

# Physical Education Teacher Experiences Through the Lens of a Pandemic: Putting a Spotlight on Teacher Beliefs, Practices, Emotional Fragility, and Well-Being

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Teaching physical education during the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges, putting a spotlight on problematic school structures and teacher beliefs that influence teacher effectiveness and well-being. The purpose of this study was to capture physical education teachers' ( $N = 10$ ) experiences during the pandemic to understand perceptions of support, teaching beliefs, and emotions/reactions to the new environment. Short-term longitudinal qualitative analysis was used to collect pre/post semester interviews and critical incidence forms throughout the semester. Resulting themes included: (a) superficial versus tangible support, (b) planning for curricular changes, (c) student–teacher connections, and (d) emotional labor and uncertainty. Results provide insight about thriving versus surviving as learned from teaching during a pandemic. Teachers who displayed positive emotions, sought student connections, and exhibited stronger core beliefs, resilience, and flexibility within instructional decisions perceived more effectiveness and well-being. Findings support investigating holes in teacher belief systems and the interconnectedness between emotions and teacher effectiveness and well-being.

**Keywords:** teacher support, resilience, belief system, emotional labor


Over the last two decades, research on teachers and their emotional experiences tied to the labors of teaching have been explored due to high attrition rates and overall reports of low job satisfaction (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). This area of research is particularly important for occupations like teaching because it requires a substantial amount of social and emotional interactions with students and peers, emotional labor, stress, and passion (Day & Quing, 2009). Teachers, in general, work in more demanding environments than previously seen before. For example, classrooms are substantially more diverse (perceived and actual), and performance driven, than in previous decades (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), which has led to great challenges for teachers feeling more pressure and needing more resources. Thus, as the demands of teachers grow, the more likely teachers are to feel stress, anxiety, burnout, and reduced well-being overall (Richards et al., 2017; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015), which subsequently reduces their ability to educate all students effectively. This is a major area of consideration for research as a motivated and emotionally stable workforce is needed to accomplish the primary goals and learning outcomes established in schools and departments (Zhang, 2021). In more recent years, research on physical education (PE) teacher motivation and emotion has received greater attention as well to address these rising concerns (Carson & Chase, 2009; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021; Van der Berghe et al., 2013; Zhang & Chen, 2017).

This line of inquiry may be particularly important for PE teachers as they have seen a parallel increase of demands in PE instruction accountability and external duties, yet have received substantial reductions in class time, resources, and professional development (PD) support (Cardina & DeNysschen, 2014). In

addition, PE has often been marginalized in schools with teachers reporting little support from administrators and feelings of isolation in the school ethos (Gaudreault et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2018). Thus, when teachers have negative teaching experiences and feel marginalized, they have reduced job satisfaction and negative beliefs about the profession and student outcomes (Richards et al., 2017; Simonton, Gaudreault, & Olive, 2021).

Given the onset of higher teaching demands and fewer resources for PE teachers, researchers and teacher educators have begun developing strategies and resources to navigate and cope with said demands. Unfortunately, teachers with less resilience, prolonged stress, and feelings of exhaustion often find their way out of the PE teaching profession (Lee, 2019; Richards et al., 2016) or may turn into a more custodial teacher (Curtner-Smith, 2009). Both of these outcomes have negative effects on schools, the profession, and students. Ideally, as researchers develop a greater understanding of what impacts teachers' emotional states and psychological factors related to teaching, it is more likely that teachers can obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to navigate the realities of teaching while maintaining motivation to be an effective instructor (Richards et al., 2016; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021). However, much of the current research on teacher emotions and motivation has been evaluated from a teacher competency perspective, specifically within a typical school year environment.

Therefore, less information is available on the mental and social–emotional side of teaching or how major national, international, and societal events can impact teachers' lives, psychological states, and occupational experiences. Recent events that exacerbated and revealed teachers' emotional and psychological well-being in the profession were the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 virus is a respiratory disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, transmitted through airborne pathogens, which has caused severe bouts of illness and death across the world in recent years (Centers for

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Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). In 2020, the COVID-19 virus forced significant changes to typical life endeavors, including schooling and, in this case, PE curriculum and delivery (Centeio et al., 2021; Mercier et al., 2021). This, of course, prompted a great deal of stress in all teachers' lives as jobs, incomes, food supplies, social interactions, and so on, were reduced and shifted significantly from the norm (SHAPE America, 2020). The onset of this situation impacted nearly every U.S. teacher and, in addition, provided a unique opportunity, removing the conventional "that's just the way it is" approach to dealing with teaching and learning issues in schools. Put simply, the time spent teaching during the pandemic allowed for further investigation into the emotional aspects of teaching as the pandemic made the emergence of these issues more noticeable (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Varea & Gonzalez-Calvo, 2021). Teachers were forced to make universal changes to teaching (Mercier et al., 2021) in which their internal beliefs about teaching and school support systems were tested. This experience can be used to highlight deeply engrained issues (and bright spots) that can no longer be ignored when considering the well-being and effectiveness of PE teachers, specifically.

This study intended to capture several PE teachers' experiences during the reopening of their respective schools and PE programs in the Fall of 2020, following the shutdown of face-to-face learning halfway through the spring 2020 school semester. For context, in the spring of 2020 (March), schools in this region were shut down, and all teachers and learners were expected to finish out the school year from home. Following the end of the semester (May–June), administrators spent the summer months creating policies and making decisions about how the school year would continue the following August. At this point in time, vaccines were not readily available, and major preventative strategies included social distancing (minimum of six feet between individuals), wearing medical masks, and sanitizing spaces and furniture. In the region this study took place, most schools took a cautionary approach to opening schools to the full student body in person, and schools in other areas of the county decided to continue with an online only option through most, if not all, of the 2021–2022 school year. The purpose of this study was to highlight and extend the continued research on understanding teachers' emotions via their teaching beliefs, goals, and day-to-day experiences, however, from the lens of teaching during a national public health pandemic, which noticeably brought these issues to the surface. Particularly, this experience provided a spotlight on weaknesses in PE teacher support, teacher beliefs and abilities, and emotional fragility in the profession. Also, this spotlight may be used to create awareness for problematic teaching beliefs and school structures that need to be understood to improve effectiveness and well-being. Overall, this study may provide deeper evidence to the importance of researching teacher emotions and professional beliefs in PE.

## Current Findings on Teaching and Learning in PE During COVID-19

Currently, research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on PE teachers and students is still evolving. A few preliminary articles have been published from the early stages of the pandemic, including, for example, the initial nationwide shut down of schools and PE teachers' transition to online PE (OPE), the impact of reduced physical activity time, and issues of trauma and mental health as a result of the pandemic restrictions, to name a few. A

nationwide investigation of PE teachers found that moving to an online or remote format was quite difficult and limiting for many teachers (Centeio et al., 2021; Mercier et al., 2021). Specifically, only 40% of teachers reported having effective technology to offer remote learning, and this severely impacted effectiveness. In addition, less than half of teachers required learning-based assignments with a third of teachers switching focus to health-related fitness and concepts in lieu of "PE content." In summary, teachers' efficacy to offer remote learning was low (SHAPE America, 2020). However, several teachers reported moments of pride and success when overcoming obstacles and being resilient in the face of change (Centeio et al., 2021). Results suggest that more PD, access to technology, and strategies to improve student participation are needed; however, to this point in time, less research has explored teachers' beliefs and characteristics of teachers who have thrived versus survived.

In addition, other recent research has pointed out that OPE is an eminent area of need for the future of PE delivery and that the pandemic has highlighted its need and may have prompted a birth of innovation to enhance its viability. For example, Webster et al. (2021) pointed out that OPE has the potential to become a holistic learning experience for students that infuses components of PE, public health, community health, and family health. However, barriers still exist in the digital divide among school districts along with issues of how PE is conceptualized and how students are held accountable. The focus of this study was not on OPE's viability in schools, but the barriers of effective OPE need to be understood as they represent a foundational piece underlying many of these teachers' experiences. In alignment with the pandemic being a conduit for pointing out the overlooked need for research on OPE, it also intensified the importance of understanding the emotional and motivational side of being an effective teacher. Thus, more work is needed to understand the internal mechanisms that motivate teachers and how their beliefs systems interact with the adoption (nonadoption) of new strategies for PE in schools.

In summary, although these previous studies have targeted teacher effectiveness and the creation of alternative teaching strategies, the current study took a different approach to investigative teachers' experiences. Specifically, the pandemic and its aftermath has further identified many flaws in PE culture, beliefs, and systems within schools, and although they were likely present beforehand, they became magnified in the last year. Although this research is not intended to provide evidence of how to teach PE during a pandemic, the flaws and issues highlighted during this time need to be addressed. It is imperative to understand the emotional well-being and professional beliefs of a teacher to understand their ability/motivation to gain more effective teaching strategies and be able to overcome stressors and advocate for their subject (Simonton, Gaudreault, & Olive, 2021; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021).

## Theoretical Lens for Teacher Emotions and Well-Being

To evaluate and interpret the experiences of these PE teachers, the ecological dynamics system theory (EDST) of teacher emotions (Schutz, 2014; Schutz et al., 2010) was used as a lens to understand the complex relationships between teaching environments, teacher beliefs and experiences, and their resulting emotions and actions. Taking a socioecological approach such as this is beneficial for two reasons. The first is that making teachers' emotions an integral

point of analysis provides key details regarding their motivation, their actions/reactions, and their pursuits for teaching effectiveness (Frenzel, 2014). Second, this approach allows researchers to consider the multiple layers that make up the dynamic teacher ecosystem and the transactions between one's sociopolitical teaching environment, classroom environment (in-person or online; where synchronous teaching and learning processes are in practice) and appraisals, and emotions and a teacher's subsequent actions (Schutz, 2014). Taken together, teachers' conscious and unconscious judgments about their environment and the messages they receive shape their beliefs, emotions, and actions. Schutz et al. (2010) stated that emotions are socially constructed and personally enacted; thus, understanding teacher emotions, their antecedents, and their outcomes is critical for understanding teacher effectiveness and well-being.

Central tenets of EDST recognize the integral role of teacher appraisals (i.e., conscious and unconscious judgments of their environment and profession) as key antecedents of the taxonomy of potential teacher emotions. However, it is simultaneously important to accept that teacher appraisals and emotions are subsequently influenced by the transactions and perceptions of their context, school policies, immediate and global societal expectations, and the previous teaching experiences (Chen, 2021; Schutz, 2014). These macro- and microlayers that interact with one's teaching experiences are particularly essential in understanding PE teacher emotions as a marginalized and low-status subject (Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021). In summary, evaluating teacher appraisals and emotions alone is short sighted without also measuring their environment and internal beliefs when explaining their motivation and actions. The complexity and nuances of teacher emotions require a dynamic approach that considers global and internal evaluations.

Four socioecological layers that encompass one's teaching beliefs and environment are considered when evaluating teacher emotions using EDST, including (a) social-historical context, (b) classroom context, (c) teacher appraisals, and (d) teacher emotions tied to unique action tendencies (Fredrickson, 2001; Schutz et al., 2010). The social-historical context considers factors that influence a teacher's socialization (Richards, 2015) from their education training and institution support and expectations (microsystem factors) as well as layers that supersede school environments, including educational/political policies, standards, sociopolitical demands, and, of course, the sociocultural background (macrosystem factors) (Chen, 2021; Schutz 2014). Next, the classroom context consists of one's beliefs regarding the constraints and affordances one perceives in relation to one's administration/supervisors, colleagues, students, and the immediate community. These perceptions are shaped by the larger social-historical context and subsequently impact the next layer of teacher appraisals. Teacher appraisals are the immediate judgment about one's teaching environment that consist of primary and secondary layers. The primary appraisal layers are related to the class goals the teacher holds including their perceived teaching goal congruence (alignment of goals with teaching) and goal relevance (alignment of value with philosophy). Secondary appraisal layers include teacher control and coping mechanisms, which enhance class effort or divert from problems.

Finally, teacher emotions result from these transactions and, subsequently, each emotion is tied to a unique behavior/outcome/reaction called an action tendency (Fredrickson, 2001). Emotions are conceptualized as physiological, psychological, motivational, and expressive mechanisms that impact cognition and behavior

(Pekrun, 2006; Shuman & Scherer, 2015). Emotions are classified by their valence (e.g., positive, negative), arousal (e.g., activating, deactivating), and object foci (e.g., process or outcome focused) (see Pekrun, 2006 for details). A taxonomy of unique emotions can be experienced by teachers (Frenzel et al., 2016); for example, teachers may feel that students are not reaching their intended goals and the school system does not support the necessary resources to make up these differences, so teachers feel anger, which subsequently leads to behaviors such as being hostile, abrupt, and short tempered with students and colleagues (Frenzel et al., 2016). Another example would include that when teachers feel as though they are valued and students are reaching intended goals, they subsequently act energized and positive and are more open to trying new techniques and adapting to student needs (e.g., less rigid) (Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021). In summary, the diversity and nuance of discrete teacher emotions provides a great deal of specificity and disentanglement to the variety of experiences that impact teacher well-being (for description on the taxonomy of teacher emotions, see Pekrun, 2006; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021).

Overall, the development of teacher emotions and their impact on behaviors, beliefs, and reactions cannot be understated, yet a dearth of evidence on these complex mechanisms regarding PE teacher beliefs and experiences exists. The marginality of PE in schools impacted by societal norms, administrative power, and colleague/student interactions exacerbates the need to understand teacher emotions as they relate to teachers' effectiveness and general well-being (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Simonton, Gaudreault, & Olive, 2021). In addition, less is known about teacher emotions or the impact of marginality in a nontraditional setting, such as hybridized scheduling, OPE, or distance learning settings. This study was guided by the EDST model and targeted/accepted the multilayer influences and reactions that teachers may experience to explain their emotions, reactions, and beliefs. In addition, by utilizing the layers of influence and beliefs that impact emotions, it allowed researchers to isolate major and minor sources that impact "down the stream" teacher beliefs and actions.

## Purpose

This study intended to place a spotlight on issues regarding teacher well-being and how teachers' emotions and coping abilities, albeit magnified and more emergent during a pandemic, can help inform research on teacher flourishing and advocacy for the profession (underlying environmental aspects like OPE and distance learning were present but not targeted in this study). The purpose of this study was to highlight and extend the continued research on understanding teachers' emotions via their teaching beliefs, goals, and day-to-day experiences, however, from the lens of teaching during a national public health pandemic. Special attention was given to this exploration on providing a spotlight on weaknesses in PE teacher support, teacher beliefs and abilities, and emotional fragility in the profession. This study utilized qualitative methods to investigate teachers' experiences preparing to shift and teach during the pandemic, their day-to-day emotional experience, and the resulting outcomes related to their coping strategies, emotional labor, and exhaustion.

## Methods

### Participants and Settings

A total of 10 certified PE teachers (K–12; five men and five women; 50% elementary, 50% secondary) were purposefully sampled as



they held preexisting relationships with the research group. The pre-existing relationships helped researchers establish a collegial willingness to participate and ensured prompt replies throughout the research process, and each teacher had demonstrated a level of effectiveness, having previously been qualified to serve as cooperating teachers for student teaching placements. Also, the participants were purposefully selected as they all taught in the Southeastern United States in bordering states that shared similar COVID-19 restrictions respective to their urban, suburban, and rural teaching contexts. Each school had unique restrictions and individualized transitions from online to in-person, and some back to online; thus, no consistency was identified (even within the same state) over the semester. All elementary schools started the semester in a hybrid format by coming to school three times a week in person with 2 days of online teaching. When in person, students were required to socially distance and wear medical masks. Students could opt to receive all online education if their parents felt it was necessary or required for medical reasons. At the middle and high school levels, most schools began in a 100% online learning format for the first month or a hybrid version in which 2–3 days were in-person and vice versa online, depending on the schedule. A variety of schools had unique situations that prompted the entire school to go virtual for a full week due to a community outbreak, for example. Thus, no consistency was established.

Researchers attempted to use a maximum variation sampling approach (Patton, 2002) across grade spans (K–12) in that no two teachers taught within the same school. In summary, the average age of participants was 38.5 ( $SD = 13.14$ ) years old, and they had taught an average of 7.6 years overall ( $SD = 6.11$ ). For complete demographic information on participants, see Table 1.

## Data Collection and Procedures

Following University of Memphis institutional review board approval, all participants agreed to participate in the study before the start of the school year in the fall of 2020. They were also aware of the main purpose of this study in capturing their practical and social-emotional experiences preparing for a new and uncertain school year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection took place over a 6-month period and included a pre-/postsemester semistructured interview as well as ongoing critical incidence reports ( $N = 30$ ), which were completed by teachers at their leisure throughout the semester. Critical incidence instructions requested that teachers make note of or describe any situation in which they felt that their PE program, teaching, or

students were impacted positively or negatively over the semester (Flanagan, 1954; Lux & McCullick, 2011) as it related to teaching during COVID-19 restrictions and changes. Using teacher accounts of their experiences allows researchers to understand the lens through which teachers view events negatively and positively and provides opportunities for teachers to discuss their experiences without a researcher being present (Lux & McCullick, 2011). Teachers were asked to complete a minimum of three reports, and no teachers reported more than three incidences.

The research team consisted of two university faculty members as lead researchers and two graduate student members serving as research assistants. The semistructured interview guide (Patton, 2002) technique was used at both the pre-/postsemester stages as teachers were gaining information about how, when, and what the expectations were for the upcoming fall and as they completed their first semester or two quarters of the school year.

Topics covered in the presemester interview guide included baseline teacher and school demographic information as well as questions driven by the EDST framework (Schutz et al., 2010), which included topics about the sociocultural school climate, PE teaching environment, teacher goals and beliefs, and teacher emotions regarding the preparation strategies for the upcoming school year. Example questions included, “What are the goals and purpose of your PE program?” “How do you typically feel while you’re teaching?” and “How is PE viewed in your school and community?” Questions directed toward planning for COVID-19 restrictions included, “What steps have you taken/your school taken to teach PE during COVID-19?” “Describe how you’re feeling as you plan your curriculum during COVID-19 and school restrictions?” and “What accommodations have you been asked to make, how does that make you feel?” Similarly, the postsemester (following second quarter) interviews targeted teachers’ emotions and the unique coping mechanisms, emotional labor, and exhaustion that may have been experienced while navigating the changes in the school and PE environment, which are key pillars for emotional antecedents and reactions (Pekrun, 2006; Schutz et al., 2010; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021). Example questions included, “Now that you’ve been teaching PE during the COVID-19 restrictions, have you been able to achieve program goals?” “Describe how PE was impacted by changes and how you were able to manage those changes?” and “How have you felt while teaching and what has caused you to feel that way?”

All interview data were collected via recorded phone/online video conferencing software. Teachers were asked to participate in two 30- to 45-min sessions, one at the beginning of the school year

**Table 1** Descriptive Information on the 10 Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Years of teaching	Grades	Context
Carlie	Female	31	9	K–first	Urban
Mary	Female	23	1	First–second	Suburban
Wilson	Male	49	11	K–fourth	Rural
Dan	Male	26	3	K–fifth	Suburban
Mike	Male	42	18	K–fifth	Rural
Diana	Female	22	1	Sixth–eighth	Urban
Connor	Male	50	17	Sixth–eighth	Urban
Beth	Female	62	6	Sixth–eighth	Rural
Kathy	Female	43	4	Ninth–10th	Suburban
Greg	Male	37	6	Ninth–12th	Suburban

Note. Sorted by grade cluster; classified as elementary or secondary (middle and high school).

(August) and another at the end of the first half of the school year (December). Teachers gave consent online via email and were also asked to confirm their consent orally during the first scheduled interview. The interviews were scheduled at the time most convenient for the participant. Participants were informed that all information would remain anonymous and that pseudonyms would be used for teachers' names, locations, schools, and so on. Thus, no identifying information will be provided in the analysis, results, or discussion of the data.

## Data Analysis

All interview transcripts and critical incident forms were analyzed using a multiphase procedure including both inductive and deductive techniques (Patton, 2015). A six-step analysis approach was followed (Richards & Hemphill, 2017) beginning with organizing data by time point and completing open and axial coding. The analysis was deductive as the researchers prioritized data fitting into one or multiple layers of the EDST framework (Schutz, 2014). However, the researchers also utilized an inductive approach to potentially identify outliers or imperfectly fitting data that did not align smoothly with the theory. From there, a preliminary codebook was created by research team members using line by line open and axial coding for each participant at each time point over two iterations. Two researchers were assigned to each participant, and initial codes and labels were assigned by each researcher before a weekly debriefing period to compare and check for fidelity across coding. A constant comparison method was used across the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), including within and across participants, among the research team to make necessary adjustments (Patton, 2015). Routine (weekly) debriefing meetings were used to compare codes and potential themes. Once the codebook was finalized and reviewed, all initial and final themes were created (Richards & Hemphill, 2017). Finally, data trustworthiness was obtained via research team debriefing of multiple researchers, an audit trail, and negative case analysis (Tracy, 2010). Lead researchers focused on negative case findings and revisited data to further explore and explain outlier or opposing cases.

## Results

Final constant comparison analysis resulted in four general themes that reflected both pre- and postsemester perceptions of the teachers. Critical incidence forms also corroborated postsemester reflections and key moments of impact on the teachers throughout the semester. Themes included: (a) superficial versus tangible support, (b) planning for curricular changes, (c) teacher–student connections, and (d) emotional labor and uncertainty. Each theme is presented next with explanation and quotes to support the discussion.

### Superficial Versus Tangible Support

As teachers entered the school year, they were confronted with expectations from their administration, many of which required more support, communication, and resources to fulfill. However, what qualified as support from administration differed greatly for each teacher. Teachers' ability to differentiate what was meaningful support to help their program/instruction versus superficial support was staggering. For example, several teachers felt supported (superficially) simply because their administration "had the option to drop PE from the [condensed and reduced] schedule, and didn't" (Connor and Diana, T1). Although Connor reported that he

felt supported, he also stated that "our admin has decided that because kids are at home, that PE would not be a report card grade." The level of support, and manner in which it was understood as true support or not, seemed blurred. Thus, removing PE from the report card, which still included the other subjects, provided explicit evidence that student learning and achievement outcomes in PE were not prioritized or relevant to the students learning experience during the school year. One high school teacher, Greg (Time 1), said, "I think that administration is quite happy for us to run things the way we are running them and [they] focus more on core subjects . . . the admin are focused on one million other problems." Much of what the teachers reported as support seemed less to do with facilitating resources for improved teacher effectiveness and well-being and more to do with believing that having PE in the schedule was a privilege as opposed to a right. This belief represents an interplay between the social–historical context and classroom context layers, as suggested in EDST, in which the historically accepted marginalization of PE in conjunction with the school context suggests that PE professionals should be satisfied that their subject would not be dropped from the schedule.

More tangible remarks for support included administrators providing additional equipment resources to cope with restrictions. Mary (Time 1) said, "My admin is awesome, they bought us [a new set] of foam balls so each student had their own for throwing skills." Beth (Time 1) discussed the importance of communication and being "heard" as an expert as a source of tangible support. She said, "Our admin proposed ideas I didn't think were correct for PE . . . they have always been good about listening to our needs and why we're doing what we do . . . it can all be worked out [by communicating]." This led to changes in PE scheduling by allocating PE time similar to a regular school year as opposed to cutting or reducing time as originally presented to start the year. Negotiations went from no assessments expected from Beth to isolating key learning objectives and state standards that could still be addressed with limited space and equipment in addition to objectives that could be achieved by students from home.

Following the semester, many teachers lamented about superficial versus tangible support as well. For example, although Beth had previously mentioned how her social equity with the principal helped her with PE scheduling and expectations, she later said (Time 2),

PE is considered fluffy, they don't really care what we do with [the students] they just want us to keep them happy and their parents happy. They do not want us to place serious demands on the [students] whatsoever.

This notion of administrators lifting PE teachers' demands and student accountability seemed to be an overt superficial support that undercut PE teachers' value and status even further. Although teachers reported that administration suggested that taking these demands out of PE for the school year was going to help teachers and students, it put a spotlight on the limited value they placed on PE. After the semester, Diana (Time 2) reported in frustration that

our admin told us not to worry about if students turned on their cameras during class or if they submitted assignments . . . but if a student submitted something at like 5pm at night or something, we were supposed to just give them their participation grade . . . I have no accountability for my students and admin is telling me it's okay, not to worry about it.

These are two examples of when teachers were able to recognize the superficial support, and it had a negative impact

on their perceived mattering as a PE teacher and on their goals for their students. Yet, other teachers reported that, overall, it was normal and adequate for the administration to reduce or remove expectations (Greg Time 2; Connor Time 2). An acceptance for being the *sacrificial subject* during this shift was observed in these interviews as well. On one side, this reaction to sacrifice could represent wanting to be a team player for the school, or instead, it could spotlight an engrained belief and acceptance in teachers of the marginality of their subject compared with the other subjects/teachers being prioritized.

There were also a few postsemester tangible examples, including another example of social equity by Carlie for equipment and scheduling help. Carlie (Time 2) said,

My principal and I talked, and I was like, I cannot teach these [elementary] students without manipulating their bodies and giving them equipment . . . [principal] gave me specials class sessions every day, anytime I asked for anything to help with PE, I got it because she knows I'm going to use it to help [my students] get physical activity in PE.

This support was in opposition to Dan's experience when asking for equipment in which he reported feeling "neglected" when trying to promote learning in PE both by administration and colleagues (Time 2). In another case, and in response to feeling isolated, Wilson reported that he "would take on extra responsibilities to help with COVID stuff at school" to try and build equity. Overall, an interaction between the school environment (micro-layers) and teacher belief systems seemed to predict their emotions. If they believed that these marginalizing support efforts hurt PE, then their reactions to superficial support prompted several emotions from frustration to relief versus resulting emotions like contentment and hopelessness, which were experienced and tied to acceptance of superficial support.

## Planning for Curricular Changes

It is important to note that grade levels taught appeared to serve as a moderator for this shift. Specifically, most elementary schools remained somewhat face-to-face for teaching but had to adhere to distancing and equipment restrictions. The middle and high school levels experienced mainly online or hybrid teaching, with physical restrictions when in school, but mainly changes in offering online instruction. Elementary teachers were mostly able to pursue indoor and outdoor opportunities to teach spatial awareness and locomotor practices but were nervous about being able to implement manipulative skill lessons with equipment (Carlie, Dan, and Mike T1). Dan (Time 1) first talked about the importance of flexibility in making curricular choices, saying, "The cool part about our district is the six elementary schools have autonomy to make decisions. I don't think I'm doing the same things as anyone else." However, he went on to share worry about the limits to "What and for how long can [I] teach a topic," and "How do I make this [lesson] work for 50 minutes?" with limited ideas on skill extensions and applications that would adhere to guidelines. But Dan and Mike both said that having other curricular material resources to draw on was essential. For example, Mike (Time 1) said, "When it comes to limitations on equipment and being socially distanced, I'm glad there are people out there working on [lessons] that I can use, or I would be stressed out." The elementary teachers appraised their environment and potential for student goal achievement as somewhat achievable as they faced small adjustments and were provided additional resources.

From a secondary perspective, teachers made a more dramatic shift in foci. When finding out that she was teaching solely online for the first half of the semester, Diana (Time 1) said, "My goals shifted from PE to health . . . it's really hard to do PE online especially when we have no accountability for students, they don't even have to turn their cameras on." Most secondary teachers could not reconcile how PE could be taught or learned in the virtual sense. Even in a hybrid setting, many teachers felt helpless as they did not know what to teach. These are significant findings to the relationship between misalignment in teachers' goals for their students and their motivation to persist. Finding relief in changing to a health curriculum for online learning was common without knowing how to "keep PE going at home or in class," said Kathy (Time 1); she also said "It's depressing. I've gone to our gym a few times for the start of hybrid PE class, and it breaks my heart they aren't getting a normal experience." In summary, four of the five secondary teachers felt that they had to abandon their PE goals/outcomes and adopt a health/wellness philosophy to get through the semester.

Following the semester, teachers at both levels reflected on the curriculum choices they made over the previous semester. At the elementary level, teachers were able to maintain a comparative curriculum to a normal school year but still changed other items. Wilson (Time 2) said, "I think some things I taught suffered, teaching things and skills I like to do, I have not went to them yet because of the restrictions and I think those areas have suffered." But he went on to say, "But in other ways I think it has got better, you know, I am not as crazy to do some things, but I got out there and did a dance and video with the group of kids [this semester]." Mary (Time 2) mentioned that her curriculum shifted to reduce equipment use, but her ability to try a new instructional model (teaching personal and social responsibility) was beneficial in her personal shift in prioritizing the cognitive and affective goals/standards as opposed to the physical ones. She said, "I think using [teaching personal and social responsibility] was pretty successful, even though I didn't do it exactly how it was supposed to," and "I was looking back the other day at all the standards we hit on in our objectives." Much like Diana at the secondary level, Mary's adopting of a models-based approach provided guidance and success even with several barriers in her school.

The secondary level, which saw a more dramatic shift in curriculum away from PE-oriented learning, showed some positive and negative reactions. Diana (Time 2) said,

We got basically handed the Life Skill Training materials (curriculum). It was easy to go through that, you know, to find videos for it and find cool stuff for the kids. But I basically made PowerPoints and taught the kids like a regular classroom teacher would, they were online for 45 minutes, but the students didn't seem to care about it as much.

Although Diana (Time 2) reported relief and reduced anxiety about the *canned* curriculum that she was given, she went on to say that she felt as though she was giving up on her PE principles and that "my biggest failure [this semester] is sometimes neglecting the PE side of it . . . Because I was so focused on what was new in the health stuff, which was heavy planning, I didn't teach real PE." This report of feeling shameful as a result of going against their underlying beliefs about being a PE teacher was reported both by Diana and Kathy. Following the semester, Kathy (Time 2) said, "I have had more failures than I've ever had. I took it upon myself that I'm to blame that this means I'm a poor teacher," as she discussed the curriculum shift in which she was forced to move from PE to more health education. Her drive to reduce her shame and anxiety

forced her to reach out to other “classroom teachers” for advice on offering more engaging lectures for her students. Indirectly, her drive not only led her to expand her teaching strategies but also led to goal misalignment appraisals that impacted her well-being.

Teacher adaptability and resilience appeared to be central for those teachers who believed they could maintain their curriculum and student achievement. Wilson reported that “I tried to learn a few new teaching strategies that would fit my restrictions,” which is evidence for being adaptable to changing environments without giving up one’s goals. As previously mentioned, although Kathy shared negative feelings, she showed resilience by finding resources and maintaining a level of accountability and rigor for her students, which helped maintain her status as a quality teacher in her marginalized field. Beth showed both adaptability and resilience as well, reporting that she “pushed the boundaries” for tasks she wanted to do and would simply make modifications versus abandoning her goals. She said (Time 2), “It goes back to my philosophy of teaching, if you’re requiring nothing, you’re going to get nothing. If you expect nothing, then you get exactly what you expect.” There is evidence here that a particular set of principles and values held by several teachers can be maintained with strong beliefs in one’s goals and that showing high amounts of adaptability and resilience reduces deserting one’s intent.

## Student–Teacher Connections

All teachers mentioned the profound impact and importance of having quality student–teacher interactions during the school year and the uncertainty of these relationships regarding their new teaching environment due to COVID-19. At the beginning of the semester, Mike and Dan (Time 1) alluded to how important PE and building relationships with students was for the success of their class and for achieving their philosophical goals for being a teacher, especially for those students who are often considered difficult in classroom settings. Dan said, “I feel [PE] is important for those students that may not do well sitting down, but when they are moving and have someone or something to connect with, they have a great time.” Wilson (Time 1) shared how motivating it was for him to have positive student–teacher interactions during class:

Excitement is the first thing, I get to see [my students] again and I see them happy and working in groups together . . . . One rule of thumb that I live by is attitude is contagious, my kids are going to be the way I am, or how I come in and act.

The power of positive student–teacher relationships and interactions on teacher job satisfaction and well-being was palpable when discussing when they felt effective or ineffective. In this case, the COVID-19 restrictions changed how teachers saw their interactions with students, and this added to their anxiety about their practices and uncertainty for the school year. With sadness, Greg (Time 1) stated, “How can I have the students this year have the same relationship experience with me that the kids had last year and two years ago?” His personal philosophy prioritized one-on-one connections as a way to share a positive mentoring relationship with students. However, the virtual learning, social distancing, and other “separating” factors caused emotions and reactions that severely impacted his motivation negatively in terms of wanting to teach and reduced enthusiasm with his students. Similarly, Beth (Time 1) stated, “I just keep thinking about my students, I would certainly want someone to smile at me [if I was the student], but it’s

hard behind a mask. Those little moments, students can’t tell [how we feel about them].” In a critical incidence report (Critical Incident-2; October), Dan wrote, “Every time a student had to leave class, my students would say I bet they have COVID. It made me feel like it was always on their mind and always took focus from class.” The distractions and negative influences caused by external factors had a direct impact on student–teacher relationships and their shared emotional experiences. In an effort to go “above and beyond with different teaching strategies to accomplish my goals,” Kathy (Time 2) said,

I feel like a circus performer, trying to get their attention and then other days I just turn on the camera and they’re there wanting that interaction and wanting to be in class. They know that I give them a full effort and stuff other classes aren’t doing, but it’s not always there every day.

Student–teacher relationships were foundational to many of the teachers’ beliefs of what they enjoyed about teaching and their purpose for being a teacher, although many external circumstances negatively impacted this underlying importance.

## Emotional Labor and Uncertainty

Most teachers felt very uneasy about starting their semester with limited time to plan for format changes. Wilson stated, “I’ve had more anxiety about what else is going to be added on me this year in PE.” In preparation for new teaching platforms, Barbara (Time 1) said, “They wanted us to be prepared to teach from home . . . we went through training after training . . . to the point that all of our brains were fried.” In addition, Kathy and Diana (Time 1) mentioned that they felt like first-year teachers, with Diana specifically using that description in referencing her older peer veteran teachers with less technology/health experience. At the beginning of the semester, Diana (Time 1) lamented, “I feel, overwhelmed . . . not scared but just worried about how I am going to teach all these kids over the internet . . . honestly, we didn’t know anything until the first week of staff development.” Kathy (Time 1) said, “I found out Friday before classes started on Monday how virtual would be set up . . . . I had from Friday to Monday to basically reinvent the wheel.” Both teachers reported feeling severe bouts of anxiety from the uncertainty and lack of communication, and guilt for not knowing what sort of quality they could offer. Interestingly, Wilson (Critical Incident-1; September) reported his feelings of being overwhelmed by extra duties due to COVID; he wrote, “I was late for a meeting THAT I PLANNED, because I had to disinfect equipment. I’m overwhelmed, there seems to be no mental capacity to balance my additional responsibilities.” These emotional responses suggested misalignment between teacher goals and coping mechanisms, which prompted bouts of anxiety and uncertainty when teachers believed their content and program were important. However, misalignment is likely not prompted if teachers do not feel that their goals are being threatened and/or they have strong coping/control strategies.

In opposition to Kathy and Wilson, Carlie and Mary (Time 1) reported open lines of communication with school leadership, alleviating uncertainty. Mary said, “My admin was very open about everything so I wasn’t stressed about where we would be teaching.” Carlie stated, “I’m not nervous at all. I am pumped, I’ve not gotten to see my kiddos in 6 months, I’m ready.”

When reflecting at the end of the semester, Diana’s (Time 2) statement encapsulated much of the struggle that several of the teachers felt:



I would come to school tired. I would come to school stressed; I would come to school anxious about how today was going to go and that's because I couldn't see my students enough, and I wasn't able to offer the curriculum I felt was best. So that was hard, and I feel anxious about that.

Similar emotional exhaustion and labor was reported by Kathy (Time 2), who, by all accounts, was perceived as an effective teacher based on previous teacher reviews and being nominated as the department head in her school. She went on to say, “[I] feel frustrated, disappointed, irritated, angry, deflated. I feel more deflated than any other school year . . . I don't feel as passionate about my craft as I did.” Emotional labor and its links to reduced motivation and effectiveness were evident when Wilson (Critical incident-2; October) wrote,

I am holding kids accountable for grades but allowing make up days, I am responding to parents' calls and explaining. But I know the teachers down the road aren't dealing with this [because they aren't doing anything]. It makes me look incompetent while the exact opposite is true. The easiest thing in the world is not to care. It is tempting at times.

Overall, several teachers who reported emotional uncertainty, frustration, and exhaustion also provided anecdotal evidence for how it felt to experience the emotion and then navigate the outcomes of those feelings, some successfully and others less successfully. From an internal perspective, several teachers cited that, over time, they were able to overcome initial frustration and anxiety as they “got in a groove.” Diana (Time 2) said,

I was way more frustrated at the beginning of the semester, but now we're this far into this, I am in the groove and kids are getting used to it. So, things are 100% better than the last time we talked.

In reflecting on her ability to overcome equipment and spacing barriers, Mary (Time 2) said, “It was occasionally frustrating, and I didn't always know what to do, but I learned how to teach other ways and the proper techniques were more difficult, but it turned out great and I felt better.” On a similar note, learning new teaching strategies and activities really helped Mike (Time 2) overcome initial uncertainty. “It went great and I think there's some new activities we came up with that are going to stay [in our PE curriculum].” Many teachers reported external rewards as a buffer to emotional exhaustion. Both Mike and Kathy (Time 2) proclaimed recognition from their principals and fellow teachers in front of their colleagues as meaningful to them after putting in a lot of extra time and work to make changes to their curriculum and instructional strategies. In summary, teachers' beliefs, experiences, and emotional experiences highlighted many misgivings in the PE teacher profession, albeit exacerbated by the pandemic.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of PE teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic to further understand teachers' beliefs, emotional fragility, and well-being through glaring holes in the school structure and their personal beliefs. From an EDST perspective, teachers' adaptability, perceived support, coping ability, and emotions were reflected and worked reciprocally as key components that supported or derailed teaching effectiveness and motivation. Analysis showed that teachers' beliefs about the

superficial or tangible support they received need reconsideration along with the restrictive beliefs placed around what PE represents to the teachers (i.e., physical skills, sports, physical activity time) and their students. In addition, quality teacher–student connections and experiences were viewed as essential for teacher well-being and positive experiences, regardless of barriers and hurdles. Being adaptable while maintaining holistic values of PE seems important for teacher flexibility and student outcomes. These relationships confirm theoretical suggestions that teacher goals are a first line in predicting their emotional experience; however, when misalignment occurs, teachers' coping and control mechanisms (reflected in adaptability and flexibility) will predict a course for teaching motivation and action (Schutz et al., 2010). Also, teachers likely needed to increase the amount of communication with administrators/colleagues and control the narrative of their subject's status through offering expert opinions and seeking collaborations with PE experts to support their teaching and status. The layers of teacher emotions and experiences work reciprocally (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009); therefore, when teachers take agency (as a result of strong beliefs and abilities), they can take actions that push back on macrolayers influencing their experiences, including the school and the social–historical contexts. Overall, teacher emotions (and what they represent) were highly interwoven for explaining and understanding teaching decisions, being able to overcome barriers, or excelling and thriving in the profession.

Although research and teacher training recommendations continue to suggest that teachers advocate for their subject and programs in schools (Gaudreault et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2018), teachers of a marginalized subject like PE may struggle to truly identify what constitutes tangible (meaningful/measurable) support. In this study, things like continuing to provide curricular time in the schedule, taking away PE grades from the report card to “reduce teacher stress,” and asking teachers to give students grades without consideration for the quality or quantity of work are considered ways in which administrators undermined PE and teachers. On the other side, when administrators purchase necessary equipment and materials, provide instructional support in person/virtual PD, or when they communicate with teachers to give them a say in scheduling/student outcomes represents tangible support for teachers. The inability to differentiate these forms of support and not engage in self-perpetuated marginalization needs more attention in PE teacher research. It appears that simply providing suggestions on subject advocacy to teachers may not be enough; specified trainings and skills that train teachers to reappraise their beliefs (Frenzel, 2014; Lazarus, 1991) about teaching PE and what PE means to students are likely needed to combat strong influences of a marginalizing social–historical and school context (Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021). Teacher training on instructional practices likely needs to be intertwined with learning about what true support looks like and ways to reconcile with other stakeholders when it is not met.

As with the previous theme, the following theme is highly dependent on the teacher belief systems. The beliefs that a teacher has about the purpose of PE dictate the curriculum they choose and, subsequently, the experience of the student (Chen, 2021; Frenzel, 2014). However, the limitations of that belief system and “what PE is/represents” can have a negative influence on students' experiences. For example, teachers who stick to a traditional team-based, highly competitive sport curriculum and who use primarily direct instruction have a particular belief system that continues to show negative student outcomes, particularly at the secondary level (Cardinal et al., 2013). In this study, teachers who seemed to



prioritize the physical domain (skill mastery, physical activity time) struggled to make curricular and instructional shifts for PE and often abandoned PE (standards/curriculum) altogether. Again, although the experience studied here is unique, this does highlight the inability of many teachers to show adaptability in teaching while maintaining strong beliefs about the holistic goals of PE. From an EDST perspective, simply accepting teachers' goals (pursuit for congruence and relevance; Schutz et al., 2010) may not be sufficient in preparing future/current PE teachers in maximizing their motivation and well-being. Special attention needs to be placed on goal relevance in PE and what that means as it relates to student needs. Teachers may be prioritizing their own perceived needs over the changing landscape of PE's role in schools and students' lives.

In addition, the goals of PE continue to be challenged. Specifically, the onset and prioritization of individualized planning for activity/fitness goals, transfer of learning activities to real-world choices, and the importance of social-emotional learning as a universal goal of school in the 21st century (Durlak et al., 2011) provide examples of the new landscape of PE. Put simply, if teachers put the goals of PE in a very narrow box, they seem to be less adaptable, persistent, and willing to experiment with new instructional strategies to meet changing needs. Attributional training of preservice and in-service teachers seems to be as essential as pedagogical and content training to potentially help teachers develop a belief system that is far more open to new strategies and possibilities of PE that subsequently result in positive emotions and stronger professional beliefs (Richards et al., 2018; Simonton, Richards, & Washburn, 2021).

As pointed out by Mansfield et al. (2016) and within the PE literature by Richards et al. (2017), teacher resilience is a prerequisite for both teacher effectiveness and well-being. Greater resilience has been found to reduce burnout in teachers, especially within early-career teachers (Richards et al., 2016). Resilience, as it relates to the current study, was embedded in those teachers who chose to push the boundaries for what was possible in PE as they pursued PE-specific goals, advocated for their subject to their colleagues, and forced communication lines to reduce undermining of their subject during these unique times. Although all teachers felt the stressors of the current pandemic, those who displayed great resilience fought for their core beliefs as opposed to those who became overwhelmed or reverted to the status quo. From a general state of PE (not tied to the pandemic), it would be assumed that those teachers who develop resilient beliefs and/or who are trained with tools to be resilient are more likely to improve PE's status in schools and feel satisfied with their profession (Richards et al., 2017). Evidence to this point in general school subjects was found in a randomized trial of teachers who participated in a resilience building intervention program. Results showed increases in both perceived well-being and intentions to implement evidence-based practices (Cook et al., 2017). This sort of training seems essential for preservice and in-service teachers moving forward in a marginalized and isolating subject like PE.

Although it may be assumed, evidence showed that the bond between teacher and student served as a foundational piece that improved teacher experiences or undercut teacher commitment when not present. Taxer et al. (2019) provided evidence in other mainstream subject areas that positive student-teacher relationships can help protect teachers from getting exhausted and stressed. Student achievement, behaviors, and reactions to the learning environment are seminal in predicting and explaining teacher experiences (Frenzel et al., 2015) and commitment to the

profession (Simonton, Gaudreault, & Olive, 2021). Fostering a positive and caring environment is essential for teachers to feel enjoyment for their profession and will likely assist in teachers persisting and engaging in best practices (Frenzel, 2014). Also, teachers who feel disconnected experience psychological impairment (Cacioppo et al., 2006), which reduces their motivation and commitment in their role. Reducing PE resources and explicit messaging in schools that lower the status of PE present environmental influences that limit opportunities to build strong student-teacher relationships.

Finally, it seems that strong core beliefs about PE were linked to evidence-based instructional models, greater diversity in experimenting with instruction, and willingness to ask for help. Similar research has shown that positive teacher emotions foster more student-centered practices and adaptive teaching strategies (Hein et al., 2012; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Therefore, positive and adaptive action tendencies for teacher effectiveness were strongly linked to positive teacher emotions resulting from strong and adaptable core appraisals/beliefs (Frenzel, 2014; Schutz, 2014). Many teachers who reported positive experiences during the pandemic relied on models of instruction wherein they made necessary adoptions but still targeted standards-based outcomes. This example shows the positive bouts of teachers' emotional labor in which they offer genuine enthusiasm and are willing to engage in difficult work as they are excited about the end goal or results of their commitment. According to Richards et al. (2017), emotional labor is a result of teachers' perceptions and working conditions, and those who feel supported and valued engage in appropriate and meaningful emotional labor. In addition, those who feel less value in their occupation and/or who have ambiguous job expectations at school will display surface-level teacher effectiveness and insincere beliefs of their profession. These beliefs and experiences enable negative teacher emotions and subsequent reduced commitment to their jobs. Also, although some teachers were prompted from guilt, shame, or frustration, their core belief that positive changes could happen led them to seek external lesson ideas and advice from fellow PE experts and from teacher colleagues from other subjects. In opposition, teachers who had stringent core beliefs and felt complacent or defeated showed a lack of willingness to try new strategies, reducing their potential effectiveness and well-being. High coping abilities, which are an essential secondary appraisal structure in understanding teacher emotions, often reflect a more positive teacher and have links to instructional flexibility and confidence in providing student autonomy (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). Finally, this study aligned with previous research on the contagious influence of positive and negative emotional interactions between teachers and students (Carson & Chase, 2009). Positive interactions appear to enhance teacher effectiveness and professional beliefs/identity.

The findings of this study support the theoretical relationships presented in EDST on the central tenet of teacher emotions and show the importance of developing strong core beliefs about the profession, appraisals of control and coping, positive emotions, and resilience. These beliefs and tools would likely be particularly relevant for early-career faculty, regardless of the pandemic. As described here, many of the teachers felt as though they were starting from scratch and felt uncertain for the upcoming school year, similar to those first starting in the profession. Likewise, those who had less communication and assertion skills for their subject felt a great deal of anxiety for implementing their program. These circumstances and factors can heighten the emotional states and reactions for these teachers (Richards et al., 2019; Simonton,

Richards, & Washburn, 2021). However, these findings likely provide evidence that if preservice and inservice teachers are given the tools in a systematic and intentional way, they can develop these internal characteristics, resulting in positive emotional teaching experiences.

### Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings from this study are beneficial, this study's methodology does have some limitations. Although representation for gender and grade level taught were relatively even, the number of participants ( $N=10$ ) can be seen as a limitation. However, the amount of data was sufficient in addressing the purpose of the study. Furthermore, although the relationship between teaching environments and experiences is becoming well documented, there is less information on how an OPE approach to teaching may elicit a different teaching perception. This study did not control for potential differences in the perceptions of in-person or online teaching, and their impact on teacher emotions is needed in future research. In addition, although it may be assumed that teachers would have experienced personal stress over health concerns related to the public health pandemic, it was not overtly mentioned by teachers as a major theme of their experience. It is likely that personal concerns were influencing thoughts and decisions as well but were not captured in this particular study. Finally, restrictions in the schools where the teachers worked were extreme and limited data collection procedures for the researchers. Thus, supporting data like teacher observations and class evaluations were not possible but would have enhanced the rigor of this study. Future studies should include increased representation for these categories. In addition, participation should include teachers with varying teaching ability, experience, and diverse school population (i.e., demographics, size, etc.). Another limitation was the inability to visit teachers at their respective schools. This would have provided researchers the opportunity to observe teacher and student interactions as well as their classroom setting. The additional data could have potentially strengthened the research findings by better understanding what both the teacher and student were dealing with as it relates to the pandemic. Future studies should evaluate the logistical setting for each participant and use objective measures of effectiveness or well-being.

### Conclusion

The EDST model for investigating teacher emotions was used as a lens to provide a framework for the dynamic and multilayered ecosystem that influences a teacher's belief system and social-emotional well-being. The relationships between these layers clearly impact a teacher's decisions related to their curricular, instructional, and social-emotional effectiveness for their students. The findings from this study contribute to our understanding of these factors in the following ways. First, teacher appraisals of support vary greatly, resulting in a misguided interpretation of what true support may be. Teachers who accept the *sacrificial subject* philosophy may exacerbate their negative teacher experiences and the marginal status they occupy. Second, if curricular changes are to occur, administration should communicate these changes in a timely manner and provide PD opportunities for further learning. An administrator who works to meet the needs of their teachers will be appreciated and most likely will see a positive return in that investment. Third, teacher emotions are greatly impacted by their interactions with students. From this study, it is obvious that more emphasis is needed in research and training to create strong professional identity beliefs as a PE teacher;

skills to navigate the realities of schools, including resiliency, persistence, and advocacy, are needed to maximize teachers' effectiveness and well-being in schools.

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