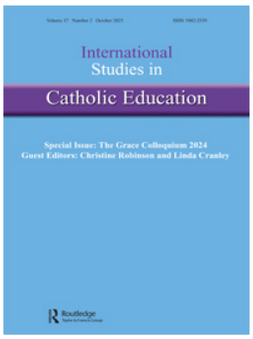

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Remote teaching and digital storytelling during COVID-19 as catalysts for teachers' holistic development

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This qualitative multiple case study focused on five teachers who completed a spring 2020 teacher education course, which centrally included a digital storytelling project. Digital stories are 2- to 5-minute multimedia projects, incorporating video, audio, text, and visuals to share a self-designed story. Digital storytelling can be formative, empowering educators to learn new technologies, express themselves creatively using multiple modalities, support their students in their own self-expression, and identify alternative modalities of instruction for learners. The teachers' digital stories focused on diverse topics, but they all conveyed a strong sense of identity and purpose as educators. This medium allowed teachers to build their professional identities in powerful ways.

Keywords: Teacher professional development; digital storytelling; whole person education; teacher resilience

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented change to schools in the United States and globally. As of 28 March 2020, 1.46 billion learners were affected worldwide by the pandemic, representing 83.6% of total enrolled learners (UNESCO 2021). Many teachers had to teach remotely for the first time in their careers, with little time for training or preparation. The pandemic also highlighted entrenched inequalities in education, as lower-income students faced greater barriers accessing quality education remotely.

COVID accelerated the trend, but there has been ongoing growth in online teaching and learning. For instance, in fall 2018, 5.7 million undergraduates, or 34% of all undergraduates enrolled in degree-seeking postsecondary education institutions in the United States, were enrolled in at least one online course, compared to 8% in 2000 and 20% in 2008 (U.S. Department of Education 2019). Thus, online learning will likely remain part of the future educational landscape.

Especially during periods of upheaval, educational approaches that adopt a holistic approach (Wortham et al. 2020) may be particularly important. One such approach is 'formative education,' which emphasises holistic development and student well-being by means of *cura personalis* or 'care of the whole person' (Casalini 2019). In the context of teacher education, there have been similar initiatives. Corcoran and O'Flaherty (2022), for example, call for increased attention to social-emotional learning after observing lower self-reported scores on purpose in life and positive interpersonal relationships among pre-service undergraduate teachers.

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The study describes how teachers created digital stories during the COVID-19 pandemic. We examine how teachers used digital storytelling to express themselves during the pandemic, and how storytelling provided an avenue for teachers' formation. We address two research questions:

(1) How do teachers compose digital stories in a teacher education course during the COVID-19 pandemic?
(2) How did teachers utilise or plan to use digital storytelling in their teaching?
(3) What are some of the central challenges faced by teachers adapting to a virtual environment because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Literature review

In this section, we review several areas of inquiry that informed our study of teachers' resilience during COVID-19 and the formative education that can take place through digital storytelling.

COVID-19 and remote teaching and learning

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted teaching and learning. The early pandemic was incredibly stressful for teachers, driving concerns about teacher burnout and retention (United Nations 2020). Hamilton et al. (2020) highlighted the range of stressors that teachers endured during this period. For example, 75% indicated that health concerns for themselves or their loved ones were a 'major' or 'moderate' concern.

These general feelings of stress and burnout might be related to gaps in the training and guidance teachers received when adjusting to virtual learning. While most teachers in the study received training on using virtual learning platforms and technology (62%), far fewer received training on promoting academic learning (42%) and supporting students' social and emotional well-being (28%) in a distance learning environment (Hamilton et al. 2020). Only 28% of teachers received training in providing accessible distance learning instruction to all students, regardless of whether they had internet access, electronic devices, or other home resources. Only 24% received training on engaging families in remote instruction. There were clearly considerable gaps in the training provided to teachers (Hamilton et al. 2020).

As in other context, in the online environment teachers play a critical role in supporting students' learning. Since most teachers are formally trained for in-person classroom environments, teachers must refine their 'teacher-self,' or their identity as a teacher, as they transition to online learning (Baran, Correia, and Thompson 2011, 435). While teachers can utilise many of their in-person skills when teaching online, the online environment poses many new challenges, since teachers must balance multiple responsibilities including course manager, instructional designer, and technical support (Baran, Correia, and Thompson 2011).

Farmer and West (2019) identified challenges including: lack of physical boundaries between work and home made it difficult for teachers to balance their time; challenges with the learning management system, which did not allow the teachers to personalise the course; poor student attendance; student challenges including economic issues, anxiety, medical issues, and learning disabilities; struggles with communications between the teacher and students/parents; and building relationships with students.

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 global pandemic challenged teachers' ability to adapt to new circumstances. Teachers had to draw upon their experience and quickly adapt their in-person instruction to a remote environment. This need to quickly adapt tested teachers' resiliency. Brunetti (2006) defines resilience as 'a quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks' (813). Gu and Day (2013) add that teacher resilience is closely related to their ability to maintain their vocational purpose in the face of uncertainty.

When teachers remain resilient and successfully adapt to online teaching, they generally experience positive outcomes. In a survey of 65 teachers, Roblyer et al. (2009) found that 75% felt that their experiences with teaching online improved their face-to-face teaching. Online teaching led to increased utilisation of technology in face-to-face learning environments, a greater emphasis on student-centred teaching, and more empathy for their students. A recent study of 200 Dutch teachers by Van der Spoel et al. (2020) found that teaching online brought greater awareness about how technology could be utilised to support student learning. The Dutch teachers also appreciated the flexibility that came from teaching online and opportunities for differentiated instruction.

Formative education

There has been growing attention to comprehensive educational approaches that recognise that the aims of education extend beyond intellectual growth (Wortham et al. 2020). While there are multiple comprehensive approaches including social-emotional learning, positive education, and character education (Wortham et al. 2020), we focus on 'formative education,' which has roots in Jesuit educational philosophies concerning human nature and flourishing (O'Malley 2015). In Jesuit education, students should be 'formed in all aspects of their persons' (Casalini 2019, 130). Through this care for the whole person, or *cura personalis*, students are equipped with the skills needed to contribute to their communities (Geger 2014; O'Malley 2015).

Formative education has three interrelated components: (1) wholeness, (2) purpose, and (3) community. First, wholeness refers to how formative education supports the development of students' minds, hearts, and spirits through the holistic integration of intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional, and moral dimensions of student development and human flourishing, rather than prioritising the development of skills and knowledge (Boston College 2007). Second, formative education provides opportunities for students to reflect on their life purpose and 'discern' how their talents can be used to support the needs of humanity, guiding them to make decisions that will lead to greater personal fulfilment (O'Malley 2015). Third, while formation is highly personal, it takes place in a broader community with 'companions' who guide students in their pursuit of purpose and holistic development (Kolvenbach 2007).

In one qualitative study of 37 college faculty, Kim et al. (2021a) identified three teaching approaches that faculty used to enact formative education in an online environment. First, faculty enacted an *empathic* approach, meaning that they centred students' complex emotions in their interactions with students inside and outside the classroom (e.g. recognising students might have experienced loss within their family, gently reaching out to students who missed class). Second, faculty

enacted a *reflective* approach by facilitating deep inquiry and inspiring connections between the course and the broader social world (e.g. developing creative activities to support students' emotional expression). Third, faculty enacted an *adaptive* approach through flexibility in adjusting their courses to optimally meet students' needs (e.g. modifying final projects to increase flexibility, holding office hours at alternative times for students living in other time zones).

Digital storytelling for professional development

Incorporating multiple modes of instruction, or multimodalities, into the classroom provides alternative avenues for students to express their ideas and to demonstrate their learning (Kim and Mannion 2018; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). For instance, students can engage in multimodal composition, meaning 'activities that engage learners in the use of digital tools to construct texts in multiple semiotic modes, including writing, image, and sound' (Hafner 2015, 487). One multimodal composition tool is a digital story, which combines visuals (e.g. pictures, images, animation, text) and audio (e.g. music, narrative voiceover) into a two-to-five-minute multimedia movie (Kim and Jia 2020; Kim and Li 2021).

Digital stories are often understood and analysed through their use of visual 'grammar,' which Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) describe as 'the way in which depicted elements – people, places and things – combine in visual 'statements' of greater or lesser complexity and extension' (1). The structure of this visual grammar guides the viewer toward interpreting the digital story in a particular way.

Educators can use digital stories in the classroom to foster their students' identity development while providing an avenue for students to express their experiences and emotions through multimedia (Kim and Mannion 2018; Hafner 2014; Hull and Katz 2006; Yang 2012). Digital storytelling offers a safe outlet for students to work through challenging personal issues and experiences (Kim and Jia 2020). For example, Kim and Jia (2020) demonstrates how digital stories can be used to teach students from immigrant families about mental health. Teachers' digital competencies also play a role in their ability to adapt to online learning during COVID-19 (König, Jäger-Biela, and Glutsch 2020). Indeed, when teachers engage in critical reflection about technology, they might feel empowered to further incorporate innovative technology into their classroom (Baran, Correia, and Thompson 2011).

Methodology

Utilising a qualitative multiple case study design (Yin 2009), the current study examines the central challenges that teachers experienced in adapting to a virtual environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their composition of digital stories during this same period, and their plans for utilising digital storytelling. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the principal investigator's institution, all participants provided consent to participate, and all names are pseudonyms.

Participants

Five participants, graduate students in teacher education, participated in the research study, four identifying as female and one identifying as male. Participants were

selected via purposive sampling (Merriam and Tisdell 2015). The two criteria for inclusion were enrolment in a spring 2020 teacher education course and agreeing to participate in the study.

Participants completed a teacher education course where digital storytelling, as a final assignment for the course, was used to help them understand multimodal communication and ways to effectively communicate information and amplify the voices of others. While one participant taught at a camp for burn victims, the other teachers taught at traditional brick-and-mortal schools. Table 1 provides information about the participants.

Data collection

Data sources were semi-structured interviews, course artifacts, and classroom observations. In late spring/early summer 2020, the five teachers participated in a 45- to 60-minute interview with one researcher. The interview topics included teachers' backgrounds, their experiences teaching during the pandemic (impact on them as teachers and impact on their students), their process creating the digital storytelling project, and how they had or planned to incorporate digital storytelling into their teaching. All interviews were transcribed. The course artifacts were the digital stories that students developed for their final project in a spring 2020 teacher education course. The final source of data was the classroom observations conducted by one author who was the instructor for the teacher education course.

Data analysis

Consistent with multiple case study methods, we began the analysis by looking within each case before making cross-case comparisons (Yin 2009). Interview data were analysed following an iterative process, in which codes were identified inductively and refined as data analysis progressed (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Specifically, we utilised constant comparative methodology, in which data are first open coded by 'breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data' (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 116). Next, using axial coding, we made connections between the open codes. Following axial coding, we used selective coding to identify core categories, while also 'systematically relating [the core categories] to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development' (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 116). After completing this coding

Table 1. Participant backgrounds and digital storytelling topics

Teacher	Gender	Teaching Context	Digital Storytelling Topic
Amy	Female	Elementary school English language support specialist	Teaching English as a Peace Corps member
Isabelle	Female	Burn survivor camp for children 7 through 17	Art of egg decorating, 'pysanky,' an important part of Ukrainian culture
Joseph	Male	Elementary school newcomer students (English learners)	Experience of English language learners
Mary	Female	Middle school mathematics	Teaching virtually during COVID
Sarah	Female	Middle school English as a Second Language	Experience of English language learners

process, we identified several themes including content delivery, students' participation and engagement, changing pedagogy, parental involvement, and learning digital storytelling.

Next, we adopted Kim's (2021b) digital storytelling analytic framework to explore the content of the digital stories along four dimensions: Representational/Ideational (i.e. what happened, location, characters/objects), Interpersonal/Interactive (i.e. relationships between content and viewer and/or between characters/objects and the author), Compositional/Textual (i.e. assembly of the story), and Sociocultural/Ideological (i.e. social context of the story, author's identity). See Kim et al. (2021b) for a detailed description of the framework, including foundational work from Unsworth (2001) and Serafini (2015a; 2015b). The interview data and the digital stories were the primary data sources, and observations were used to triangulate the findings, increasing trustworthiness (Merriam and Tisdell 2015).

Results

This study explored the obstacles that teachers encountered in the transition to remote learning during the early COVID-19 pandemic, the content of teachers' digital stories, and how teachers envisioned using DST in their own classrooms. The results indicate that teachers encountered a range of obstacles, including content delivery, changing pedagogy, and student engagement, but also that they remained resilient in adapting to remote teaching. In addition, teachers used digital storytelling as a reflective and pedagogical tool.

General challenges in online teaching during COVID-19

Moving to remote learning presented teachers with various challenges that took an emotional toll. Despite her 18 years of teaching experience, Sarah explained that 'These last couple of months have definitely been the hardest, the most time-consuming, [and] the most emotionally draining.' Many teachers provided instruction online for the first time, learning to navigate the uncertainty and ambiguity of the unknown. Joseph described this feeling as 'not having a clear idea of how long we were going to be doing it [remote instruction].' District policies were also constantly being revised, in response to the ongoing pandemic, contributing to a constant state of flux.

As an instructor for English language learners (ELLs), Amy was accustomed to casual side conversations with her co-teachers and teaching support personnel throughout the workday. These missing interactions made it more challenging to plan meaningful lessons spontaneously. Moreover, teachers were used to dynamic interactions with students in person, answering questions and having face-to-face dialogue. Teachers realised that some of their in-person mannerisms were lost when teaching online.

Content delivery

For many teachers, it was challenging to adjust to new technology and instructional platforms for content delivery. Sometimes, due to teacher variation in instructional platforms, students had to switch between platforms throughout the day, leading to confusion. Some teachers only had a day or two to prepare for the transition while

others had a week. This preparation also affected students' families, who needed to understand what was happening and how they could support students.

One of the greatest barriers to delivering content was technology and internet access. As Joseph explained, 'The biggest barrier initially was just getting kids tech. So many families didn't have computers or tablets or anything. And it's impossible to do remote learning without technology.' Sarah recounted how she drove to a student's house to deliver his math packet since he did not have access to the necessary technology. Ultimately, many schools provided students Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots. Some schools formed partnerships with companies, such as Comcast, that offered a free Wi-Fi programme for 'vulnerable communities.' Yet, even this approach was not sufficient for some families, as some schools only provided one Chromebook per family, regardless of the number of students in that family. Another school was fortunate to have secured a grant from Verizon Wireless in early 2020 that made the transition easier because each student already had an electronic device and Wi-Fi.

Students' participation and engagement

Remote learning provided a significant challenge in motivating and encouraging students to remain engaged. For example, technology access issues prevented students from accessing materials or attending classes. All four teachers in traditional classroom settings mentioned that some students were absent during synchronous live sessions. The average attendance for synchronous sessions was approximately 45%, across four teachers, ranging from approximately 25% to 60%. Some teachers could track down some students, but it appeared to be easy for students to fall through the cracks. Furthermore, during synchronous sessions students, many students tended to keep their videos off, so teachers could not see or interact with them. One teacher expressed frustration when her district decided that coursework during this period would not impact whether students progressed to the next level, as this reduced students' motivation to complete assignments.

Changing pedagogy & expectations

COVID-19 disruptions challenged many teachers, as they struggled to organise classes and provide material that would help students learn. However, these challenges also presented opportunities.

Creativity with assignments

Teachers learned to be creative with assignments. Lessons had to be changed in accordance with district rules. Some districts required that no direct instruction be offered via video, to ensure that students were not left out. Some teachers had to condense their lessons into five-minute videos for students to watch independently. As Mary explained, 'I [am] going to change to make my students more independent learners instead of so dependent on me or, or any teacher for that matter.' Hence, Mary viewed this as an opportunity to reconsider how to best support students' optimal development. In relation, Joseph explained how remote instruction increased students' digital literacy, by offering them opportunities to '[develop] a fluency with technology that they wouldn't have otherwise.'

Teachers also had to identify and learn new approaches to connect with students, leading teachers to develop 'this whole other tool bank,' as Mary described. The focus turned from preparing long lesson plans toward assisting individual students. This focus on individual students' needs led Mary to consider how technology could facilitate differentiated instruction. Mary elaborated, 'Your students can just be plugged in and working on whatever you've set [up] for them [to do].' Additionally, Mary also described her desire to foster additional opportunities for collaboration and communication among students in remote learning environments. In a camp setting, Isabelle had to be creative in terms of getting materials to students and creating more activities that were online and web based.

Learning what content is essential

Since they were not physically in the classroom, teachers offered more feedback on students' written assignments. As Sarah explained, 'So then everything that they submit, I tried to give them feedback, so they know how they're doing.' While helpful for students, this extensive feedback was time consuming for teachers. Consequently, teachers realised that it was most prudent to focus on what was essential for students. Sarah said, 'Let's just do what is the most important and not overwhelm the kids, and make sure that they have connections and they're okay,' highlighting her desire to prioritise students' emotional wellbeing.

Diminished student progress

Rather than covering new material, some teachers returned to aspects of the curriculum that they had already taught earlier, before moving to remote instruction. Joseph described this as 'spiraling back to curriculum we already studied earlier in the school year when we were in the building.' Additionally, some school districts transitioned to pass-fail classes. The absence of letter grades seemed to negatively impact students' motivation and engagement in class. As Mary explained, 'My students are really motivated by grades and so, because they're not getting a grade, they do not see it as valuable.' Mary was concerned about how this would impact students' long-term performance in mathematics. To motivate them to work harder despite the lack of letter grades, she warned her students, 'You're going to go into the next year and you're not going to have learned an entire quarter of the school year. That's going to be really hard for you.' Despite this warning, students still seemed unmotivated, because the consequences of poor performance were not immediately apparent.

Digital storytelling composition

Participants completed a teacher education course where digital storytelling was used to help educators understand multimodal communication and ways to effectively communicate information and amplify the voices of others.

Teachers' digital stories

Teachers' stories varied in content. Mary was the only teacher who used the project to discuss teaching during COVID-19. Joseph and Sarah's stories focused on the experiences of ELLs, while Amy's story focused on her experience as an English teacher in

the Peace Corps. Finally, Isabelle's story focused on the art of egg decorating, 'pysanky,' that is an important part of Ukrainian culture.

'O'lou Igoa – My Name' by Amy

Amy's story focused on her experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in Samoa. While Amy dreamed of joining the Peace Corps since high school, when she reached her volunteer site, she struggled to feel a sense of belonging with her new community, including her fellow teachers and the school principal. Amy considered leaving the Peace Corps every day during her first year. However, she ultimately took a leap of faith and dedicated herself completely to her teaching and building relationships with colleagues who she eventually described as her 'dear friends.' Indeed, Amy said, 'Samoa felt like home.' Amy gave her entire farewell speech to the Samoan community in Samoan. In her digital story, Amy said, 'I will never forget you! Samoa will remain forever in my heart!' and 'Samoa is the place where I transformed through the toughest job I ever loved.'

'Writing Ukrainian Pysanky: The Gift of Language and Culture in Symbols' by Isabelle

Isabelle's digital story describes an important Ukrainian tradition, 'pysanky,' the art of egg decorating. These eggs, representing rebirth, are given to family and friends during the Easter season. Pysanky is characterised by its language of symbols and colours. While decorating the egg using the 'Kistka' writing instrument, artists should think about the individual that they are decorating the egg for and the messages that they intend to communicate through their selection of symbols and colours.

'Sofia's Big Moment' by Joseph*

Joseph's digital story focuses on the experience of a young girl in his class named Sofia. Sofia is sad because her mother is in Honduras, while Sofia lives in the United States with her father. The beginning of the video describes how Sofia feels excluded by her classmates. However, later, Sofia excitedly shares a playful story to her teacher during a math lesson. Sofia describes an argument she had with another child while playing a video game. While he pulled her hair, she dipped his video game controller into a paint can. Joseph explains that this was 'the happiest [he] ever saw [Sofia].'

'What's It Like Being a Teacher During COVID-19' by Mary

Mary focused on her emotional experience as a teacher during the pandemic. Mary steadfastly created engaging classroom content, but soon realised that her students were encountering significant economic barriers and inequalities that hindered their participation. For example, some students cared for younger siblings while their parents worked, while others worked themselves. Mary described a student who expressed gratitude for helping him understand the material, with a screaming baby in the background. Mary concluded that 'Even in the toughest moments when you want to give up know that you are making a difference for someone, so we just can't stop.'

'English Language Learners at [Anonymous] Upper Middle School' by Sarah

Sarah focuses on the experiences and backgrounds of diverse ELLs at Sarah's school who come from 13 countries and speak 11 languages (excluding English). Students have lived in the United States for three months to four years. Most students moved to the United States due to employment opportunities for their parents and a better quality of life. Sarah's students describe various challenges encountered in the United States, including not speaking English very well, not having many friends, and adjusting to differences in the academic grading system. Sarah's students offered three pieces of advice for how teachers could better support ELLs: know and respect students' cultures; support students' self-esteem; and be aware of students' current language development by understanding what they can do in English and their native language.

Multiple-case analysis of digital story themes

Analysing themes across the digital stories can provide insights into shared inner experiences, perspectives, and attitudes among teachers during the early COVID-19 pandemic.

Representational perspective

All teachers except Isabelle, whose story was primarily set in her home, focused on classroom environments. While Mary primarily focused on virtual classrooms, Amy, Joseph, and Sarah primarily focused on in-person learning. All videos incorporated students. In Isabelle's case, the students were family members, while the other teachers included students in schools.

In terms of topics, all five teachers incorporated culture and language to varying extents. In Amy's case, this involved her experience learning a new language and culture in Samoa, while Joseph and Sarah focused on their students' experiences adjusting to new cultural environments in the United States while learning English. Mary focused on the challenges related to adapting from the cultural expectations related to in person versus virtual schooling, as well as unique challenges encountered by English learners in virtual environments. Isabelle's video was a celebration of Ukrainian cultural traditions.

Second, all five stories focused on resiliency in varying ways. Amy and Mary focus on their personal resiliency as teachers. While Amy discusses her internal struggle in deciding whether she wanted to leave the Peace Corps early, Mary described many discouraging points in her online teaching journey that required strong resilience. Joseph and Sarah's stories focus on the resiliency of ELLs more broadly. Additionally, Isabelle's celebration of a Ukrainian cultural tradition is a testament to the resiliency of immigrant families.

A third theme in three of the five videos related to sense of belonging. Amy described the sense of isolation she felt when she first joined the school community in Samoa. Later, however, Amy began to develop stronger relationships with school personnel and to participate in the choir. Joseph's story centred around one of his students, Sofia, who was initially very shy and felt excluded by other children, but later developed more confidence. Additionally, Sarah's story focused on the experiences of English learners in the United States, including some of the challenges

they experienced adapting to the United States and their recommendations for how their teachers could better support them.

The fourth theme in two of the five stories pertained to broad concerns about students' wellbeing. In describing the challenges that she encountered adapting to virtual teaching, Mary also expressed concern for the challenges her students were experiencing during the early period of the pandemic, in particular. For example, some middle-school students were responsible for caring for their younger siblings, while some students struggled to access technology. Sarah's story also emphasised that attending to ELLs' social and emotional wellbeing was even more important than attending to their intellectual needs.

Interpersonal perspective

With respect to the interpersonal perspective, Isabelle creates a high degree of intimacy with her viewer through close-up shots of her hands (see Figure 1), as well as close-up images of her family, whereas Sarah includes close-up shots of her students' faces (Figure 2). Amy, Joseph, and Mary change the interpersonal perspective throughout the video. The first part of Amy's story included more images of Amy alone or looking at others from the outside (Figure 3), the latter of which creates a distance for the viewer. Later, Amy is represented as a member of the Samoan community (Figure 4), as there is no longer a distance between Amy and other community members. In Joseph's case, the gaze of the young girl, Sofia, serves as an indicator of her confidence. Early in the video, a young girl is looking out the window away from the viewer, creating distance (Figure 5). In comparison, at the end of the video, Sofia is staring straight at the camera, eye level with the viewer, indicating growing confidence (Figure 6). Finally, Mary included wide-angle images of her students having fun at the beginning of her

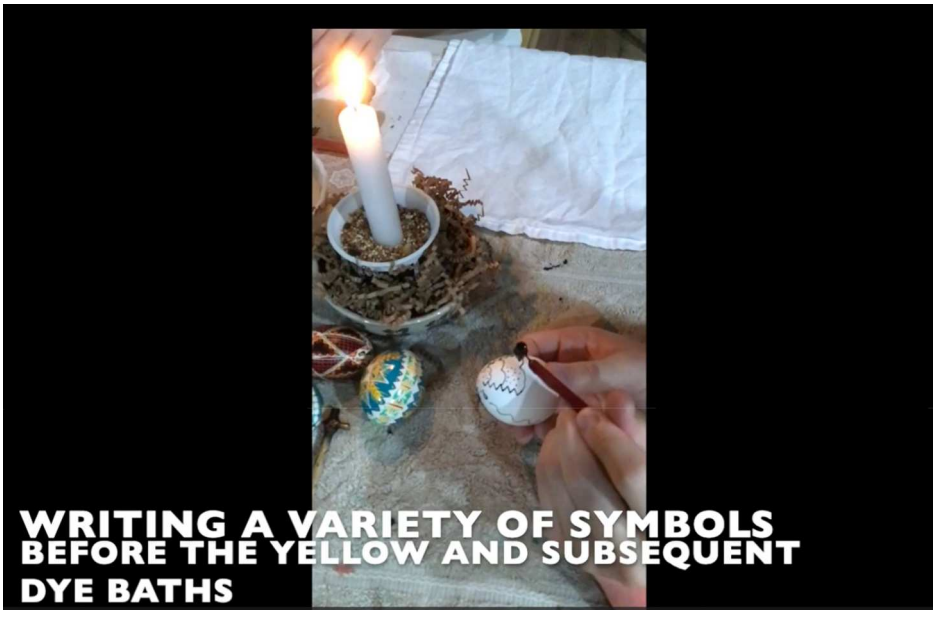

Figure 1. Isabelle's Interpersonal Perspective.

Figure 2. Sarah's Interpersonal Perspective.

story before the pandemic started (Figure 7). These images place the viewer as a spectator, but there is intimacy among the students, since they are gazing at one another. In the middle of the video, there are no images of students, but some close-up shots of Mary's face, fostering intimacy between Mary and the viewer (Figure 8). The video ends with a wide-angle image of Mary's students, staring and smiling directly at the camera, fostering intimacy between the students and the viewer (Figure 9).

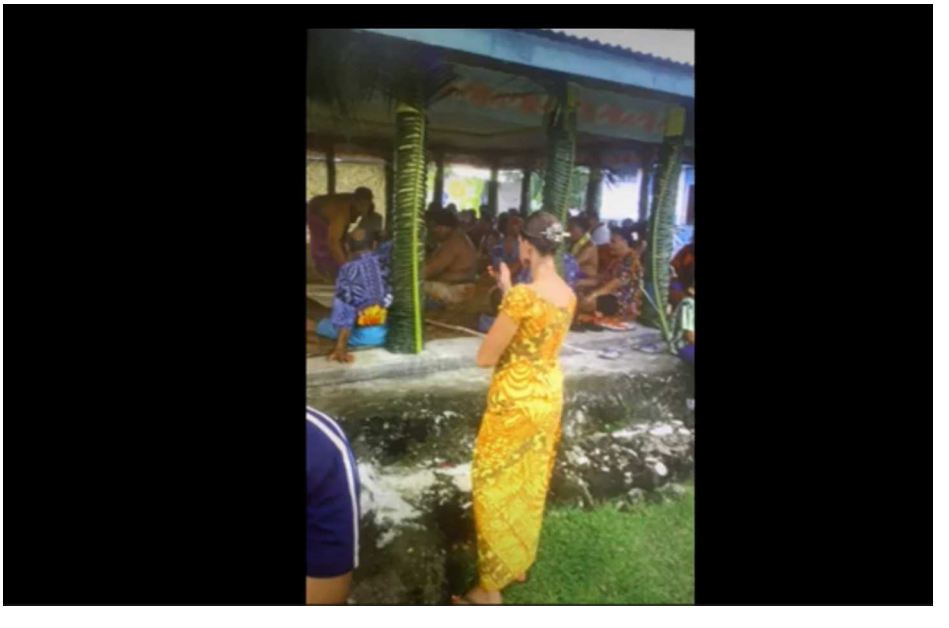

Figure 3. Amy's Interpersonal Perspective – Early Stage.

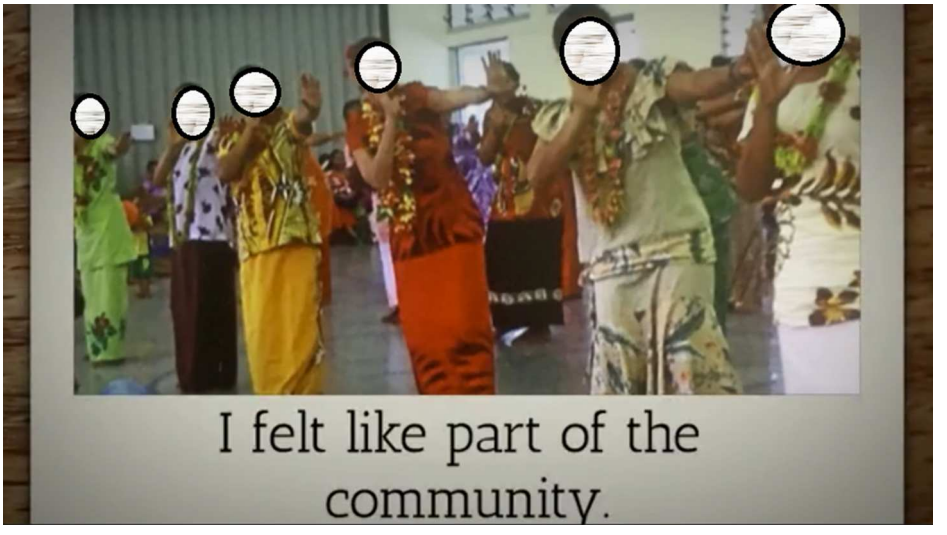

Figure 4. Amy's Interpersonal Perspective – Late Stage.

Figure 5. Joseph's Interpersonal Perspective – Early Stage.

Compositional perspective

All five teachers incorporated music into their videos. Three teachers used consistent music throughout the video. Isabelle played Ukrainian music softly throughout the video. Sarah and Amy both used one song/beat throughout their stories, but intermittently turned the music off. For instance, Sarah used upbeat music in the background during her voice over but turned it off when her students were speaking. In contrast, when Amy was not providing voice over, she played Samoan music in the background. When Samoan music was playing, Amy conveyed her thoughts using written text.

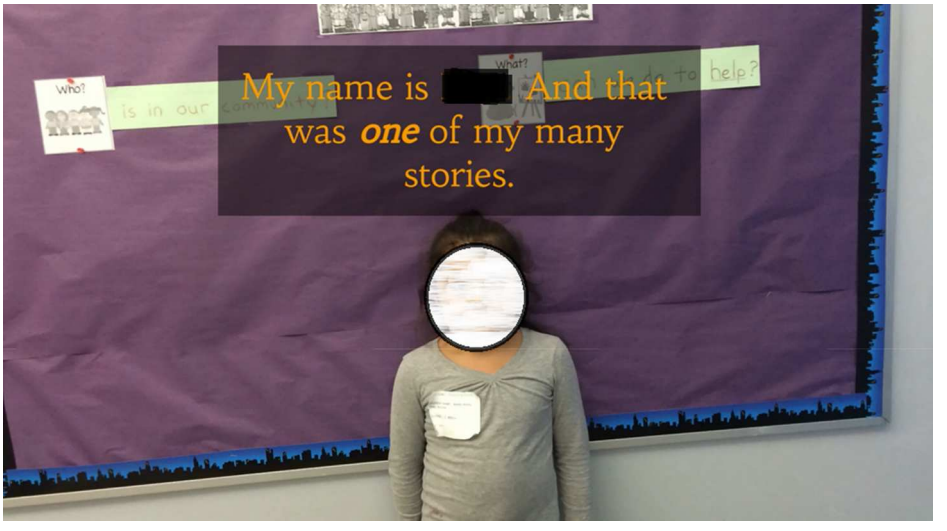

Figure 6. Joseph's Interpersonal Perspective – Late Stage.

Figure 7. Mary's Interpersonal Perspective – Early Stage.

In contrast, Joseph and Mary used music to convey key transitions. For example, Joseph used gloomy music in the first part of the story when describing Sofia's sense of isolation, but he transitioned to upbeat music in the second part when Sofia felt confident to share an exciting story with her peers. In contrast, Mary begins with upbeat hip hop music to signal the joyous period before the COVID-19 pandemic to sullen music when the pandemic begins. Mary's video ends with more neutral or upbeat tonal music, when she discusses how she will remain resilient despite the challenges encountered in virtual teaching.

In addition to music, Amy, Isabelle, and Joseph both incorporate written Samoan (Figure 10), Ukrainian (Figure 11), and Spanish (Figure 12) words, respectively, to

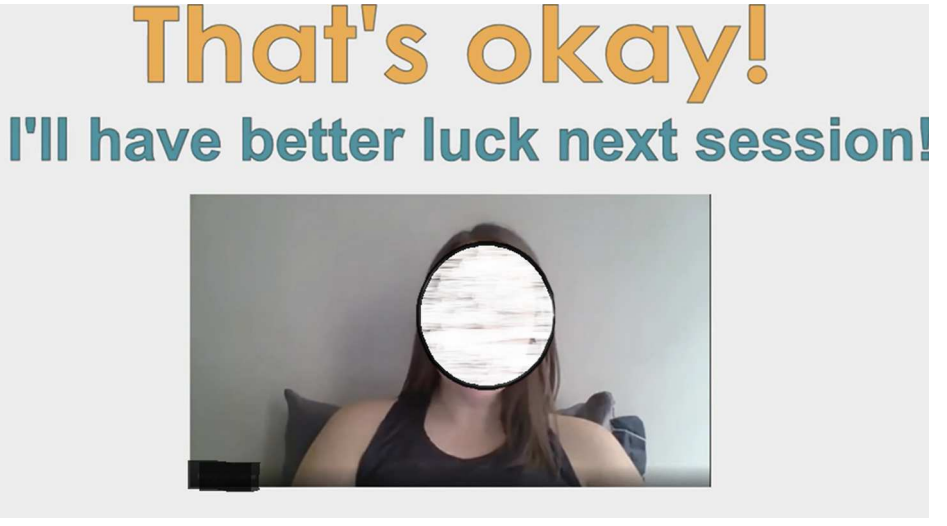

Figure 8. Mary's Interpersonal Perspective – Middle Stage.

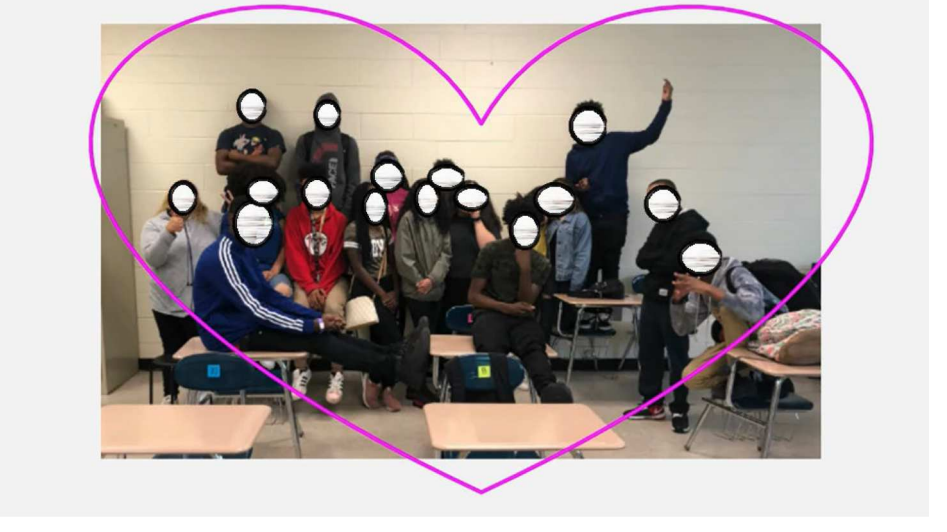

Figure 9. Mary's Interpersonal Perspective – Late Stage.

reflect either their host country's, their own, or their student's cultural heritage, respectively. Isabelle also displays symbols as another form of language (Figure 13). Sarah incorporates charts and graphs in her story to underscore that she is sharing information collected methodically (Figure 14). Mary and Sarah also incorporate written text that corresponds to students' feedback about online learning (Figure 15) and their experience as ELLs (Figure 16), respectively. Moreover, Joseph (Figure 17) and Mary (Figure 18) both use cartoons to convey exaggerated emotions.

Figure 10. Amy's Compositional Perspective – Integrating Samoan Language.

Figure 11. Isabelle's Compositional Perspective – Integrating Ukrainian Language.

Sociocultural perspective

Regarding the sociocultural perspective, participants' videos underscored the critical role of socioeconomic status and/or cultural background status in education. With respect to socioeconomic status, Mary described how some students did not have access to technology which impeded their classroom engagement. Similarly, Sarah described how many students came to the U.S. due to economic opportunities and Joseph's student Sofia was separated from her mother, while in the U.S. with her father who is presumably seeking work in the U.S. Additionally, all participants are teachers and thus are highly educated relative to many of the other 'characters' in the stories.

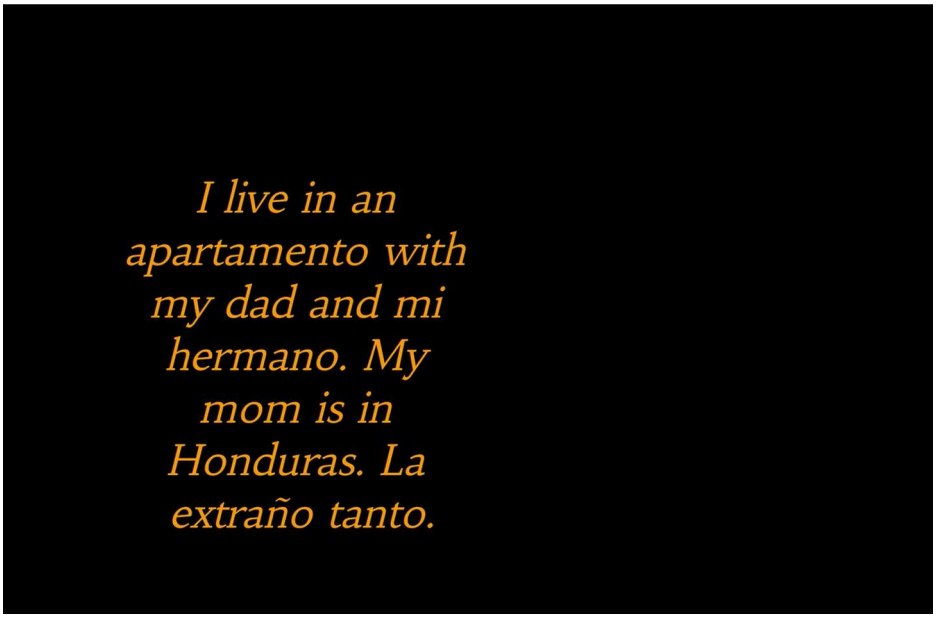

Figure 12. Joseph's Compositional Perspective – Integrating Spanish Language.

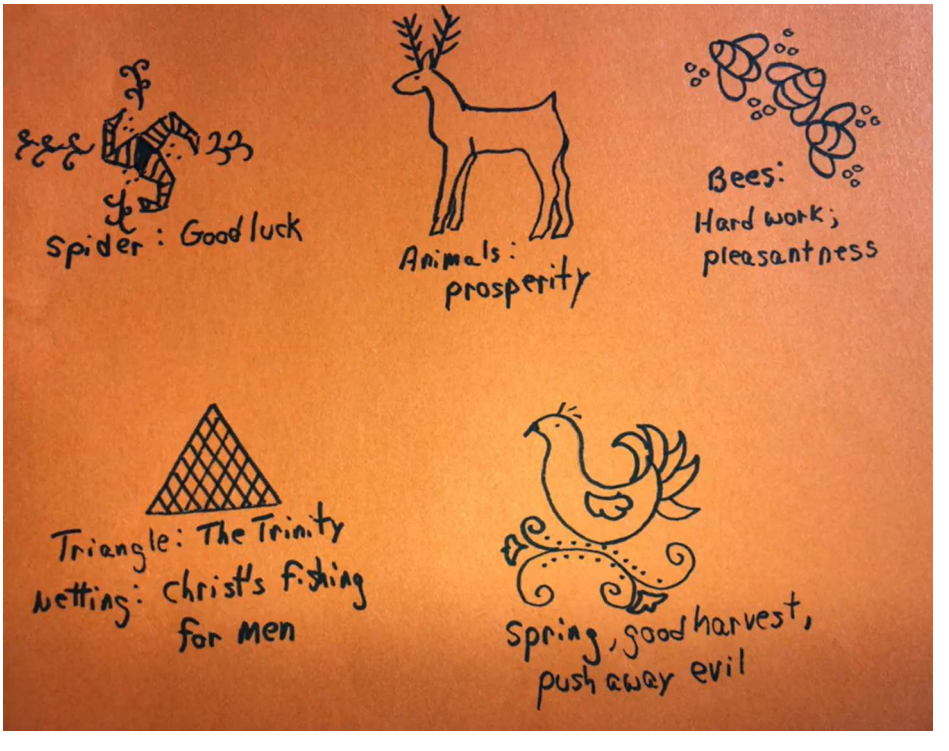

Figure 13. Isabelle's Compositional Perspective – Use of Symbols.

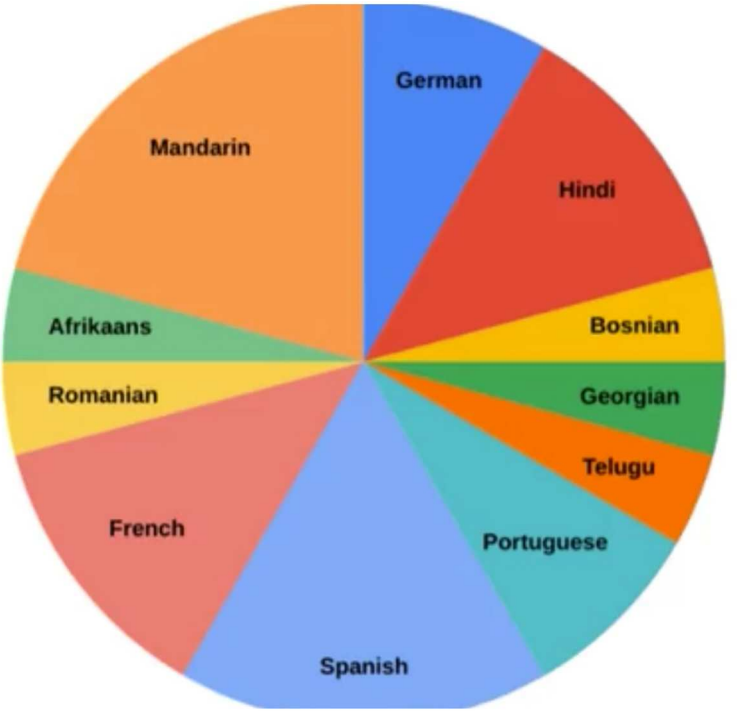

Figure 14. Sarah's Compositional Perspective – Integration of Data.

- *I can't do my work because my dad is making me help out at his construction site to earn extra money*
- *My mom is still working and I'm here with 4 little siblings all by myself*
- *I can't do your live sessions because my mom gets home late and I'm stuck watching my brothers until she gets home*

Figure 15. Mary's Compositional Perspective – Incorporating Students' Voices as Written Text.

With respect to cultural background, the importance of language is emphasised. For example, Joseph and Sarah's videos underscore how ELLs can feel excluded from classrooms in the U.S. In Amy's case, cultural barriers coupled with her status as a

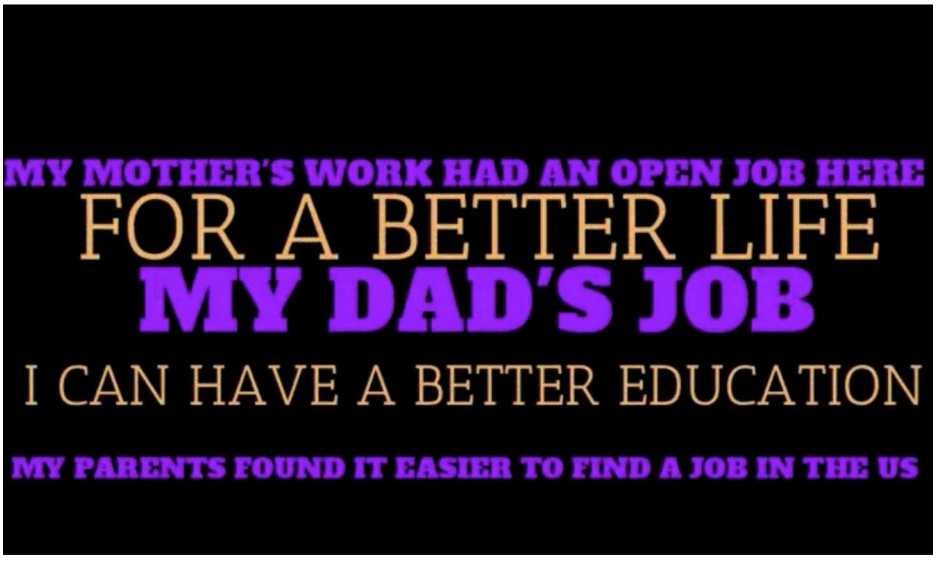

Figure 16. Sarah's Compositional Perspective – Incorporating Students' Voices as Written Text.

Figure 17. Joseph's Compositional Perspective – Use of Cartoons to Convey Exaggerated Emotions.

Caucasian, English speaking woman from the U.S. initially impeded her relationships with her colleagues at the Samoan school. For Isabelle, the language of pysanky is an important cultural tradition.

Figure 18. Mary's Compositional Perspective – Use of Cartoons to Convey Exaggerated Emotions.

Utilising digital storytelling in the classroom

The second research question is 'How did teachers utilise or plan to utilise digital storytelling in their teaching?' There were two main themes that emerged for this research question that are discussed below.

Multimodality in instructional design

Teachers appreciated opportunities to incorporate new modalities into their instruction. Some teachers immediately integrated what they learned about digital storytelling, particularly WeVideo, into their remote instruction while others focused on how they might create digital storytelling assignments in their future classes. For instance, Sarah explained that digital storytelling 'was actually really beneficial professionally too' and that 'what I learned about how to use the technology I've used to make videos and stuff for my digital lessons.' Isabelle appreciated the 'layering' process that occurs when composing digital stories, such that one can add music to images, for example. Mary described the process of adapting how she creates her online instructional videos:

> One thing I really got from the digital stories is a lot of the teaching that we use, like the videos we make are all just our voice and are visual. […] I've created some videos now that have me speaking, but they'll also have the texts that come up or maybe it has my face in it, so they can see my facial expressions more instead of just hearing my voice. So it changed the way I thought about creating videos for instruction.

Mary's comment underscores her recognition that there are different strengths and weaknesses of various modalities. By combining multimodalities, Mary can capitalise on each of their strengths.

Digital storytelling as empowering

Teachers experienced digital storytelling as an empowering tool for both themselves as teachers and learners and for their students. For example, prior to the digital storytelling project, Isabelle lacked confidence with digital tools like WeVideo. Isabelle described the process of learning digital storytelling as a 'catalyst.' She added: 'Now, I have a tool […] it just wasn't available to me [before] because it was just, I didn't know enough about it.'

In terms of students, Joseph described digital storytelling as a potentially 'empowering […] tool for students to use.' More specifically, Joseph views digital storytelling as a 'space' for students 'to bring aspects of their home language and home culture into the classroom in a way that is otherwise very cut off.' In other words, Joseph views digital storytelling as a bridge between home and school. Similarly, Amy observed how prior use of video tools provided a platform for one of her students to express herself, in a way that felt less intimidating than in the classroom. She imagined that future use of digital storytelling would provide a similar experience for her students.

Discussion

Results from our study highlight the range of challenges that teachers encountered during the early pandemic, including content delivery and student engagement. The results also show how teachers composed digital stories during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they plan to use digital storytelling in the future. Overall, these findings highlight the adaptability and resiliency of teachers and the importance of attending to both teachers' and students' holistic wellbeing.

Teacher formation and holistic wellbeing

The participants experienced formation as both teachers in their classrooms and students in the graduate course. Like other teachers around the world, participants encountered tremendous stress in their role as teachers (Hamilton et al. 2020). Teachers overcame many of the same challenges and obstacles related to general online teaching described in Farmer and West's (2019) study including student engagement and attendance, building relationships with students, and technology issues. Teachers in our study also encountered loss of in-person social connections with their fellow teachers who they relied on for support, as well as evolving expectations from district leaders. An unsupportive school leadership team can harm teachers' sense of resiliency (Le Cornu 2013).

Despite these challenges, teachers utilised their prior pedagogical knowledge and teaching experience to quickly adapt their in-person instruction to a remote environment while considering the needs of diverse learners (Vaughn et al. 2016). For example, teachers needed to build stronger bonds with students' families to ensure smooth delivery of course content. In doing so, teachers demonstrated their resilience amidst unprecedented change (Gu and Day 2013).

Teachers' resilience also reflects the meaning and purpose they derive from their role as teachers. For example, in her digital story, Mary said, 'Teachers are superheroes,' which both underscores the high expectations placed on teachers during this period of the pandemic and the drive Mary feels for her vocation. Indeed, finding purpose in the Jesuit tradition involves 'discerning' how one's talents can benefit

humanity (O'Malley 2015). With this framing, the pandemic posed a critical question to Mary and other teachers: 'Does the meaning and sense of purpose that one experiences as a teacher outweigh the obstacles?' The teachers in the current study seemed to answer a resounding 'yes.'

Digital storytelling as a formative tool

Digital storytelling in the classroom can support student formation, since digital stories foster students' identity development while offering an outlet for students to express their experiences and emotions through multimedia (Kim and Mannion 2018; Hafner 2014; Hull and Katz 2006; Yang 2012). Specifically, consistent with Kim and Jia (2020), the project allowed teachers to express themselves during a stressful time (i.e. the early pandemic). Additionally, digital storytelling is responsive to Corcoran and O'Flaherty's (2022) call for increased focus on social-emotional learning in teacher education courses.

Several teachers in our study described digital storytelling as 'empowering.' Although only one teacher's video focused specifically on her experience teaching online, common themes throughout teachers' stories included culture and language, resiliency, sense of belonging, and holistic wellbeing, which are intricately connected to teaching and learning during the pandemic. Additionally, all participants integrated music, images, and voice over to express themselves through multiple modalities. One interesting trend throughout teachers' stories was the layering of voices, such as teacher and student voices, and multiple languages, such as English and Samoan. This layering may further underscore the value that teachers placed on community solidarity during this early period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, when sharing these stories with fellow teachers, teacher education students can further build community.

Digital storytelling also provided teachers with a new toolset that they could use in their classrooms, with some teachers immediately using WeVideo technology in their classes, as well as a greater appreciation for multimodal learning. Hamilton et al. (2020) found that a high proportion of teachers did not receive training in remote instruction when the pandemic started. Similarly, the teachers in the present study had to quickly transition to remote instruction with varying levels of school and district support. Given this context, learning WeVideo likely provided teachers with some sense of control over their learning, during a period when they especially needed technology support for their instruction.

Teachers also viewed digital storytelling as a potentially empowering tool for their students. For example, one teacher described digital stories as an avenue for linguistically diverse students to bridge connections between their home and school. Providing access to digital storytelling technology for diverse learners could support their intellectual development and increase their sense of community in the classroom. Some teachers incorporated or planned to incorporate digital storytelling into their instruction as a new creative learning opportunity. The stories could provide an alternative means for students to express their understanding of academic material.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

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