulmonary artery comes back to the heart. I was just like (pause), I was just so fascinated. I was [thinking], the heart doesn't really look like the other [hearts] people draw. She was like, "you really think people could draw this on the [Valentine's day] card?" And I said, "well no." She was fun. She was just funny, but she didn't take no crap off anybody either. (S)

Jessica described her elementary experiences as more traditional learning environments. She recalled several middle school and high school experiences of her teachers and their teaching styles. [One of her 6th grade teachers], she was like, no matter how many times you asked her a question, she would go over it again. Like I mean you could tell her you didn't understand something, and she would go over it. I

mean she would just sit there and do something over (*pause*) and over (*pause*) and she was [like], “oh let's do it a different way,” or “let's try a different one.” “Let's do one [a math problem] like it [or] let's do this, let's do this, let's do this” [showing the continued attitude of continuous improvement with her students].

Jessica recalled an experience with her ninth grade Biology teacher where I believe she interacted with the hidden curriculum. Jessica's teacher and Jessica's mother were both working to teach Jessica different unwritten rules. She also described the TCL learning style her teacher employed as the catalyst for the story. Let's stick with her for a minute, Ms. Parks (pseudonym) in biology. I had her in ninth grade. So, when we were on about day four of Punnett squares [which should have been covered more quickly], and I was reading a book. And she took my book. She took my library book. And I asked her if I could have it back at the end of class. She was like, “no, you can't have it back until May”, and it was like September or something like that. So, I went home, and I told my mom. Mom called the library and she said, I can't even remember Ms. Parks' first name, but my mom did, and she said, “she [Ms. Parks] took Jessica's book from her in class and she will not give it back.” “It's due on this date, and I need it to be checked out to her [Jessica's teacher].” And the lady at the library said “no problem.” So, she checked it out to Ms. Parks, and [her mother told her] I want [you] to go to school tomorrow and tell Miss Parks that it's been checked out to her. So, I went to school the next day and mom said, ask her nicely for it one more time first. The next day, I said “Ms. Parks, my mom said for me to ask you nicely for my library book because it is a county library book.” “She made me promise not to read anymore in class.” Ms. Parks said, “tell your mother, did you tell your mother that you can have it back in May?”

I said, “yes mam.” She said, “well then you should have known better than to ask for it back.” I said “OKAY (emphasized), well my mom said to also let you know that she called the library yesterday and had it changed to your name, and that the due date is whatever date and that if you don't turn it again until May this will be your fine.” And it [the fine] was like several hundred dollars. And my mom said to just give you a heads up.

(S) This experience provided details about the dissonance between the lesson in obedience that her teacher attempted to teach her and the lesson in problem-solving from Jessica's mother. It also supports the idea that Jessica was bored in the instructor's class because of the disengagement she felt from the teachers' learning strategies.

I had Ms. Young (pseudonym) for algebra I. When we walked in her room, she had all the examples on the board. You sat down, and you copied your examples. And the woman stayed at her seat, and then on the side it would tell you what your homework was. [Our] examples were just like the even problems from the textbook and then you had to do the odd ones so you could check them in the back of the book. (S)

Jessica discussed a K-12 experience with a math teacher who displayed some SCL strategies and had a lasting impact on Jessica's education. Jessica uses strategies she learned from this teacher in her classroom to this day. Ms. Hopper (pseudonym) was freaking amazing. Okay, you know how kids say I don't understand, [Or] I don't get it, [or] I don't understand anything? And you're [the teacher] like okay, start back at the very top. Do you understand, you know like [she gave a sample problem for the story] $2x + 5 = 12$. [Continues the hypothetical discussion with the student] Do you understand that you're trying to solve for x? [She gave a sample answer from the student] Yes, mam. [The teacher again says] “Well, see you do understand something. Don't tell [me] you

don't understand anything, because you do understand something. You understand that x is the variable, and you understand the purpose of the problem and what do you need to do next?" Sometimes they'll say, "I need to subtract the five [or] I have to get the 5 [or] I have to subtract the 5." Ms. Hopper would never let you say I don't understand anything, [or] I don't get any of it. She would make you start over, and she would make you go to the top and she would make you go step by step. I still use that for my kids. I say, you're not going to tell me that you don't understand anything because you know something. You know something. I mean like you might have got [ten] lost at that four, but you still understood steps one and two and you probably understand a little bit if you just got lost right here [hypothetical discussion with a student]. So, you're good from here to here, so don't tell me that you don't understand anything. And that's the way Ms. Hopper would do. She would say "no, no, no, no. You got to have some confidence in yourself. You know more than you think you do. I will not accept I don't understand anything. You know something." And that always stuck with me as a kid. And I am a firm believer in it as a teacher. I'm like, "you understand something." (S)

I do the same thing [as Ms. Hopper]. Especially when we start talking about solving one step equations, and we start talking about solving for variables. I tell my kids too, you realize you already know how to solve a one-step equation and you learned how to do this in second grade. [Continues hypothetical discussion with her students] When your teachers were teaching you fact families and they had $2 +$ and a blank square $= 5$, and you were all sitting on the carpet, and you were super excited, and you were squealing and raising your hand and you were all jumping up and down and you were excited because you [knew] a three goes in that square? Guess what? $2 + a = 5$, a is also

three. It doesn't matter what is here [where the a or blank was in the equation], it's still three. But if anybody told your second-grade teacher, they were teaching y'all basic algebra, they would have probably cried too because some of them don't like it. They'll [second grade math teachers] tell you in a minute, "I'm not good at algebra or not good at math, that's why I teach elementary school." But the fact of the matter is most of them have already taught y'all some of the basic algebra stuff that I need to teach you too. (S)

Jessica's stories from her K-12 experiences were vivid and detailed. She recalled much more specific information about the learning styles and lessons she learned from her teachers compared to Kim's narrative. Later in this narrative, we will discuss her reflections on how these experiences impacted her teaching career and the transition toward primarily SCL instruction.

College/Student Teaching Experience

The next section of Jessica's narrative details some of the experiences and stories from her college and student teaching experience. Jessica details the lack of instructional strategies she was taught during her college experience. These stories provide information about the impact of her teacher preparation experiences on her teaching practices and her preparedness for the transition toward primarily SCL at JSMS. I graduated high school and I enrolled at [local college]. Back when I went to school to be a teacher, because that was (pause) [19]90 3,4, or 5, something like that. Mainly then it was more, content and management. [It was] more classroom management stuff [and] very little of it was teaching strategies. I had one teacher [who] made me write my alphabet, the capital and the lower case, three times a night [for] like half [of] the semester (pause) every night. Because he told me I had some kind of made-

up hodge-podge language that no child was ever going to be able to read from the board. He said that my students would never be able to read my handwriting. And I said, “my handwriting is neat.” And he said, “it is a mix of cursive print mix, with no rhyme or reason.” Well, if he only knew now that children don't know cursive at all. I don't remember any specific strategies taught to me during those classes. I remember learning about professionalism and ethics. But I couldn't have told you traditional or student-focused learning was at that point. (T) *Jessica's experience with the professor who focused more on a skill than on teaching strategies was a common thread across the stories of her college and student teaching experiences. She also discussed some negative moments of her student teaching experience and what those experiences taught her about herself and the teaching profession.*

My student teaching lady, her name was Ms. Young (pseudonym), she and I did not, I don't want to say we didn't [get along] very well, but we did not [get along] very well. I think it [the student teaching experience with Ms. Young] was 9 weeks. Because she (*pause*), she was just very (*laughs*), I don't know she was very dry. We had reading at that school. Everybody [taught] reading first period. [It] was like an abbreviated first period, like 55 minutes and so the whole school did reading [instruction and learning], no matter what subject you taught. I did my student teaching in [a] social studies [classroom] and [we taught reading and] then we taught social studies the rest of the day. I remember writing in my reflection notebook, which she [Ms. Young] was not supposed to see. It was only for my professor. But my professor asked her [Ms. Young] a question about something I had written in it, which really made her mad. One of the questions was, you know basically like you are saying, is there anything that your mentor teacher

does that you would not do? Or [what] things your teacher mentor did that you would do. Basically, every week I had to write a reflection and give an example, and it was like, [Jessica recalled the reflection in question that her professor asked Ms. Young about] I remember one day we were doing something [in class], and I felt like she should have given them a map. That [way], while we were discussing the trek that they [the population in the lesson] had made through, like I can't even remember where they were going, it was something about going across the Appalachians or something. We were from a very small town in rural South Georgia. I was like, a lot of students have never been out of this town, so they don't have any kind of perception of where we are talking about or the distance or have any scope or idea of you know, exactly where we are talking about geographically. [They don't understand the] time or distance or this that and the other, and so they need a map so they could follow it. They could color it and do this and this [sample actions from her reflection], and you could have done a small group thing that you could have done this [another example of teacher strategy that could have been used]. Anyway, that was supposed to be how I would have done it, and she [Ms. Young] didn't appreciate that at all. She went to her principal and said, "I don't want her back in there."

So, the principal comes to me, and he said "can I see what you wrote?" I said, "that's between me and my professor, I mean she shouldn't even know what I wrote in there!" Then I got mad with my professor, and I was like "why would you tell her that!" I told [my professor] "I can't fail student teaching." She [Jessica's college professor] was like, "if she kicks you out and doesn't let you finish the last two weeks, I promise I won't let you fail because that's on me [her fault]." I finished my student teaching and passed

the course, but Ms. Young did not speak to me the rest of the time. She didn't even let me teach the final few times that I was supposed to. I don't understand, looking back, why she was so upset. When I have had student teachers in my classroom now that I am a teacher, I always meet with them to see what I can learn from them, you know what I mean. All of Ms. Young's lessons could have been more engaging and better. She wanted to stand up there and talk and it was so dry and boring. (S) *I asked Jessica what type of instruction, TCL or SCL, she would considered the dominant style used in her student teaching experience.* Oh, I would say all teacher centered. Maybe 95% teacher centered.

Jessica did not remember or share much from her college preparation and student teaching experience. I included the story from her student teaching experience as Jessica's reflection for what led to the problem, revolved around what she described as "boring and dry" instruction from her student teaching mentor. I was curious how these experiences would impact her decisions about her own teaching style and instructional choices. She didn't think she was exposed to helpful strategies, and she had a bad student teaching experience overall.

Transition Toward SCL

Jessica described a typical day in her classroom before the transition toward creating a primarily SCL classroom. Additionally, she shared the stories and experiences that she remembered about the transition toward primarily SCL at JSMS between the 2013-2018 school years. On a typical day [before the transition] we have, a problem of the day. Or a warm-up, bellringer, whatever the lingo that the school uses [for the beginning of the lesson]. I have worked at many schools that use different

terminology or lingo, but we used problem of the day. It kind of sets up the tone [or] uses more background knowledge or spirals back to whatever they need to kind of review or activate [their memory] for what they need to do that day. It gives them like a little refresher. And then we check their homework. [Then we] review [the problem of the day], [by asking] does anybody have any questions? Then we normally start on our activity for the day. Typically, this is either direct instruction or some type of work with manipulatives. Manipulatives are an important part of the conceptual part of learning math for our students. And then, I like tickets out the door, but I tend to run out of time. That is always, always has been a struggle for me. I do like tickets out the door in theory, but I do struggle with them because of time management, but that's just me. I typically am in the same place in the pacing guide with each of my classes, so I use the same lesson plan for the most part for each class. I didn't use much, personalized learning or student-centered learning before the transition toward SCL. I think just because that wasn't the way I learned how to learn, you know? I liked [my] school [experience] and I guess the more "old-school" type of teaching is what has always worked for me. (T)

Following a brief discussion of what her class looked like teaching in primarily TCL, Jessica described what happened in the transition toward creating a primarily SCL environment in her classroom. Jessica began the schoolwide transition on the traditional instruction half of the school. Many of the teachers in this group did not volunteer to begin the transition the previous year. I wanted to ask Jessica if she requested to be on the traditional side, and to get her perspective on the school culture during those years of transition. So, in the first year of our school switch [transition] toward personalized learning [a term for SCL used at JSMS], I did not sign up for that struggle in year one,

(laughs). Honestly, I was very comfortable with my teaching style. I had created so many lessons that I really knew what I was going to teach and at what part of the year. I wasn't sure that [our principal] had it all figured out either at first. (T) I had my own personal concerns as well about how the students would receive instruction and how it might affect scores on the math end of grade assessment. That didn't go away because we switched teaching styles you know?

The first year was weird. It was sort of like having a best friend who got all the attention, and you were pretty awesome too, but no one noticed. There was a video shoot every other month, tours of teachers from other states that wanted to come see what we were doing. Trips for some of the teachers to fly and watch other schools. I have worked in several different schools, but JSMS was a very tight knit group of teachers before that first year of transition [2013-2014]. It took us a few years to recover and be like it was before those years.

Jessica discussed the second year of the school wide transition at JSMS, and her first year attempting to transition her learning environment to one that was focused on primarily SCL. Jessica was resilient and determined to find common ground with administration and ensure her students were learning. So initially it was, they wanted them [our students] to all go at their own pace, they wanted this and this and this [administration asked for a long list of things] to happen. And after a few months, I went to our principal and I said "OK, this is exhausting, I cannot do this." I said "I cannot, I am having to teach the children, like the same thing 140 times because I can't teach it all at once. So, instead of me doing direct instruction for 10 or 15 minutes at the beginning of class, I am having to teach it 140 times over three days because they are all going at

their own pace. So, I am actually hindering some kids from going on because I am having to do this one on one or two at a time, or three at a time, and it's exhausting to do it that much." I suggested that I do a very general talk, or general thing [lesson] about this week [any week she was teaching]. This is what you need to accomplish and the basic general instructions on Monday for about 15 minutes, and then work with small groups Tuesday and Thursday and then let them work individually. And he said, "I can do that ... or do that." So, the kids did way better the next few months than they did during the first 6 weeks. (S)

We also added choice boards in during that time [as Jessica was altering her delivery of content after getting feedback from administration]. I think it was because there wasn't as much down time. They weren't having to wait on me to like explain stuff. Because on Monday, I would give them like a major overarching set of instructions, instead of me explaining like over the week I would give them several examples and I would say, "this is what you will need to accomplish this week. You will need to talk about equivalent expressions, and you are going to cover these four properties this week." And I would give them several examples about different properties. And you know you [her students] need to practice distributive, commutative, associative, all these things. And then they would have different assignments or things they could choose to work on each thing [each property or portion of the lesson]. Well over that week, they could work on each assignment or each property and different activities and then they could all bring it together at the end or take their quiz at the end of the week. And then they didn't have to really wait for me, and if they needed any help in between, I could work with two or three or four of them at a time. And that helped so much. (S) *These choice boards that*

Jessica described provided structure and rigor to the individual work students completed in her classroom during the week. It allowed students to work on different assignments, at the same time, while she worked with a different small group of students.

But I will say this, the kids you know we had to give them leveled choices [on the choice boards described above]. Well, the kids tended to pick a lot of level one stuff [Level 1 Depth of Knowledge (DOK) work on our choice boards was the lowest level of knowledge acquisition]. Because I used to have them, they used to have to complete at least two activities before I would let them take a quiz. And then if they didn't pass the quiz, they had to complete another, or do a remediation one so they had to complete more on the choice board. So, the year that we did that [2014-2015] was one of the highest and I don't remember if it was GA milestones or one of the years that we did CRCT, but it was one of the highest [scoring] years for me [on the end of year summative assessments]. I know when I was at [her previous school] I had super, super high scores [on the end of year summative assessments]. And then my kids had not scored very well or done as well [at JSMS]. And then I had extremely high scores that year. And I got a lot of push back [during the 2014-2015 school year] because they were like well you know, the DOK level is not that high. And I said "I get it, but they [her students] are doing a lot of practice. They [her students] are doing a lot of independent practice. But then when they finish it, they are still doing the performance tasks that are in the state frameworks, so they still are doing the higher level DOK things, just on the choice boards they aren't doing the higher-level things." They just aren't volunteering to do it, but at the end they have no choice because they must do it for a test grade [on the performance task]. But I mean they still scored, tremendously high. (T) *The performance tasks were*

real-world scenario problems that were typically multi-step math problems for students to solve. These tasks were used as an assessment grade in Jessica's class.

Jessica described one of the components of the transition toward primarily SCL that she did not enjoy, lab days. These were days of the week where a content teacher would be in a large learning lab with 60-90 students who were working on their Chromebook on the online learning content through the learning management system (LMS). As a teacher, lab day was boring, it was just like you know the song that never ends. Lab days were a part of the model to decrease class size in each core instructional class. Students spent part of their week in a large setting working in the online learning management system with one teacher. It was just the day that never ended, it was, awful. The kids hated it, they just, oh they hated it. The Edgenuity [the online learning management system] was, some of it was just not right, it would tell them one thing and then when it would give them a question, like some of the answers wouldn't be right. Then, you know, when we would let Edgenuity know [something was incorrect in the curriculum], we had to fill out all these forms and let them know stuff wasn't right, and it was just a big pain. Behavior wasn't great because the kids were bored, and they didn't like it and they didn't like listening to the person on the computer because the person on the computer [the virtual videos of instructors teaching a lesson] kind of talked kind of monotone. And it just, oh it was just awful. And you couldn't see them all, and you didn't know if they were doing what they were supposed to be doing. It was just awful. I think was just all around a really horrible, no good, bad idea. I think Edgenuity [the learning management system] was just a bad idea from the get-go. (T)

I asked Jessica to share more about the differences between her previous teaching and her instruction or teaching during the transition toward using primarily SCL. It was a lot of similar, it was a lot of the same strategies it was just restructured. I mean, yea. It was just structured a little differently. It was kind of like I gave them everything on Monday, and I said this is everything that you need to have accomplished by Friday. Do it as you see fit and like you need to have this done by Friday, and if you have it done by Friday, these are some other things you could do. It really was not, I mean it was kind of at your own pace, but at the same time this is what your expectation is to be finished on Friday. Because if they didn't have deadline expectations, nothing ever got done. And that was one of my big beefs [problems or complaints], and one of my issues with the whole thing. I was like, if you told me to turn in grades, whenever I was ready, do you really think grades would ever get turned in? You have deadlines, everybody has deadlines because if you don't have deadlines and there is not an expectation of a deadline, nothing will ever get done. It is human nature. You have to set boundaries. It is normal, and it is healthy. You can have some personalization, but at the same time, you have to give people limits and you have to give them boundaries, or things will not get accomplished. You have to have limits and expectations it can't be all loosey goosey.

(T)

Jessica explained her opinion on what happens without deadlines from her personal experience. It can be crazy, and it can be loosey goosy and people who do some of that [teaching without deadlines] can be in unit one for an entire school year, which that happened in our school [during the transition]. Like the student-centered thing during our personalized learning years, that was really hard to wrap my brain around, and

it was really hard to get it structured out and to get it planned out. But pulling the resources [to teach in the SCL environment] was an exorbitant amount of time that was unrealistic, and it was unfair. It was an unfair and unrealistic expectation to put on us [teachers at JSMS], without the proper resources. I don't know how, like newer teachers survived, I really don't. Because had I been a new teacher, I probably would have just sat in a ball and cried, and probably quit. I would have waited tables or something. *Jessica shared a similar frustration with Kim that teachers at JSMS were not prepared with the resources and training to be successful. She felt that too much work was put on the teachers to figure it out and make it work.*

I think that I learned some new strategies to teach with during the transition, and I learned how important structure is to both teachers and to students. I mean, that is probably what I got the most. Kids need to know what their guard rails are, and without those, kids struggle. But so, do teachers, you know? I make decisions now in my classroom that I know will challenge students, but also that will give them the supports that they will need to find success if they will work hard to get to it. *Jessica reflected on some of her lessons learned from the experience of shifting toward primarily SCL instruction in her classroom. She also discussed the impact of the culture of the classroom on her transition and how her personal experiences impacted her instructional choices during and after the transition.*

Reflections on the Transition

In this section, Jessica described her classroom today, after the years of transition, and the decreased emphasis on SCL strategies at JSMS. Every Monday ... I always start off with, here are your reminders. So, it's the first page on my agenda for

the week. I have a google slideshow in my google classroom, and so I publish it to the web so that I can update it every day, with like the answers to their homework and that stuff. That way I don't have to go into every google classroom and change it. It has um, like [Jessica provided an example of what would be in the reminders] your formative 17 closes on January 30th at midnight, be sure your corrections are made by that time. Be sure you are done by that time, [because] I am not reopening after it closes. Be sure your weekly problem of the day for January are all submitted by the 28th. I am not going to take them after the Wednesday following [their due date]. We also review all of the assignments that are due in that week, so it's like a warmup on Monday [and] we review the standards for the week and all the assignments for the week. It kind of just gives the kids a little preview for the week. It usually takes me about 8 minutes, I try to keep it under 10 [minutes]. I don't do like a bell ringer or a warmup problem on Monday because that's what I do with the entire class on Monday. (T)

Jessica also still uses a performance task for the unit. I go over that at the very beginning of the unit, so I mean I don't like to go over it like ad nauseum detail, but I show it to them and I kind of go over what it covers. Then as we go through it like usually when we finish a little section of the unit, I'm like "you could do question number one in your performance task, or you can do question two, you should be able to do one and two if you want to do it." The one we have for this unit, equations, it's all about a family traveling to Coopers town to travel to the baseball hall of fame. How many miles they drive, like what's their round trip. So, they [Jessica's students] have to write the equation, then they have to figure up like it gives them what the variables were so then they have to use substitution, which is a standard...[and] write the equation for the miles

per gallon. Then using how many miles they traveled, they have to figure up what was their miles per gallon, that kind of stuff.

Jessica reflected on how the instructional choices made affect students and what her experiences have taught her about student learning in different learning environments. Her answers helped me understand how she made meaning of her experiences and how her K-12 school, teacher preparation, and transition experiences have impacted her views on education. Sometimes when it gets to being too teacher-centered, some students get extremely bored, and they tune out. They get lost in their own thoughts and in their own world, and they don't absorb any of it [the material being taught]. They don't learn any of it because it's not entertaining. It's not engaging enough for them. When things are too focused on just student learning and student-led, there can be entirely too many misconceptions. And there can be too many, there can be a lot of floundering and not a lot accomplished.

You cannot stand up there every day and talk to them for 55 minutes. I do think that there is a lot of value, and I took that from this experience [the transition toward SCL], there is a lot of value in letting them correct their work. There is a lot of value in them going back and reviewing and reworking and justifying their corrections. My students do that now to this day. I leave their quizzes open for two weeks and they get a first grade, and then they have an extra week to make corrections. Then they get a second week, and they can get a second grade [after they have more time to work on the quiz]. And when they get their second grade, I put it in infinite campus [the student information system for JSMS] and I put like first attempt, a 67, second attempt 100, or first attempt a 50 and second attempt an 84. So that way the parents know what you did

on your first attempt and what you did on your second attempt. If you make 100 the first time it says in the comments, great job on first attempt. But that goes back to what I did during our transition toward personalized learning [primarily SCL]. If you do not master it, before you can redo it you have to review it. I did pick that up and we still do that now. I think that helps a lot, I even do it with their tests. I give them back their performance tasks with notes and feedback on it and they have a week, or sometimes two weeks, to make corrections and give it back to me. (T)

I don't think you can blanket statement say that one [style of instruction] is better for all kids. Student centered is better for some kids, teacher centered is better for others. There are certain topics that lend themselves better for student-centered and there are some topics that lend themselves better for teacher centered. Like the one step equation thing, we're doing an Desmos activity [an online virtual modeling activity] next week where they're actually going to, they're not actually going to get scales, but they're going to get algebra tiles that are virtual for everybody. So, they can play virtually and have like these little animals, and they have like little bags with little animals, how much is in the bag [is a sample question the activity may ask them]. I think for some of the students that are struggling with what it looks like [understanding the mathematics standard], I mean they can actually see the scale go up and down. Some of the kids that are struggling are going to do that activity on Monday, the other ones are going to do an error analysis. So, you have to, it becomes a professional judgment. Take a look at the data and see where your kids are at and how they're performing with their practice and on their formatives, and with their exit tickets, and how they're answering the questions [they discuss in class]. Like today, it was like, we [Jessica and her co-teacher] had done

practice with them for two days. Now we're going to let them do it with groups, we gave them like 10 word problems and some of them were just like, they didn't know and they have the hardest time writing the equation. And we didn't even, didn't have to solve the equation they just had to write it. [sample question Jessica would ask her class] Can you write the equation? I would have to take a step back and I was like, okay let's write, don't even write the 6th-grade thing, just write the third-grade math problem. A few of them couldn't even write a third-grade math problem for the word problem. So, my co-teacher and I were like okay, we immediately see what group needs review and who needs to be in my group tomorrow. So, you know, that comes from experience that just comes from years of working with kids. I didn't learn that from my personal school experience necessarily, like I wasn't taught those strategies during my teacher prep courses. We learned how to manage students and handle classroom discipline. We also learned very traditional instruction, but that was ages ago. *Jessica's previous experiences taught her what works and doesn't work for her students. She finds ways to use data and to group her students for flexibility instead of attempting to teach all of her kids the same thing at the same time.*

Jessica's described what she thinks students need to learn in their K-12 experience to be prepared for their lives after high school. She discussed both explicit content knowledge and implicit skills which she thinks students need based on her experiences. These reflections supported my understanding of the impact of both the culture of the classroom and the hidden curriculum on Jessica's experiences. As far as math goes, there are life skills they need and then there is stuff that there is no point in them knowing unless it is a career path that they need to pursue. Um, you know there is

basic, very basic fundamental algebra that they need to know. And I don't see anything wrong with building that foundation very early. I mean there [are] a lot of things that they have already built the foundation [for] in elementary school and we are continuing to build on that in middle school. That's the kind of stuff that does continue to spiral, but the way that it's presented from one year to the next, if you have a teacher that's not experienced and doesn't understand that spiral...its disjointed so the kids can't build on it. Taking them [every student] all the way to a precalculus or calculus, or even up to an algebra II type stuff [isn't needed]. If someone wants to be a hairdresser, they don't need algebra II. Now, on the flip side of that you get someone who needs to be a plumber, if they want to be an industrial plumber [and] if they are going to do big projects and stuff like that, they probably do need some of that linear algebra. It's [the math standards they need are] going to be more in depth. *Jessica discussed the non-academic skills she felt kids needed based on her experiences.* They have to learn to get along with people. You have to learn to get along with people. There are going to be plenty of people in life that you don't like and that you don't get along with, but you just have to learn to get along. You have to learn to do your job and go forward. (T)

Jessica shared a few stories about what students in different school environments or with disabilities can and should learn. Jessica had previous teaching experience at a youth detention center, and she recalled the value of math to these students. I included these portions in the narrative to help me discern how Jessica interacted with the culture of the classroom and hidden curriculum during her teaching experiences and how they impacted her opinions of the experiences. My really only experience with teaching really urban kids [was] when I taught at the [youth detention center]. It was a whole different

situation, you know, trying to teach those students [about] ratios and unit rate and proportion take on a whole [new meaning. When you're trying to teach them ratios, you don't read it out [to the students], how much a horse needs to eat or how much they have for that. I need a ratio of a whole different level. And believe it or not, they will pay attention because it's important [and] that's their livelihood. You know I love kids, going back to the trade thing, [when Jessica taught at the youth detention center she discussed a student] years ago, he said I do not need to learn any of this math, I just want to grow up and do hair. So, I said, I mean in cosmetology you got to understand ratios and how to mix the hair chemicals because they don't come already mixed. And if you don't understand how much toner to put and you know how much color to put and how much of this to put and how much it is to put in there, I said "you're not going to have return clients." He was like "oh my God." I said, "you have to understand this stuff." They have to see it and understand it for what the purpose [is] of it or they don't see the value of it. You have to be on their level, whether it's rural or Urban or whatever. *Jessica's discussion of her experience from the youth detention center gave me insight into how she approaches learning for her students. She makes real-world connections to mathematics for her students and engages them through creating a purpose in their learning.*

I asked Jessica if she thought students with disabilities struggle with specific types of learning strategies, specifically SCL based on her extensive experience as teacher of students with disabilities. I think across the board they were ok. Um, I didn't really see any kind of dip as far as their grades or them getting the work done or anything like that. I think probably more so than any other subject, I think direct instruction has more play [is more important] than any other place [subject area compared to math]. I really do. I

think it's more appropriate there than anywhere else. But I don't think it's the sole teaching practice. I think once its taught and demonstrated, the students should be able to explore and practice and work together and do all of that. So, I do think manipulatives, group work, I wouldn't even say it's a 50/50 split, I would think it's probably more 70/30 more heavily on the direct instruction [TCL]. And even not just take notes, take notes, take notes, but even if they are just working and going around and modeling with them or working with them. (T)

[Jessica discussed that classroom behaviors and classroom identities can influence her decision making on which strategies she uses for learning] I do not like for my [one of her class periods] to do student-centered activities, they are very difficult to manage. Let me rephrase that, they are very difficult to keep on task. They are very social. So, it takes a lot to keep them on task, but they still need it. It's just a lot of work on the teachers. You don't always take the easy way out; it just is what it is. But there are kids that don't do anything when it's teacher-led and they also don't do anything when it's student-led. They just are not going to do. So, you can't, you can't do anything about that either way.

Jessica reflected on how she makes meaning of the years of transition in teaching style and which types of strategies she thinks benefit student learning the most. Those years of transition were so freaking difficult. For me, (pause) for my students, (pause) for the parents. And I think it made me realize that maybe we shouldn't jumble up the way that they are supposed to learn and work if they are only going to revert to the teacher-centered style when they go to college. But I think that my answer would depend on if you are asking about the academic skills or the non-academic skills. I do think that

student-centered strategies often help to develop those, um, those soft skills I guess, the four C's [creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking], you know what I mean. In strictly teacher-centered you don't get much time to struggle or to collaborate or talk, so those skills are better developed through student-centered, but I think skill learning happens better through teacher-centered.

I'm going to keep doing what I know works. When I think about what I learned during my middle and high school experiences, it is that lazy teachers don't help anyone to learn and that sometimes you have to take things into your own hands in order to get what you need. That sounds rough, but it's the truth. I learned that sometimes a teacher thinks they know what you can do, and you can prove them wrong. But I also think about my elementary teachers ... and I know that I learned how to talk to other people and how to value people from those teachers as well. I think you can learn a lot that is not in the standards. (S)

My Reflection

Throughout my interviews and conversations with Jessica, I was reminded of her passion for her students and for her craft of teaching. Jessica's stories of her K-12 experience made me laugh out loud while conducting the first interview. She remembered specific details and stories at a far greater level of specificity than I remember my elementary and middle school experiences. Her stories from her K-12 experiences and from her college and student teaching experiences nearly all involved getting into trouble or achieving something great and proving someone wrong. From being popped with a ruler by an elementary school teacher to being reprimanded in high school or college, Jessica remembered the teachers and the actions that lead to negative

attention and those experiences stood out to her as we talked. Jessica is an outspoken and direct communicator and these traits surely developed during her experiences in school as a student.

Jessica's experience as a teacher and her discussions about the school-wide shift from predominantly teacher-centered to predominantly student-centered instruction was just as passionate and opinionated. What stood out to me the most was her frustration with her administration and the lack of direction she was given during the transition. I gathered that she felt very confused and left to figure it out on her own as she attempted to find ways to meet her students needs in a new and unique environment for learning. She was determined to make learning happen in her room, but she often felt at odds with her administrators and felt unprepared for the challenges that she faced.

Jessica's third interview brought out her passion for students and for the future of education as she discussed how the transition toward student-centered learning impacted her and her teaching. She described many of the negatives of student-centered learning and teaching in a way that I thought was connected to the lack of support she felt during the transition experience. She also had very strong opinions of how teachers and students abuse the systems of any instructional style, teacher-centered or student-centered, when the proper supports and expectations are not in place. I finished my last interview with Jessica hopeful for the future of education. I think that teachers like Jessica can find a way to make a difference in the lives of their students, regardless of teaching style. Additionally, Jessica made me think that great teachers balance their instructional styles, based on data, to meet the needs of their students. Through this

balance, Jessica explained how she thinks educators can meet both the academic and the social needs of our students in the future.

Rebekah

Rebekah is a math and science teacher who has worked on a two-person team in 6th grade since the 2013-2014 school year at JSMS. She teaches math and science to a group of approximately 60 students, and the majority of her students are typically identified as gifted learners. Rebekah is the type of teacher that students remember for the rest of their lives. She cares deeply, not just about the grades that her students make, but also about their personal growth and maturity. She sets elevated expectations with her students, and then supports them to set goals to reach these expectations. In her classroom during the 2013-2014 school year, you could find aquariums and terrariums with classroom pets from fish to turtles. Different students had the job of feeding and helping take care of the animals in Rebekah's classroom.

Rebekah greets her students each day with a big smile, and she rarely raises her voice to garner their attention. She is a firm believer in the value of hands-on experiences to learn in science. She told me before one interview began that science without labs and interactive experiences is not even really science. More than any other research participant, SCL strategies were a central part of Rebekah's teaching strategies prior to the schoolwide transition toward primarily SCL environments. I was curious before our interviews began if she would describe a smaller number of frustrations with the transition toward primarily SCL than my other participants. Kim's primary frustrations centered on the change in her responsibility and purpose in her classroom during the transition, while Jessica focused on the lack of communication she received

and being unprepared for the challenges she faced. Rebekah also had a different teacher preparation experience compared to my other participants. She earned a non-education bachelor's degree and then joined education as a second career. I wondered how Rebekah would describe the transition and if her experiences would relate to one or both previous narratives.

Rebekah is a teacher who knows her students and connects with each one to help them be successful. She discussed several of her students during our discussions and before interviews began, it was clear to me that she enjoys making a difference and supporting students with her teaching.

K-12 Experience

*Rebekah's narrative begins with a discussion of the experiences and stories she recalled from elementary, middle, and high school. These experiences created the foundation that I used to understand how her K-12 experiences impacted her instructional choices as a teacher and how she experienced the transition toward primarily SCL at JSMS. [Oh my] gosh, well that brings back a lot of memories. So, I had really good experiences in elementary school. I went to a smaller elementary school. The classes were small, and I have very fond memories of all of my teachers in elementary school. Ms. Carter (pseudonym) was my first-grade teacher, my aunt was actually my kindergarten teacher (*laughs*). I loved reading, that was my favorite. [That is] kind of ironic since I'm a math and science teacher now. I loved math up until the point that I had long division and then I didn't care for it. I had a lot of friends during that time, and it was a small community, so we were very close knit. There was a lot of parental involvement, a lot of family activities all the time. (S)*

She also discussed her learning experience with her kindergarten teacher who taught reading in an innovative way. We really focused on reading with her, but she made reading fun. Of course, we had like the sight words in kindergarten and my aunt did a great job [with helping us learn those]. I remember her [Rebekah's kindergarten teacher] using art and paint and she had an easel set up for every student. Now that I think back on it, I guess to make it more interesting and interactive we actually would paint letters, and then we learned how to paint words like paint our names. And that way, I think that for her that was a way to keep all of the kids in kindergarten engaged and busy. I remember wearing those aprons you know to keep our clothes clean but now that I think back, I mean I think that's the way that she probably taught us a lot of our letters. I remember her making sounds and then the sounds that she made we had to write the letter in green paint on that easel. And then eventually she would have us draw things that started with the letters. So, she might say, you know, make the "S" sound and we have to draw something and write something, write the word of whatever the object was that she made the sound [for], whatever the letter was. So that was interesting, but I was in kindergarten [for that]. Then I remember in first grade, we focused more on reading, and I remember reading circles. I enjoyed our teacher reading to us out loud and I don't remember really reading books in her class, I just remember her reading to us. Once we got into the upper grades, I would say fourth grade or fifth grade, I remember Ms. Nicholas (pseudonym) and Ms. Grant (pseudonym) and by that time I was in the more advanced classes. They were rigorous classes, so I remember the math and the reading and dissecting sentences. It was a different type of curriculum than we have now, I'm not even sure that they teach that (pause) dissecting sentences anymore. (T)

I remember the reading challenges that we had to earn points and then we would get prizes out of a basket in her class. In Ms. Nicholas's classroom, she was a great teacher, but more than anything I remember long division and I don't know why that sticks out in my head so much. She was very patient with teaching that long division, it was just on paper so she would teach it on the board, and we would just have to practice the long division until we got that right. I remember even with our multiplication facts, that was with Ms. Thomas (pseudonym), so I'm stepping back into third grade here, I remember multiplication drills and she would call us up to her desk and we would know we were supposed to have memorized the 8s [multiplication facts with an 8], and then the 9s [multiplication facts with a 9] would be the next week if we successfully answered all of the 8s. And then we had the timed multiplication facts, so that's kind of how the math instruction was.

Rebekah discussed the math struggles that she faced and what experiences negatively influenced her opinions about math. It was just the long division, I loved the fractions, it was just the long division. I guess I found it ... long (*laughs*). Even to this day it's not my favorite thing and I think it's just because it was so long, and I really don't think it's necessary. Not that I am really getting into this now, but I don't really teach it the way that she did. There is no reason to have fifteen thousand different steps with long division, because we have calculators today anyway. If she would have taught it in two steps I probably wouldn't have been so resentful. She was an extremely teacher focused instructor [TCL]. Like she would stand in the front of the room and work through sample problems, then she would let us work on those problems for the rest of the class. I try in my classroom today to not teach like she did, I think it's just boring. (T)

Rebekah described her middle school experiences. She recalled specific learning experiences that impacted how she teaches in her classroom now. Our Middle School was only two grade levels, so it was 7th and 8th, no it was 8th and 9th sorry. It was 8th and 9th [grade] and our high school was 10th, 11th, and 12th. So, for 8th and 9th I remember Mr. Long (pseudonym) as being my science teacher and it was an advanced class, and I loved his class because every week once we learned everything we always had hands-on labs. They would be planned at the end of the week and that wasn't typically something we had experienced in elementary school, and we did a lot more details and hands-on labs in science and I enjoyed that instead of reading about science from a book. And I guess because the content, you get into more specific content when you get to Middle School, especially in science, so I really remember his class. Then I had Ms. Harp (pseudonym) for ELA. I actually had her for 8th grade and 9th grade and that's when we read some of the more traditional books at the time, some of the Tom Sawyer books. We weren't up to like To Kill a Mockingbird or anything like that yet, but just some of the longer chapter books. I remember reading poems in her class [Ms. Harp], and chapter books and poems both years, [8th and 9th grade] and then really breaking them down to see what the meaning was behind them and learning about all the different literary techniques. It was fun in her class because we would read and then she would allow us to discuss things [and] it didn't feel like a lot of busy work. Her classroom was one of the more student focused [SCL] classrooms that I remember working in during my school experience. Those discussions and how she let us select different texts and poems to read made it feel like we had more choices than I did in any of my other classes. (S)

Rebekah detailed a negative experience from her middle school career with a teacher that did not connect with her or help her learn. I had Ms. Smalls (pseudonym) for Algebra I and I was in advanced math, so I had her in eighth grade that one year [and] she was my least favorite teacher. I remember her going up to the board and she sounded like, what did she sound like, the best way I can describe it is she sounded like Charlie Brown's teacher: whomp whomp whomp. She always gave us examples and said "OKAY, you got it?" And then start on your homework and she would go sit at her desk. I don't remember anyone asking, she never really helped us again. I was totally confused. It was me and my friend Charlie (pseudonym) and she and I would dig into the algebra book and basically teach ourselves Algebra. I will never forget that. I would think, okay I got this, I understand. Then when I started working on it and that algebra problem looked a little different, then I realized, oh okay I don't know how to do this. But she [Ms. Smalls] was just intimidating, and no one really asked her any questions. We just figured it out on our own. (S)

Rebekah shared several high school experiences. She described her high school, which was much larger than a typical high school at that time. Additionally, she described the types of learning environments that she remembered and which teachers still impact her teaching career and decisions as a teacher today.

So, I went from a very small [middle] school to a much larger [high] school. Once I got to high school, and I went to Johnson High (pseudonym), and at the time it was the largest high school in the United States. It was like a (*pauses*), it was like a small campus. There were five buildings on the campus, and when I say five buildings, I'm talking like five buildings that were the size of [a local high school]. There were five

buildings and we literally travelled in between those buildings, so it was like a small college experience. There were over 3,000 kids there at that time I mean it was huge! (P)

Everything there [in high school] was good. I think I had some type of consumer math. But then the next year I went into geometry and then Algebra II and then I didn't go into calculus. I did something else my senior year. I think it must have been like a pre-calculus, it wasn't called that at the time, but that's what it was. For all three of those years, I had Ms. Hollis (pseudonym) and she was absolutely phenomenal. She was the first one that really introduced me to manipulatives. Like for example in Geometry, she would give us nets that you could fold a part so you can see what the net was flat, and then it was much easier to understand. [she helped them to understand that] OK the net is made up of this 3D shape [which] is really made up of this 2D shape. [Then] to find the surface area for it, all you have to do is break it out of the smaller shapes. Math makes so much more sense to me with a manipulative and the way that she explained things. She gave ample time for questions [and] I remember her asking us a lot of questions. I'm pretty sure thinking back that that's how she assessed us daily, not just [I] hope you got it, go sit at your desk. But I had her for all three years of high school [and] she was a phenomenal teacher. She definitely influenced my teaching career. I kind of look back on it and I can understand that when kids struggle depending on where they come from, they may feel like they're not getting enough help and it's just a different perspective. I could tell what a great job Ms. Hollis did and that's what made me want to be a teacher.

(S) *This teacher's classroom environment sounded like it had some SCL strategies mixed into the structure of the learning environment. This teacher had an ability to engage her*

students and supported them as they struggled and learned and that had a positive impact on Rebekah.

I remember my English Language Arts teacher [in high school], Ms. King (pseudonym) and I had her for 2 years. My Junior and Senior year she introduced us to Shakespeare and that's where I gained the love of Shakespeare [that I have now]. We read it and then she would explain it, and I was like wow! I do understand this, I get this! She introduced us to a lot of great novels, and we discussed those daily in class. I remember too that I had a job at the time, I had started working at the Piggly Wiggly part-time and we were supposed to read like a chapter [each] night and that was really hard for me to do. I would leave school and go to work and when I came home, I would fall asleep reading Shakespeare. Those were the days for sure preparing for college. I think it was her discussions that really made it interesting and the way that she explained it and challenged us on it. She let us know the history of it, you know it wasn't, it wasn't abstract. She would say “during this time such-and-such happened, so this is why this is so significant.” And that was, you know, she kind of explained it from [a] historical standpoint, even though it was fiction. She was a great teacher. (S)

Rebekah's stories from her K-12 experience were a mix of positive learning memories from teachers who challenged her and negative memories from teachers who did not connect with her and support her in learning. She recalled primarily TCL environments, but she encountered several teachers who developed a love of school and planted the seed for her to want to become a teacher one day. She discussed her college experience, where she first earned a bachelor's degree in economics. Her teacher

preparation experience was quite different from the other participants in this study and is detailed in the following section.

College and Student Teaching Experience

I was a non-traditional academic [Rebekah's bachelor's degree was not in education] and the reason that happened is because I was the first one in my family to go to college and I went to [a major state university], and I majored in economics. I did that because my parents, they said "no you're not going to make any money as a teacher, that's not what you really want to do." And they were paying for everything, so I listened to them and of course I wanted to make them proud. That's what I graduated with, was an undergraduate degree in economics. As soon as I graduated, I got the job, and I was in sales. I had a company car and a big spending account, and I travelled all over the place and lived the life of luxury, and I was miserable. So, I went in secret [back to school to get her education degree], I didn't tell my parents for a long time. At the time we didn't really have online classes. I was still living in [a local city], and I went to [a local university], they had like a satellite campus in [her city]. So, I lived close to it, and I took one or two classes each semester until I took all the classes that I needed to teach. That was through [a local university] and at the time [another local university] had some classes there as well, and so I finished my master's degree through [a second school] and at that time I started working at Valley Middle School (pseudonym) and that was in 1994, no 1995. I was used to going to school, so I just continued, and I went to [another university] in [her city]. I drove down there after school, again they didn't have online classes and I finished my gifted certification first and then I continued going and I finished my Educational Specialist degree all part-time, and I finished it in 1999. And I

became a national board-certified teacher in math in 2000, and then I started my doctorate in 2011 and finished it in 2017. My Master's Degree was in Science Education, the Specialist degree was in middle grades curriculum and instruction with a specialization in math, and the doctorate was in curriculum and instruction. *I included Rebekah's college experience because she was my only participant with her doctoral degree in education and because her college experience was not in the same degree major as the other participants in my study. Her choices in what major to originally pursue were grounded in the expectations of her parents, even though she didn't think she would be happy working on the field of her major. Additionally, Rebekah completed each of her degrees in education while working full time. I believe this displays Rebekah's perseverance and determination and I was curious if this would come back up during our discussion of her transition toward primarily SCL at JSMS.*

Rebekah recalled some of her experiences and stories from her college and student teaching experiences. Her experiences are detailed in chronological order, beginning with her bachelor's degree in education experience and then finishing with her doctoral program. I remember, I think I was pretty well-versed [she did pretty well academically] and I really didn't struggle with the content, it was more so the instructional pieces with how to teach the content and then the assessments that were involved. I remember one teacher who really focused on having detailed lesson plans with each component of our lessons laid out, just about word for word what we were going to say from the opening, to the direct instruction, to the summary of the lesson at the end of the unit. I remember thinking that there was not way a class was going to run that smoothly where you could predict everything. I had one teacher who wanted us to

be assessment gurus too, she was tough. In her class we learned to write assessments and I struggled in her class because there was a lot of new terminology for someone transferring over into education. (T)

I think where I learned the most was when I actually did my student teaching. I did student teaching for two semesters at Summer Middle School (pseudonym) and one of the things that they did that I really liked, looking back on it, I thought oh my gosh this is going to be crazy, but I really liked it, they moved me from classroom to classroom. [They also] moved me to different teachers. So, I was with a math teacher, I was with a science teacher, I was with a PE [physical education] teacher, I was with the family and consumer science teacher. I got to see a lot of different contents being taught in a lot of different styles and it was different teaching styles and different classroom management styles and different organizational styles [for] all of those different teachers. I think that benefited me more than anything. I learned that I absolutely did not want to walk into a classroom unprepared. There was one specific teacher, she was, it was like, every day she was winging it [not sure of her lesson plans and making it up as she went]. She really didn't know what she was doing and that's when the classroom management problems happened. And I'm not sure, [but] I thought she had to turn in lesson plans. I'm not sure that she always followed them, but she never had backup plans and I learned that one day [when I had my own classroom] I was going to always be prepared, especially with middle school, or they will eat you alive. This happened a few times, but I can remember during one of her lessons the kids were coming into the room and she was trying to create a warmup problem for the day. When the kids started solving the problem, she realized that to answer the problem they needed a skill she hadn't taught them yet (laughs). So,

when none of the students could answer the warm-up correctly, she moved into the lesson and told them that we would come back to that later. She missed the opportunity to use the plan of her lessons to help students get engaged and learn at high levels. She was also very traditional [primarily TCL strategies], so I don't think the kids were very engaged from what I remember. She was a warmup, direct instruction, and then a quiz at the end of the week. (T) *Rebekah would reference these primarily TCL learning experiences later in her narrative and discuss how they shaped her instructional choices.*

Rebekah shared her thoughts on another teacher from her student teaching experience where she experienced some SCL strategies and had a more positive experience. There was one teacher Ms. Strength (pseudonym), she was [a different] math teacher, and she was always extremely organized. She always had something prepared for those kids that finished early to move ahead but it was always something that was engaging [and] the kids loved her class and I think the kids learned a lot from her class. She usually did a whole group instruction, and she was one of the few teachers that after the whole group instruction she would break them down into smaller groups and actually allow them to talk in class. You know because back in the mid-1990s there wasn't a whole lot of talking going on in the classroom, the teacher just wanted you to be quiet all the time. So, she was one that would allow them to, you know, participate in discussion and talk [about] all the different concepts. During her class students had working sessions where they could work with partners to see how many different ways they could solve a problem, stuff like that. She was the only non-traditional, somewhat student focused [SCL] teacher that I had during my student teaching experience. In general, I learned, you know, classroom management for behavior and your instructional strategies

is what is going to keep those kids engaged [and] to always be prepared and to expect the unexpected.

Rebekah discussed that during her graduate degrees in education, she had experiences in diverse types of instructional models compared to her student teaching. These experiences impacted Rebekah's transition and how she made meaning of it later in her narrative. I learned about, I guess more 21st century skill acquisition during my doctorate work. Some of that was just through reading research study after research study for some of my courses. We would read and create a literature review and then share out our findings with the rest of the cohort. I think that helped me to understand the personalized learning transition better. If I only had my undergraduate in education to lean on during those years, I don't think I would have made it. I had read about project-based learning and I was familiar with some of the buzz words arounds student-centered teaching from those classes. Rebekah discussed that in summary from all of her education degrees that she learned multiple things including the following. Pick strategies that keep them [students] engaged. Focus on differentiation for all of them [her students]. [Use] lots of assessment [and] analyzing the assessment, and [then] going back and reteaching where you need to and reflecting within yourself what can you do differently as a teacher. Rebekah's experiences in her teacher preparation helped her to gain a better understanding of things she wanted to include and things to avoid in her classroom. Her thoughts and opinions about education were impacted by these experiences and how she made meaning of the transition toward SCL. In the next section of her narrative Rebekah details the experience of transitioning toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment at JSMS.

Transition Toward SCL

In the 2013-2014 school year, Rebekah volunteered to be in the pilot group of teachers that began shifting their classroom environments toward primarily SCL. Well one of the things that was the most difficult [during the transition toward SCL] is that the kids basically got lessons from online, there wasn't a lot of direct instruction. And there were so many more kids that year and my class size was growing. [When Rebekah was] going into the lab [the large space where students completed their online work through the learning management system] and then out of the lab, the number of kids that I had was higher. Rebekah is discussing that in her physical classroom that year on the days that she taught in her room, she had 15-20 students. However, during her day to rotate with her teaching team member and be in the learning lab, she had nearly 45 students for the instructional day in the lab. Because Rebekah taught on a two-person team, she was in the learning lab more days each week than a four-person team member would have been. In terms of the instruction, I think the instruction that the kids received [during the transition] was more limited, because it was mostly the instruction that came from the videos that were online. Rebekah is referring to the content that her students were supposed to complete using the learning management system. During the first year, our students progressed through their online, personalized content on the Chromebook and then in the classroom we started out just filling in and remediating. We went from teaching all of the material, to not really teaching any of it. Students would sit in the computer lab with their headphones on and their eyes glued to the screen and work through their lessons. In class I struggled to engage my students because I don't really think anyone knew what their main purpose was. Like me or the students. Were they

supposed to only learn from the lab, was I supposed to teach additional stuff? I didn't really know. (T)

I remember that I was in a [parent-teacher] conference and one of the kids was, you know, he'd been struggling in class. We [the teachers and his parents] asked him why he was struggling and one of the teachers said, you know, "just go back and watch the video over again", and the kid said that he went back and watched the video over and over again, "but she [the online instructor] is still not answering my question." (S) And I thought okay because the person in the video can't answer your questions. So, you know for some kids the videos were good, but it wasn't enough. So was there good information in those videos, yes, but to use that is the only instructional strategy and then try to fill in the blanks when you got you know 45 kids in your classroom and trying to fill in the blanks and they're all in different areas was extremely difficult to do. I spent hours and hours that first year [2013-2014] trying to figure out how to help 15 kids in 15 different places with their learning. I remember working one day, one on one, with a student on, I think it was the space unit. He was struggling with a quiz question from the unit test in Edgenuity and I was trying to help him understand what the right answer was and why it was correct. I kept thinking to myself, if I had taught this using my normal strategies in class, he never would have developed this misconception, and that happened a lot to me that first year. Moving into the second and third year, that was a major change that we made. I knew what concepts students would struggle with the most, and I had mini lessons for those that we did before any students started those units in their online coursework. We also adjusted how much content students learned online and what those units of material looked like in the online learning. When we balanced that out, I thought

my classroom flowed more smoothly and kids learned more. My classroom looked more like a balance during the next several years of the transition and focus on personalized learning. I think it looked more like my room, instead of a room that I was the support staff in. After the first year swinging so far toward completely personalized for each student, the balance was refreshing, at least for me it was. (T)

Rebekah explained that she uses some of the techniques or tools from the transition years in her classroom today and some things she learned. I did like the videos, and I did continue to use some of those videos [today in her classroom]. And something else that I did learn from the first year was, especially for science, there are some really good virtual labs out there. I incorporate virtual labs into my classroom now, and it doesn't take as much preparation time and they're still just as effective as they were before. Also thinking back to that first year one of the things that was very difficult was assessing the kids, because the only assessment that we were giving them was from the Edgenuity, the learning management system. That was basically the only assessment and if the kids didn't understand the vocabulary words that were in some of the questions and answered the questions wrong, it wasn't necessarily that they didn't understand the concept, but they didn't understand what the question in Edgenuity was asking of them. If I would have been there to answer that for them like I would have on a normal quiz and clarify the vocabulary, then I think they would have done better. It was just really difficult. And I felt like that was the only assessment and I wasn't with them in the labs when they were doing that [all of the time]. Now in my classroom, the other years after, one of the things that [she still does is] pull some of that information from quizzes that we have online. But that's simply not the only thing that I use. (T)

You know we tried to group the kids to see where they were, just to try to put them in groups to see which concepts that they needed help on. Did I do that a little more during the personalized learning [SCL] years? Yes. But I've always used the results from their quizzes versus the results of my observations from class. Edgenuity was a really negative experience for me. It was almost, I don't know (*pause*) when so many of the kids did not, they didn't enjoy it and it was frustrating for them. It did help me with groups a little bit really to pull that data and really pay more attention to that and place them into groups. I guess now you know, if anything, I use more data and I also know that you don't only have to use quiz scores or test scores. Edgenuity was the teacher and I felt like I was almost a paraprofessional there or the tutor to fill in the blanks as needed. The problem was I wasn't really clear where the blanks were all the time (*laughs*). (S)

Rebekah explained some of the things that she thought could have gone better in the implementation of student-centered learning at JSMS and stories that are included as negatives with her experience of the transition. I think if all of the teachers, if we had been given something like some consistency with, [for example if the administration had said] this is what we expect for you to do. [Or if administration said] this is how you're going to collect the data, [or] here is how you can collect the data, [or] if you have issues here's what we're going to do. I didn't know what my role was, and I felt like I was oh, I felt like I was floundering. By far out of my 27 years of teaching that was the worst year [the 2013-2014 school year]. I feel like I wasn't teaching at all. I felt like the students were just supposed to be going in there and doing the work and you know, we were just going to fill in the blanks. I feel like we needed more clarity for the role of the teacher, and the role of the student, and the role of assessment [and] how to collect the data. (T)

Rebekah felt a change in roles similar to what Jessica and Kim discussed in their narratives. She felt that she was replaced, at times by the LMS and that her value and importance were changed.

Rebekah paused to discuss something she learned during the transition that she applies to her classroom today. She pointed out some useful things she still uses in her classroom today from the transition. I think that I knew what good teaching was before personalized learning [the transition toward SCL at JSMS] and I still use those evidence-based strategies today. I think that the experience in the transition taught me to be a better communicator, a better listener, and it taught me to plan ahead even more than I ever did before we taught those few years [of the transition to primarily SCL]. I learned that the structure of school is so important, not just to the kids, but to the teachers as well. Even pulling from Edgenuity [the virtual learning software program used for instruction] a little bit and I don't continue to use that program, but I do have several students who want to continue challenging themselves and they are the early finishers. So, for them, I have them set up on Khan Academy or a technology platform because their goal is to be in a more advanced math class next year. When they finish early even that group works together, [in] Khan Academy so they can get that foundation independently and they truly are working on their own. [They have to] ask me a question every once in a while, but most of the time they will they take it upon themselves to get into their small group and start working on those advanced concepts on their own. Even beyond the concept that we're working on that day if it's more student-centered and not just teacher centered, I'm not limiting everybody in the class, and they can go so much deeper into the concepts. (T)

Rebekah also described the growth and change that occurred for her between the first year of the transition and the next several years of teaching in a primarily SCL environment. The first year that we used Edgenuity, I was a complete failure. It was horrible. I have no other words for that. I didn't feel like I was a good teacher. I didn't feel like I did a good job with assessment. I didn't feel like I did well with any of those things. The years following that, I took what I learned, and I took what did keep the kids engaged and I have become much better with (pause) a balanced model of teaching. I know that is kind of a buzzword right now but that's really what I have become, more of a balanced model, where its teacher-centered, student-centered, whole group centered and still individual work too. I believe in that as well. I think there was a shock to that first year because there was so much change. During the second and third years, we were able to plan ahead because we had a better idea what to expect.

Reflections on the Transition

*Rebekah talked with me about how she made meaning of the transition and how she reflects on those years of teaching. She discussed the benefits and drawbacks of SCL in her opinion. This section of her narrative helped me understand how her experiences influenced her and how her opinions and thoughts impacted her transition. I still think that the kids need a teacher, some teacher centered [instruction], because I think that direct instruction and the experience that we can offer for misconceptions is one of the first things that I always share with my kids. [Rebekah gave an example of how she would talk to her class] here's the idea that we're going to be talking about today. You know, for example with exponents, you know the exponent means you're going to multiply that number that many times. So, 2^3 does not mean $2 * 3$, it means $2 * 2 * 2$.*

That's the most common misconception. So, it helps to, you know, fill some of those gaps, just person-to-person contact, nothing can replace that. Not a video not anything else any other teacher can still hold the attention, as long as they're not holding it for too long, I still think that direct instruction of that communication one on one is needed. *The idea of filling in gaps was a central thought in all of Rebekah's narrative. She discussed it as a negative in her transition toward SCL and as a positive of a more TCL environment.*

For student-centered learning, I think giving them too much responsibility or let me take that back, not giving them too much responsibility, but some of them are not going to take on that responsibility. So, if you give everybody that responsibility and say "hey, just go to this website and this is what you're going to be doing", kind of like we did with Edgenuity [during the transition toward primarily SCL], then that doesn't work. The students still need someone to guide them. Sometimes on those assessments they can google those answers, so you still need that accountability from the teacher. Like I said before, they [some teachers] can teach for too long and be the sage on the stage and that's not, that's not going to hold kids' attention just from the lecture, especially with the electronics that we have today. So, just too much teacher time in front of the kids, and that's not going to allow you to assess either, so you need multiple forms of assessment and the more strategies that you have the more instructional strategies that you have to reach the kids, the better off you are going to be.

I think that when I look back at it now, I can see that we really tried to think about our students differently than we ever had before. We tried to see their strengths and their weaknesses, and we figured out who could keep up with the pace of instruction and who

couldn't. We figured out which students were able to work online and manage their time and who could not. I think that the difficult years of transition shape what I think about my students, I learned some new ways to think about teaching and learning during those years, that is for sure true. I'm just going to be honest see, sometimes the kids discussing ideas with each other, they do a better job. Like one student may do a better job explaining something to another student than I do. Also, it allows them to talk through a problem to share ideas with each other. I can recall several times during the personalized learning years [during the transition toward SCL] that students supported each other learning in the classroom. Because students would move ahead in Edgenuity, they might have already mastered a concept or standard before their peers. They would grab an expo marker and start working with each other to help them understand how to solve an equation or a problem. I started to use misconceptions to prompt an even deeper level of learning from this. I would have them create problems for each other that were wrong, and then see if they could find the problem in pairs on the boards in my classroom. Those were some of the deepest moments of learning that we did in math during the personalized years. (S)

I think when I look back at the transition years, compared to how structured our learning environments are supposed to be now [in the fall of 2021], I can see how the freedom to allow kids a little bit wider range of parameters [like we did during the transition] can be refreshing. I think that students need opportunities to explore their interests and to learn in hands-on and [in] real-world ways, not just through listening or memorizing facts and dates. I do think that during the years of personalized learning [SCL] I was able to see what education could become, but I think that we have to figure

out the technology piece. Edgenuity was such a problem during those years. I mean there are some math skills where kids are going to need direct instruction and there are some a things where you just can't figure them out. But if you're teaching science and you want kids to understand what density is then they can have a lab or they figure it out and they gain an understanding of density. But when you're teaching, you know one step equations, kids you know that kids can always just figure out if that makes sense. *I included this information in Rebekah's narrative because she shared her frustration with the technology used at JSMS during the transition, just like Kim and Jessica did in their narratives. Technology and its impact on the transition was evident with each participant so far in my interviews.*

I think about my experiences in the classroom right now, and also during the Edgenuity years, and I just see students that have strengths and untapped potential that we are not doing a good job of recognizing and growing. Through my classroom strategies, I have learned so much about what kids want to be when they grow up and also how they see the content that we value as teachers and as an education system as not important to them. I can remember kids complaining about learning math facts or that they didn't need to know about all of the weather standards that I taught them. But when we completed hands-on labs and when I can get my students engaged in discovering a solution to a problem and convincing their classmates why their answer is right, I really see them thrive. Although the transition toward Edgenuity was frustrating, I know that it helped me focus on individual student data and their strengths. It makes me think that we are not doing enough for individual kids to be successful, you know what I mean? (T)

Rebekah briefly discussed whether or not she thinks that all students should be taught in the same way. I included this section to help me understand her opinions and thoughts on learning and on the hidden curriculum in our schools. Since I primarily teach gifted students, I can really only speak to their experience. For gifted students, and I discussed some of this earlier in other interviews, I think for a portion of them they would be able to do whatever instructional style we throw their direction. They were able to move forward and complete the work, but I don't think they gained the level of mastery that they could have gotten in my typical class. When I talked with other teachers during the transition, I do remember other students struggling more that were not gifted. I have taught general education students using student-centered strategies and had success. I think that if the teacher is able to teach effectively and uses data to support their decisions, any student can learn using either student centered, or teacher centered strategies. But since I didn't teach them, I don't think I can really explain the differences if there were any. The dynamics of the classroom make all the difference. You know that from teaching. During the transition toward personalized learning [SCL], I had a great group of students, and I still had a frustrating experience with the switch in styles, so you can take what you will from that. I think the classroom management influences how we interact with our kids, but I don't think the instructional style should be influenced by behaviors.

Rebekah described the type of instruction she thought was best for students, based on her experiences, and how her transition toward using primarily SCL instruction influenced her opinions. Specifically based on my experience I think it's the more student-centered style. I think the more student-centered removes limits because the goal

for the teacher maybe to teach, I don't know, addition of fractions 1 day, but for the kids if they get past and they master that concept and they're able to push it and take it even deeper than what the teacher even expected, and that's a whole 'nother level for them to be able to keep going. I think that the problems that we faced in our school as we attempted to transition to student-centered learning were not because of the style of teaching, if that makes sense. I think I was frustrated and overwhelmed because I did not feel prepared to do what I was asked to do. I also don't think that our style of instruction always matched a true student-centered or personalized style of teaching. We were on the front edge of trying to do something different for our students, and we used technology as a major component of the work. We needed the technology platform to be the teacher for part of the week because that was how our school structured the experience. Edgenuity made it where the students were in different places, but it also made it where the students and teachers relied heavily on Edgenuity to teach our kids. I think that is where the frustration came from. I believe that teaching in a one size fits all, that sage on the stage that I talked about before, it not what is best for kids, but I still think that what we did in our transition was rough. If that even makes sense.

Rebekah discussed whether she felt she was prepared with the instructional strategies she needed to complete the transition toward SCL instruction. In my courses [in teacher preparation] we learned about how to manage classroom behaviors and we learned the content that we needed in order to be successful teachers. We did not spend any time preparing to be uncomfortable or how to use technology to teach the kids. I don't even think we were close enough to technology innovations for that to even have been a conversation. But more than that, I didn't have much experience with those type

of learning environments from when I was in school. As teachers, we lean on how we were taught and those classrooms that felt safe and where we learned, you know. I felt very overwhelmed and underprepared during the transition years, but especially the first year. The first Edgenuity year [2013-2014] was such a hard year. (T)

I completed Rebekah's narrative with a discussion of what she believed kids need to learn before they complete their K-12 experience. She discussed both explicit and implicitly taught skills that students need. I think that kids learn a lot about being a real person during their K-12 experience. When you are in early grades you learn to share, and you learn how to get along with your friends and classmates. I guess really, they are still working on that in middle school too, (laughs). I think that kids learn how to get along with each other, and how to listen and work together even though that is not a part of the formal curriculum. They also used to learn respect and responsibility, but I am not sure that they still get that. What they are taught at home and what they are taught at school for those two pieces don't always line up, if you know what I mean.

Academically, I think they pretty much just learn what is in the standards. Unless they are able to choose a project or a topic that they really enjoy. When the kids are working in small groups they're learning those social skills and they're learning how to work with others to solve problems, so they get problem-solving skills [and] they're also learning to communicate with each other and they're interacting with each other. Just by sharing ideas with each other and sharing their thoughts, that solidifies their understanding of specific concepts. So, I think that student-centered learning helps out in a tremendous amount of ways. They need the technology as well, we can't leave the technology behind, the technology is here to stay. They just need to learn how to use it in a

productive way and limit themselves to the not living their lives through the technology but interacting with other humans as well.

Kids are sponges. They are constantly learning from their teachers and their peers every day that they are in school. They are learning how to interact and how to follow rules, and which rules they need to follow closely to not get sent to the front office (*laughs*). I think those things that kids learn outside of the math or science curriculum that I teach could even be more valuable, more of those skills that we discussed earlier that kids really need before they graduate, they pick those up through those non structured times during the day as well. *Rebekah discussed the hidden curriculum more directly than either Kim or Jessica did, although both of my first two participants also hinted at the difference between academic skills and nonacademic skills that students need to be successful. Rebekah felt that the things that are not in the curriculum are more important than the academic skills to a healthy and successful life for her students.*

I think that through the transition I did become a better teacher. I really struggled with my students not feeling successful and not understanding what I needed to do to help them. I felt like a failure because I was so used to knowing what strategies and practices would help my students and I think the technology, the Edgenuity, and how we tried to run the whole thing just didn't work out. I think the experience taught me several things and I have thought about these since we talked last time. First, I think that technology cannot replace a good teacher, and we did that at times during our transition. Second, students can learn things in a ton of different ways, and I think I learned that I can push and challenge them to grow and develop using not just me as the teacher, but a variety of instructional tools and concepts. I think they [our students] noticed that we

didn't know what we were doing at times. I know that my level of stress was much higher than a normal year. I love teaching, but that year was awful at times. It was just awful. I felt like a first-year teacher, like I was trying to learn a new language or a new way to do my job, and that was really difficult.

My Reflection

Rebekah grew up in a very rural community and her memories about her early years of her K-12 experience revolve around exciting learning experiences and challenging learning difficulties. I was reminded of how different early learning experiences were 30 to 40 years ago as Rebekah talked about painting her letters and learning to read in a less regimented fashion than what takes place in elementary school classrooms today in my school district. As Rebekah discussed her middle and high school experiences, it was clear that the supportive community of her school and the positive learning environment of her classes had a memorable impact on her. Rebekah didn't remember many instructional choices that her teachers made, but many of teachers and their characteristics were a part of what she remembered about her K-12 experience in its totality.

Rebekah's non-traditional path to becoming an educator mirrored my college experience and was a connection I didn't know we shared. Her choice to follow her passion for teaching, despite her parent's wishes, inspired me that great teachers always find their way into education. Rebekah's perseverance to attend school while teaching full time, before online classes were a part of the college experience, speaks to her commitment and passion for students and for education. She was more prepared for her transition toward primarily SCL instruction because of her decision to continue her

education and obtain graduate degrees while she was teaching. More than the other participants, she received teacher education training well into the 21st century when new styles of learning were taught by her instructors.

As Rebekah described her experiences and how she made meaning of those experiences as she transitioned from predominantly teacher-centered to predominantly student-centered instruction, I was reminded of several instances that were not fresh in my mind from my own transition toward student-centered instruction as a teacher. Primarily, her frustration with her administration's lack of direction and specific guidance as she began the transition brought back strong emotional memories for me. Rebekah described the frustration and inadequacy that I had not revisited. Additionally, she shared a common frustration with my other participants in the technology platform and the structure of our learning environment.

The most interesting components of my interviews with Rebekah were how valuable she thought student-centered instruction was to the future of education and what students need to develop the non-academic skills needed to be successful, despite how frustrating she thought the transition was in her building. Rebekah's experience was impacted by what she perceived as a lack of support and lack of planning and preparation for us to be successful.

Brianna

During the 2013-2014 school year, Brianna taught English Language Arts and Social Studies for students in sixth and seventh grades at JSMS. She joined the staff at JSMS later than my other participants, and her first year was also the first year of the

transition toward primarily SCL. She was, like Kim and Rebekah, on the SCL side of the split in teaching style for the 2013-2014 school year.

She has an educator's heart for students and is unrelenting in her attempts to reach each student and to support them in their learning. She is the kind of teacher who gets to know each one of her students and knows them well enough to know when something is wrong just from how they enter the room.

Brianna's experience in transitioning from a predominantly TCL environment to a predominantly SCL environment was challenging, but not for the reasons that I would have assumed before her interviews. She was confident in her ability to create activities for SCL before the transition, more confident than my other participants in this area. She was the only participant from my research that is currently teaching a different class than what she taught during the transition years [2013-2018]. She now works with students who are struggling in reading and writing in a very personalized model of academic support. I learned about her K-12 experiences, and how her current work as a teacher is influenced by the years of transitioning toward SCL. Her narrative is intriguing and in some ways different than the other participants. Her narrative is below.

K-12 Experience

Brianna's narrative begins with stories and experiences that she recalls from her elementary, middle, and high school years. Like Jessica, Brianna's family moved during her elementary school years, and she was taught at two schools in separate locations. I remember my first-grade teacher a lot. I remember my teacher always liked my handwriting, and we were learning how to write really neat. I remember her letting me write on the board for her because she wanted me to write out her agenda for the day or

the date because she liked my handwriting. My second and third grade teachers they were very nice, I don't remember really learning, I just remember their personalities.

Brianna's early learning experiences where she recalled the characteristics of her teachers and times where she felt proud or successful align with stories from the same period of learning for each of my other participants.

After third grade we moved again, I remember moving and that being scary, going to a new school. We always had small groups in reading, I remember that. And we were different color birds [each group was assigned a different bird as their group insignia]. I remember like, not necessarily what we read, but what it looked like. Little thin books/readers. I don't know what they're called. [We had] different books for each group, and we were reading out of those. I remember nothing about math. Reading was always enjoyable and something where I was comfortable. We would read our books in different styles. Somedays each student would read a sentence, and we would practice our listening skills. The best groups were when we were with our teacher for the small group reading. She would always get us excited about the process, she would ask us questions before we read, like based on the picture on the front of the book. Something like, "What do you think this story will be about, just from the picture on the front?" Then at the end of the story I can remember her asking us how our guesses were correct or incorrect. She could make any story interesting though, she created engaging groups.

(T)

[In] fourth grade, I don't remember groups anymore like when I moved. I don't remember that small group instruction, but the teachers were still really nice. They were very personable and got to know you, and I remember my fourth-grade teacher always

trying to distract me with animals so I wouldn't be scared or anything. I don't remember small group, but I do remember books like *The Baby-Sitters Club*. We read it, for the most part, just out loud in the whole class and then we had questions that we had to answer.

In fifth grade I remember learning fractions. And they were so hard I remember that. I remember my teacher like, fussing at us because we could never get it. I remember always reviewing fractions (*pause*) that was in fifth grade. But it [the instructional style] was whole group. And I remember her coming around to us individually and talking to us about fractions, but it was always whole group or independent. And then in seventh and eighth, [or] maybe it was sixth grade, sixth grade social studies. We had to memorize the entire, "Four score and 7 years ago" poem. We had to memorize that and stand in front of the class, and I was terrified. And I remember that I was almost in tears, and my voice was shaking so she made me turn my back to the class. And as soon as I did that, I could say it. I remember some of the people that were in that class, and I remember he [the teacher] was a coach. So, I think that a lot of kids, we liked him because he was a coach, and he was very personable, but I don't remember learning. I don't remember learning very much, not saying that he wasn't good, but that doesn't stand out to me. My sixth-grade teacher, what I remember most is that we had spelling tests and I was a really good speller. And she would let us pick our own seats where we sit in the classroom if we got a 100, and we could bump people, or we could keep our seats, or you know, it was a really heavy competition. (S)

And then in high school, I know this may sound crazy, but it was sort of like, I don't remember very much. I remember social stuff, but I don't remember like teachers.

I can remember my friends, and I remember events and dances, that kind of stuff. But my classroom experiences and my teachers, nothing stands out. I enjoyed school, but it must have been pretty bland if it doesn't come back to me (*laughs*). *She did remember her* ninth-grade language arts teacher, because everyone said she was really hard. I had heard the rumors, and I was scared, so I remember working extra hard for her, and I remember a lot of literature, [and] having to write papers [and that] a group of us would help each other. [We would] check over and make sure we had everything [correct or included that was supposed to be there]. I just remember having to read a whole lot. (T)

Math, oh, ninth-grade math, you see memories are coming down [as we talked]. Math was terrible, terrible in ninth grade. Ninth-grade math, that is why I pushed it back because it was not good (*laughs*). It was (*pause*) algebra, and I remember it was always whole group instruction. He would show us one problem and say "go do like these 50" or whatever. And of course, I did not get it [after only receiving the instruction from the teacher]. I remember struggling and it was an older guy and he had a long gray beard and everybody called him Papa Smurf. I remember his real name, but to us, he was Papa Smurf. I struggled so much. I remember that I had to get a tutor, and I think I finally survived that, and I passed. I remember math was just terrible; it was a terrible experience. And then I think I took geometry and that was, that went better just because it was different.

I must have had the 11th-grade teacher and my 12th-grade teacher was the same. I remember she did whole group, but she would also pull a few of us if we needed extra help. I remember her showing us different ways [to complete problems], she would work one-on-one with me and I think that's really when I started, when I was comfortable

asking questions because I knew she would help me. Sometimes I would go before school if I was really struggling, and she would always help me. And I feel like she really got to know me as a person, not just “here do these math problems.” I think that helped when I was, you know, my senior year just doing that senior math class, which was just like a big review over the final 4 years of math. Math was my struggle, so when I took my 12th-grade year, which was senior math (*pause*) it all clicked. All [of] the sudden, and I just remember her really working more one-on-one with me, and making sure that I got it. Like I said, I think that's when it all clicked for me; she just never gave up, and she just kept going. *Brianna shared that her K-12 instructional experiences that she remembered* were just mostly traditional, old school except for the early years reading, but that was about it. I remember having to do research, and we would go to the library to get the encyclopedias. Kids don't even know what those are anymore (*laughs*). And then I remember that we had to, we could pick any topic we wanted, and I remember that like they gave us lined paper and we had to fill in that space with what we learned. From the encyclopedia. (T)

Brianna's K-12 experiences were stories about her teachers who had an impact on her. She did not recall many detailed stories of time in the classroom, but she remembered very challenging, scary, or rewarding moments from those foundational years. I will use the information from this first section to better understand how the K-12 experience that Brianna received impacted her transition toward primarily SCL instruction at JSMS and how she made meaning of the transition. Brianna also discussed her college and student teaching experiences where she received preparation to become

a teacher. These experiences will continue to help me understand why she made the choices that she made during the transition.

College/Student Teaching Experience

My first semester, oh, my first year of college I went to [an in-state university] and I was always the kid, who [would say] “I can't wait to get out of here.” And then I came home like every weekend (*laughs*). So, I think I grew up pretty sheltered, you know, so when I went to [an in-state university] like my eyes got really big and I couldn't believe what was going on. I remember the dorm experience, I remember classes and walking to those, but my major at first was psychology. I knew I wanted to do something with children in psychology, but I was also like one of those kids that always played school and [I remember] standing up on top of the dresser with my chalk board and my stuffed animals like lined up in rows. So just seeing that, I kind of ignored that and went through psychology.

And then I think after like my first semester or quarter, I think we were in quarters back then, after the first two and I took my psychology class, and I switched over to education. After my first year in [the in-state university] I came back home and went to [a local university]. And then I finished up my core and then we had to apply [for the education program], and it was for Middle grades. They didn't have it for Early Childhood or High School, they only had it for Middle Grades, like they [had] just started up. I got into the program and [the local university] was very different than [the larger in-state university], it was a lot harder. And the classes were much smaller, so I felt like I got more out of it. But I remember going into the program and just talking to other people that were at different schools [and the local university], I think their standards

were a little bit higher for education and we got better exposure of different areas. When I left [the local university], I came out certified in three areas instead of just two [like it was from other education programs]. Because of my classes, I was certified in language arts with my major and then social studies and science. *Brianna talked about the instructional experiences from the classes in her teacher preparation program before she began her student teaching experience. She recalled mostly traditional learning styles from her professors, because of the amount of content they were tasked with learning.* I learned so much during those teacher preparation classes about, I guess like what it means to be a teacher. Everything that I can remember is very teacher-centered strategies from my instructors, but I think that was the normal style for every college class that I took. My professors lectured and we worked on the skills and foundational knowledge that we were going to need once we were in our own classrooms. In one of my classes, we had projects where we started out creating lesson plans for a unit. Then we created the assessments, formative and summative for that unit. We had to provide why we chose each strategy in the lesson plan, and we had to show what we were going to do with the data from the formative and the summative assessment. Then we made a plan for the students who struggled and what would our plan be to help students finish the unit on time. But the classroom that I was planning for, hypothetically, was similar to the ones that I experienced as a student and what my professors described. Very teacher-centered and one dimensional. We read a ton of our textbooks on education as well. We stayed busy; I can promise you that. Our professors were career educators and they always said they “wanted us to be the best.” (T)

When speaking of her student teaching experiences, she discussed short-term observations her junior year and her in-depth and long-term placement during her senior year as a student teacher. I don't know if it was my junior or senior year, I think it was my junior year we had to go out to schools 2 or 3 days a week. Then our senior year was our internship and we started at pre-planning the whole week. And then like 2 or 3 days a week, and then by near the end of the second semester of school we had to go every day. And then every day to post planning too, so we got to see from beginning to end modeled. I remember a lot of content and I remember they made us read a bunch of clinical books. Like a variety and [we] talked about those. I remember a lot of collaboration and like partner work for all of my classes. Lots of discussion and lots of observations. It did focus a lot on behavior and different strategies for that [behavior and classroom management]. I want to say they taught a bunch of good instructional strategies too because they modeled that through our classes. I remember one teacher in specific who I observed during my junior year who just seemed like a fantastic teacher. She was an ELA teacher, and her students were so well behaved. I was impressed that she could build such a good routine with her students that they knew exactly what to do from the beginning of the class until the end. Looking back at it, she taught in a very traditional style and there wasn't much room in her class for students to work on those soft skills, but I don't think she was worried about developing those (*laughs*). She really helped her students to love school and her kids were so excited and engaged in their work. Her classroom reminded me of some of the ones I talked about in the first interview, supportive and structured. In every classroom I can remember, it was very much, like, a warm-up, then the teacher teaches the lesson, and then students worked

independently. I didn't see any good examples of personalized learning or even any student-focused practices until my senior year of full-time student teaching.

I think [during] our junior year we got to see different counties and different levels, like elementary and middle and high. And then they gave us a preference like our top three. I don't remember picking the school because I didn't know much about the school. They picked the schools, but they based it on if we were majoring in language arts, or you know our content area. I was [placed] in sixth grade language arts and social studies. I remember behavior, you know, and just always trying to engage the kids or they were really good about doing that and trying to make like connections so that they could understand [their students better]. I remember them working a lot independently with the kids. And I remember behavior really wasn't an issue, but I don't remember like discipline, like when the procedures or the process they used. It was just sort of like they built the trust and expectations, and the kids just did it. It wasn't an issue if that makes sense.

I remember having to do like detailed lesson plans. Just like books [long lesson plans], you know what I mean. You have to do so much because you were new in it, but I just remember it being like notebooks and notebooks full [of lesson plans that she created]. It just seemed like a lot of overkill [and] of paperwork to prepare, but I guess that gets you in the right frame [of mind to become a teacher]. But I remember just always the paperwork and grading. I just felt like it was more of a traditional style. We might have done more of like, literature groups. Because she was able to [use] me, you know, I can take over a group and she could use a group and [we] get to work independently [with smaller groups of students]. I remember those small groups for

reading. Most of the days were very similar. I can remember kids working individually on their warmup or opener, and then turning in their homework and us moving right into the lesson for the day. Students were on task for the most part, but they were very quiet, and the classroom was very structured. It was more like whole group instruction, and then just independent work. I remember seeing some science labs that were, you know, group work. But overall, it was still pretty independent and very traditional. (T)

Brianna's college and student teaching experiences were in predominantly TCL environments. She was prepared to teach in a very traditional classroom, and her lesson plans were supposed to be the plan that kept the class moving at the singular pace for all student learning. Just like the narratives of Jessica, Kim, and Rebekah, Brianna was prepared with more classroom management strategies and skills for compliance than with innovative teaching strategies to keep her students engaged. She not only discussed her teacher preparation experiences, she also shared her thoughts on the transition toward primarily SCL that she experienced at JSMS. She expressed similar frustrations compared to my other participants. Yet, she was much more confident in her ability to teach using SCL strategies and I wanted to find out why.

Transition Toward SCL

During the first year of the transition [toward SCL], I was on the Edgenuity side. *Like the other participants, Brianna described the entire transition at times as Edgenuity, which was the LMS used to support individual and virtual learning for each student at JSMS. During the first year of the transition in 2013-2014, half of the teachers were on the TCL side and half began their transition toward teaching in a predominantly SCL environment, as previously discussed in this chapter. The first two years when we did*

Edgenuity, I was on a co-taught team for my classes. I had sixth grade social studies and language arts. The one thing that I remember the most is the scope and sequence that we were using from the county didn't match Edgenuity [the online LMS] and it didn't necessarily line up [the online curriculum didn't match the pacing guide from the district]. So, I remember having to teach what I needed to teach according to the scope and sequence [for the district pacing guide], but then they needed help on the Edgenuity side [as well]. My co-teacher and I would do small groups, and sometimes we would both be doing the same things and sometimes she would take the Edgenuity side, and I would take the what we were doing in class side. We just tag teamed, then tried to do both, it was almost like two sorts of scope and sequences at once. And the kids, I remember being frustrated because they were like "well this isn't what we're doing it Edgenuity." And I was like "yes, I know." But what do you do? (S)

I was really frantic [during that first year] and I felt like I didn't know what was expected of me or of my teaching. During open house that first year [for the 2013-2014 school year], we thought we would be teaching more than one grade level and then we changed that at the last minute, that was frustrating too. I remember changing how we communicated what was in Edgenuity several times, we [also] changed how we taught several times, and there wasn't much flow in our year in terms of how we taught or what we taught. It just felt like frantic small group all of the time, but only based on one data source. I used the data in Edgenuity to determine who was at what place in the curriculum, based on their progress bar. Then my co-teacher and I would work with small groups and students and help them understand the material. But we were both just plugging the holes from the online curriculum. (T) *Brianna shared a common concern in*

communication and clarity from JSMS administration on the roles and responsibilities of the teacher and the student in the classroom during the transition toward SCL. She was confident in her abilities as a teacher after nearly two decades teaching, but she felt undermined by her administration at times.

Brianna discussed the structure of the schedule during the SCL school years where students rotated between being in class with their physical teacher and being in the large learning labs working individually on their computers. The kids rotated and had part of their class in the normal room with their teacher and then part of their class every day in the computer labs, and that was the big space [the learning lab]. Then as teachers we were in the lab one day out of the week, for the entire day. Those are the days that I think I remember the most where they were supposed to be working on their Edgenuity [their online LMS curriculum] and working at their own pace. I remember that being chaotic and kids needed technical help, or kids would have a question and there was only one of me and 60 or 70 of them. I felt like I was monitoring them and watching them, but not teaching. You know what I mean? In the labs our class sizes were huge, and I didn't think that was very effective. I saw a lot of off-task and [just] more behaviors because I feel like we were in the lab for a long time, I don't remember the time period [it was actually 2 hours] that we were expected [to be in there]. I just remember two rooms; you know side by side cut out in the middle just completely filled. And I remember near the end it was just like almost impossible to get them to work. I didn't think that was good just because of the size and maybe the time, but I can't remember how long we were in there. Students stayed off task, and constantly tried to open up games on their computer and they were distracted. I had lots of discipline issues

when I was in charge of the lab [on her day of the week in the learning lab]. One student would take something from the student next to them, somebody had to use the bathroom, and five kids would be confused on their lesson, and this would all happen at the same time. I left work on those days completely and utterly exhausted. I dreaded lab days, maybe more than the kids did (*laughs*). (P) *Like my other three participants, Brianna expressed frustration with the school schedule and structure of the SCL environment at JSMS.*

I felt like the only difference [between the TCL environment and the SCL environment] was it was on the computer instead of the teacher instructing and checking in with them, it was more the teacher checking in with them and trying to get the kids to do the lessons on the computer. Then [teachers] asking questions [like who feels confident they have mastered this skill? or What skills in this unit did you think were challenging?] and then realizing that “hey this group needs this,” and then I had to make notes to go help them. Because in the lab I couldn't help them in the moment because I had too many kids. I had to remember to, “hey, I need to hit this when we go back to the classroom.” *This frustration was not expressed by the other participants and was unique to Brianna. She felt unable to help her students because the behaviors and environment in the large learning labs was not conducive to her working one-on-one with her students.*

Brianna also discussed some of the impacts of the transition on the culture of the school at JSMS. Like my other participants, she felt that the split in teaching styles for the 2013-2014 school year caused controversy at JSMS. I remember feeling like the school was two totally different schools and it just didn't feel unified. If that makes

sense. I don't know, it was just different. I just remember that it felt like there was so much tension in the building, and I thought we had great unity before that [Brianna discussed that this unity was described to her by teachers she was friends with who taught at JSMS during previous school years]. I had friends that I taught with for several years before the transition [in a different school in the county], and they felt like the Edgenuity side got all the attention from our principal and all of the resources and attention. I think we could have done a better job of creating value to both sides and learned from each other what was working or what didn't work. There seemed to be the same thing on the student side as well. I know that my kids would say [that] students on the traditional school hallways missed seeing them and felt like they were on the "special" team because of the Edgenuity stuff that we did. Parents were just confused and upset, and kind of frustrated because of the change, and any kind of change is going to be hard. I think that is why we had some major struggles with the entire transition, kids and parents were caught off guard and they didn't know what to expect. Then when we didn't know how to answer their questions that was frustrating too. Change can be good, but in this case, there were pieces that we didn't do a very good job with, at least in my opinion. It seems like Edgenuity [the LMS] would have provided more of meeting the kids where they were at a certain level. I remember the reading passages in language arts were just way too hard, and the kids struggling, and they didn't understand the vocabulary and much less the comprehension. I guess I felt like we needed different levels and [we should have been] meeting the kids where they were and that would have caused less confusion and less frustration. Because it was so difficult. (S)

I think that we had so much trouble because we didn't have a great system [in place during the transition] or great communication before and during the beginning of the shift [toward SCL]. I think my feelings of chaos and frustration probably come from not knowing the answer to questions that parents and students asked me, and then [from] changing what I was doing on a weekly basis, and I don't think that was good for kids either [the changes]. Sometimes I don't think we were listened to either as teachers and that was hard. I hope I am saying that right. I felt dumb sometimes for not understanding what we should have been doing or because I couldn't figure it out for my students. I think that for our students, that was a really tough couple of years as well, but they seemed to have learned what they needed based on our state testing from those few years.

(S) Brianna shared another common frustration with my other participants in the lack of communication and that she didn't think that communication was clear or consistent during the transition toward SCL.

Brianna also discussed how she thought the transition could have gone more smoothly, and what the most challenging pieces of the transition were. Guidelines and parameters are so important to a quality learning environment. I know in my classes that I want my students to have a choice on what they read and how they complete their work, and [to have access to me] when they need me. I also have always enjoyed giving my kids opportunities to show me what they know in different ways. But I have seen students thrive when they are given the right blend of choice and guidelines. I think they have to be given room to think, but too much room to think can lead to a lack of action on the student part. As a teacher, I work really hard to be prepared so that I can create an environment that is clear and supportive of my students and their families. During the

transition and even the few years after, I felt like I had to change what I had previously said way too many times. I would have been frustrated with me if I had been a student or a parent in my class (*laughs*). (S) *Brianna echoed Jessica's point about guidelines and parameters as an important piece of the school environment. I believe both participants were discussing a dynamic of the culture of the classroom. Without structure, they feared students were not learning the skills and content they were scheduled to learn. This craving for structure is a key part of the classroom experience that both participants experienced in their K-12 schooling and it impacted their view of the transition.*

I think it [the transition toward primarily SCL] caused problems in different areas for different teachers. First, it was a new program to me, and I didn't know how to set it up to fit my class. I don't even think we knew what was really in those courses [in the LMS] the first year, I don't think it was lined up with our state standards even, but I could be wrong on that. Next, it was new to the kids. For middle school students, their attention span is not extremely long and the videos they were supposed to learn from [in the LMS] could be dry and strange for them to learn from. But probably the biggest reason why I think it caused problems, was because it kind of became the most important part of the classroom. Students that scored well and were far ahead in Edgenuity were supposed to have learned the material, but then they would write something that was below grade level in my class. It was hard to feel like the teacher of the class, when I was really just supposed to support and help students whenever they got lost. (S)

Brianna's discussion of the years of transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment at JSMS shared common frustrations and experiences with my other participants. I believe her attempts to find structure and safety in her classroom during

the transition were impacted by the experiences in her K-12, college/student teaching, and previous teaching experiences. I included Brianna's reflections on how she makes meaning of the transition, how the transition impacted her instructional choices and beliefs about education, and what she believed students needed to learn before they completed their K-12 experience.

Reflections on the Transition

I feel like I am more successful now, than using the strategies with Edgenuity [during the transition toward SCL]. Just because using Edgenuity was so new and we were trying to figure it out, you know, just the first year [2013-2014] we were trying to figure it out. Then we [were] getting better [during the 2014-2015 through 2017-2018 school years] and if we had kept on [with a focus on using SCL strategies in the classroom], we would have gotten a whole lot better. But you know, the challenges of learning, and then once we learn you get different kids, I mean everything is always changing. I feel like I am just more successful now than back then.

This is my third year [teaching a course] using [a reading intervention learning platform] and this is my first year also doing the writing course. I've been teaching reading interventions for 4 years [beginning in the 2018-2019 school year]. The first year [2018-2019] I did not have [the reading intervention learning platform], but I had what we called focused reading, it was just a workbook. But I incorporated stations that year, the first year in the reading intervention classes. We implement the basic reading skills central idea, making inferences, different comprehension strategies, and then one station is independent reading. And [it is] based on their reading inventory or Lexile level that the [technology platform] provides by taking the test three times a year. Students get to

choose books or audiobooks, paperbacks or digital, and also articles, and they read those individually and independently and then they take quizzes on those. The other station is [on the online platform] and again is based on their Lexile level for the reading inventory. They get lessons in fluency and spelling, and there [are] videos to kind of supplement that work and introduce the activities. They work on that as well, so the stations are about 20 to 25 minutes long and we rotate through those usually two stations a day. (T) *When I conducted the interviews with Brianna, she was teaching a reading course that was very student centered. The course included an online curriculum component and leveraged student choice and rotations, it reminded me of the structure of the classroom environment during the transition toward primarily SCL teaching at JSMS. I asked her if she felt those years prepared her for her current teaching experience. I think so. Before that first year of the transition, I had never observed or taught in a classroom that was mainly student-led learning. In my classes now, I have students working on different activities, with different texts, and students who are at very different reading levels but because the classroom system is clearly set up, it works. Now, was I prepared for our transition at JSMS? No. My previous experiences and teacher courses in college did not prepare me for how difficult and strange that process was. (T)*

Brianna discussed how the behaviors and the students in a classroom impacted her learning style choices for that class and then if she believes that SCL works for all students. I used this discussion to support my analysis of the impact of the culture of the classroom on the style of instruction she uses. I think every class is different. And even just the day, if they are wound up about something [the students' emotions are high] or the schedule is changed, then you may not be able to do what you want, you know? I

think that the classroom and how the students interact with each other and learn what they can and can't do can make[s] all of the difference in the type of learning environment. The amount of learning that takes place in a classroom can definitely be influenced by the makeup [the students] of the classroom. If the students in the class get along with each other and can respect each other, then you are going to get more soft-skill development and more communication, more collaborative work. But if there are some behavior problems or students that are mean or rude in the group, then sometimes those skills don't develop or aren't able to be pushed by the teacher the same way (S).

I think the small group [instructional strategy] definitely benefits, really everybody. The gifted kids are going to be able to showcase what they know and then the lower [performing] kids will benefit too, because they hear them [other students] explain it more. But they [lower performing students] get more confidence, maybe? That is one of the reasons that I like to work with the lower [performing] kids, because they don't know they can do it, but when they see that they can through small group or work with a partner, [or when they] see [their score on the Measures of Academic Progress assessment] (MAP) scores and their scores grow, they are like, "Oh I am making progress!" I think that's where kids don't understand that they are making progress, they may not be on grade level, but at least they are going in the right direction. And I try to push that, but I think that small group and one on one benefits really everybody, more student-centered, and I think that's for all learners, across the board. (S)

Brianna also discussed what she believes students need to learn before they complete their K-12 experience. This discussion helped me to see what Brianna believes are the most important skills for students. I was curious if they were explicitly or

implicitly taught and to determine which of her previous experiences were impacting her views. Definitely reading and writing, and the basic skills of that. And being able to, you may not know everything, but you know how to find the answers for what you are looking for. You know, the research skills. Definitely, you know, overview of social studies math and science. Again, you don't have to necessarily know everything but maybe have heard of it and you know how to get the information. I think since I have been working with the kids who struggle more, where in the past I have worked more with a combination [of students at different learning levels], you know, but I see them, and I feel like things need to be offered for all kids. Not all kids go to college, so I really like the career paths that they offer so kids can get a taste, all kids can get a taste of possible careers that they like, and they learn this isn't for me or this is for me, I think that's important. (S)

I feel like maybe more personable skills and like life skills [should be learned]. I think school is so important to who our students will become as adults, that's really why I enjoy it so much today. I know that I can make a difference in the lives of the students that I teach, not just through what I can teach them about reading and writing, but also just about dealing with problems and working with their peers.

We talk and read so much about how to manage conflicts and why some things just aren't worth getting upset about. I think kids can learn how to interact, how to learn, not just to learn, but (*emphasizes*) how to learn something is such a valuable skill. I think about some of the students that I taught during our transition years [toward SCL] and I think we were really all learning things that we didn't plan for, if that makes sense. As teachers we were learning how to work in a new environment with unique and different

problems than what we had been prepared for. And then our students were faced with the unique challenge of learning how to really do all of their school experience in a new way. I think that unwritten rules exist in a lot of places, but school is definitely one of them where there are tons of things that are learned besides just math and ELA.

I do think that those years impact how I think about valuable skills for students. I already knew that students needed more than just the academic skills to be successful, but I learned through those years [the transition toward SCL] that students' ability to persevere and to be flexible to adjust to the demands of the class are first, difficult skills to obtain, and second, at very different levels for all of our students that we teach. I really think that the students that did well were not so much our gifted students or non-gifted, but the students that were able to find ways to adapt to the unique way we were now teaching. Kids that got flustered with Edgenuity and that wanted everything the old way, well they weren't as successful as they would have been if they had done a better job with that (T). *Brianna discussed the implicit things that students need to learn and are taught through school in her reflection on what she learned through the transition toward primarily SCL instruction. Like my other participants, Brianna shared that soft-skill development was as important, if not more important than the academic content students learned.*

When asked what type of instruction was best for students, Brianna said I want to say more student centered, but I think they have to have the academics and the teacher centered to go with it you know. So maybe more of a balance, but more, you have to have the instruction and direct teaching, even if it's in a small group, you still have to have that. Because it might be new information, but then when they are applying it. I feel like

it needs to be more student-centered. But it's funny because we just did an activity where we were studying the plot line, and then they just had to make a short flip grid with just the setting and the characters, not even the full-blown story, and they were terrified of speaking just even recording a minute or two video. They didn't want anybody to hear them, and they didn't want anybody to see it. I mean they were like having anxiety over it. So, you know, its like you introduce the information but then they have to do something with it. They have to process it and apply it, sort of ,you know, watch the process of their "aha" moment. Where [they say] "oh, I get it now because I've done something with it." Instead of just being spoon fed [the material]. (S)

I think that before we went through those few years of transition [toward SCL] that I used a balanced mix of the two different styles that you have asked about. I think that as a school we used a heavy dose of technology and relied on the platform [Edgenuity, the LMS], but in my opinion, I don't know that it was as personalized as we wanted it to be. But I can see with Edgenuity [the SCL instructional years] I probably did have to do more teacher instruction because they just didn't grasp what they were being asked to do on Edgenuity, or they didn't comprehend what they were reading because the levels were so high on Edgenuity. So, I may have had to do more teacher instruction than I wanted because of Edgenuity. It's interesting now that I think about it, I may have really reverted to more teacher centered as a result of the platform, even though we wanted to be more personalized [SCL]. I do feel like I was able to teach kids using the style that was asked of me, but maybe I relied on controlling the system a little more than I should have. (T)

You know, I was on a co-taught team, and I had a [co-] teacher with me. And I had a good mix where some kids could handle it [the SCL environment] and needed a little bit of help. And then I had, you know, over half that needed extra support because of the Edgenuity system. Like what they had on there [in the LMS] was more advanced than what my kids were ready to handle, like it didn't start at their level. I don't think it was that they couldn't handle that instructional style, just the way that we were using it. I have students now that are below grade level and they are able to thrive in a student-centered environment, and that is using a technology system and learning platform similar to what we used back during the Edgenuity days of teaching [the SCL focused school years]. I think that kids from all different learning styles and ability levels can learn using student-centered or teacher-centered styles. I think that all depends on the teacher and the system that is chosen for learning. (S)

My Reflection

Brianna described her K-12 experience as sheltered and mostly positive. Although she moved and switched schools during her primary school experience, she had loving teachers that she remembered who helped her cope with her shyness and quiet demeanor. Her strongest emotional memories from her limited memories of her K-12 experience all involved math and her math teachers. I gathered that Brianna and her family had high expectations for her as a student and that her struggles in math were really difficult for her to work through. She discussed excelling in language arts and connecting with several teachers in that content area.

Brianna's interviews became much more descriptive and interesting as we discussed her college experiences and her student-teaching experiences that prepared

her for her career as an educator. After leaving home and struggling to determine her major during her first year in college, she found her niche at a school close to home with a new education program during her second year. I noticed a change in Brianna's tone and attitude as she discussed her college experience at this school and her student teaching experiences. She felt supported, challenged, and prepared for her career at the conclusion of her student teaching experience. Although, she did think she was more prepared for classroom management and the content, and still needed time to develop instructional strategies that were effective as she began her first job as a teacher.

As Brianna discussed her experience in transitioning toward predominantly student-centered instruction, she described the frustration of the online learning management system and that she was not sure what to do to be successful, and she really didn't like that. She also discussed the problems that developed with the overall school culture and climate during the years of transition toward SCL. She felt that the way she began the transition, first as a pilot with part of the school and then with the entire school, created an Us vs. Them environment in the school. She remembered tension and she described that it seemed like "two different schools."

As Brianna described the impact that the transition had on her teaching, she explained that she is a more student-centered instructional style teacher now than she was during the transition years toward primarily SCL. I believe that Brianna was an expert teacher who used a variety of student-centered strategies prior to the school-wide transition, and from her descriptions of her current classroom, I believe she is still an expert teacher with excellent strategies in her classroom today.

Connecting Narratives

After I created a narrative from each of my participants transcripts that included stories and experiences from the beginning of their educational experience through their reflections on the transition and what influences their teaching today, I looked across the narratives to determine what connecting ideas existed. I analyzed the dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place as described by Clandinin (2013) to add to my understanding of the relationships between each narrative.

Temporality. During the creation of each narrative, I marked sections with a (T) that included descriptions of temporality. The temporality dimension of each participant narrative included how they were influenced by the specific time that an event occurred (Clandinin, 2013). This element of narrative inquiry led me to focus on the past, present, and future of the participants and the events they described in our interviews. I analyzed each narrative for sections denoted for temporality and searched for commonalities and differences between my participants.

I determined three common ideas across my narratives for the *past* element of the temporality dimension. First, participants told stories and recalled experiences of teachers who encouraged and supported them. These teachers created exciting lessons, made learning fun, or made connections with my participants as they learned the material. Second, participants were prepared to teach with classroom management strategies and TCL teaching strategies during their teacher preparation courses. Each participant shared stories from their teacher programs detailing how they were taught to teach using traditional strategies and to structure their classroom to minimize behavior. Finally, participants recalled being frustrated or bored during their learning experiences

due to teachers who did not engage them in the learning or taught in the same way every single day of instruction.

The next element of the temporality dimension of analysis was the *present*, or the phenomenon in study. For my research, this was the school years of transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment. The first common idea in this element of temporality my participants described was the lack of clarity of expectations from administration. All four participants described experiences of misunderstandings that they felt were created through a lack of clarity and communication from the leadership at JSMS. The second idea that existed across all four participants was the impact of the change in roles as the teacher of the classroom. My participants described their struggle to facilitate learning instead of their previous role as the source of nearly all learning in the classroom. The final idea that resonated with me from the *present* experiences for temporality from my participants was that their students were learning new skills. Kim described the new responsibilities of her students to take more ownership of their learning. Jessica discussed a greater need for her students to communicate and be better at time management in the primarily SCL environment.

The final element of temporality included thoughts on the *future* for each participant. I identified two common ideas in this element, that participants were hopeful for students to learn more than academic content standards, and they were determined to find better ways for kids to learn in school. When my participants reflected on their experiences in the transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment, each one was hopeful for education and for students. Each participant was also determined to take something positive from their transition in teaching style and create a better learning

experience for their kids. Table 8 displays which narratives included each element of temporality from the past, present, and future components from the previous discussion.

Table 8

Temporality Dimension Across Narratives

Element of Temporality	Participants			
	Kim	Jessica	Rebekah	Brianna
Past: Encouragement from teachers		✓	✓	✓
Past: Prepared to teach with classroom management and TCL Strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Past: Frustrated or bored	✓	✓	✓	✓
Present: Lack of clarity from administration	✓	✓	✓	✓
Present: Change in the role of the teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓
Present: Students learned new skills during the transition	✓	✓		
Future: Hopeful for students	✓	✓	✓	✓
Future: Determined to find a better way for students to learn	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 8 displays which common ideas I created in the past, present, and future sections of temporality were included in each participant's narrative. A check mark beneath a participant's name indicates that their narrative included the common idea listed in the far left column of the table. I determined that the participant's experiences warranted a check mark if the common idea was clearly evident from the stories and experiences that participant described.

Sociality. I recognized the sociality dimension of my narratives as the influence of the school environment and of the relationships formed within the school for each participant. I analyzed each narrative for sections denoted for sociality and searched for commonalities and differences between my participants. I used the sociality dimension of my participant's narratives to understand how each participant experienced the culture of the classroom and the hidden curriculum. Additionally, I sought to understand if or how these two constructs impacted the transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment for my participants.

The culture of the classroom was a component of each participant's narrative and the stories and experiences they shared with me. I previously defined the culture of the classroom for my research as the unique set of roles and routine practices for the student and the teacher, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and the goals and expectations for student learning and the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills (Quinn, 2005). Each participant recalled experiences from their transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment in which they wrestled with the disconnected or changing culture of the classroom compared to their previous experiences Kim discussed her inability to get to know her students and their writing abilities due to

decreased time with her students (roles and routines). Rebekah discussed frantically trying to patch holes in student understanding caused by the online LMS instead of sharing knowledge with her students as she did prior to the transition (roles and routines). Each participant felt the change in the classroom environment and worked to find a balance between their older teaching ways and the new style of instruction. Jessica detailed an example of bridging the old and the new styles of instruction together. She explained that through conversations with administration, she was able to create a time in her classroom instruction each week to engage with her students in a more direct instruction style of a traditional classroom (roles and expectations). This time helped her to be more in control of her role in delivering the instruction and create better parameters for learning in her classroom. The unique experiences that my participants had as teachers with their peers, with their students, and with the parents at JSMS were impacted by the culture of the classroom in their transition experiences.

In addition to describing their interactions with the culture of the classroom and the unique school environment, each participant explained elements of the hidden curriculum or expressed personal interactions with implicitly taught components of the K-12 school experience. Each of my participants detailed experiences where they interacted with the implicit curriculum in their personal K-12 experience. In Chapter 2 I defined that the hidden curriculum was often seen through teachers and parents unspoken expectations students will learn social and soft skills, power dynamics, and proper behaviors while at school. Kim and Rebekah both described teachers who were very teacher centered and who no one was brave enough to ask questions about the material (proper behaviors). Both participants expressed being confused and struggling, but they

were not taught to seek out solutions and think innovatively from their teacher. They were taught to work out their problems on their own, quietly, without questioning the authority figure in the room (power dynamics). Jessica interacted with the hidden curriculum during her story about her teacher who took up a book she was reading and threatened to not give it back until the end of the year to teach her a lesson about following directions and obeying the authority figure in the classroom (power dynamics and proper behavior).

Later in my participant's narratives, they described how they implicitly taught unintended lessons as teachers in their own classrooms. Jessica, who taught in a youth detention center (YDC), explained that her students had learned that there was not an application of mathematics academic content to their lives and were surprised that she was determined to find ways to support them. Her students at the YDC learned throughout their school experience that some of the standards in math were too difficult for them or that they didn't need those skills (soft skill development). When Jessica created a connection between the standards and careers her students were interested in, learning occurred for these students. Brianna expressed that SCL was good for all students, no matter if they were gifted, regular education, or students with a disability. She felt that this style of learning increased students' ability to develop their communication and collaboration skills and that every group of students would benefit (soft skill development). Kim explained that some of the students with disabilities at JSMS struggled in the transition toward SCL because they had not been taught the same nonacademic skills as their peers. These stories allowed me to see how the hidden curriculum was experienced by each participant in my research, and they each discussed

valuable nonacademic skills implicitly taught in schools. Table 9 displays which narratives included the common elements of sociality.

Table 9

Sociality Dimension Across Narratives

Element of Sociality	Participants			
	Kim	Jessica	Rebekah	Brianna
A classroom experience built on tradition	✓	✓	✓	✓
Felt connected, safe, and loved as a student	✓	✓	✓	✓
Articulated an experience with the hidden curriculum as a student	✓	✓	✓	✓
Felt challenged and driven to learn as a student		✓	✓	✓
Identifies that students learn more than academic standards in school	✓	✓	✓	✓
Struggled to build relationships during the transition	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 9 displays which common ideas in the element of sociality were included in each participant's narrative. A check mark beneath a participant's name indicates that their narrative included the common idea listed in the far-left column of the table. I

determined that the participant's experiences warranted a check mark if the common idea was clearly evident from the stories and experiences that participant described.

Place. As previously stated in Chapter 2, place was described by Clandinin (2013) as the "specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 41). I analyzed each narrative for sections denoted for place and searched for commonalities and differences between my participants. A unique component of the culture of the classroom is that schools are unlike any other institution for kids between the ages and 5 and 18 (Jackson, 1990). Three of the most common ideas in the dimension of place across my participants were safety, support, and connection in their personal school experiences. Each participant's transition toward primarily SCL instruction occurred at the same rural middle school, JSMS. Although the physical building and classrooms were reminiscent of their personal experiences of school, the structure and dynamic between teachers and students during the transition was different in many ways. Each participant discussed stories of their struggle to provide the safe, supportive, and connected school experience that they received as K-12 students. The place dimension and the unique culture of the school played an important role in the experience of the transition for my participants at JSMS. I noted the impact of the dimension of place on my participant experiences and included this idea as a connecting idea. I did not include a table to compare my participant experiences for the dimension of place and the phenomenon of transitioning instructional styles because each participant transitioned in the same school and utilized the same spaces.

After I analyzed each participant's narrative using the three dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place, I used the analytic memos I created as I constructed each narrative to add to the ideas that connected my narratives together. Below is an excerpt from an analytic memo created during my connecting strategy analysis.

The idea that my participants K-12 and college experiences influence their opinions of what the classroom instruction should look like seems to be included in each of the four narratives. All four participants had trouble specifically stating why they don't think they should be a facilitator of learning instead of the sole sources of the dissemination of instruction in their classroom, besides sharing that they don't think its effective for student learning. It seems that my participants believed they were ineffective and expressed frustration with the SCL style of instruction because it is different than how they learned and how they were taught to lead a classroom. (Analytic Memo August 15, 2022)

Utilizing my analysis of the narratives using Clandinin's (2013) three-dimensional narrative inquiry approach and analytic memos, I determined the following key ideas to be the common threads connecting ideas across all participants. These common threads were implications I drew from the data through the creation and analysis of my participant narratives.

1. It was believed that technology can be a positive in learning environments, but it can also cause major frustration if not aligned to the needs of teachers.
2. When roles and responsibilities shifted in the classroom, my participants struggled to believe they were needed and valuable in the learning environment.

3. Participants wanted students to learn, and they understood the general academic and nonacademic needs of their students, even if they don't know how to teach them each of these skills.
4. Participants recognized the hidden curriculum as a force and named things they saw taught implicitly in school, but also had strong opinions about what should and should not be taught to students implicitly or otherwise.
5. Participants' opinions of how students should learn and how teachers should instruct were based on years of K-12 experience, college experience, and thousands of daily interactions.
6. The culture of the school is an important factor of the daily lives and experiences of participants.
7. Participants believe that their students need guidelines and parameters to have successful learning experiences.

In addition to these ideas created through an analysis using connecting strategies, I analyzed my interview transcripts using categorizing strategies. I used the seven common threads created from my participant narratives, in combination with the code categories created through categorizing strategies discussed in Chapter 5, to create themes, answer research questions, and compare this research to the literature review in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Chapter V

CATEGORIZING STRATEGIES

After completing my analysis utilizing connecting strategies, I began an additional analysis of interview transcripts using categorizing strategies. I completed two first cycle coding strategies, in vivo and emotion. My categorizing data analysis process included coding, creating categories from these initial codes through code mapping, and then recoding and code mapping again to create final code categories from my transcripts. The first style of coding I applied was in vivo coding.

In Vivo Coding

In this section I described how I analyzed each of my participant's transcripts with the in vivo first cycle coding style. After completing an initial coding of each transcript, I used code mapping in MAXQDA to group in vivo codes together into larger code categories. These codes were not grouped by time period like the emotion codes, instead, they were created across the three interviews with each participant. I focused on coded sections where my participants were discussing SCL, reflecting on the transition toward SCL, or planning for their future of teaching and making sense of how the transition toward primarily SCL affected their views on education. This allowed me to discuss my research questions and determine how each participant made meaning of their transition toward SCL. The four code categories created with this categorizing approach were Success and Achievement, Fear and Frustration, Resisting Change, and Focusing on

Students. I discussed each of the four in vivo code categories and shared excerpts from each participant that aligned with each category.

Figure 4 displays the number of in vivo codes from each category created for each of my participants. I completed a process that Saldaña called coding the codes to take my initial codes and lump them together into larger code categories. I selected the names of the lumped codes from the original in vivo codes to ensure my participants' words were the focus of this categorizing strategy as I created larger and larger code categories from several hundred initial in vivo codes.

Figure 4. Breakdown of lumped code categories from each participant

Code System	Bria...	Jessi...	Reb...	Kim ...
> K-12 Experience	8	24	13	10
> Student-Teaching/College Experience	7	3	5	9
> Transition to SCL	18	6	11	25
> Teaching Today/During COVID	29	29	12	23
> Success and Achievement	67	49	58	93
> Fear and Frustration	85	67	57	78
> Resisting Change	45	44	17	35
> Focusing on Students	91	98	96	60

Figure 4 includes detailed information on the number of codes from each participant's interviews that were grouped into the in vivo code categories I created. I created the most in vivo codes that were grouped into the Success and Achievement category from Kim's interview transcripts, with 93 codes created. Jessica's interview transcripts included the most in vivo codes that were grouped into the Focusing on Students category, with 98 codes created. This figure is included to provide information on the balance of codes between participants in each category and the category where the most codes were created for each participant.

I added to my answers to both research questions through my analysis and discussion of the in vivo codes created by my participants. My research questions were, How do middle school teachers describe their experience and make meaning of the transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning in a rural middle school? (RQ 1) and How do these teachers describe the process of going from a predominantly teacher-centered learning model to a predominantly student-centered learning model in relation to the shared culture of the classroom? (RQ 2).

Success and Achievement

In vivo codes created and grouped together in this code category included groups of first-cycle codes such as expectations, joy or happiness, support, monitoring and feedback, success, and achievement. Each participant discussed stories and memories of success and achievement as a part of their interviews. The following excerpts from each participant's interview transcripts were coded into the Success and Achievement code category.

Kim. Kim's transcripts contained the most codes for the Success and Achievement category, and they spanned all three of her interviews. She emphasized through her stories and experiences that data collection and grouping were areas where she saw success in the transition toward SCL.

Edgenuity [the LMS during the transition] was nice because it was a computer program and you can just run it and say I'm looking for kids who are struggling with this lesson. And you know, I guess I can do that now with Illuminate [a current assessment platform for JSMS] if you have a group of kids who missed certain questions or you need to have that small group instruction, so I can still

pull data from a computer program. And let's be honest that is a whole lot easier than reading 50 or 60 essays you know and trying to say okay this is a common problem that I see this is a problem that I see you. With Edgenuity it was right at your fingertips or using illuminate it is right at your fingertips.

The smaller classes were good, I think the status bar was good because they gave timely feedback on things. [For] positives, I'm going to say those are the two and I'm sure that the timely feedback was the best. And then like I said the smaller class sizes. I did really enjoy that shift to smaller classes that we started back in that year [2013-2014]. I went from 30 or so kids down to 18.

Brianna. The participant with the second highest occurrence of codes that were lumped together into the Success and Achievement code category was Brianna. She felt more successful teaching in her classroom after the transition but described that she still uses SCL strategies and technology with her students.

I think the small group [instructional strategies] definitely benefits, really everybody. The gifted kids are going to be able to showcase what they know and then the lower [performing] kids will benefit too because they hear them [other students] explain it more. But they [lower performing students] get more confidence, maybe? That is one of the reasons that I like to work with the lower [performing] kids, because they don't know they can do it, but when they see that they can through small group or work with a partner, [or when they] see their MAP scores and their scores grow, they are like, "oh I am making progress!"

I am more successful now, than using the strategies with [the learning platform]. Just because using [the learning platform] was so new and we were

trying to figure it out you know just the first year [2013-2014] we were trying to figure it out, and then we are getting better and if we had kept on we would have gotten a whole lot better but you know the challenges of learning and then once we learn you get different kids, I mean everything is always changing. I feel like I am just more successful now than back then.

I have students now that are below grade level and they are able to thrive in a student-centered environment, and that is using a technology system and learning platform similar to what we used back during the [student-centered learning] days of teaching. I think that kids from all different learning styles and ability levels can learn using student-centered or teacher-centered styles, I think that all depends on the teacher and the system that is created for learning.

Jessica. Jessica did not discuss as many stories and experiences where success and achievement codes were created. When she did, they were often from her K-12 experience or her student-teaching/college experience. Two excerpts from her transcripts are included below.

Well over that week, they could work on each assignment or each property and different activities and then they could all bring it together at the end or take their quiz at the end of the week. And then they didn't have to really wait for me, and if they needed any help in between, I could work with two or three or four of them at a time. And that helped so much.

It was one of the highest scoring years for me... They are doing a lot of independent practice. But then when they finish it they are still doing the performance task. That are in the state frameworks, so they still are doing the

higher level DOK things, just on the choice boards they aren't doing the higher-level things. They just aren't volunteering to do it, but at the end they have no choice because they have to do it for a test grade. But I mean they still scored, tremendously high.

Rebekah. Rebekah recalled the usefulness of student data and soft-skill development from her students during the transition toward predominantly SCL.

The years following that [the 2013-2014 school year], I took what I learned, and I took what did keep the kids engaged and I have become much better with...a balanced model of teaching.

Although the transition toward Edgenuity was frustrating, I know that it helped me focus on individual student data and their [student] strengths. It makes me think that we are not doing enough for individual kids to be successful [now].

When the kids are working in small groups, they're learning those social skills and they're learning how to work with others to solve problems, so they get problem-solving skills they're also learning to communicate with each other and they're interacting with each other. Just by sharing ideas with each other and sharing their thoughts that solidifies their understanding of specific concepts.

Each participant discussed components of their experience of the transition toward SCL and places where they felt or created success and achievement. One way that each participant made meaning of their transition was to find positives or success stories from within their transition. Often these stories included a positive impact on students or on student achievement. These stories were typically a part of participants

looking back several years later and determining how SCL positively impacted the skills their students' acquired. .

Fear and Frustration

I created this code category through multiple rounds of grouping in vivo codes together into similar groups. These initial groups included code groupings such as uncertainty, misconceptions, difficulty, struggle, and frustration. It included the first cycle in vivo codes such as I was miserable, I felt overwhelmed and unprepared, and a really tough year. The following excerpts from each participant's interviews were coded into the Fear and Frustration category and are connected to the transition toward SCL or their reflection on those years of transition and the meaning they gave to the experience.

Brianna. Brianna had the most first cycle in vivo codes that were grouped into the Fear and Frustration code group. She discussed being overwhelmed and frustrated with the lack of preparation and the changing landscape of the first few months of teaching in the SCL style.

I remember being frustrated because they were like well this isn't what we're doing in Edgenuity, and I was like yes, I know but what do you do.

I was just really frantic, and I felt like I didn't know what was expected of me or of my teaching. During open house that first year, we thought we would be teaching more than one grade level and then we changed that at the last minute, that was frustrating too. I remember changing how we communicated what was in Edgenuity several times, we changed how we taught several times, and there wasn't much flow in our year in terms of how we taught or what we taught.

Those are the days that I think I remember the most where they were supposed to be working on their Edgenuity and working at their own pace. I remember that being chaotic and kids needed technical help, or kids would have a question and there was only one of me and 60 or 70 of them. I felt like I was monitoring them and watching them, but not teaching. You know what I mean?

I think parents were just confused and upset, and kind of frustrated because of the change and any kind of change is going to be hard. I think that is why we had some major struggles with the entire transition, kids and parents were caught off guard and they didn't know what to expect. Then when we didn't know how to answer their questions that was frustrating too.

I remember the kids struggling and they didn't understand the vocabulary and much less the comprehension so I guess I felt like we needed different levels and meeting the kids where they were and that would have caused less confusion and less frustration. Because it was so difficult.

Kim. Kim struggled to find her place in the SCL classroom and advocated that all students were not mature enough to work independently in the learning management system without an expert teacher.

My students were gifted and so several of them did very well, but I had a lot of students that were very smart but also very unmotivated to do the work.

Sometimes, and I have seen this in other years too, sometimes gifted students are used to the work being easy and so they shut down when something doesn't work or if they are asked to go above and beyond, that's really where I try to grow students as a teacher of gifted students.

Sometimes the intricacies or the quirks of the Edgenuity platform would get in the way of the instruction that we were aiming for. I would have students and their parents for that matter that were frustrated with the system, and then because of that they were frustrated with everything else that we did.

There was such a strange feeling in faculty meetings or in professional developments because we were on the "good side" and everyone else in the traditional side did not get any attention for their hard work. There were teams that came in to video and observe, and to see all of the things we were doing, and I think people that were working really hard on the traditional side felt left out of the school environment. I don't think we planned that out very well.

I definitely think that those years reinforced for me that there is so much to teaching and preparing kids for the real world. I think about how I was challenged as a teacher during those years. I was often frustrated, overwhelmed, I felt unsupported, and I wonder if I was truly prepared for an experience like that from my K-12 experience.

I think most teachers are just like oh yeah, I got this I can handle it. When really, they're probably not oh, and I do think we were pretty much thrown into the Edgenuity, that they could have been a whole lot more training than what we were received. And I also, I don't think it was a Edgenuity's fault I think it was a bigger undertaking than what everybody thought it was going to be.

Jessica. Jessica had issues with the support and professional development during the beginning of her experience in the transition toward predominantly SCL. She also taught her class with tight guidelines and parameters prior to the transition experience

and struggled to align with the less restrictive expectations of the SCL environment at her school.

The kids hated it, the just oh they hated it. Um, the Edgenuity was, some of it was just not right, the it would tell them one thing and then when it would give them a question, like some of the answers wouldn't be right and then you know when we would let Edgenuity know, we had to fill out all these forms and let them know stuff wasn't right, and it was just a big pain.

When things are too focused on just student learning and student-led, there can be entirely too many misconceptions. And there can be too many, there can be a lot of floundering and not a lot accomplished.

Pulling the resources was an exorbitant amount of time that was unrealistic, and it was unfair. It was an unfair and unrealistic expectation to put on us, without the proper resources.

And [the learning platform] was crap. I think going and I don't know how like newer teachers survived, I really don't. Because had I been a new teacher I probably would have just sat in a ball and cried, and probably quit. I would have waited tables or something.

I think children just in general are just like willy nilly about due dates because it's just so lackadaisical because they say they will let me make it up or do it whenever, or it doesn't matter if its December and its due in August, I can do it later, I mean that's just, no that's [not] how life works anymore.

Rebekah. Like the other participants, Rebekah had frustrations with the technology platform and the disconnect that it created within her classroom.

[the learning platform] was a really negative experience for me. It was almost, I don't know when so many of the kids did not, they didn't enjoy it. It was frustrating for them.

[the learning platform] was the teacher and I felt like I was almost a parapro there or the tutor to fill in the blanks are needed at the problem was I wasn't really clear where the blanks were all the time.

I didn't know what my role was, and I felt like I was oh, I felt like I was floundering by far out of my 27 years of teaching that was the worst year. I feel like I wasn't teaching at all, and when we questioned that I felt like the students were just supposed to be going in there and doing the work and you know we were just going to fill in the blanks and I feel like we needed more clarity for the role of the teacher in the role of the student and the role of assessment of how to collect the data.

The first year that we used [the learning platform], I was a complete failure. It was horrible. I have no other words for that. I didn't feel like I was a good teacher I didn't feel like I did a good job with assessment. I didn't feel like I did well with any of those things.

I think that the problems that we faced in our school as we attempted to transition to student-centered learning were not because of the style of teaching if that makes sense. I think I was frustrated and overwhelmed because I did not feel prepared to do what I was asked to do. I also don't think that our style of instruction always matched a true student-centered of personalized style of

teaching. We were on the front edge of trying to do something different for our students, and we used technology as a major component of the work.

I think they noticed that we didn't know what we were doing at times. I know that my level of stress was much higher than a normal year. I love teaching, but that year was awful at times. It was just awful. I felt like a first-year teacher, like I was trying to learn a new language or a new way to do my job, and that was really difficult.

I felt very overwhelmed and underprepared during that entire year. The [transition toward SCL] year was such a hard year.

Each of my participants reflected on the difficult components of changing their style of instruction and their experiences and stories of the challenges they faced during those years. I believe that the codes in this group contributed to how each participant made meaning of their experience. There were several primary factors that contributed to the Fear and Frustration of participants in this study. A lack of clarity in expectations and the roles of both students and teachers in the work. A disconnect between participants expectations for how their classroom should be conducted and how it was conducted during the years of teaching in a predominantly SCL environment. Additionally, my participants described that they were restricted by the technology platform that was meant to support the transition toward SCL. Each of these factors impacted how my participants created meaning from their experiences.

Resisting Change

The Resisting Change code category included the fewest number of in vivo codes compared to the other three categories. As I grouped and regrouped the first cycle codes

and performed the coding the codes strategy, I created code categories such as Let Teachers Teach, Old School, and Compliance. I looked for connections between the categories I was creating that did not fit into the other categories and formed Resisting Change. This category included coded sections across interviews for each participant but was most prevalent in the final interview as participants reflected on their experiences and discussed how they made meaning of those experiences. Resisting Change is a category that I believe stems from the Fear and Frustration code category. The following excerpts are coded passages from each participant that were grouped into the Resisting Change category.

Brianna. Brianna felt that she was an effective teacher before the transition toward SCL and that she had to perform tasks and find solutions to situations during the transition that did not support her growth as a teacher, but instead caused unneeded stress to her preparation and instructional style.

I still did what I thought was best what the kids needed so, I don't think, I still think I used everything that I did before and after. So like I still did, everything the same but then [the learning platform] made me do another component just to add to it.

Jessica. Jessica typically found solutions to her barriers during her experience in transitioning toward an SCL environment and did not typically describe stories that would be coded into this category. However, she did discuss her belief about college instructional styles and her resistance to micromanagement styles of leadership.

Because honestly if they're going to go to college, that's what they're going to get. Well, let me take that back, if they are going to go to a traditional face to face

college that is what they are going to get. They are going to get a teacher centered I'm going to stand up here and talk to you for 45 minutes to an hour and tell you what you need to do before you come back to me in two days.

You should not be breathing down their neck making them jump through thousands of Hoops weekly, and we should not be spending five or six hours a week writing lesson plans that is asinine. It's asinine.

Kim. Kim discussed multiple times during her interviews that she believed good teachers cannot be replaced. She disliked the technology learning management system and felt strongly after her experience in the transition toward SCL that she was a better teacher in the more traditional, or TCL, instruction.

Even today, some of the things that I've done from day one teaching I still do today. I just, you seem like you get better with it every year. But how do I do it today, like for writing for instance if you are reading essay after essay and you notice a problem. This is always a 6th grade problem, run on sentences, and you're like okay we need to we need to focus on this.

I think, you know older teachers will always you know there are good things that are just kind of you know, you cannot tell me any different.

I guess I think of traditional as being more hands on, you know kids are writing on their papers and they are listening and writing notes. I don't mind kids learning different things, but I think they don't have to be on the computer all of the time.

I think I am a better teacher and a more successful in the classroom using the more traditional style. It could be just because it's my age and how long I've been teaching.

Maybe my problem is with the technology platforms, I do not know. I just think that the teacher can't be replaced and so we have to be sure that students have choices, that also fit within what we know is best for student learning, and that needs teachers.

And I think earlier I said like my role as a teacher was not as important with that, because the kids have the computer, and they could work at their own you know speed progress and so you know for some of them you learned really quick that they didn't really even need you.

I do think that the easiest way would be if it was all teacher-centered because then you're in control of everything.

The coded segments from my participants for the Resisting Change category supported the idea that change is a difficult experience for educators. Each participant described why they didn't want to change or what parts of the change were most difficult for them. Each participant taught in a predominantly TCL environment prior to the transition and learned in a predominantly TCL environment during their K-12 school experience. These experiences created an expectation of the culture of the classroom as a student and as a teacher. When the adjustments to the instructional style in their school were altered, I believe that each participant resisted due to the gap between expected routines and culture and the unknown of changing roles of the student and the teacher.

Focusing on Students

The final code category that I created from the in vivo codes was Focusing on Students. This category included smaller code categories of Human Connection, Soft Skills, and Student Behavior/Management. This category included coded segments that supported either the Resisting Change or the Success and Achievement categories. My participants defended their resistance and found personal success in their connection to and focus on their students. The following excerpts from my participants are from coded segments that make up the Focusing on Students category.

Brianna. Brianna's connection to her students and her commitment to creating an environment for learning were clear through her coded sections for this category. She also discussed her belief that all students can learn in an SCL environment if they are given the right parameters and guidelines to succeed.

I always tell them if you ever need help, and some kids will bring in so I can do small groups with them if they are struggling and they need help on it, so they are really pretty good advocates for themselves, they will tell me, "hey I don't get this how to write this claim," You know some other kids will chime in and we can review claim and then I'll do small group with them, so they have a lot of say of what they, what they need help on and I think that's good that they recognize their strengths and their weaknesses.

The transition really made me think more about data and about how I can help students to get out of their comfort zone while learning. I think that I learned that students can learn life skills from being in difficult situations and learning groups, and that I want kids to gain those experiences, just in a more controlled

way than what we did during the transition years. Those years were something else.

... student-centered, I feel like there is more buy in. Students are going to be more willing to do things that they have decided they wanted to do so giving them choice, but also with stations or rotations with different activities, or maybe not even different activities you know reading or just anything if you chunk it into stations and they work 20 minutes, and then they get to change the station, I think that helps them just with focusing and the willingness to try, because they are like “oh I am only here for 20 minutes for today” and I feel like with the time they are like “ok I can do this for 20 minutes” and that helps.

I do think that those years impact how I think about valuable skills for students. I already knew that students needed more than just the academic skills to be successful, but I learned through those years that student’s ability to persevere and to be flexible to adjust to the demands of the class are first, difficult skills to obtain, and second, at very different levels for all of our students that we teach.

I know that I can make a difference in the lives of the students that I teach, not just through what I can teach them about reading and writing, but also just about dealing with problems and working with their peers. We talk and read so much about how to manage conflicts and why some things just aren't worth getting upset about. I think kids can learn how to interact, how to learn, not just to learn, but how to learn something is such a valuable skill.

Jessica. Jessica’s passion for her students was clear during her coded sections for this category. More than the other participants, Jessica was determined to use data to find

ways to ensure her students were learning at high levels during the transition toward SCL. She also used personal experiences to describe the value of student's developing skills to be successful after they finished their K-12 experience.

I think modeling math is super important. So, I think probably more so than any other subject, I think direct instruction has more play than any other place. I really do. I think its more appropriate there than anywhere else. But I don't think it's the sole teaching practice. I think once its taught and demonstrated, the students should be able to explore and practice and work together and do all of that.

Some kids that can solve things so outside of the box and I tell my students too, all the time, there is more than one way to solve a problem. Almost everything in math can be solved in more than one way, pretty much.

I think for them to work on it and build on it, they are going to have to be, they are going to have to work in groups with people they don't necessarily know and like, teacher chosen groups, and it's going to have to be a very structured assignment. Like a very structured student-centered assignment if that makes sense

There is a lot of value in them going back and reviewing and reworking and justifying their corrections. My students do that now to this day. I leave their quizzes open for two weeks and they get a first grade, and then they have an extra week to make corrections and then they get a second week, and they can get a second grade.

Student-centered is better for some kids, teacher centered is better for others. there are certain topics that lend themselves better for student centered and there are some topics that lend themselves better for teacher centered.

You can't wait till I get to the test to see if they know it. You have to let them have their student time. and but teacher-centered is by far the easiest.

Rebekah. Rebekah discussed several stories and experiences where she posited that SCL was a valuable style of instruction for learning academic and nonacademic skills. The coded sections for this category display Rebekah's passion for learning and for finding unique ways to engage her students.

I usually try to find what I call a hook and try to get the kids engaged in whatever it is they were talking about that day. For example, in math if we're studying amount of perimeter. Then I may bring up the song, there's one that I used that's called the perimeter rap. I use this in science as well and sometimes my warmup that just to kind of Interest them and get them started and get them engaged in it.

I'm constantly assessing them whether that's asking them questions or allowing them to ask questions and walking around the classroom and listening to their discussions, looking at their independent work, looking at their collective group work or pull test scores or pulling quiz scores for that day from something like [an online assessment] it does give them the percentage right or percentage wrong. There's a lot of different types of assessment that we use.

When the kids are working in small groups, they're learning those social skills and they're learning how to work with others to solve problems, so they get problem-solving skills [and] they're also learning to communicate with each other

and they're interacting with each other. Just by sharing ideas with each other and sharing their thoughts that solidifies their understanding of specific concepts. So yes, I think that student-centered learning helps out in a tremendous amount of ways.

I think the more student-centered side removes limits because the goal for the teacher maybe to teach, I don't know addition of fractions 1 day, but for the kids if they get past and they master that concept and they're able to push it and take it even deeper than what the teacher even expected, and that's another level for them to be able to keep going.

I think that students need opportunities to explore their interests and to learn in hands-on and real-world ways, not just through listening or memorizing facts and dates. I do think that during the years of personalized learning I was able to see what education could become, but I think that we have to figure out the technology piece.

Kim. Kim holds strong negative opinions about the transition toward SCL instruction. Yet, maintains a focus on doing what is best for students in the coded sections for this category.

There are times where I say look at your whatever paragraph and I want you to say did you do this, did you do that. And I think with writing there is still that time we need to like work on different pieces of writing. There are three different genres that we cover in 6th grade. so yeah, I think writing narratives are easier, because it's you know either imagined or it's real, but the others are so, they're pretty formulaic. So, I think it's more of an individual process for each student.

I do think there's still that importance of students being able to work together, even if it's only for 5 or 10 minutes see, those communication skills that they're building, I feel like those are a trend that you're going to continue to see. I think we have learned through the last few years that it's important for kids to socialize.

Is there a better way for us to tap into each student, because I mean every student is gifted. I mean having to really have programs available for kids so that all kids can feel successful. Because you know that's when a kid acts up there's a reason why they're acting up it's not against me, it's you know, something has happened. And if we can get to the bottom of that but, you know, they always say to look at the whole child, look at the whole child, but we don't have time to look at the whole child.

Some of the most important things that kids learn during their time in school are not a fact from social studies or a part of the cell in science, but they are the skills that kids need to live a long and happy life. They are the things that kids need to know how to do and the skills that kids need to work with others.

I created the Focusing on Students code category through multiple rounds of coding the codes from first cycle in vivo codes. Coded segments for this category were created for each participant and were used to explain participant choices during the transition and how they justified their choices both during and after the transition occurred. My participants made meaning of their experience toward a predominantly SCL environment by describing their effectiveness, their frustrations, and their opinions about the transition all through the lens of Focusing on Students.

This coding style left me with the ideas that my participants were impacted by their personal K-12 experiences, that their instructional strategies and routines were built on years of experience and were difficult to adjust, and that my participants cared deeply about the students they teach. I then turned to emotion coding to further understand how my participants described each time period of their journey from their personal K-12 experience through the completion of their transition toward utilizing primarily SCL as their instructional strategy.

Emotion Coding by Time Period

Although I used past, present, and future as the time periods in my narratives for alignment to temporal components of the data, I divided the interviews into four time periods for the emotion coding process.

1. K-12 Experience
2. Student-Teaching/College Experience
3. Transition to SCL
4. Teaching Today/During COVID

I discussed each separate time period in this section and provided emotion coded segments from participants from that time period. After coding each interview with emotion coding, I began the process of grouping and developing code categories that connected the smaller codes together into larger code categories for each time period. At the conclusion of this process, I created two emotion code categories for each time period. Figure 5 displays the two code categories for each time period, along with the number of codes that existed in each group.

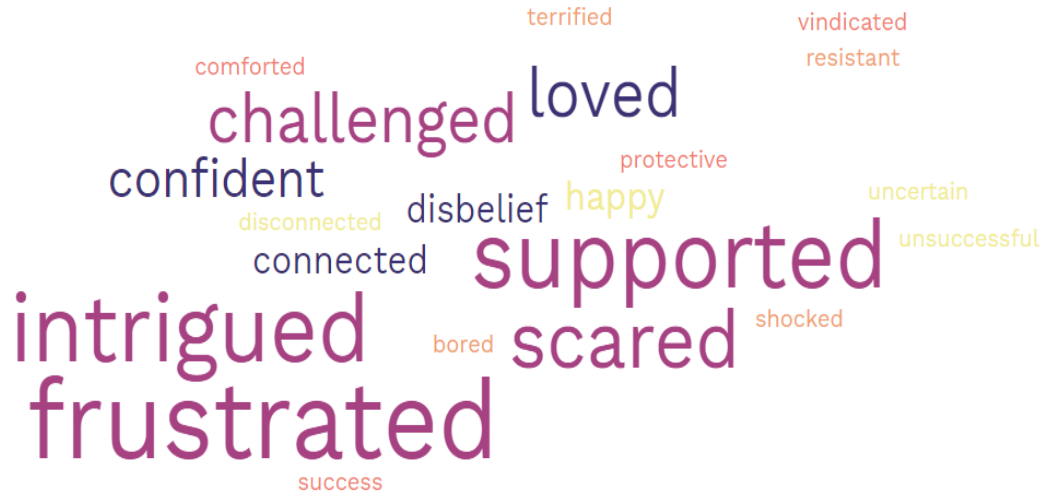
Figure 5. Final code categories for emotion codes by time period

Code System	Count
Code System	1272
K-12 Experience	0
Sad	26
Joy	29
Student-Teaching/College Experience	0
Confident (1)	12
Challenged	12
Transition to SCL	0
assertive	9
Overwhelmed	51
Teaching Today/During COVID	0
undermined	45
passionate	48

Figure 5 includes the two code categories I created for each time period of my participant interviews. On the right side of the figure, the number of codes that are grouped into the category are displayed. For example, the emotion code categories I created for the Transition to SCL time period were assertive and overwhelmed. There were nine codes grouped into the assertive category and 51 codes grouped into the overwhelmed category for this time period. I provided information about the specific codes created for each time period through code landscaping and the creation of a wordle, which are displayed in this chapter.

K-12 Experience. This time period included all emotion codes created for the personal K-12 experiences for each participant. Figure 6 includes a wordle that displays each emotion code and its relative frequency expressed by participants.

Figure 6. Code landscaping for the K-12 experience of participants.



The wordle I created in Figure 6 includes every emotion code from my participant's interviews where experiences and stories of the K-12 experience were discussed. The two emotion code categories I created across my participants' descriptions of their K-12 experience were joy and sadness. Strong emotions were memorable to each participant and from those strong emotions, stories emerged of friendships or skills learned during that time. The wordle above contains each of the codes from the K-12 experience portion of participants' interviews. The largest words in the image are frustrated, intrigued, supported, and scared, indicating that these emotions were mentioned with the most frequency across participant interviews. Frustrated and scared were the codes with the highest frequency under sadness, while intrigued and supported were the codes with the highest frequency under joy. Figure 7 is a display of the emotion code groups that were joined together to create the code categories for this section.

Figure 7. Intermediate codes during coding the codes process for the K-12 experience.

Code System	Count
Code System	1272
K-12 Experience	0
Sad	1
Disconnected	1
uncertain	1
Unsuccessful	1
Shocked	1
Disbelief	2
Challenged	4
Frustrated	7
Reistant	1
Bored	1
scared	5
Terrefied	1
Joy	3
success	1
Vindicated	1
Supported	6
Intrigued	6
Protective	1
Loved	4
Confident	2
Connected	2
Comforted	1
Happy	2

Figure 7 includes a list of the codes and the number of times that each emotion code was identified for the time period of K-12 experience. The number listed on the right side of the figure displays the number of times that emotion code was created from my transcripts. For example, the emotion code of *intrigued* was created six times across all participant interviews for the time period of K-12 experience. I used the K-12 experience

section to support part of my answer to the research question, How have their previous teaching and learning experiences influenced their opinions of the culture of the classroom and their shifting style of instruction? (RQ2 Sub 2b)

Brianna described a memory of changing schools during third grade. She recalled that “after third grade we moved again I remember moving and that being scary.” Later during her high school experience, she remembered being scared during a presentation when she had to “ ... memorize and stand in front of the class and I was terrified. And I remember, I remember that I was almost in tears and my voice was shaking.” She also described a teacher with a reputation for being challenging and she had “ ... heard the rumors and I was scared.”

Jessica’s K-12 experience involved more frustration than fear. She recalled several experiences where a teacher doubted her abilities or belittled her in front of her peers. In one experience, Jessica recalled that her teacher was moving very slowly through the material and Jessica described this instruction as “ ... awful. She was awful. She like instead of doing like a lesson a day we were doing like a lesson a week.” Jessica remembered several experiences where she was bored or frustrated with a teacher’s lack of competence and teaching ability.

Rebekah recalled being frustrated during her school experience, especially in math class. In one experience she recalled being confused and frustrated, “I totally yeah I was totally confused it was me and my friend ... and I would dig into the algebra book and basically teach ourselves ... I will never forget that.” And then a second time when she was afraid to ask questions to a different math teacher “ ... she was just intimidating, and no one really ask her any questions we just figured it out on our own.”

Kim recalled stories of fear and being intimidated during her K-12 experience, like the other participants. She described her first male teacher and the fear that experience brought with it, “ ... I don't know maybe I was scared because it was a male teacher, and I didn't have much experience with male teachers. And he was very intimidating. Because I felt insecure and he was not, you know as open to I didn't feel like he would answer my questions.” Although her experience was primarily positive, Kim had the strongest negative overall opinion of herself as a student. During interview 1 Kim stated directly that, “ ... me as a student, I was a terrible student.” Kim’s opinions of herself as a student and of her abilities was very different than the other interview participants.

The other emotion code category for my participants K-12 experience, joy, was noted in each participants interview transcripts as well. Brianna discussed one of her teachers that formed a relationship with her.

... I feel like she really got to know me as a person, not just here, do these math problems. So, I think that helped when I was you know my senior year just doing that senior math class which was just like a big review over the final four years of math. And like I said I think that's when it all clicked for me, she just never gave up and she just kept going.

Brianna’s tone changed during this portion of the interview, and I could tell that this teacher had a positive impact on her life.

Jessica had an overwhelming positive K-12 experience. She described several of her elementary and middle school teachers in detail and explained strong connections to each one. For one teacher she stated that her librarian “ ... could read like nobody’s

business. And we just loved [her]. She would love on us and hug on us and she was just the best ever.” Jessica described a different teacher’s persistence in helping students, “no matter how many times you ask[ed] her a question she would go over it again. Like I mean you could tell her you didn't understand something, and she would go over it. I mean she would just sit there and do something over and over.” She had several other stories of encouragement and called numerous other teachers “the best ever” or “the best teacher.” Her first interview outlined a joyful and supported K-12 experience.

Rebekah’s K-12 experiences were very positive and filled with intriguing and supported emotions. She described her elementary school experience by saying that “...the teachers were just very loving very helpful just a very positive experience.” She felt supported by many of her middle and high school teachers as well. She described one math teacher who found unique ways to model difficult concepts by saying “I had her for all three years of high school, she was a phenomenal teacher.” Rebekah remembered specific instructional strategies and tactics that her teachers used at a much higher frequency than the other participants. She described why she loved one of her teachers’ classes so much because “... it was her discussions that really made it interesting and the way that she explained it and challenged us on it, and she let us know the history of it.” She detailed how a language arts teacher brought novels to life during her high school experience and these memories brought laughter and happiness into her tone during the interview process.

Kim’s K-12 experience was much foggier in her memory than the other participants. She recalled specific memories as we continued to talk and as I asked probing questions, but she felt regret that she didn’t really get connected with her schools

and felt like that was why her memories were not as abundant. She did recall several memories of teachers who asked challenging questions that she had never thought of before. She described one of her teachers by saying, “I remember how much she loved what she did. She was all math and all science. You know, just constantly pushing us. And asking us those thought-provoking questions, like does a rainbow ever end.” Kim remembered a connection with her grandfather as a result of this teacher because she always wanted to ask him if he knew the answer. Kim also remembered experiences when she was intrigued by emotionally charged material she had never known about before. She discussed when her social studies class learned about “... the diary of Anne Frank, and we had to get permission to stay after school and watch a video about the holocaust and the survivors. And it was very graphic images, and I am very emotional, and I remember crying looking at those images.”

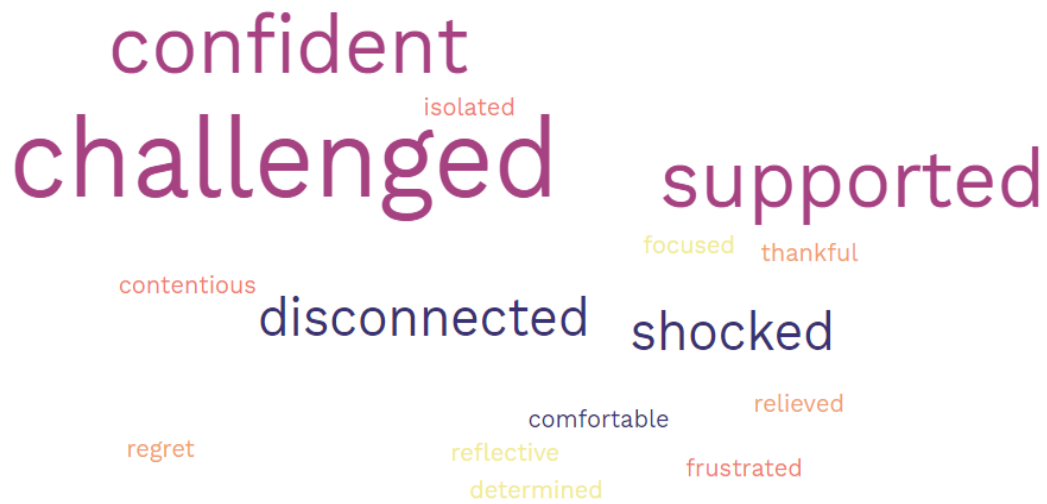
Each participant recalled and explained several memories that contained *joy* or *sadness* from their K-12 experience portion of their interviews. The mundane and routine components of a student’s K-12 experience were not the stories that my participants told. The routines that make up the culture of the classroom, often go unnoticed to students during their own experience (Jackson, 1968). The K-12 experiences for each participant built the foundation for how they would expect their teaching experiences to unfold and created the foundation for my participant’s expectations of the roles of the teacher and the student and what types of content students learned.

When I asked Jessica what type of instruction, she experienced the most during her K-12 experience she said, “... way more teacher centered. I think about one day a week, maybe not even once a week, maybe one day every other week [she would

experience SCL].” I asked Kim if she felt like her teachers conducted any SCL strategies during her K-12 experience and she did not recall many experiences that were student-centered. She explained that in most classes they would, “come in, this is what you are going to do, let me tell you a little bit and then you do it.” These types of experiences from my participants and the memories they shared from their classroom experiences created a teacher student relationship grounded in teacher control of the learning and the pacing of the class. My participants previous learning experiences impacted their expectations for the dynamics of the classroom and were built on hundreds of days of learning experiences. They expected teachers at the front of the classroom, students listening and taking notes, and assessments taken every Friday by students. They had done it that way themselves for more than 2 decades prior to being asked to transition. Therefore, the predominantly student-centered style of instruction often created a rift for my participants in what they expected to do in the classroom and what they were asked to do as a part of the SCL classroom. I believe this change in classroom dynamic and the shift in responsibility and control of the classroom impacted each of my participants’ experience as they transitioned toward primarily SCL.

Student teaching/college experience. The next time period for each interview was the student teaching and college experiences for each participant. The stories and experiences in this section supported my understanding of what my participants were prepared to teach and what type of classrooms they observed as they learned to be a teacher. Figure 8 is the wordle for this time period.

Figure 8. Code landscaping for student teaching/college experience of participants



In Figure 8, the emotion codes that I created for the student teaching/college experience time period are displayed. The larger the word is in the wordle, the more frequently that emotion code was created across all participant interviews for this time period. The two emotion code categories that were created for this time period of each participants' interviews where college experience and student teaching were discussed were confident and challenged. Each participant took a different journey through college and the experience of being a student teacher. Rebekah received a degree in economics, and then went back several years later to follow her passion to become an educator. Brianna left home to go to a large university, then returned home to find a smaller school experience where she thrived. Each participant was prepared for their career in education in a different way and their preparation experiences created differing opinions and beliefs about education and more specifically, instructional styles. I used quotes from each participants' interviews to describe similarities and differences in their experiences in the

process. Figure 9 displays the emotion code categories and codes from this time period of the interview experiences that were grouped together to create the two code categories.

Figure 9. Intermediate codes during coding the codes process for student teaching/college experience

Code System	Count
Code System	1272
K-12 Experience	55
Student-Teaching/College Experience	0
Confident (1)	3
Comfortable	1
Reflective	1
Focused	1
Supported	3
Determined	1
Relieved	1
Thankful	1
Challenged	4
regret	1
Disconnected	2
Isolated	1
Contentious	1
Frustrated	1
Shocked	2

Figure 9 includes details of the emotion codes grouped together into the confident and challenged categories. The number on the right side of the figure displays the number of times that emotion code was created across all participant interviews. For example, the emotion code *shocked* was created 2 times and was then grouped into the challenged emotion code category.

Brianna described her student teaching and teacher preparation experience as very valuable and challenging. She discussed that during her teacher preparation experience she remembered “ ... a lot of collaboration and like partner work for all of my classes.

Lots of discussion and lots of observations.” She explained that during her student teaching she was with experienced teachers and in a school where discipline wasn’t a major problem. When I asked her more about the type of class that she was in and culture in the class she said that “It was just sort of like they built the trust and expectations, and the kids just did it. It wasn't an issue if that makes sense.” She remembered being supported and challenged during those experiences. Brianna stated that she was not prepared for her first teaching experience due to her teacher preparation courses and student teaching experience.

Jessica’s teacher preparation courses and student teaching experience was often about what not do to instead of focused on the teaching strategies that she would need to be successful as a teacher. She described that her classes focused on “ ... more classroom management stuff. Very little of it was teaching strategies.” A central memory from Jessica’s student teaching experience was the poor relationship that she formed with her student teaching model teacher. Jessica had a challenging experience where her model teacher was given feedback that Jessica wrote about her that was supposed to be part of a journal that Jessica kept for her class. The feedback was shared with the model teacher and “...she went to her principal and said I don't want her back in there.” This memory was emotionally charged for Jessica, and I could hear the frustration in her voice over two decades later during the interview. The remainder of Jessica’s student teaching experience was negatively impacted by this experience.

Rebekah was the non-traditional teacher preparation experience of the participant group as she was working in the business sector when she went back to school and received her teaching certification. She remembered being challenged and she stated that

“I really didn’t struggle with the content, it was more so the instructional pieces with how to teach the content.” Rebekah’s experience was a more positive one than Jessica’s and she was able to experience teaching with a variety of different teachers, grade levels, and content areas during her student teaching experience. She described this experience when she said that she worked in “ ... a lot of different contents being taught in a lot of different styles, and it was different teaching styles and different classroom management styles and different organizational styles of all of those different teachers. I think that benefited me more than anything.” Rebekah described being challenged by working full time and taking courses at night, but she enjoyed her experience, because she knew that she was going back to school for a profession that she was going to love. Because of this, she remembered very positive and confidence building emotions from her experiences.

Kim recalled her instructors from her teacher preparation courses and their high level of support and expectations when she stated about one of her teachers “ ... that woman knew her stuff and she expected you to know your stuff. And you did not want to disappoint her, because she was so she had very, very high expectations.” She remembered a deep connection with her teachers and the relationships they built with their students and their passion for their craft. From her student teaching experience, she discussed sessions at the schools where she observed where master teachers would explain their best practices and tricks of the trade with her and her classmates. She recalled a focus on classroom management and not as much about instructional strategies and practices.

Kim remembered experiences with highly organized teachers and also lessons learned from teachers that were not as prepared for class. Overall, she discussed that

during her student teaching experience “We were able to go into schools of different income level, race/ethnicity, and high achieving vs. low achieving and in each one I remember very similar types of teaching taking place. I would say all the schools that we went to, looking back, at high expectations for their students and I don't remember discipline so much.” She recalled a high level of teacher centered learning and high levels of engagement in the schools where she observed, and student taught.

Each participant spent multiple years of their college experience learning to become an educator. During their college experience before student teaching, each participant shared that classes taught them the content and how to manage a classroom in order to be a successful teacher. Brianna explained that her teacher preparation courses taught her “a lot of content and I remember they made us read a bunch of clinical books. Like a variety and talked about those.” I asked her if they learned about classroom management, and she went on to say that “It did focus a lot on behavior and different strategies for that.” Jessica described that during her teacher preparation courses she learned “mainly then it was more, content and management, more classroom management stuff. Very little of it was teaching strategies.”

During student teaching experiences my participants described the learning styles they recalled from the stories that they shared with me. Kim described two different student teaching environments that she observed and then taught in during the final year of her education program and she stated, “I would say both were teacher-centered environments. Neither group really was student centered, but their behavior management and what they were ok with kids doing was very different.” Rebekah summed up the style of her student teaching classroom when she stated, “I just felt like it was more of a

traditional style.” None of the participants in this study completed student teaching experiences in classrooms that they described as student-centered. I believe this impacted their expectations for teaching and learning. Each teacher taught in a predominantly TCL environment prior to transitioning toward SCL. This instructional style choice, along with the stories and experiences detailed in participant interviews, supported the conclusion that the previous experiences of teachers in teacher preparation courses and student teaching impacted their instructional choices and their opinions of learning.

Transition to SCL. The third period of time that I used to determine emotion codes from my participants was in their transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL environment. Figure 10 is the wordle for this section of time.

Figure 10. Code landscaping for transition to SCL of participants



Figure 10 includes all of the emotion codes I created across all participant interviews for the transition to SCL time period. The larger the code is in the wordle, the more times

that emotion code was created from the transcripts. The emotion code categories I created from participant interviews and their experiences in transitioning from a predominantly TCL environment to one that was predominantly SCL were the most difficult to group into larger code categories.. The transition toward SCL time period was different in that nearly 80% of the emotion codes for this section were grouped together under the emotion code category of overwhelmed. A much smaller number, only 20% of the codes, were grouped under the emotion code category of assertive. I believe this indicated the wide range of frustration and difficulty that a shift in pedagogy can induce for teachers, especially those with a large amount of experience in teaching prior to the desired shift. Figure 11 displays the emotion codes from this time period that were grouped together to create the emotion code categories.

Figure 11. Intermediate codes during coding the codes process for Transition to SCL

Code System	Count
Code System	1272
K-12 Experience	55
Student-Teaching/College Experience	24
Transition to SCL	0
assertive	1
determined	1
Defensive	1
Focused	2
Reflective	1
Supportive	2
Supported	1
Overwhelmed	5
Unsupported	1
uncertain	4
Undermined	6
Disconnected	7
Intimidated	1
stressed	1
Undervalued	5
unprepared	1
defeated	1
Exhausted	1
Unsafe	1
Frustrated	15
Confused	2

Figure 11 includes the emotion codes that I created and grouped together into the emotion code categories for the transition to SCL time period. The number on the right side of the figure displays the number of times that emotion code was created across all participant interviews for this time period. For example, I created the emotion code *frustrated* 15 times from my transcripts.

I discussed both of my primary research questions in this section as participants described their experiences and their opinions of the impact of the culture of the classroom on these experiences. How do middle school teachers describe their experience and make meaning of the transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning in a rural middle school? (RQ 1) and How do these teachers describe the process of going from a predominantly teacher-centered learning model to a predominantly student-centered learning model in relation to the shared culture of the classroom? (RQ 2)

Brianna described her experience in transitioning toward primarily SCL with several experiences that I coded as frustrated or confused. Many of her memories involved frustration over the learning management system, Edgenuity, not working the way she expected it to work. She often referred to the entire student-centered learning experience as Edgenuity. She explained that what she remembered “... the most is the scope and sequence that we were using from the county didn't match.” She recalled that her students were “... frustrated because they were like well this isn't what we're doing it Edgenuity, and I was like yes I know but what do you do.” She recalled being frustrated with monitoring the large learning labs that were used to decrease class size. Brianna said that by the end of the 2-hour lab session with students it was “... just like almost impossible to get them to work.”

Brianna explained the tension that she felt in the school during the transition toward primarily SCL. She was in the student-centered learning pilot portion of school during the 2013-2014 school year of the transition, and she remembered that teachers on both sides were frustrated. She explained that “I think we could have done a better job of

creating value to both sides and learned from each other what was working or what didn't work.”

Jessica’s transition toward predominantly student-centered learning occurred on a different timeline than the other three participants. Jessica chose to remain on the predominantly teacher-centered half of the school during the 2013-2014 school year of the transition while the other half was in the pilot group which taught using student-centered learning strategies. In the next school year, the entire school was a part of the shift toward student-centered learning. Jessica was very outspoken about her frustration and struggle with the beginning of the transition with her administration. Jessica recalled the beginning of her transition toward SCL in an experience that I coded with the emotion of exhausted. She described that “ ... initially it was, they wanted them [the students] to all go at their own pace, they wanted this and this and this to happen. And after a few months, I went to [the principal] and I said OK this is exhausting, I cannot do this.”

When Jessica discussed the lab rotation model used at the school and her day monitoring students as they worked on their online work, she said “It was just the day that never ended, it was, awful. The kids hated it, the just, oh they hated it.” She recalled another frustration with the shift toward SCL and the ambiguity of deadlines for her students. She explained that administration wanted students to have flexibility in their due dates, but she struggled with creating an environment where kids could learn and be allowed to not meet her expectations. She stated that “ ... you have deadlines, everybody has deadlines because if you don't have deadlines and there is not an expectation of a

deadline, nothing will ever get done it is human nature. You have to set boundaries. It is normal, and it is healthy.”

Jessica also described experiences where she felt supported, and I was impressed with her ability to find solutions to complex problems she faced during the transition in instructional style. In response to school-wide expectation that kids should have flexibility in their pace of learning, she created a classroom model where core instruction occurred whole-group each week, then each student had activities to complete each week at a more flexible pace toward an expected assessment at the end of the week. She discussed that despite the change in instructional style, her students “... still scored, tremendously high” on their state assessment. Jessica found a way to continue her positive impact as a teacher even during a transition that she described as frustrating and overwhelming.

Rebekah was in the pilot group in the school during the first year of the transition toward SCL. She continues to use student-centered learning styles in her classroom and is a very innovative teacher. She detailed several stories and experiences during the transition toward predominantly student-centered learning where she felt frustrated, undervalued, and uncertain. She felt frustrated that she didn’t believe she could always tell what her students didn’t know how to do from her standards. She described that “thinking back to that first year one of the things that was very difficult was assessing the kids because the only assessment that we were giving them was from the Edgenuity, the learning management system. That was basically the only assessment and if the kids...didn't understand the vocabulary word and some of the questions and answer the question wrong it wasn't necessarily that they didn't understand the concept, but they

didn't understand what the question in Edgenuity was asking of them.” She felt frustrated that her students could pass a quiz without truly knowing the content because when failed quizzes were reset they “...might end up having the same question again so I came down and memorizing the answer to the question.”

Rebekah felt undervalued during the transition toward SCL and she blamed the learning management system, Edgenuity, because she felt that technology was tasked with teaching the students some of the information instead of the teacher. Rebekah recalled “...was there good information in those videos, yes, but to use that as the only instructional strategy and then try to fill in the blanks when you got you know 45 kids in your classroom and trying to fill in the blanks and they're all in different areas was extremely difficult to do.” She felt uncertain about her role as the instructor in her classroom. She recalled that “I didn't know what my role was and I felt like I was oh, I felt like I was floundering.” Letting go of the control of the classroom that is associated with teacher-centered learning and moving toward predominantly student-centered learning was a difficult and frustrating initial experience for Rebekah.

Kim was also on the pilot half of the school during the transition toward SCL. More than any other participant that I interviewed, Kim struggled with believing that she was undermined/undervalued as the teacher during the student-centered learning style of teaching. She also felt disconnected and uncertain about both her ability to connect with her students and her role in the classroom. Kim homed in on the learning management system and made statements like “...a computer could not teach a student how to write or craft their style or those things.” She went into great detail during the interviews about the process of grading a writing piece and the teacher experience needed to teach writing

to middle school students. She described another experience where she felt undervalued when she stated that “I think that looking back on it, I do think there were times that I felt like I wasn't as needed in the classroom as I was before because once again the computer was teaching them a lot of the things. And so, you know what we had those higher achieving students you know some of them could just you know go through and never really need that much assistance with some of the lessons.” I felt Kim’s frustration in her voice as she described the initial transition toward SCL and how it impacted her as an educator.

Kim discussed an additional part of the transition and the effect the school-wide rollout toward SCL had on school culture in the building. She explained that “there was such a strange feeling in faculty meetings or in professional developments because we were on the "good side" and everyone else in the traditional side did not get any attention for their hard work. There were teams that came into video and observe, and to see all of the things we were doing, and I think people that were working really hard on the traditional side felt left out of the school environment. I don't think we planned that out very well.” This tension continued on into the next several years of the school-wide transition and created a difficult professional environment at times for our teachers.

Each participant described stories and memories from their transition from a predominantly TCL environment to a predominantly SCL environment during their second interview. Emotion coding allowed me to assign emotions related to each of these stories and memories. According to Saldaña (2016), emotion coding is especially appropriate “... in matters of social relationship, reasoning, decision-making, judgement, and risk-taking” (p. 125). My participant experiences in the classroom, in combination

with the unique culture of the classroom, provided an opportunity to use this affective coding method to label the emotions recalled from each participant's stories. For my first research question, emotion coding for stories and recollections from this time period allowed me to provide an answer for how teachers explained their experiences in the transition from a predominantly TCL environment to one that was predominantly SCL. Each participant chose a single word to describe the transition. These words are listed in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Participant answers to the question: What is one word to describe your experience of the transition toward SCL?

Participant	One word to describe the transition
Kim	Struggle
Jessica	Awful
Rebekah	Frustrating
Brianna	Overwhelming

The strong negative choices from my participants were different from what I expected and different from what I experienced in my personal experience in the same transition from predominantly TCL to predominantly SCL. During the interview process with participants, I was reminded of several emotions I experienced during the first weeks of the first year of the transition. However, I had positive and innovative stories from my experience that my participants did not recall or share during their interviews. In contrast to the other time periods of emotion codes, the transition toward SCL emotion code categories had nearly five times as many emotion codes for overwhelmed when

compared to the codes for assertive. The six most used emotion codes from the transition toward SCL interviews were frustrated, disconnected, undermined, undervalued, overwhelmed, and uncertain. Each of these codes appeared more than four different times across my four participants explanations of their experiences in the transition. My participants made meaning of their experience, which I processed utilizing emotion coding, that the transition was difficult and several years after the experience my participants remained primarily dissatisfied with the experience.

For my second research question, each participant discussed the culture of the classroom during their experiences and stories from the transition toward predominantly SCL environments. Brianna discussed the change in her role and ability to know the answers to questions when she recalled that "...kids and parents were caught off guard and they didn't know what to expect. Then when we didn't know how to answer their questions that was frustrating too." She went on to discuss a change in the classroom model that she experienced because "... instead of the teacher instructing and checking in with them, it was more the teacher checking in with them and trying to get the kids to do the lessons on the computer." Brianna's experience was different than her K-12 experience, and she expressed emotions of being disconnected and frustration at not being in control of the environment.

Jessica discussed the culture of the classroom and her interactions with it as she discussed the changes to student behavior during the transition toward predominantly student learning in her classroom. She stated that "Behavior wasn't great because the kids were bored and they didn't like it." Later in her interview, Jessica discussed the lack of motivation and completion of work that she noticed from her students during the

transition toward SCL. She explained that “You have to set boundaries it is normal, and it is healthy. You can have some personalization, but at the same time you have to give people limits and you have to give them boundaries, or things will not get accomplished.” The classroom environment and the rules were different than what Jessica experienced in her K-12 experience. Jessica described changes to the roles and routines of the teacher and student, and to the expectations of student learning, which are two components of the culture of the classroom I defined for this research. The traditions of the classroom were different during the transition years. These experiences brought out stories of frustration.

Rebekah detailed her experiences with the changing traditions and culture of the classroom surrounding both instruction and assessment. Rebekah described the change in instructional model by saying “...kids basically got lessons from online there wasn't a lot of direct instruction.” She then discussed that “...one of the things that was very difficult was assessing the kids because the only assessment that we were giving them was from the Edgenuity, the learning management system.” Rebekah’s expectations for the classroom environment and how kids learn and are assessed for their understanding were different during her transition toward SCL and these changes to the culture of the classroom impacted her opinions of the transition.

Kim recalled the change in teacher-student relationship that differed from her expectations during the transition toward SCL. She recalled that “...a computer could not teach a student how to write or craft their style or those things.” Kim also felt that the traditions and culture of the classroom were altered when she stated that “there were times that I felt like I wasn't as needed in the classroom as I was before because once again the computer was teaching them a lot of the things.” Kim recalled not being sure

what her students knew at times and struggling to carry out her classroom similar to her own K-12 experience or how her classroom functioned in a teacher-centered learning environment. The roles of the teacher and student shifted during the transition toward SCL and Kim was frustrated with this shift.

Through the stories and experiences that each participant recalled from the transition, each participant struggled with the changing dynamics and culture of the classroom. The routines and nuances were altered due to new instruction, new expectations, or new technology, and each of these caused friction with the participants of this study. In relation to the shared culture of the classroom, each participant described a frustrating and difficult transition away from their expectations and into an environment that was often difficult to predict or be successful within. Their roles, attitudes toward learning, and expectations for what academic and non-academic skills students should master in their classrooms were altered during the instructional transition.

Teaching Today/During COVID-19. The final section of time from my interview transcripts included my participants' discussions on how they teach today and how they reflect on the experience of the transition toward primarily SCL. Figure 13 displays the wordle for this period of time.

Figure 13. Code landscaping for teaching today/during COVID-19 from participants



Figure 13 includes all of the emotion codes created for the teaching today/during COVID-19 time period. The larger the code is in the wordle, the more times that emotion code was created from the transcripts.

The participants in this study transitioned toward a predominantly SCL environment in their classrooms between the 2013-2018 school years as a part of a school-district wide transition toward SCL. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews with my participants did not take place until after teachers worked through the initial school closures of the 2019-2020 school year, as well as the rolling closures and virtual teaching environments of the 2020-2021 school year. This experience inevitably impacted the educational experiences of my participants and in this section, participants were asked to describe their opinions of education and their classroom instructional styles today. The emotion code categories that were created as a part of my categorizing and

code lumping processes were undermined and passionate. Participants explained their experiences of transitioning toward SCL and how the years since the transition have impacted their ability to teach and their opinions of education. Figure 14 displays the emotion codes that were grouped together to create the code categories of undermined and passionate.

Figure 14. Intermediate codes from coding the codes process for teaching today/during COVID-19

Code	Frequency
Teaching Today/During COVID	0
undermined	2
frustrated	8
Disconnected (1)	3
Overwhelmed (1)	3
Uncertain	5
Tired	1
Disappointed	2
Exasperated	4
challenged	3
Concerned	5
Annoyed	4
Worried	1
Confused	1
Helpless	2
Undervalued	1
passionate	4
Committed	3
Determined	3
protective	1
Hopeful	8
Confident (2)	10
Proud	2
Supportive	6
Calculated	1
Loving	1
Intrigued	2
Nostalgic	4
focused	1
Curious	1
Supported	1

This figure includes information about the emotion codes I created and grouped together into the two emotion code categories for this time period. The number on the right side of the figure details the number of times that emotion code was created across all participant interviews for this time period. For example, the emotion code *concerned* was created five times from my transcripts.

Brianna's stories and explanations of how the transition toward SCL affect her current teaching and opinions of teaching today revolve around the skills that she now believes students need to be successful after their K-12 experience. I coded her explanation as intrigued when she said, "I already knew that students needed more than just the academic skills to be successful, but I learned through those years that student's ability to persevere and to be flexible to adjust to the demands of the class are first, difficult skills to obtain, and second, at very different levels for all of our students that we teach." Even after the difficulty of teaching during the pandemic, Brianna explained her philosophy that all students can learn in the right environment. She stated, "I have students now that are below grade level and they are able to thrive in a student-centered environment, and that is using a technology system and learning platform similar to what we used back during the Edgenuity days of teaching. I think that kids from all different learning styles and ability levels can learn using student-centered or teacher-centered styles, I think that all depends on the teacher and the system that is created for learning."

Jessica explained that several of the strategies she developed during the transition toward SCL remain integral parts of her classroom instruction model today. She detailed her whole-group review and instruction day when she described that "... every Monday I started doing this during personalized learning, every Monday I talked about we did a

teacher focused day and I always started off with, here are your reminders. So it's the first page on my agenda for the week." She felt disappointed and exasperated that after the transition toward SCL and after the pandemic that students were still required to be college ready at the end of their high school career instead of being prepared for college or for a job. She expressed that several key skills that students need to be successful are not taught through a traditional, teacher-centered style of instruction.

Jessica also discussed how her classroom instruction was changed through the skills she developed during the transition toward student-centered learning. She explained hands-on projects and tasks that her students complete today where they must collaborate with others and think critically about a problem in order to find the solutions. She was confident that good teaching will continue and clear that educators are mistrusted and undervalued in their work.

Rebekah's stories and experiences in teaching today were different than the other three participants. She struggled and was overwhelmed during the transition toward SCL, but she remained more positive about the future of education, and she was more appreciative of what she learned during the transition and how it helped her to grow as an educator. Rebekah explained that she was uncertain about how the current trend in education did not focus on individual student's strengths and growing their unique passions and interests. She tied this uncertain emotion to her transition experience stating that, "although the transition toward Edgenuity was frustrating, I know that it helped me focus on individual student data and their strengths. It makes me think that we are not doing enough for individual kids to be successful."

Besides emotions of uncertainty for the future of education, Rebekah described several reasons she was hopeful for her students and for education and things she learned from her transition toward SCL. She stated that “I think that when I look back at it now, I can see that we really tried to think about our students differently than we ever had before. We tried to see their strengths and their weaknesses, and we figured out who could keep up with the pace of instruction and who couldn't.” She shared that she learned that students could benefit from working together and collaborating because “it also allows them to show that there's more than one way to solve a problem so once to that may have you know one specific idea where a different student solves a problem differently and they both get the same answer at the end but they saw that with different strategies. So, it allows them to share different types of strategies, to communicate with each other.” Rebekah shared the most hopeful view of the future of using SCL in education when she explained that “I think that students need opportunities to explore their interests and to learn in hands-on and real-world ways, not just through listening or memorizing facts and dates. I do think that during the years of personalized learning [the district term for SCL] I was able to see what education could become, but I think that we have to figure out the technology piece.” She remained determined, even after teaching during the pandemic, that SCL could support student learning in a powerful way if it was set up correctly.

When Kim described her opinions and thoughts about teaching today and what types of instructional styles should be used, she chose TCL more than the other participants as an important instructional strategy. Kim attempted to explain the need for balance between teacher-centered and student-centered in a portion of her interview that I

used uncertain as the emotion code when she said “I feel like if you just throw it to the kids then there won't be clear expectations about what they're supposed to do. So, I think there has to be some oh, there's got to be some teacher-centered in there...I think that was one of the things with the student-centered learning experience was their kids felt like we couldn't help the way we were supposed to because everything was on the computer.” She went on to say, “I do think that the easiest way would be if it was all teacher-centered because then you're in control of everything. But with the way society is today the way kids are raised their meant to socialize with one another, so you have to have a time for them to work together.” Kim often focused on negative components of her experience in transitioning toward SCL and her emotions were primarily negative as she recalled those experiences. Near the end of her final interview as she worked to make meaning the transition toward SCL, Kim made a final hopeful statement and said, “during those years of transition toward personalized learning we really did teach kids valuable skills that were not a part of the curriculum. Now I think we also taught them some things not to do because of our missteps and mistakes, but that is a different conversation entirely.” Kim found positive components from her experience, but they often were spread out between more negative memories and stories from her experiences.

After completing my analysis of my participants' interviews using categorizing strategies, I searched for category relationships between the eight categories from the emotion coding process and the four categories from the in vivo coding work. I summarized the ideas and patterns in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Relationships from Categorizing Analysis



In Figure 15, I utilized the category relationship strategy and developed a connection between the categorizing strategies to use in the creation of themes from my work that I will discuss in Chapter 6. The eight emotion code categories are listed on the right side of the figure and are aligned with the in vivo coding category I believed they support. The figure displays the interconnectedness of the code categories within my work.

After I completed an analysis of my interview transcripts using connecting and categorizing strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008), I created four themes which I used to answer my research questions and explain the findings of my research. Additionally, I explained the connections of my findings to the literature, discussed limitations of my study, and explained lessons I learned and potential future research areas.

Chapter VI

CONNECTING CATEGORIES, COMMON THREADS, AND CREATING THEMES

Introduction

In this dissertation, I provided information on how teachers experienced the cognitive and practical shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL and addressed the culture of the classroom and how it affected the meaning teachers assigned to their experiences during this transition in instructional style. I addressed each of these components through in-depth interviews with four teachers who previously successfully transitioned to primarily SCL instruction at the same rural middle school between the 2013-2018 school years. Additionally, I created analytic memos to collect my reactions and responses to my participant's experiences and explanations. My dissertation and conclusions add to the understanding of the teacher experience through an instructional shift.

In this closing chapter, I discuss the themes I created through my analysis of the participants interview transcripts and my analytic memos, review the literature from Chapter 2 and discuss how my findings and analysis compare, and discuss my lessons learned, limitations, future research, and my final thoughts on my dissertation process.

Themes

To create themes from my data, I utilized both qualitative analysis strategies discussed by Maxwell and Miller (2008), categorizing and connecting strategies. From

my categorizing strategy of coding, I created four overarching code categories from in vivo coding and eight supportive code categories from emotion coding. I connected these code categories together in Figure 15. From my connecting strategy of creating and finding connections between narratives, I created seven common threads that connected my participant narratives together. From these code categories and common threads, I crafted themes from the data. According to Saldaña (2016), a theme is “... a condensed lesson of wisdom we formulate from our experiences that we pass along to other generations. Aesop’s fables have morals; our research tales have theories” (p. 278). I began the process of mapping the connections between code categories and the connecting ideas between participants narratives to determine themes supported from my work. I created four themes from this analysis of categorizing and connecting strategies from the data.

1. Participants needed clarity on daily routines, expectations of roles and learning, and support from a variety of sources to be successful and believe in themselves when changing instructional styles.
2. The education system is grounded in expectations from parents, teachers, and students that participants believed created pressure on them to use specific instructional styles and behave in a certain way.
3. Participants believed that nonacademic skills were an important part of the K-12 student experience and should be emphasized alongside academic content skills.

4. The culture of the classroom was an important part the connection that participants shared with their students and impacted the instructional choices participants made every day.

Themes 1, 2, and 4 were substantially influenced and impacted by the components of the culture of the classroom I defined for my research. I defined this as the unique set of roles and routine practices for the student and the teacher, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and the goals and expectations for student learning and the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills (Quinn, 2005). In Theme 3 I noted interactions my participants experienced with the hidden curriculum and how non-academic skill development was important to each of my participants. I discussed each theme in detail and provided excerpts from my participant transcripts in this section.

Theme 1: Clarity. Daily routines and expectations are created by the thousands of hours of experiences that each teacher had from their personal K-12 experience, college preparation, and teaching experience in their classroom. Participants had an expectation of their role, the role of their students, and what the learning environment should look like based on their individual experiences. As discussed previously, the components of the culture of the classroom for this study included the roles and routines of teachers and students and the expectations for what students learned (Quinn, 2005).

Their role as teachers was expected to be delivering information to students, setting the pace for student learning, and building relationships with their students to support their academic and social growth. The student role was expected to be learning information from the teacher, completing assignments from their teacher, and learning how to engage with the teacher and their peers. They expected the learning environment

to be organized and predictable for their students. Kim explained that during her teacher preparation experiences, “Most of the environments [from student teaching her junior and senior year were] heavily traditional with similar teaching styles in each building. Lots of direct instruction and teacher-guided lessons, then homework and a new type of activity the next day.” Brianna expressed that during her student teaching experience,

Most of the days were very similar. I can remember kids working individually on their warmup or opener, and then turning in their homework and us moving right into the lesson for the day. Students were on task for the most part, but they were very quiet, and the classroom was very structured. It was more like whole group instruction, and then just independent work.

These expectations were rooted in the culture of the classroom that each participant experienced as a student, during their teacher preparation experiences, and with previous classroom experiences before the transition toward primarily SCL. Phillip Jackson (1968) discussed in *Life in Classrooms* that teachers control the flow of the classroom, and each of my participants understood how to do this based on practice and training for their job.

When teachers were asked to shift their instructional style and change the classroom environment, they claimed to need something they were not given, including clear expectations, routines, and support to make the change occur effectively. Each of my participants discussed stories of frustration and being overwhelmed by the class structure or the learning model as a result of the lack of clarity around components of the culture of the classroom, including what learning would look like and what routines teachers could expect to experience during their day.

Both Brianna and Kim focused on the lack of clarity in their interview responses. Brianna discussed that she did not have clarity on her role during the transition. “I was just really frantic, and I felt like I didn't know what was expected of me or of my teaching. During open house that first year, we thought we would be teaching more than one grade level and then we changed that at the last minute, that was frustrating too.” In this story Brianna did not understand her role as the teacher and she also felt embarrassed for not having the information she felt she should have known as the teacher of the classroom. She went on to discuss her student’s frustration due to misunderstandings about their role as learners. “I think parents were just confused and upset, and kind of frustrated because of the change and any kind of change is going to be hard. I think that is why we had some major struggles with the entire transition, kids and parents were caught off guard and they didn't know what to expect.” When I asked Brianna if she was successful teaching in a primarily SCL environment she said, “I feel like I am more successful now [after moving back toward primarily TCL], than using the strategies with Edgenuity [primarily SCL]. Just because using Edgenuity was so new, and we were trying to figure it out.”

Kim explained that her students and their parents did not have clarity on their roles in the learning during the transition. She shared that, “I would have students and their parents for that matter that were frustrated with the system, and then because of that they were frustrated with everything else that we did.” She summarized her own frustration in the transition by saying that she was “... often frustrated, overwhelmed, I felt unsupported, and I wonder if I was truly prepared for an experience like that from my K-12 experience.” When I asked Kim if she was successful teaching in a primarily SCL

environment she said, “I don’t think I was a great teacher during the years of personalized learning. There was so much confusion about when and what to teach.”

John Kotter is a professor at Harvard Business school and an expert on the topics of leadership and change. In his book *Leading Change*, he discussed change management theory and an eight-stage process to lead effective change in an organization (2012). Step three of his eight-stage process is communicating the change vision and in this step Kotter explained that the leader must communicate the goals and direction clearly so that team members understand their place and expectations within the organization or group (Kotter, 2012). When my participants were not sure how to teach in their learning environment and were not clear on the components of the culture of the classroom, frustration and overwhelmed emotions surfaced. Administrators and district leaders’ ability to set clear guidelines and parameters and create an environment where teachers can gauge their success is an important part of a successful transition in instructional style.

Theme 2: Expectations and Pressure. The second theme refers to the expectations put on participants by administrators, parents, and the greater community around a school. These expectations, which are a component of the culture of the classroom, include the academic and nonacademic skills and content that students should know when they finish their K-12 experience. My participants described some of these expectations including high test scores, high coursework grades, and abilities such as communication and teamwork. They also described that these expectations often made it easier to teach using a TCL environment instead of an SCL environment due to the

uncertainty and misconceptions around SCL. All four of my participants discussed these expectations and pressure and how they affected their instructional choices.

Kim described the expectations and pressure from parents and students on her teaching practices during the transition toward primarily SCL instruction. She recalled a conversation from a parent-teacher conference where the parent and student were frustrated with the instructional techniques she was using in class. She recalled that,

We just didn't know what we were doing, or what we were supposed to be doing so many times during those years. I would sit in parent-teacher conferences and listen to students and their parents discuss how much they wanted us to "just teach the kids like we used to." We had to invent new ways of teaching and of engaging with our students, and I just think we didn't have the right training or support to be successful in that style of teaching.

Jessica wrestled with expectations and the pressures from administration during her transition toward SCL and the school years that she taught in a primarily SCL classroom following the transition. She discussed test scores several times during our interviews, and I noted in my memos that she felt pressure to help her students score well on the tests at the end of the year. When she discussed the first year of the transition she justified her work by telling me how her students did on the end of year assessments. She stated,

So, the year that we did that [2014-2015] was one of the highest and I don't remember if it was GA milestones or one of the years that we did CRCT, but it was one of the highest [scoring] years for me [on the end of year summative assessments].

Jessica was also frustrated during the transition toward primarily SCL by not being the sole provider of instruction for her students. She was unsure what they were learning from the LMS and she worked with the administration to create a classroom structure that was infused with TCL strategies, specifically more direct instruction. She stated in her narrative that,

So initially it was, they wanted them [our students] to all go at their own pace, they wanted this and this and this [administration asked for a long list of things] to happen. And after a few months, I went to our principal and I said “OK, this is exhausting, I cannot do this.” I said “I cannot, I am having to teach the children, like the same thing 140 times because I can’t teach it all at once. So, instead of me doing direct instruction for 10 or 15 minutes at the beginning of class, I am having to teach it 140 times over three days because they are all going at their own pace. So, I am actually hindering some kids from going on because I am having to do this one on one or two at a time, or three at a time, and it’s exhausting to do it that much.”

Rebekah experienced some of the same expectations and pressures that Kim and Jessica articulated in their interviews. She was frustrated during the primarily SCL school years and did not know how to help students learn.

Students would sit in the computer lab with their headphones on and their eyes glued to the screen and work through their lessons. In class I struggled to engage my students because I don’t really think anyone knew what their main purpose was. Like me or the students. Were they supposed to only learn from the lab, was I supposed to teach additional stuff? I didn’t really know.

She expressed that she did not believe she was successful during the primarily SCL school years because she didn't know how to help her students and she felt it was her responsibility to ensure that students learned at high levels in her classroom. She explained that,

I really struggled with my students not feeling successful and not understanding what I needed to do to help them. I felt like a failure because I was so used to knowing what strategies and practices would help my students and I think the technology, the Edgenuity, and how we tried to run the whole thing just didn't work out.

Brianna explained her struggles with meeting expectations and the pressure for her students to score well and learn at elevated levels. She shared that she was frustrated when she did not know all of the answers for her students and her parents. She felt like learning was not consistent across the year of primarily SCL environments. Like Jessica, she also discussed the value of the end-of-year assessments to determine how well she taught her students. She stated that,

I think my feelings of chaos and frustration probably come from not knowing the answer to questions that parents and students asked me, and then [from] changing what I was doing on a weekly basis, and I don't think that was good for kids either [the changes]. Sometimes I don't think we were listened to either as teachers and that was hard. I hope I am saying that right. I felt dumb sometimes for not understanding what we should have been doing or because I couldn't figure it out for my students. I think that for our students, that was a really tough couple of

years as well, but they seemed to have learned what they needed based on our state testing from those few years.

There was a disconnect between the expectations to teach in a TCL environment to develop high test scores and the choice to teach in an SCL environment where students would grow their nonacademic skills. My participants were under pressure from outside of their classroom to perform at certain levels and complete certain tasks, and were often uncomfortable when they were not in control of their classroom. Each of these pressures connects to the culture of the classroom and components discussed in this research. Administrators supporting an instructional shift can provide clear expectations and measures of success for their teachers to make the transition smoother.

Theme 3: Non-Academic Skills. I created the third theme by combining common thread number 3 from my connective strategies and from the code categories of focusing on students, assertive, and passionate. Kim, Jessica, Rebekah, and Brianna each detailed their opinions of what students should learn during their K-12 experience for academic skills like reading, and nonacademic skills like communication. It surprised me that when I asked teachers to discuss what they thought kids needed to learn or be able to do when they completed their K-12 experience, many of the items mentioned were not academic in nature. Many of the nonacademic skills they noted were supported by the research on SCL and its benefits for students including communication, collaboration, and student autonomy (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016; Cohen & Riel, 1989; Çubukcu, 2012; Estes et al., 2014; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). These social skills and soft skills are a component of the hidden curriculum I defined in Chapter 2. In the discussion of this theme, I used stories and experiences where my participants interacted with the hidden

curriculum, specifically social and soft skill development, during their transition toward primarily SCL instruction. My participants were not all convinced that they were successful in supporting their students to acquire these skills in their classroom during the primarily SCL school years while teaching academic content skills.

Kim expressed that communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution were important skills that students needed to acquire before they completed their K-12 experience. Kim shared that,

I think there's that, just being able to socialize with one another so they can build relationships and work with one another. I think being able to work together and talk to one another and being able to share their ideas in [a] manner that doesn't hurt each other's feelings [is important]. And where they can be honest with each other. Not all jobs are going to be behind a computer screen, you have to be able to work with others. I think that is one of the biggest [things kids need through their K-12 experience] is being able to work well with one another. And then the other pieces just kind of fall into place. Like [if] I'm not being a team player, if that's the word, it is going to be a long road ahead. Working together, conflict resolution. I think if you can't collaborate, if you can't work together, you're not going to be successful.

Some of the most important things that kids learn during their time in school are not a fact from social studies or a part of the cell in science, but they are the skills that kids need to live a long and happy life. They are the things that kids need to know how to do and the skills that kids need to work with others.

Jessica discussed communication and learning to coexist with others as two nonacademic skills that students need before the complete their K-12 experience. She felt strongly that students should learn how to work together and complete their work without getting emotional or upset. She stated that,

They have to learn to get along with people. You have to learn to get along with people. There are going to be plenty of people in life that you don't like and that you don't get along with, but you just have to learn to get along. You have to learn to do your job and go forward.

Rebekah expressed working together, respect, responsibility, and problem-solving as nonacademic skills that each students need to acquire before they complete their K-12 experience. She also discussed that these skills are often learned through SCL environments as students work in small groups or on complex projects. Rebekah stated that,

I think that kids learn a lot about being a real person during their K-12 experience. When you are in early grades you learn to share, and you learn how to get along with your friends and classmates. I guess really, they are still working on that in middle school too, (*laughs*). I think that kids learn how to get along with each other, and how to listen and work together even though that is not a part of the formal curriculum. They also used to learn respect and responsibility...When the kids are working in small groups they're learning those social skills and they're learning how to work with others to solve problems, so they get problem-solving skills [and] they're also learning to communicate with each other and they're interacting with each other. Just by sharing ideas with each other and sharing

their thoughts, that solidifies their understanding of specific concepts. So, I think that student-centered learning helps out in a tremendous amount of ways.

Brianna was my only participant who discussed research skills or the knowledge of how to find answers from sources as a skill that students needed to learn. She also detailed that dealing with problems and managing conflict were valuable nonacademic skills for students to learn during their K-12 experience. Brianna stated that students needed,

Definitely reading and writing, and the basic skills of that. And being able to, you may not know everything, but you know how to find the answers for what you are looking for. You know, the research skills. Definitely, you know, overview of social studies math and science. Again, you don't have to necessarily know everything but maybe have heard of it and you know how to get the information.

I feel like maybe more personable skills and like life skills [should be learned]. I think school is so important to who our students will become as adults, that's really why I enjoy it so much today. I know that I can make a difference in the lives of the students that I teach, not just through what I can teach them about reading and writing, but also just about dealing with problems and working with their peers. We talk and read so much about how to manage conflicts and why some things just aren't worth getting upset about. I think kids can learn how to interact, how to learn, not just to learn, but (*emphasizes*) how to learn something is such a valuable skill.

Through connecting and categorizing analysis strategies that I utilized, I identified the importance of nonacademic skills to each of my participants. They expressed that

students needed to be able to read, write, and compute basic math, however, they also each agreed that soft skills like communication, often taught implicitly, were equal if not more important than the content standards taught as a part of the K-12 curriculum.

Theme 4: Impact of the Culture of the Classroom. I created the final theme to bring together common threads across each narrative and coded sections where I identified the culture of the classroom impacting the instructional choices or learning experience for my participants and their students. I determined that the culture of the classroom directly affected the transition from primarily TCL to primarily SCL for my participants. The culture of the classroom for my study included the roles and routines of teachers and students, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and goals and expectations for student learning (Quinn, 2005). Each of these components impacted the transition toward primarily SCL for my participants.

My participants worked during the transition toward teaching in a primarily SCL classroom to create a stable physical environment and to connect with their students, which are two of the intricacies of schools discussed by Phillip Jackson (1968). My participants attempted to control the roles and routines of the classroom and developed expectations for student learning and behavior in the changing environment of their classroom. Kim, Jessica, and Rebekah shared experiences that detailed struggles with how the culture of the classroom and the culture of the school were altered as a result of the shift in instructional styles from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. Additionally, their stories expressed a preference for specific instructional strategies based on this culture.

Kim felt disconnected from her students in the new instructional model of teaching primarily SCL. She did not see her students every day and felt that she did not

make the deep connections with her students that she made in previous school years. Her expectations for relationships because of the changing roles in her classroom caused frustration. She stated that,

I know that I missed the connection with kids. I didn't really put my best foot forward when I was in school, and I always aim to help students find their place in school. Since I didn't see my students every day, it just felt different. I didn't think I was able to build the same relationships with my students in the different format of learning

Jessica found ways from the beginning of shift from primarily TCL to primarily SCL to create a more predictable classroom structure and routines for her students. After struggling to find ways to use direct instruction during the first few weeks of her transition in the 2014-2015 school year, she adjusted her instructional practices to provide a more structured model of learning. These changes included more strategies that were considered TCL from the review of constructivism and SCL in the conceptual framework from Chapter 2. Jessica attempted to create a routine physical environment for her students. Jessica stated that,

I suggested that I do a very general talk, or general thing [lesson] about this week [any week she was teaching]. This is what you need to accomplish and the basic general instructions on Monday for about 15 minutes, and then [she] work[ed] with small groups Tuesday and Thursday and then let them work individually. And he [her principal] said, "I can do that ... or do that." So, the kids did way better the next few months than they did during the first 6 weeks.

Rebekah described her struggle with not feeling connected to her students like she did in the past. She expressed the changing roles of the teacher and the student in her classroom, and she was frustrated and did not see her role as valuable. She shared that,

By far out of my 27 years of teaching that was the worst year [the 2013-2014 school year]. I feel like I wasn't teaching at all. I felt like the students were just supposed to be going in there and doing the work and you know, we were just going to fill in the blanks.

Throughout my narratives, the discussion of the culture of the classroom and its impact on my participants was evident. My participants worked to reconstruct the components of the classroom from their primarily TCL environment during the transition toward primarily SCL to create more consistency for themselves and their students.

These behaviors created more familiar roles for the teacher and the students in the classroom, as well as expectations and goals that were clearer to my participants in their primarily SCL classroom. Each of my participants learned in primarily TCL classrooms in their K-12 experience and in their teacher preparation courses. I do not believe these experiences adequately prepared them for the change in classroom structure and teacher environment they experienced as they transitioned their instructional style.

A secondary goal of my research was to determine if my themes, code categories, and connecting ideas were aligned with the current literature on the topics of the culture of the classroom, the hidden curriculum, and a constructivist approach to education. I reviewed each construct and the literature from Chapter 2 to determine how my study connected with or differed from the literature. Additionally, I added updated research

where applicable and discussed connections between my findings and the most current literature available.

Connections to Literature

In Chapter 2, I discussed literature pertaining to the culture of the classroom, the hidden curriculum, and the impact of a constructivist approach to education. The first of these topics discussed was the culture of the classroom. As previously discussed in this chapter, I defined the culture of the classroom as a combination of a definition of culture from Naomi Quinn (2005) and the descriptions of the intricacies of the classroom discussed by Phillip Jackson (1968) including the following:

1. A stable physical environment.
2. A social intimacy unmatched elsewhere in society.
3. The ritualistic cycle quality of activities carried out in the classroom.
4. The fact that students are forced to be in schools.

The definition of the culture of the classroom for my research was the unique set of roles and routine practices for the student and the teacher, the shared attitudes and values of the group, and the goals and expectations for student learning and the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills (Quinn, 2005).

As I reflected on the components of this definition, I could see from the connecting and categorizing strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) I used to analyze my data that the culture of the classroom had an impact on how my participants described and made meaning of the experience of transitioning toward a predominantly SCL environment. I discussed connections between the components and themes 1, 2, and 4 earlier in this chapter. My participants struggled when their physical environment was

changed through the addition of whole group learning labs and adjusted instructional delivery models, and they believed the roles and expectations of the teacher and student were changed. They also struggled when the social intimacy of the classroom was changed, and they didn't believe they were as needed by their students. My participants discussed the shifting expectations for their work and for their students and struggled with the changing elements of the classroom during the transition. My participants and the data from this research support that the culture of the classroom is important to teacher's beliefs about their teaching and each participant was affected by the changes in the components of the culture of the classroom.

The next topic discussed from my literature review in Chapter 2 was the hidden curriculum. I discussed researchers who theorized that the hidden curriculum was an implicit set of items learned through the experiences and actions of teachers in schools, but not explicitly taught to their students (Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1990; Dewey 1964; Henry, 1972; Martin, 1976). I determined that the elements of the hidden curriculum in my study were the unspoken expectations students will learn social and soft skills, power dynamics, and proper behaviors while at school. In interviews with my participants, they agreed that things are implicitly taught in education, but they each discussed that expectations for students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or race, should be high. Brianna stated that "... our students were faced with the unique challenge of learning how to really do all of their school experience in a new way. I think that unwritten rules exist in a lot of places, but school is definitely one of them where there are tons of things that are learned besides just math and ELA." Jessica reflected on things she learned that were not explicitly taught and said that "...I know that I learned

how to talk to other people and how to value people from those teachers as well. I think you can learn a lot that is not in the standards.” Jessica’s reflection connected to social and soft skills, as well as proper behaviors that she learned while in school. These were items she discussed that her students needed to learn as well.

Jules Henry (1972) posited that our system of education deters difficult questions and thinking for order to occur. This hidden curriculum of social aspects and personal characteristics exists within schools, although not as clearly visible as the learning of standards that are explicitly taught. My participants did not think that SCL was a tactic that only benefited a specific group of students. They discussed the opposite. My participants described that SCL environments where collaboration and thinking were encouraged benefited all groups of students. Brianna said that “ ... Students are going to be more willing to do things that they have decided they wanted to do so giving them choice, but also with stations or rotations with different activities.” However, my participants explained stories and experiences I coded into the Fear and Frustration code category due to the lack of clear expectations and routines which made teaching in and SCL environment more challenging during the transition. My participants described that SCL strategies had benefits for students but were often still frustrated by the transition toward teaching in an SCL classroom. They realized that the hidden curriculum existed and that items were taught that were not a part of the curriculum, but these realizations did not directly impact the experiences of my participants in their transition toward primarily SCL.

The final concept discussed in Chapter 2 was the constructivist approach to education and the impact that this approach has on students, teachers, and learning. The findings from the literature review for constructivism included.

1. The roles of the teacher shift from the main distributor of knowledge into a facilitator of the knowledge (Cattaneo, 2017), and some teachers preferred it (Çubukcu, 2012).
2. Using technology is paramount to the success of SCL as the change in how knowledge is delivered to students allowed the teacher to work in a support role needed to advance the SCL environment (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2016)
3. SCL classrooms benefited students in a variety of ways, including an increase of student goal setting (Estes et al., 2014; Lee & Hannafin, 2016), self-direction (Çubukcu, 2017), and problem-solving (Shieh & Chang, 2014)

After the analysis of data from this study, I determined that my participants felt fear and frustration around the shifting roles from distributor of knowledge to the facilitator of knowledge. Overwhelmed was one of the two code categories created during emotion coding for the time period of transitioning to SCL for my participants. Within this category were groups of codes that included undermined, undervalued, and uncertain. Coded segments from these categories included participant discussions on a lack of understanding of their role and discomfort at what their students knew because they did not teach them the information. I found that this element of the literature on

constructivism also connected to the culture of the classroom and the roles that my participants believed teachers and students should have.

Technology was a primary point of discussion in the experiences of my participants. In a recent qualitative study of novice teachers in 2019-2020, Many et al. (2022) found that technology usage by teachers was a key indicator for success in student-centered instruction. They determined that teachers who could leverage technology were more successful than teachers who could not. In my study, each of my participants had negative experiences with the technology platform used during their transition toward SCL. When I asked Jessica to describe her experience with the day during the week where she monitored her students as they learned on technology in a learning lab she stated that “And we all hated lab days, we all hated lab days, kids hated lab days, we hated lab days. Everybody hated lab day.” Kim explained that “Sometimes the intricacies or the quirks of the [learning management system] platform would get in the way of the instruction that we were aiming for. I would have students and their parents for that matter that were frustrated with the system, and then because of that they were frustrated with everything else that we did.” From the in vivo coding strategy, there were 23 coded segments across participant transcripts that I grouped together with the title *problems with technology*. This category was grouped with other similar code groups in the Fear and Frustration category. For the participants of my study, technology was a barrier to their SCL transition. This barrier was a change management issue and connects to the themes discussed previously in this chapter.

My participants confirmed some of the positive impacts of an SCL environment on their students discussed in the literature. Rebekah noted that SCL instruction “ ...

allows them to talk through a problem to share ideas with each other, one of the problems like we're talking about maybe a specific math problem. It also allows them to show that there's more than one way to solve a problem.” She went on to say that “ ... it allows them to share different types of strategies, to communicate with each other.” As Jessica reflected on the transition toward SCL she explained, “I do think that student-centered strategies often help to develop those soft skills I guess, the four C's, you know what I mean. In strictly teacher-centered you don't get much time to struggle or to collaborate or talk, so those skills are better developed through student-centered.”

I reviewed updated literature to increase the value of my discussion of the connection of my findings to current research. In a recent ethnographic case study, Koehler and Meeche (2022) analyzed survey data and conducted observations of college students completing a course in a student-centered instructional style. One of their themes created from data analysis was that their participants needed support in understanding, articulating, and reconciling expectations and roles in the SCL classroom. This theme aligns with my findings that my participants needed clarity on daily routines, expectations of roles and learning, and support from a variety of sources to be successful and believe in themselves when changing instructional styles.

In another recent study, Lee and Branch (2022) conducted a qualitative study with 11 college students in a student-centered learning environment with the goal of determining how students' beliefs about teaching and learning, or their implicit assumptions and understandings, impacted the experience of learning in a student-centered environment. They determined that student's beliefs could shift, especially if the instructor of the course was able to provide support for the new instructional style

(Lee & Branch, 2022). Similar to their findings, my participant's beliefs about the transition were impacted by the support they received from the administration at JSMS. I learned lessons through my experiences with this research. Some of these lessons were directly related to my findings and expectations for my research, while others were lessons I think could benefit other doctoral students as they seek to complete their dissertation.

Lessons Learned

I learned several lessons through data collection and analysis for this study. First, I realized that the culture of the classroom had a strong impact on my participants as they transitioned from primarily TCL to primarily SCL. I believed there would be a connection between the culture of the classroom and the transition toward SCL, but I did not anticipate that my participants' experiences would nearly all connect to the components of the culture of the classroom. The culture of the classroom, especially the roles and routines for teachers and students, were constantly discussed by my participants and impacted their opinions of how successful they were in transitioning their instructional style.

Second, I was surprised that my participants articulated the need for the skills that SCL environments helped students obtain. Yet, they were intimidated or apprehensive about changing their instructional style because of the deeply ingrained expectations of the culture of the classroom in their learning environment. They struggled with the changing roles of the teacher and student, and they needed help setting goals and supporting their students in the new learning style.

Finally, I learned that due to my previous transition from primarily TCL to SCL in the classroom, I had trouble gathering specific stories from some of my participants. However, I did not have trouble acquiring perceptions and opinions about the experiences and stories that my participants discussed. I believe this was due to the time between the transition experience and the interviews for my study, as well as that I was an insider in the group through my personal transition. I would caution other doctoral students conducting a narrative inquiry research study to carefully employ questioning strategies to gather specific stories from their participants. In addition to the lessons I learned, there were components of my study that could be considered limitations to my research. These limitations are discussed in the next section, followed by ideas for future research from my work.

Limitations

Although I answered each research question through my data analysis strategies, there were limitations to my research. First, the scope of my research was limited to a small group of teachers that experienced a similar transition toward predominantly SCL. A larger study could have included additional subjects and specific subgroups of students taught, such as students with disabilities or gifted students. Additionally, the experiences of my participants were limited to one school. There is a possibility that the leadership decisions and process for change management at JSMS impacted my participants' opinions of the transition. However, a more diverse group of teachers from different schools and regions would provide more information on this topic.

A second limitation was that the technology platform used at JSMS seemed to have a substantial impact on their experiences and their opinions of the transition toward

predominantly SCL instruction. Additional studies with limited use of a technology platform, or with a different learning management system could provide more information on the transition toward SCL instruction and the impact of technology on the transition. I believe I was successful in recommending ways to make the transition toward primarily SCL easier, smoother, and more effective for teachers and I provided ideas for administrators to support the transition of teaching styles in their school. Because of this success, there are several ideas and realizations from my study that could be further researched to better inform the transition process.

Future Research

If I were to continue this research, I believe that observations of classrooms either in transition toward SCL or that have previously made this transition, and interviews with students in these classes would provide more data and information to add to the findings and results of this research. Removing observations and focus group interviews because of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a major adjustment to data collection, and these additional data collection methods would create new angles to research this phenomenon. I believe that applying the themes created from this research to other situations where instructional changes with teachers occurred could provide information to better support teachers and their schools as they make these instructional shifts.

Additionally, my participants discussed technology, including its uses in the classroom and its role in student learning. Further research into how new technology platforms and artificial intelligence software programs impact learning and learning styles could provide valuable information for educators and administrators as these

platforms become more prominent. In the final section of this chapter, I will detail personal lessons learned and final thoughts about my dissertation journey.

Final Thoughts

Although I doubt any dissertation process would be complete without engaging with unanticipated problems and productive struggle, the timing of world events created a distraction and multiple alterations to my dissertation journey that I never anticipated nor was I prepared to overcome. I completed the defense of my proposal in the spring of 2020, just as we prepared to isolate for 2 weeks and then return to normal life. As a father of two elementary school children, the completion of the 2019-2020 school year and the next two school years ending with May of 2022 would be challenging and unique. As an administrator at a high school, I found new ways to use online meeting software, and my wife and I tried to figure out how to motivate a kindergartener to focus on his teacher online, while sitting in the basement of our home with our dogs barking upstairs because his school was closed due to COVID. The COVID-19 pandemic also brought major changes to life outside of school. Sports programs and teams paused. Weekends with my parents became virtual trivia contests to try to stay connected. Life as I knew it was fundamentally changed and remains that way in some respects today.

Inside the world of my dissertation, I struggled with a variety of aspects of my work. After receiving approval from my dissertation committee with Valdosta State in the spring of 2020, my school district did not allow any research to take place during the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year. My original plan to interview teachers, observe classrooms, and interview focus groups of students was also put on pause. I struggled during the 2020-2021 school year with my motivation to continue my dissertation work

and whether it would even be possible to complete my planned research with the uncertainty of the pandemic. I did not know when the chaos and interruptions to school would end. I did not know how the pandemic would affect my district's decision to allow me to conduct my research. I did not know how long I would have to wait to begin my research and I didn't know how much longer it would take to complete my dissertation. I reached a state of hopelessness and defeat with my dissertation work that I had never experienced during my educational career.

After taking time to refocus my personal and professional life, I began working with my dissertation committee to determine how I could adjust my dissertation during the spring of 2021. I needed to change my research style, because going into the school building and into classrooms was no longer an option nor was interviewing students. After several suggestions from my dissertation committee and reading new literature and resources, I changed my research style from ethnography to narrative inquiry. I then began rewriting my proposal components that required change and worked to secure the approval of my district to begin conducting interviews with teachers in the fall of 2021.

Through the process of this dissertation, I have grown to be more disciplined, developed skills to be a better listener, and gained a deeper understanding of how I make meaning of my personal experiences in both my K-12 journey and my personal experience of transitioning from predominantly TCL to predominantly SCL in my classroom as a teacher. This dissertation is the single most challenging thing that I have ever done in my life. The number of hours spent reading, writing, and editing this work is surely entire months of my life when added together.

First, through this dissertation I learned that discipline and holding myself accountable to the goals I set can allow me to complete tasks I never thought possible. I learned how to stack habits together to ensure I have a routine of writing, reading, or editing for my dissertation. Second, I learned to be a better listener and how to ask better questions through this work. With each interview that I completed, I became a better listener and a better interviewer. This has become a skill that benefits me both in my personal and my professional life. I am better at leading teams in my current position in my school district and I am better at asking questions and providing my children with the space to learn and mature without giving them my own answers to their problems. Finally, I have learned more about my personal journey as an educator and how I make meaning of my experiences through listening to the participants of my dissertation. Each participant had a unique way of making the transition toward predominantly SCL make sense to them, and I learned more about myself as a person through the stories that stand out to me from my individual experiences.

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Appendix A:
IRB Approval Letter



**Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants**

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04055-2020

Responsible Researcher(s): Mr. Joshua Heath

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Richard Schmertzing

Project Title: *The Transition from Teacher Centered Learning to Student Center Learning.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under **Category 2**. Your research study may begin 06.07.2021, a [REDACTED]. It is required that you abide by conditions outlined in the Letter of Cooperation received from [REDACTED] Policy, Planning and Systems Improvement, [REDACTED]. Should the nature of your research study change in such a way that exemption criteria no longer applies, you must consult with the IRB Administrator (tmwright@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of this research study all collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years.*
- *If additional locations are approved for data collection within [REDACTED], please email approvals as received.*
- *Name lists and pseudonym lists must be kept in separate secure files.*
- *Exempt protocol guidelines permit the recording of interviews provided the recording is made for the sole purpose of creating an accurate transcript. Recordings must be deleted from all devices.*
- *The research consent statement must be read aloud to each participant at the start of the interview session. The reading of the statement, confirmation of understanding, and willingness to participate must be included in the recording and documented in the transcript.*

If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *03.30.2021*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

*Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.*

Revised: 06.02.10

Redaction used for confidentiality reasons

Appendix B:
Email to Prospective Participant (Teacher)

Dear Teacher,

My name is Josh Heath, and I am currently working on my doctoral dissertation at Valdosta State University. Through my dissertation I hope to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers that have transitioned from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Through qualitative inquiry, I hope to learn from you how to help others make the same transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning in the most effective way possible.

If you are a certified teacher and consider yourself a person who transitioned from teacher-centered learning to using student-centered learning techniques as a primary mode of instruction, then I would love to talk to you.

I am looking for teachers who are willing to volunteer to participate in this exploratory journey. You will be asked to participate in three to five one-on-one interviews with me. Each will last 90 minutes and be located at a time that is convenient for you. Interviews will be held virtually using a skype video call.

If you are interested in participating in this study. Please send an email to me at jmheath@valdosta.edu stating your interest and an answer to the following questions:

- What grade/subject do you teach?
- How many years have you been teaching?
- How many years have you been at this school?

I will respond with a proposed time to meet individually to discuss the study and the structure of the research.

Thank you,

Josh Heath

Valdosta State Graduate Student

Appendix C:
Teacher Interview 1 Prompts

My data collection method will follow an open-ended interview process. Because of this, the nature of my questions should evolve as the conversation does. However, to ensure that all participants were asked at least some of the same questions, each question below was included in the interview process.

1. What do you remember about your K-12 school experience?
2. What specific things from elementary school do you remember about school and/or instruction?
3. What specific things from middle school do you remember about school and/or instruction?
4. What specific things from high school do you remember about school and/or instruction?
5. What instructional techniques stand out to you from any of the different levels of K-12 schooling that you remember?
6. What classes during your teacher preparation program do you remember about instruction or instructional strategies?
7. What instructional strategies were discussed in your teacher preparation courses?
8. What were your student teaching experiences like?

Appendix D:
Teacher Interview 2 Prompts

My data collection method followed an open-ended interview process. Because of this, the nature of my questions evolved as the conversation did. However, to ensure that all participants were asked at least some of the same questions, each question below was included in the interview process.

1. Describe what a typical instructional day looks like in your classroom?
2. What type of instructional strategies do you rely on the most for student learning to occur?
3. Why do you choose these strategies?
4. How do you know if the strategies are working in your classroom?
5. Describe for me the process of changing your instructional style toward student-centered learning.
6. What positives do you see in the instructional strategies within student-centered learning, and with teacher centered learning?
7. What negatives do you see in the instructional strategies within student-centered learning, and with teacher centered learning?
8. What are the biggest challenges that you face with teaching?
 - a. What is it about teaching in a teacher-centered or student-centered style that impacts these challenges?
9. Do you think that you have been successful in the transition toward student-centered learning?

Appendix E:
Teacher Interview 3 Prompts

My data collection method followed an open-ended interview process. Because of this, the nature of my questions evolved as the conversation did. However, to ensure that all participants were asked at least some of the same questions, each question below was included in the interview process.

1. What is your opinion of the current state of education today?
2. What characteristics or skills do you think are the most important for students to have when they have completed their K-12 education?
3. How does student-centered learning help students to reach these characteristics/skills that you discussed in question 2?
4. Describe your process of transitioning to the student-centered learning techniques that you currently use.
5. Which of the SCL strategies will you continue to use in the future?
6. Which of the two strategies, teacher-centered learning or student-centered learning, do you think is better for kids? Better for teachers? Explain.
7. What do you think the future of education will/should look like?
8. What do you think the future of instruction in the classroom will look like?

Appendix F:
Consent to Participate in Research

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Consent to Participate in Research
Teacher

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled "***The transition from teacher centered learning to student centered learning.***" This research project is being conducted by Josh Heath, a student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to *determine teacher and student perspectives in the transition from teacher centered learning practices to student centered learning practices.* Your participation is entirely voluntary.

As described in more detail below, we will ask you to participate in three, one-hour interviews. Someone in your position might be interested in participating because *participating in this research will allow students and teachers' perspectives and thoughts to be documented and facilitate future teachers and students as they perform the same transition.* Because there are some risks, such as *being nervous to discuss your true feelings with the researcher present,* you may not wish to participate. It is important for you to know that you can stop your participation at any time. More information about all aspects of this study is provided below.

This form includes detailed information to help you decide whether to participate in this *study.* Please read it carefully and ask any questions that you have before you agree to participate. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Procedures: Your participation will involve participating in three one hour interviews, for a total of three hours of participating time.

This study involves the researcher observing and interviewing participants to determine their perceptions and understanding of the transition toward student centered learning. No instructional strategies will be altered for research purposes. The observations and discussion will pertain to the typical instructional strategies used by the classroom teacher.

Possible Risks or Discomfort: This is a minimal risk research study. That means that the risks of participating are no more likely or serious than those you encounter in everyday activities. *You may be uncomfortable or uneasy discussing your opinions of student centered learning or teacher centered learning with the researcher. You may also be uneasy discussing your supervisors with the researcher. The risk level is minimal and will be protected using various safeguards listed below.* By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

Potential Benefits: *Although you will not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of the transition from teacher centered learning to student centered learning. Knowledge gained may contribute to addressing the transition from teacher centered learning to student centered learning and the perspectives of teachers and students as they transition.*

Costs and Compensation: *There are no costs to you and there is no compensation (no money, gifts, or services) for your participation in this research project.*

Assurance of Confidentiality: Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information.

There will be a 6 digit code attached to your name or answers in the audio recording. After being transcribed by me into the research data base, I will keep your information confidential and protected from unauthorized access by keeping the audio recording stored in a locked file cabinet at my home for the required three year time period. At the completion of this time period, I will physically destroy the recording, and place the destructed pieces into the trash.

The information from this research study will be reported as a combination of observed behaviors and conversations, teacher interview responses, and student responses from the focus group and no names of information about the participants will be individually identifiable. If you should decide to withdraw after data collection is complete, your information will be deleted from the database and will not be included in research results.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you agree now to participate and change your mind later, you are free to leave the study. Your decision not to participate at all or to stop participating at any time in the future will not have any effect on any rights you have or any services you are otherwise entitled to from Valdosta State University.

Information Contacts: Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to *Josh Heath* at jmheath@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Agreement to Participate: The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, I am indicating that I am 18 years of age or older. I have received a copy of this consent form.

