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## Turning the Page to a More Supportive Educational Approach

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**Turning the page to a more supportive educational approach**

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Ls:400 Senior Capstone

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### **Abstract**

The focus of this Capstone Project is on lessening the negative impacts on students that occurred because of the transition from remote learning to in-person learning. It's essential for students and teachers to get the necessary support and resources they need in order to be in to better their learning and grow in their academic fields. There are children who have only experienced remote learning and may be facing challenges after the transition to in-person instruction. It is argued that a lack of support can negatively impact the student's engagement and motivation to continue learning. After interviewing administrators, teachers, and instructional aids, three action options emerged and were explored as ways to address the issue presented. Based on an analysis of the interviews and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what they learned to formulate an action that responded in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

### **Turning the page to a more supportive educational approach**

During my first week as an instructional assistant for kindergarten through fifth grade, I observed the interactions between the teachers and their students. I was excited yet nervous because I was entering a new environment. I already had experience working with students in an after-school classroom setting, both virtually and in-person, but not in an in-person day school environment. I faced similar stressors getting my students to engage virtually like teachers and other staff members. I tried to support my students' needs during my after-school time, such as homework support, encouragement, guidance, etc. In the classroom with the students, I heard the joy in the student's voices when they shared what they learned and how they retained this knowledge. I saw the ways the students explored their classrooms with their classmates. It was magical to see the excitement on the students' faces when they learned something new from reading. I also felt the teachers' stress daily due to the constant struggle for support. I observed the teachers share with their peers what their go-to resources are, they also shared those with me. Which made me feel involved and a part of their community. Although we tried our best to support each other, frustration

arises from the pressure from the parents, the lack of knowledge given in response when asked a question to the school board, and how these teachers were struggling within their classrooms.

I was assigned to be a “reading teacher” for kindergarten and first grade, that is not the official title of the staff (instructional aids) supporting the teachers, but rather the target focus for the students. This reading program ran based on the students reading levels and abilities; strangely enough, almost all the students returning to campus knew little to no sounds (phonics). I was excited to be working with the younger students but at the same time terrified. I knew that these young students had no experience in a classroom nor with other students; thus, I believed students had multiple layers of challenges. I began my new job not knowing what I would be diving into. At the beginning of the school year, the students were tested on their knowledge of phonics, reading, and writing skills. From there, the students were grouped based on their shared knowledge. In this reading program called PAF (Preventing Academic Failure), four reading teachers went through the different grade levels to support the students and the teachers. The support that these aides were providing the teacher and students was

extraordinary and it removed some of the stress that was placed on the teachers. This is due to the consent support being offered daily.

Unlike my coworkers, I was lucky enough to get the groups of students who had prior knowledge of reading and writing skills. Starting off, I was nervous, thinking that I might mess up or show the students the wrong thing. However, after consulting with my supervisor and the principal, I felt relieved that my work with the students was admirable. I saw how fast the students were learning in a short amount of time. The small numbers in these groups provided the students and teachers created a relationship that furthered the students' motivation to learn and grow. They came ready to expand their knowledge while wanting to share their stories of how they took what they learned and applied it to their everyday lives.

At the same time, learning and reading don't always come easy. I had students who, I had observed their abilities during our group time, knew how to pronounce the words but when asked to read the following sentence, they panicked. Their minds became flustered, and they randomly tried to figure out the sounds or say a sound they had heard before. After redirecting and calming the students, they could regather their thoughts and read the

sentence with flying colors. If these students were not given the opportunity to relax and gather their thoughts, they could be overlooked and fall through the cracks.

The first-grade teacher I was working with came to me sharing her gratitude for the support I have provided to her students despite only working with them for 25 minutes. She shared that in her previous years as a teacher, she always had aides in her class to help the students, especially those who were struggling, but since returning to campus, they took aid out of the classroom . Ms.Sue<sup>1</sup> had students who didn't know how to sing the Alphabet song in first grade. She asked me “ how am I supposed to teach all the other subjects like math or science when half of my students can't read the questions or notes?”. A common question and concern that teachers face, especially after remote learning for two years.

### **Literature Synthesis & Integration**

At the beginning of 2020, there was a global pandemic issued, causing school closures. Many families, teachers, and students were affected by these school closures. After nearly two years of schools being shut down and

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<sup>1</sup> pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

rushing to implement new 'norms' of education, an educational gap within the classroom has increased. This leads us to think about the effects distant learning has on the education system, the classroom environment, and the relationships the teacher establishes.

### **What is the Problem/Opportunity?**

During this transition from remote learning to in-person learning, the administration has observed multiple drastic changes in their student's behaviors, abilities, and needs. "more than 97% of educators reported seeing learning loss in their students over the past year when compared to children in previous years, and 57%, estimated their students are behind by more than three months in their social-emotional progress"( Dickeler, 2021).

During this shutdown of many schools with a high population of low-income families, we could not provide the proper resources. With the shut down of schools, the lower-income communities "struggled for weeks, some more than a month, just to begin online learning. They scrambled to buy computers and hot spots, even as the onslaught of demand led to long delays." ( Esquivel, Blume, Poston and Barajas, 2020). Thus widening a gap for low-income students of color reinforces the struggle for support and the lack

of resources. “ Educators in schools in areas with higher poverty found virtual classes especially ineffective, heightening concerns that Covid-19 exacerbated educational inequalities.” ( Dickeler, 2021). “ Although it's common for all schools and districts to struggle with finances, absences of students, providing the proper resources, its dispositionally common for lower-income schools to be affected the most. “ While there are deficits across demographic groups, the gaps were larger in schools that serve predominantly Black, Hispanic, or low-income students” ( Goldstein 2022).

### **Why is it an Issue/Opportunity?**

This is an issue because students were thriving in an in-person classroom who are now struggling to stay above the educational gap that was created. This is also an issue because, without the proper support given to teachers and students, there will be no improvement for the students, thus creating a constant game of catch-up. “As the pandemic enters its third year,.... shows that about a third of children in the youngest grades are missing reading benchmarks, up significantly from before the pandemic.” ( Goldstein 2022). Since children have spent the last three years outside of the classroom, teachers need to review and reteach the basic necessities of

education to the students. “ For the youngest learners ... it’s not just picking up where you left off; it’s actually starting all over again..... “We have first-graders who can’t sing the alphabet song,” “We’re seeing first graders coming in with no familiarity with the text.” ( Jacobson, 2022).

Since children and families have been struggling to retain the necessary resources to obtain a successful education, it's putting a strain on their emotional needs that can cause anxiety and depression. “ These inequities threaten to exacerbate wide and persistent disparities in public education that shortchange students of color and those from low-income families, resulting in potentially lasting harm to a generation of children.” ( Esquivel, et al. 2020).

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### Impact of the pandemic on academic learning

Share of survey responses from 941 U.S. educators covering grades K-12



SOURCE: Horace Mann Educators Corporation survey of 941 U.S. educators, including public school K-12 teachers, administrators and support personnel, conducted in February and March 2021.



*Image 1. Data based on a survey viewing the impacts of the pandemic on academic learning.*

**What Has and/or Should Be Done?**

Despite the research that teachers and children have been drastically affected by the pandemic, sadly, teachers are getting laid off due to recent budget cuts. " Advocates for low-income children challenged layoffs by seniority... They argued that the last-in, first-out system of layoffs disproportionately harms low-income schools, staffed by new teachers, and doesn't factor in teacher effectiveness." (Fensterward 2022). These layoffs affect the personnel that should be placed in the classroom to support and nurture the children and teachers. " What's also different this year is that for the first time, classified employees, including kitchen workers, janitors, and special education aides, must also be given notices by March 15, or else their jobs will be shielded from layoffs."

However, research shows that if there are instructional aids and other trained personnel in the classroom, and they remain in the school, they provide the necessary support to improve the growing educational gap. "Research suggests that in-school tutoring from a highly trained teacher or aide, ideally one-on-one or in a small group, can help students who are behind catch up academically ." ( Goldstein 2022). Teachers have also been

advocating for support for themselves and focusing on the children. Luckily some of the funding has been placed to support the children with extra one-on-one tutoring with trained personnel, including instructional aides. "Billions of federal stimulus dollars are flowing to districts for tutoring and other supports.." ( Goldstein 2022).

At the beginning of the pandemic, schools were not required to partake in state-mandated testing; however, there has been a shift to reincorporate them back in. Although there are mixed feeling about assessing students, this is helpful for the teachers so they can create an effective lesson plan for students. A high school student from New York shares, " they should plan on testing students this year, in part to measure the "educational inequities that the pandemic has exacerbated."I agree with this statement because of how far behind I know some people are in school; teachers should know what they need to help more on."

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the transition from virtual learning to in-person learning has some drawbacks; some drastic changes need to be made and considered to support those in need. If there is support in the classroom, where teachers

and students are allowed to have more one-on-one time, there will be more successful for those children in need. There has to be a way to keep the necessary trained personnel at the school, including classified employees, to help this shift to a better, more supportive educational environment.

### **Method**

For this Capstone Project, I investigated how elementary school teachers and the principal at Ocean Elementary School<sup>2</sup> view the impacts that occurred during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning and what they thought could be done to improve it. This is also important because there are children who went into a classroom with no prior knowledge or skills, so they fell behind at a significantly higher rate and many teachers cannot fully support them. Also, this is important because stakeholders had an opportunity to express their perspectives on an issue that became a national concern. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, I used what I have learned to formulate an action that responded to the impacts that occurred during the transition from

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

remote learning to in-person learning in a way that inspired, informed, or involved a particular audience.

## **Context**

The location of Ocean Elementary School is in a middle-class housing community. It is a couple of minutes away from a fire station. Recently there has been a lot of construction building new homes and adding to the main road connecting to a highway. Hollister used to be a rural town; however, there has been recent expansion development. There is a mix of different ethnicities of students in the school, with 62.9 percent of students being Hispanic or Latino, 26.4 percent of students being White, and 1.9 percent of students being African American. Despite the English Learning population being at 13.9 percent, there is only one staff member who speaks Spanish, making her the go-to communicator to all the Spanish-speaking families.

The school's structure comprises the main office as the center, with the grades surrounding it broken into quads. Facing the front office, to the left, is TK through first-grade classrooms. The classrooms alternate every other being, kindergarten then first. There is only one TK class which is the closest to

the office. These classrooms have a divider that separates the grades yet still allows teachers to open it to talk to each other. Depending on the divider, some doors have a handle while some are heavy "curtains." On the right side are the second and third-grade classrooms. Similar to the younger grades, these classrooms have a divider. Also, on the right side, the last classroom closest to the field is the PE teacher's class, which is used for storage and PE during rainy days. There are benches and small garden spaces within the quads that students work on and interact with. The office is connected to a multipurpose room, nurse's office, counselor's office, and speech therapist's office. There is a cafeteria on the backside of the office, but it's only used to cook the food. The students eat outside on the benches surrounded by a chain-link fence. Along the side of the school, there are portable classrooms that house Special Education, fourth -eighth grade, the library, and storage. The library is across campus; it's in a classroom that took down the divider to expand the room.

### **Participants and Participant Selection**

I interviewed the school's principal and six staff members, including

teachers, instructional aides, and a speech aid. This group of prospective participants was invited to participate because of their relevant influence and experience as teachers and aides; as well as the quality of actions seen through directly working with them. Note that Ocean Elementary School goes up to eighth grade; nevertheless, I focused on grades K-5.

### **Participants**

**Principal A-** A female educator who has been in education for 24 years.

**Teacher 1-** A female second-grade teacher. She finished school in 1992 with a multiple subject credential and a master's degree in teaching with technology.

**Teacher 2-** A female kindergarten teacher. She has been teaching at a variety of schools for 20 years.

**Teacher 3-** A female second-grade teacher. She has been in education for six years.

**Teacher 4 -** A female speech therapist that works with both special ed students and grade students. She has been a speech therapist for 12 years.

**Instructional Aid 1-** A female Instructional Aid that has been at the school for seven years.

## **Researcher**

This topic is important to me because I have seen firsthand the effects of this transition on the student's educational, behavioral, and emotional needs. Another reason why this is important to me is because I had conversations with teachers about some of the issues that occurred during the transition.

I am similar to my participants in that I am concerned with the lack of resources and support for students, their families, and teachers. However, I differ from my participants because I am not a credentialed teacher. Also, I am not the one directly being influenced and affected by these issues daily.

I remained mindful of the terms I used because they might portray a different meaning than I was trying to display, leading to miscommunication. I also stayed conscious of any bias.

## **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

1. Name, profession, and how long in their field.
2. What are some of the impacts that occurred during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning?

What do you see as some of the advantages or successes of the transition?

What do you see as some of the challenges with the transition?

What are you most concerned about when it comes to the transition from remote to in-person learning? Concerns about a learning gap, lack of funding being properly implemented, lack of support for staff and students?

3. How do you think remote learning impacted students - in both good and bad ways

4. What is currently being done to support the students who might be falling behind or through the gaps and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?

What more can be done to support teachers and students in the classroom with the transition?

5. What do you think should be done about these impacts that occurred?/What is being done to address the impacts?

How is funding impacting what is being done and what could be done?

If money was no object, how would you use it to address the impacts of remote instruction on students? What other roles might this funding or lack of funding impact?

When there are teacher helpers( instructional aids) in the classroom, are there any noticeable improvements for the students, teachers, and the school's overall environment?

6. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about these impacts?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to say about impacts that occurred during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning and ways to improve it? Or clarify anything regarding the things we have been talking about?

### **Procedure**

Participants were interviewed via Zoom. All interviews were done individually, took less than 30 minutes, and were audio-recorded (with participant consent). A semi-structured interview format will be used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear,

interesting, or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys will be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee.

### **Data Analysis**

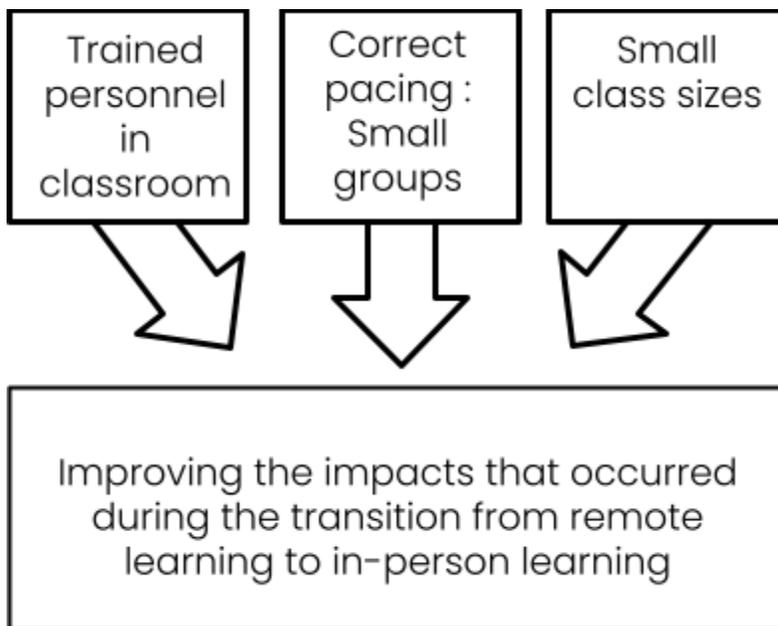
Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

### **Results**

For this Capstone Project, elementary school teachers, instructional aides, and the principal were interviewed to see what they thought could be done to improve the impacts that occurred during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning and what they thought could be done improve it. This is important because there are students who are entering the classroom with no prior knowledge or skills, including behavioral, academic, and social-emotional. This led to many of those students falling behind at a significantly higher rate. many teachers cannot fully support their needs due to the lack of support and resources. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, three themes emerged (see Table 1).

Evidence-based decision-making requires evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: the time required, effectiveness, and cost. It is essential to examine the time it requires to support these students and

teachers because it helps us determine how the remaining academic year will run and time is already a factor that is working against teachers. Of course, we have to examine the effectiveness for both students and teachers. Effectiveness is also a necessary criterion because it analyzes the possibility and extent of success. Lastly, we have to explore how costs will affect the actions since the literature shows that there is a budget cut anticipated for this school year. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option, action will be recommended and justified.



*Image 1. Themes that emerged from the data and literature.*

*Table 1*

*Evaluation of Action Options*

	[TIME REQUIRED]	[EFFECTIVENESS ]	[COST]
Trained personnel	High	Medium	High
Correct pacing for students: Small groups	Medium	High	Low
Smaller class sizes	High	High	High

**Trained personnel in the classroom**

Although time is not on their side, many teachers have expressed the needed for trained personnel in the classroom who can mimic the actions of the teacher. Since children have spent the last three years outside of the school, teachers need to review and reteach the “ basics” to the students (e.g., ., holding a pencil, this is an environment for learning, hands to ourselves, etc.).

“ For the youngest learners ... it’s not just picking up where you left off, it’s actually starting all over again..... We have first-graders who can’t sing the alphabet song....We’re seeing first graders coming in with no familiarity with the text” ( Jacobson, 2022). If there are more trained helpers in the class, the

teacher and students will move smoother through the curriculum since there is not as much stopping or backtracking. When interviewing the teachers, they all said that trained personnel were trained in the same manner as Instructional Aides. " Keeping the supported and trained personals for longer time. [ Instructional Aides ( IA) were already in the classroom during small reading groups but for only 25 minutes." ( Teacher 2, personal communication, April 13, 2022).

Also, during the interview process, there was a direct connection between having more trained personnels in the classroom and how valuable they are as direct resources. As pointed out through the data, there are still students trying to adjust to this in-person environment. When asked about the impacts of this transition, Teacher 2 responded, " Mental health of students, they are not used to the social setting of being around 25 other students. Behaviors, emotional issues, then suddenly going back to the classroom."

### **Correct pacing**

Time is always a factor that teachers are fighting against. During this transition to in-person instruction, teachers were already anticipating some of the causes and effects these students would face due to being out of the classroom for so long. The top need is to “reteach” basic needs. However, the need to keep the class moving on time was challenging. Teachers are expressing that in order for them to correct the pacing for students they would need necessary support so they can work more one-on-one with their students. “ They need the instruction at their level...Teachers are able to do for one on one” ( Teacher 1, personal communication, April 7, 2022). At various times, not all the students were in the class (due to multiple factors), so choosing a pace for math and English language arts instructions was a challenge. Teacher 1 went on to illustrate this scenario, “ So you're back today. You've been gone for 20 days. Let's think. What do you know, do you know how to do the addition from class?” ( Teacher 1, personal communication, April 7, 2022).

It was shown that if there are instructional aids and other trained personnel in the classroom, and they remain in the school, they provide the necessary support to improve any potential educational gaps. “Research

suggests that in-school tutoring from a highly trained teacher or aide, ideally one-on-one or in a small group, can help students who are behind catch up academically" ( Goldstein, 2022). However, based on the literature(Fensterward 2022), it is known that budget cuts are making it highly challenging for teachers to perform. Luckily some of the funding has been placed to support the children with extra one-on-one tutoring with trained personnel, including instructional aides. "Billions of federal stimulus dollars are flowing to districts for tutoring and other supports.." ( Goldstein 2022). An interesting connection between correcting the pace for students and the need for support is that support comes in a variety of different forms, including volunteers and outside organizations. " it takes a community. It takes everyone to help the students out." ( Teacher 3, personal communication, April 8, 2022).

### **Smaller class sizes**

A third theme that emerged during the research process was the necessity of having smaller class sizes. It provides more personal relationships for students and teachers, but now students are less likely to fall

through the cracks. All of the interviewed teachers referenced that smaller class sizes are directly related to effectiveness. Since there are more one-on-one and interpersonal interactions, the students can work with fewer distractions.

When interviewing the teachers and Instructional Aides, nearly all referenced a form of distraction due to having multiple students in a class. “ Even working in a room full of other students, they get easily distracted.” ( Teacher 3, personal communication, April 8, 2022).

Quoted from interviewed teachers, “ reorganization of student rosters into smaller class sizes by leveling our kids based their reading leaves, one teacher will have the lower-level students who are struggling with reading while the other has the higher levels so there are proper instructions” ( Teacher 3, personal communication, April 8, 2022).

Sadly based on the literature, we see that with funding being taken from school districts, reducing class sizes is unlikely. “ Advocates for low-income children challenged layoffs by seniority... They argued that the last-in, first-out system of layoffs disproportionately harms low-income schools, staffed by

new teachers, and doesn't factor in teacher effectiveness." (Fensterward 2022).

## **Conclusion**

Of the three action options, I recommend correcting the pace for students by having small groups. We are including and requesting that trained personnel be in the classroom during this time of small groups. Second, by correcting the pace for students in need of a slower or faster pace, the teacher can evaluate the needs of the students at a much quicker rate, avoiding any forming gaps. Based on the literature and the data collected in the interviewing process, I am confident that this is the best solution to better support teachers and students transitioning from virtual learning to in-person.

## **Concessions**

While I chose the correct pacing for students, by utilizing small groups based on the student's reading levels as the best action option moving forward, the other two options have considerable strengths. For example, time is required to evaluate each student to determine which reading group the

students will be placed in. Although there's a high chance of it being effective,

Correct pacing using small groups will need time to move the students

towards the state's goals.

Inevitably, when small groups require more hands-on-deck, there will be some form of financial issue. However, this can also be overlooked by focusing on parent volunteers to come and support during those times.

### **Limitations**

While choosing correct pacing, and referring to small groups based on the students' reading levels, as my recommended action option, there are still limitations to recognize. For example, time and cost are still an adversary.

Nevertheless, this action will require teachers to reevaluate the schedule of their lessons. They ( staff at Ocean Elementary<sup>3</sup>) will need to determine who will have which aides during which time. Another limitation would be determining if all grade levels will shift into a more 'small group' dominant instruction

### **Potential negative outcomes**

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<sup>3</sup> \*Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

There are some possible negative outcomes to consider in this action option. For instance, it is unclear what the "correct pacing" refers to, and it varies depending on the grade level, the teacher's ability, and the evaluations of the student's test score. Regardless of effectiveness or finically qualification, this would require a direct change in design and curriculum and teachers might be resentful towards any changes. Another potential negative outcome would be that there will be a shortage of teachers since there are budget cuts. Due to recent budget cuts, teachers are forced into overcrowded classrooms, making it difficult to find time for small groups.

## **Conclusion**

Despite all limitations or potential adverse outcomes, I still recommend correct pacing: small groups as the best action option to solve the issues during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning. This action has the strongest reach of all the actions because it requires the least amount of direct restrictions and since we can use parent volunteers to volunteer during specific hours of the day to support the students in need. While working as an instructional aide and supporting teachers during

reading level-based small groups, it is evident that if we keep the students at their level, they are more likely to reach the pace as the rest of their classmates at a faster rate. This also supports the confidence within the child and their love for reading and learning.

### **Action Documentation and Critical Reflection**

Many California students have been out of a classroom setting for more than three years. Teachers have been struggling to stay on top of all the changes and challenges that the pandemic created. Adapting is necessary for growth, but how can teachers and students succeed in their academic fields when they do not have the proper resources? Resources come in many different forms and consistencies. It is well known that moving forward, districts, schools, and teachers will need to focus on supporting the students that fell behind academically.

This paper focuses on lessening the negative impacts on students that occurred during the transition from remote learning to in-person learning. After finalizing the tools and topics I was going to explore and critically examine, I partnered with a local elementary school. I interviewed the school's principal and six staff members, including three teachers, instructional aides,

and a speech aide. I invited this group of prospective participants to participate because of their relevant influence and experience as teachers and aides and the quality of actions seen through directly working with them.

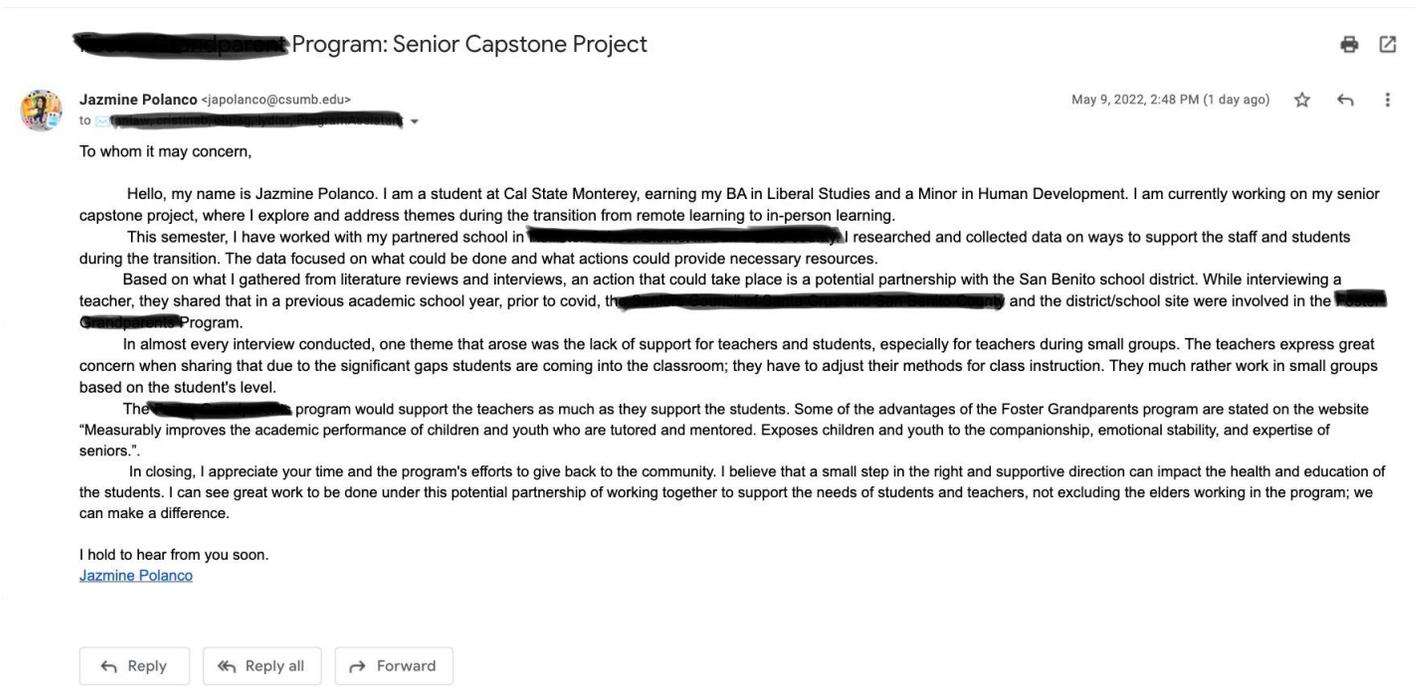
Three action options emerged after interviewing the participants. Their inputs and stories corresponded with the studies I had researched regarding the impacts students face following the transition to in-person instruction, which guided me in weighing out my action options. The first action option is incorporating more trained personnel in the classroom that can mimic the expectations and guidance of the teacher towards the students. The trained personnel will also be in the classroom during any small group instruction for the teachers, as well as provide support to teachers so teachers can do more one-on-one instruction. The second option action is correct pacing referring to small groups based on the students reading levels. Since students are entering and exiting the classroom at different times due to Covid exposure, Covid contracts, or independent studies, they are retaining and learning the materials at different speeds. So teachers have been integrating small groups to support the needs of all their students; however, they can not fully support their students without resources. The third and final action option is to have

smaller class sizes. This would open up the opportunity for teachers to build an interpersonal relationship with their students as well as support them on a more one-on-one level. The recommended action option is to correct the pacing by establishing a routine for small group instruction. This action option was chosen based on the data collected from elementary school teacher interviews, scholarly studies on the importance of instructional aides, and lived experiences in the after-school program setting as well as day school settings. Educators can also integrate this action option at different levels since it provides openness to volunteers. I believe that this is the best action option because I see so much potential for this resource. This can be the first step toward a more inclusive teaching method. In addition, this action is open to take in parent volunteers and outside organizations.



Image 2. PDF version of the poster I created reaching out to parent volunteers

*that I placed throughout the town.*



*Image 3. Screenshot of the letter sent to an organization with a group of willing participants trying to reach out to a potential partnership.*

### *Critical Reflection*

*Beginning the semester, I did not know what to expect in my LS 400: Senior Capstone course. I, and many of my classmates, were extremely nervous and anxious. Not only because, for most, this was our first semester being back on campus taking an in-person course after the Covid-19 pandemic, but also because the idea of "capstone" is stressful. While in the Capstone class, I soon began a new job working as an instructional aide in*

*my town's School District. This was the first job where I worked during school hours; usually, I worked after school. I became an Instructional Aide for kindergarten and first grade daily; I also had a fourth and fifth-grade group every other day. The focus of my job was to be their reading teacher during small groups and provide support to the teachers. It was an exciting experience. Not only did I begin to develop new skills, but this experience inspired me for my capstone project. I had teachers share my excitement about me entering the field of education. However, I also saw the stress that these teachers were going through. On one specific day, I had a teacher express gratitude for all I helped her and her students. At that moment, I knew I needed and wanted to find a way to help with more.*

*Going into this capstone project, I found it challenging to keep my bias out of focus. I had believed that I knew what the teachers were going to reference or point to; however, I was quick to change my mindset. Following the interviews, I realized that despite having some background in education, I had overlooked some of the needs of the students.*

*As I began to move toward potential action options and solutions, I began to stress out. I thought I would not find anything that would "really*

*make a difference.” After some reflection and talking to my peers, I realized that the changes and support I have been providing and am trying to do is the first step toward change. This project has provided me with so much insight and knowledge as a future educator. I will continue to advocate for additional support for teachers and students.*

### **Synthesis and Integration**

As an undergraduate student at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), my time has been, at times, challenging but ultimately rewarding. This was the first semester since transferring in 2019 when I spent my time physically on campus. The required coursework, Liberal Studies (LS) MLOs, and this action research project have positively impacted and equipped me in my professional development. Beginning with MLO 1: Developing Educator, I learned to become more confident in my skills to think, write, and speak critically regarding the subject matter of my project and in the context of a California public educator. I began to incorporate and reflect on the skills I was developing and implement them in my careers in an after-school and day school setting. By being provided an opportunity to work alongside educators and the community who have aided me through

interviews and mentorship, I have understood the responsibilities of a California public educator in the classroom, community, State, and National contexts. Referring to MLO 2: Diversity and Multicultural Scholar, I was able to reflect on my education and environment and transform ideas critically. Of course, over the last two years, technology has been an enormous component of education. I have first-hand experience with the push and pull effects that technology has played.

Additionally, in terms of MLO 5: Subject Matter Generalist, I recognize my newfound experience of completing a coherent depth of a study within my action research project. As I continue to move forward in my career as an educator, I must familiarize myself with current pedagogical practices, literature, studies, and my passion for student achievement and well-being. I felt that I had been trying to move in this direction, but now I can identify the needed tools. My greatest takeaway after completing this project is that I have the power to inspire, inform, and educate others, which will be a lesson I pass on to my students.

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