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**Investigating the Key Challenges Facing Teachers in Post-Pandemic
American Public Educational System**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's degree in literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

We began only by His facilitation, we reached the end only through His guidance, and we achieved our goals only by His grace .All praise is due to Allah, who enabled us to accomplish this milestone in our academic journey.

We dedicate the fruits of our effort to ourselves for never giving up , we dedicate this work to all our family and friends for their endless love and emotional support .Their sacrifices and encouragement gave us the motivation to continue during moments of pressure and uncertainty.

May Allah protect and reward you.

We also dedicate this work to teachers everywhere, especially those who continued educating, supporting, and inspiring students despite the uncertainty and emotional pressure brought by the post –pandemic period. Their resilience, sacrifices, and dedication deserve recognition and appreciation.

FEZZAI Messaouda / GUEMMOULA Chaima

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the everyday reality of teachers across the American educational system. As classrooms reopened, teachers returned to familiar settings, yet their professional reality had significantly changed. This study explores the key challenges facing teachers in the post-pandemic American public educational system, and it arises from the need to understand how these ongoing pressures continue to affect teachers' professional practice and well-being. It aims to identify the key challenges teachers face, examine their impact on teaching performance, and highlight the types of support teachers need to adapt to this new educational landscape. This research is significant because it gives voice to teachers' lived experiences and contributes to a deeper understanding of the support they require in the aftermath of the pandemic. A qualitative method approach was used to collect data from teachers in the American educational system, combining quantitative trends with qualitative insights. The findings reveal increased classroom disruption, noticeable learning gaps, and heightened emotional demands that require more from teachers than traditional instruction. Additionally, rising levels of stress and burnout among teachers indicate a strong need for institutional support, training, and emotional resources to help them cope effectively.

Keywords: American public education; Post-pandemic education; Teacher challenges.

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The unexpected arrival of the pandemic shook U.S. schools into sudden online instruction. Though educators adjusted quickly, their efforts revealed deeper pre-existing problems that remained after screens went dark and the return to in-person instruction. In classrooms today, familiar struggles like overcrowding persist alongside fresh complications rooted in those isolated months. Even with students back in seats, recovery is uneven and shaped by what happened when normal routines vanished. One major issue which schools face now is the deep setbacks in student learning. Alongside this, stress weighs on both students and teachers. The pressure to make up for delays runs into the reality of current course requirements. Within debates about school rules, research shows that classroom environments changed after COVID-19 took hold. Rather than simply returning to old norms, today's classrooms demand more from teachers in ways that have not been seen previously. Support structures must evolve, given these layered challenges that shape daily practice. These developments place this study within the field of educational policy and teacher support, where understanding post-pandemic challenges is essential for designing effective interventions.

2. Statement of the Problem

Following the end of pandemic-related school closures, pressure on educators in American public schools has grown heavier. Classrooms may have reopened, yet underlying struggles have deepened over time. Instead of easing, challenges around student readiness and mental health have intensified. Many teachers face these demands daily, lacking sufficient support or resources. Without proper help, frustration builds quietly beneath the surface, and support systems fail to match the reality of their current roles. As they are stretched thin, educators experience declining

well-being dips just as student outcomes hang in the balance. What exists now is less a shortfall than a widening rift between expectation and aid. This gap not only affects teachers' professional well-being but also has direct consequences for student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education.

3. Aims of the Study

The main goal of this research is to identify and analyze the most significant challenges facing teachers after the pandemic to provide a clear understanding of what support is needed. In doing so, the study aims to contribute to both practical policy development and academic discussions on teacher support. This study has three specific objectives:

- a. To identify the key post-pandemic challenges for teachers, including academic, social, and emotional pressures;
- b. To examine how these challenges impact teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and their decision to stay in the profession;
- c. To investigate the current support systems available to teachers and determine where they are falling short, and how these can be translated into effective institutional policies.

4. Research Questions

This study is guided by one central question: what are the most critical challenges facing teachers in the post-pandemic American public school system, and how are these challenges impacting the teaching profession? To answer this question, three sub-questions are asked:

- a. What specific academic, behavioral, and well-being-related challenges do teachers report as their most significant post-pandemic obstacles?
- b. In what ways do these challenges affect teacher morale, burnout rates, and career decisions?

- c. How can policymakers translate teachers' lived experiences into sustainable support systems that enhance retention, morale, and instructional quality?

5. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- a. Student learning loss and increased behavioral issues are directly linked to higher levels of teacher stress and burnout.
- b. Inadequate mental health support for both students and teachers is a primary factor driving teachers to leave the profession.
- c. A significant gap exists between the professional development teachers receive and the skills they need to manage post-pandemic classrooms effectively.

6 .Research Methodology

This project relies on qualitative analysis of written sources to examine challenges teachers encounter. By looking closely at different texts, research journals, staff interviews, official district memos, digital discussion boards, labor group reports, and institutional reviews, a picture begins to form. When these pieces connect, common threads appear, showing concerns educators voice about daily realities. Meaning is derived through attention to recurring thoughts in authentic, accessible narratives. Interpretation follows a clear path, tying conclusions directly to lived expressions collected from practice. This approach allows for the identification of recurring themes and shared challenges based on documented professional experiences.

7 .Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it shows how teachers face new challenges after the pandemic, using data instead of assumptions. Because leaders in schools need reliable insights, the

results point to specific problems they might target when shaping staff wellness programs, updating training plans, or deciding where funding goes most effectively. Since scholars look for patterns in education shifts, this approach gives them a methodical way to explore how teaching roles change and what institutions must do differently now. What follows is not just observation but a foundation that others can extend into future models. The findings also contribute to the theoretical understanding of how teaching roles evolve in response to large-scale educational disruptions.

8 .Structure of the Study

This dissertation is organized into two main chapters that examine the challenges facing teachers in the United States education system after COVID-19. The first chapter is titled "Post-Pandemic Challenges in American Public Education". It provides the theoretical and contextual background by describing the educational system before the pandemic, the transition to post-pandemic schooling, and the different categories of challenges teachers encounter, including academic, behavioral, administrative and systemic pressures, as well as their impact on teacher's well-being, job satisfaction and existing support systems.

The second chapter focuses on teacher's lived experiences and the gaps in institutional support. It analyzes teacher testimonies and reports to identify the key themes, mismatches between challenges and professional training, and structural limitations within existing policies with recommendations aimed at strengthening supports systems and informed policy improvement. The first chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and literature review, while the second chapter presents the analytical findings and practical implications of the study.

9 . Literature Review

Learning setbacks during the pandemic hit hard, particularly in math and reading, evidence confirms (Donnelly,&Patrinos, 2021). Once back in schools, educators faced demands to accelerate

student progress without dropping standard curriculum duties. Balancing these goals brought extra strain-making up lost ground while keeping pace with required material. As a result, teachers report increased workloads along with rising levels of daily tension. One key idea found across studies involves growing rates of student behavior issues and emotional struggles. According to a nationwide survey, incidents like outbursts during lessons, trouble managing feelings, and responses tied to past trauma have sharply risen (Kurtz, 2022). Educators now often take on duties beyond teaching - offering basic psychological support - despite lacking proper preparation. Carrying these extra expectations wears down their energy while shrinking time meant for actual instruction. Burnout among educators has increased significantly since the pandemic ended. Work demands have grown, paperwork keeps piling up, while helping distressed learners takes an unseen toll - leading to greater strain, frustration at work, thoughts of quitting (Zbanca et al., 2024). Staff gaps widen because of it; remaining teachers face heavier loads without relief. Outside the classroom, educators grapple with deeper structural strains. Studies show mounting paperwork loads, sharper conflicts over what gets taught, along with greater media attention aimed at teaching staff. Pressure builds when these factors layer onto everyday responsibilities, leaving many instructors feeling isolated or unappreciated. Although existing research examines these factors individually (learning loss, emotional demands, exhaustion, and structural strains) it offers little overall picture. Without connecting the dots, it remains unclear how such factors amplify one another amid rising teacher distress after the pandemic. Rather than treating them apart, this work draws these threads together into a single view of present-day teaching struggles. This integrated perspective is necessary to fully understand how these interconnected pressures shape the current educational environment.

CHAPTER ONE

Post-Pandemic Challenges in American Public Education

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic changed school functions across nations. One of the biggest interruptions to learning in recent times followed soon after. Across America, educators had to move lessons online with little training while coping with mounting stress. Although schools have reopened and routines resemble past ones, teachers still face numerous challenges. How things unfolded before the crisis shaped today's realities. Difficulties persist, affecting classroom effectiveness and teachers' well-being. Grasping earlier conditions helps explain current struggles. The American school system functioned in a different way back then. Shifting toward today's model brought adjustments that few anticipated. Problems now include workload, student readiness, and lack of resources. Support networks exist, yet they often fall short. Examining each piece helps clarify what teachers navigate long after headlines fade.

1.1 The American Public Education System Before COVID-19

To better understand these current challenges, it is essential to first examine how the American education system functioned prior to COVID-19. Education was delivered in a traditional instructional model. Teachers and students interacted in one classroom and followed the regular curriculum. Despite having some challenges, their enrollment rate was significant, and the students' academic performance was not concerning (COE, 2022)

The pandemic impacted and caused disruption to education; as a result, changes had to be implemented. School closures led to the transition to remote and hybrid learning. This highlighted the inequity between students, as some of them could not access the technological tools for this type of learning, as well as having poor or no Internet connection (Bishop & Howard, 2025). This change caused the students' test results and, therefore, their academic achievement to decline (Callen et al, 2024).

During COVID-19, teachers had to adapt to the new instructional model and manage additional tasks. They had to become familiar with remote and hybrid learning, prepare their lessons, and try to personalize them to the students' needs. Additionally, they had to interact with parents and families concerning the new changes. All of this led to teachers' burnout and high levels of stress (Zamarro et al., 2021).

After the pandemic, education changed to the a "new normal" and returned to in-person learning. The effects of COVID-19 were significant; the students experienced learning loss and a decline in their academic performance. They also struggled with mental health problems (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). These effects posed new challenges for teachers who had to manage them and live up to the expectations, so teachers decided to leave their profession, which led to the decline in staff numbers (DiNapoli, 2021). However, this relatively stable system was significantly disrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19, which triggered rapid and unprecedented changes in educational practices.

1.2 The Shift to Post-Pandemic Education

The transition from pre-pandemic to post-pandemic education represents one of the most rapid transformations in the history of mankind worldwide. In America, this shift unfolded in several phases which presented distinct challenges for teachers.

1.2.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Schools

School closures in 2020 led to the suspension of in-person activities. As case numbers climbed, American schools weighed risks against unknown timelines - remaining open carried a threat; closing brought uncertainty. Despite initial hesitation, many schools were closed within days. Most institutions were locked, affecting millions who depended on daily routines, and that caused the shift to remote learning. Schools transitioned to online learning so that education did

not stop. They relied on online platforms to provide instructions and assignments for the students to access. Moreover, many schools used their websites to connect with students and their parents (Harris, 2020).

The reliance on remote learning created new difficulties for teachers and students as technological devices and Internet access were needed to serve this purpose. Teachers reported that their students did not have devices to attend lessons online. Students from low-income backgrounds could not afford laptops or cellphones, and even though some schools provided their students with those devices, most of them could not. Additionally, some students did not have Internet access, and that led to some of their classes being cancelled, which put them at a disadvantage, which again stressed the inequity issue (Reimers, 2022).

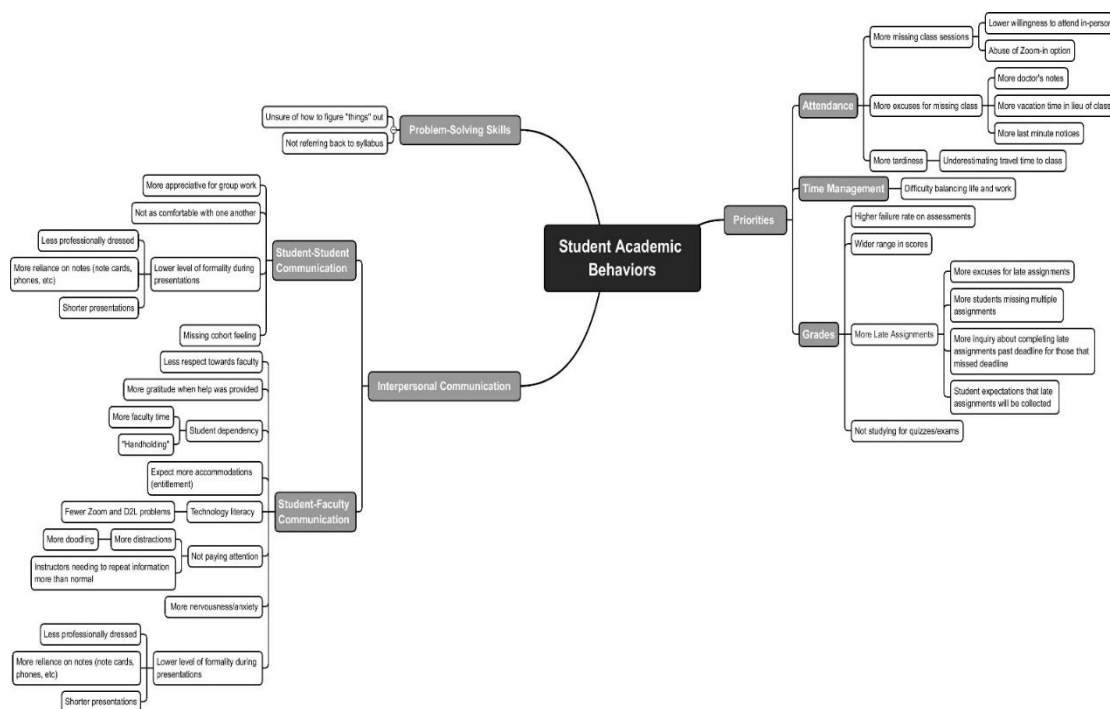
Although remote learning allowed education to continue during the pandemic, it also created several difficulties that became more visible when students and teachers returned to schools.

1.2.2 Transition Back to In-Person Learning

Returning to the traditional way of education indicated the effects of the epidemic on students and teachers. After having attended classes through remote and hybrid learning, students had difficulties going back to in-person learning. Teachers noted changes in their students' behavior and academic performance. A study was conducted on students at Michigan University to investigate the impact of the pandemic on them and inspect the changes. Figure 1 below shows the results (Becker et al., 2022).

Figure 1.1

Combined Mind Map Derived from Faculty Focus Group



Note: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9662797/>

The figure highlights the impact of COVID-19 on students' academic behavior, including difficulties in problem-solving, critical thinking, and social interaction with peers and faculty, showing increased distraction and reduced attention. In addition, it indicates how students are more tired and show a low level of attendance and motivation as they provide excuses not to attend sessions. In addition, students are not making serious efforts to study and therefore getting low grades. These results show how the pandemic affected the students as it hindered them in achieving their goals, which is shown in the following table.

Table 1.1

Michigan State University undergraduate learning goals and associated focus group themes

Undergraduate Learning Goal	Focus Group Themes
Analytical thinking	Problem-solving skills (critical thinking)
Effective citizenship	Priorities 1. Grades 2. Time management 3. Attendance
Effective communication	Interpersonal communication: student-to-student Interpersonal communication: student-to-faculty

By comparing Figure1 and Table1 above, it is evident how the learning goals are hard to achieve as the students struggle academically because of the changes that have occurred and returning to in-person learning.

While teachers were trying to manage the immediate challenges of returning to the classroom, it also became clear that the pandemic had created long-term changes in educational expectations and teaching practices.

1.2.3 Long-term Changes in Educational Expectations

Nowhere is change more evident than in how classrooms operate since the surge of tech use amid crisis-driven distance learning. Instruction rarely unfolds without some form of digital tool

woven into daily tasks. Some schools continued to deliver some classes online even after the return to the in-person learning. Furthermore, educators must navigate online systems even when experience with them runs thin, and the policy makers have to design more professional development programs as a support to them. Contacting caregivers happens across apps, emails, or messaging sites - often all at once to facilitate being updated concerning the students. The comfort level matters less than expectation as the increasing level of responsibilities for the teachers makes it hard to separate classroom work from household space over time (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Because of these rapid changes in the educational environment, teachers began to face several new challenges in their daily professional work. These structural and pedagogical transformations did not occur without consequences; rather, they gave rise to a range of new and complex challenges for teachers in the post-pandemic context.

1.3 Types of New Challenges Faced by Teachers After COVID-19

COVID-19 affected many aspects of the lives of Americans, and education was one of the main sectors. It led to changes as an adaptation to its impact, which caused new challenges in the post-pandemic period because of the transition back to in-person education. The lasting effects posed new challenges for teachers, and they come in different types. These challenges can be broadly categorized into academic and instructional, emotional and behavioral, and systemic and policy-related dimensions.

1.3.1 Academic and Instructional Challenges

Teachers after COVID-19 faced challenges at the academic and instructional level. The implementation of e-learning during the pandemic and the transition back to classroom learning caused new challenges for teachers to deal with. They have to manage these changes with no prior

preparation or training and deal with extra responsibilities such as students' learning loss, the pressure to catch up with the standards, and cover the lacking areas of students, as well as adjusting the instructional modalities to fit the students' needs.

1.3.1.1 Learning Loss Among Students

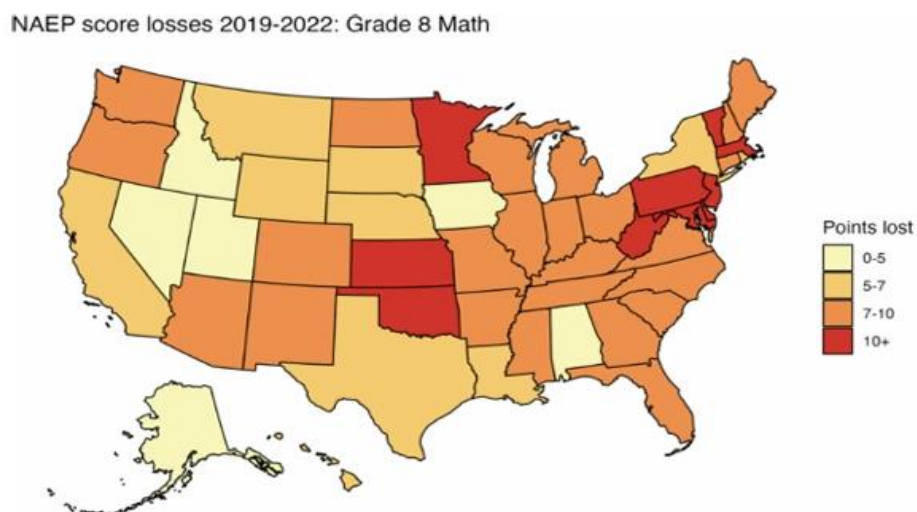
Students experienced a significant learning loss in the post-pandemic era. They experienced a decline in their cognitive skills, such as reading and Mathematics. American students were affected by this phenomenon, which led to lower academic performance and an increase in the rate of student dropouts (Hanushek&Strauss, 2025). The figure below shows the decline in 8th-grade students' math scores across different states.

Figure 1.2

NAEP score losses 2019-2022. Grade 8 Math.

Note: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/NAEP-Score-Degrees-by-State-2019-2022-](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/NAEP-Score-Degrees-by-State-2019-2022-Source-Author-calculations-from-https_fig2_384932848)

[Source-Author-calculations-from-https fig2 384932848](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/NAEP-Score-Degrees-by-State-2019-2022-Source-Author-calculations-from-https_fig2_384932848)



As shown in the figure 1.2, 8th-grade students experienced a decline in their math scores ranging from 5 to 10 points. It is highlighted how most states have significant point loss in math from 5 to more than 10 points, which indicates the impact of COVID-19 on students' achievements.

According to Callen et al. (2024), students' achievements in the post-pandemic period have declined due to the shift to remote learning and their social background. Schools have to take action to recover from this loss with a special focus on math and reading.

Research has shown that learning loss during the pandemic was not evenly distributed among students. Studies indicate that students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds experienced the greatest academic setbacks, largely due to limited access to digital learning resources and reduced academic support at home. Mathematics and reading were among the subjects most significantly affected, as these areas require consistent practice and structured instruction.

1.3.1.2 Pressure to Catch up while Covering Standard Curriculum

To meet the expected outcomes, teachers are pressured to catch up on students' learning gaps as well as keep up with the curriculum. This added stress on teachers because it increased their existing workload and responsibilities. They have to develop new strategies and instructional methods to improve students' outcomes and performance as an adaptation to these changes. Additionally, teachers have to complete the syllabus content and stay up to date with state standards, which adds more responsibility and pressure on them (Herb & Noel, 2023).

1.3.1.3 Adjusting to Hybrid or Changing Teaching Modalities

One major issue for educators involved shifting back from digital instruction to face-to-face teaching. Adapting meant handling both in-person and virtual sessions at once, aiming to support

learners more effectively. This way of teaching accommodates student differences, but at the same time, poses a challenge for teachers because they are required to adapt in terms of their time and workload, in addition to those who lack technological skills. The implementation of such a strategy to keep students engaged and motivated added more stress on teachers, as they are responsible for achieving better outcomes without taking their workload into consideration (Arghand et al., 2026). In addition to these instructional difficulties, teachers also face important emotional and behavioral challenges when working with students in the post-pandemic classroom.

1.3.2 Emotional and Behavioral Challenges

After the pandemic, classrooms now show more emotional ups and downs. In U.S. public schools, educators are dealing with rising levels of emotional and behavioral issues among students. Instead of steady learning rhythms, school shutdowns broke key moments for connection and growth. Once doors opened again for face-to-face lessons, learners walked back into rooms weighed down by worry, isolation, and even confusion. Outward behavior often mirrors private battles, revealing itself in ways teachers confront regularly. Trouble concentrating, blurting answers, or resisting routines can lead to disruptive classroom behavior. When focus slips or impulses take over, adults see fatigue, anxiety, or blank stares settle into student expressions (Barone, 2024). From quiet disengagement to sudden reactions, daily classroom life reflects unseen mental load.

1.3.2.1 Increase in Classroom Disruptions

A shift in students' actions at school stands out since classes moved back into classrooms after the health crisis. Following the period of remote learning, instructors noticed shifts - not just in engagement, but also in self-control and group interactions. Some now move constantly, others lose track mid-task, argue more with classmates, or resist routine expectations (Gibson, 2025).

Behind every lesson attempt lies an effort to steady the space, balance emotions, and keep order without showing strain. Teaching through such conditions means holding focus amid chaos, responding calmly when tension rises. The weight shows not in grades alone, but in quiet moments between bells - when energy fades, yet demands remain. Soon following the return of classroom instruction nationwide after pandemic closures, uninterrupted teaching started to decline. Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics shows an evident rise in disciplinary actions between 2020 and 2022. As disruptions became frequent, teachers faced growing responsibilities - managing learning gaps along with increasing signs of student distress. Due to combined stressors, daily operations changed across most educational institutions.

1.3.2.2 Emotional and Trauma-Related Student Behaviors

Following the global health crisis, educators within American public institutions began noticing shifts in student conduct tied to psychological strain. Uncertainty defined much of the experience for young learners during extended periods away from school grounds. Emotional scars emerged once face-to-face instruction resumed, revealing themselves in actions and reactions during routine exchanges. These patterns became part of everyday classroom life, requiring attention without clear precedent. Responses varied widely among children who lived through disrupted routines and limited contact. The return did not erase what had come before it - instead, past conditions influenced present dynamics between teacher and learner. The table below demonstrates the learners' experiences caused by COVID-19. (Jones et al., 2022)

Table 1.2

Adolescent Behaviors and Experience Survey. COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey		
COVID-19 Pandemic Impact	Percentage	Confidence Interval
Reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good during the COVID-19 pandemic (poor mental health includes stress, anxiety, and depression)	37.1	34.6 - 39.6
Reported that their parent or other adult in their home lost their job during the COVID-19 pandemic (even for a short amount of time, among students whose parents and adults in their home had jobs before the COVID-19 pandemic started)	28.5	26.2 - 30.9
Lost their paying job during the COVID-19 pandemic (even for a short amount of time, among students who had a job before the COVID-19 pandemic started)	22.3	19.8 - 24.9
Went hungry because there was not enough food in their home during the COVID-19 pandemic	23.8	21.6 - 26.3
Strongly agree or agree that doing their schoolwork was more difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started	66.6	64.5 - 68.6
Reported that a parent or other adult in their home swore at them, insulted them, or put them down during the COVID-19 pandemic	55.1	52.3 - 57.8
Reported that a parent or other adult in their home hit, beat, kicked, or physically hurt them in any way during the COVID-19 pandemic	11.3	10.2 - 12.4
Strongly agree or agree that they drank more alcohol during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started	14.7	13.0 - 16.5
Strongly agree or agree that they used drugs more during the COVID-19 pandemic than before it started (counting using marijuana, synthetic marijuana, cocaine, prescription pain medicine without a doctor's prescription, and other illegal drugs)	12.1	10.7 - 13.7
Never or rarely were able to spend time with family, friends, or other groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (such as clubs or religious groups and not counting attending school online, by using a computer, phone, or other device)	28.2	26.7 - 29.8

Note: https://www.cdc.gov/abes/media/pdf/total/ABES_total-COVID-19-Pandemic-Impact.pdf

It is clear from the table how learners were significantly affected by the pandemic, and those experiences influenced their behavior after its end. When trauma occurs, thinking and emotions in class may shift. Following fear, loss, or worry, young minds sometimes settle into unease or powerlessness - especially if teachers believe preparation falls short. Reactions emerge quietly; attention follows. Responses form, even as a balance between care and structure is sought. As reported, return to classrooms post-pandemic brought heavier moods, quieter voices (APA, 2022). Participation shifted. Behavior reflected inner weight. Observations confirm: unseen layers shape visible moments.

1.3.2.3 Teachers Acting as Informal Mental Health Support

With school doors opening again, pupils arrived bearing traces of loneliness, household strain, and time spent adrift. Faced with this shift, educators found themselves stepping into roles beyond teaching - offering quiet comfort without clear preparation. Though never certified in trauma intervention, staff now manage sudden outbursts, soothe anxious moments, and act before harm unfolds. Without official instruction in therapy methods, many still navigate distress simply because someone must (Thomas & Carlson, 2025). Expected to handle raw emotions amid lessons, overcrowded rooms - often thirty-plus - and wide-ranging student demands, the gap grows evident: duties stretch past practical limits. What gets requested sits far outside ordinary capacity. Reality bends under mismatched expectations.

When learners face emotional challenges, teachers offer understanding responses. Confidence returns slowly, supported by consistent guidance. Healthier ways of managing stress emerge through repeated positive interactions. Strong connections between educators and youth lessen the effect of trauma on school performance and conduct. Over time, trust replaces withdrawal. Learning resumes where disruption once held sway (Nygaard et al., 2022). Besides the challenges that appear inside the classroom, teachers must also deal with broader systemic and policy-related issues within the education system.

1.3.3 Systemic and Policy-Related Challenges

Systemic and policy-related issues that go beyond the classroom have significantly impacted the post-pandemic educational landscape in the United States, putting the teaching profession under a complicated web of demands. The changes caused by the pandemic have made these problems, which have their roots in long-standing systemic issues with funding, governance, and reform paradigms, much worse (Alegretto et al., 2022). The insufficient professional development and

training, resource limitations (staffing, technology, materials), and public scrutiny, political debates, and policy pressures are three crucial aspects of these systemic challenges that teachers face (Doan et al., 2022).

1.3.3.1 Insufficient Professional Development and Training

After the pandemic, the way in which education was delivered changed because of the impact of COVID-19. The implementation of e-learning brought new challenges, such as the lack of knowledge of technological skills by teachers, as they were not previously trained for such circumstances. Moreover, teachers had to adapt to this rigid system, although they were not prepared enough for it. A lack of growth in educational initiatives presents challenges, since maintaining existing course material while adopting alternative instruction methods requires greater preparation and assistance (Revelle et al., 2024).

1.3.3.2 Resource limitations (staffing, technology, materials)

COVID-19 highlighted various deficiencies regarding resources in education. First, there was the problem of a shortage of staffing, which increased due to the pandemic; teachers of different subjects were reportedly insufficient, and that called for employing non-qualified teachers. This affects the quality of education, although it was necessary (D. Goldhaber et al., 2025). Second, technological limitations posed an issue. The transformation to e-learning showed the lack of digital resources in both educational institutions and among students, especially in underfunded schools and among students from low-income backgrounds. Accessing the Internet and having devices and tools for remote learning were not affordable to everyone (V. Katz et al., 2021). Moreover, a deficiency in materials was noticeable in the post-pandemic period. Instructional materials like books and labs were insufficient, and therefore, this affected the teaching process. Pandemic conditions intensified existing gaps in classroom preparation. Without

proper tools, educators struggled to shape lessons effectively. Assistance remained too limited when challenges grew sharper. Remote learning widened divides already present. Support systems failed to keep pace with rising demands. Lessons suffered where materials were missing. Difficulties mounted precisely when guidance was most needed.

1.3.3.3 Public Scrutiny, Political Debates, and Policy Pressures

Despite public attention, educators across the United States face persistent oversight. Their performance undergoes regular evaluation by various parties. Understanding of pandemic-related pressures remained limited during those early shifts. Adjustment came slowly, as classroom methods transformed under pressure. Student progress and conduct became harder to influence without adequate resources. Outside routine instruction, changing government priorities influence stress levels among teachers. When evaluation systems link test results to staff accountability, tasks multiply without clear support (Thomsen et al., 2024). Over time, fatigue accumulates - eventually prompting exits by certain professionals. Pre-packaged lesson content appears ready-made, yet restricts individual adjustments even when useful (Makenna, 2024). While uniformity can offer predictability, narrowed expression tends to emerge alongside it. Positioned at the heart of learning systems, teacher well-being becomes central to progress in education. Without supportive frameworks, long-term improvement remains difficult to reach. These different challenges do not only affect the teaching process; they also have important consequences for teachers themselves and for their professional well-being.

1.4 Impacts on Teachers

After the pandemic began, teaching staff felt intense pressure. With schools moving online without warning, American teachers took on more work. Not only did they manage lesson plans, but they also supported students dealing with personal struggles. Unexpected changes left them

balancing duties that were once handled by entire school systems. Stress levels increased noticeably; satisfaction dipped at the same time. Thoughts about leaving the profession grew stronger among teachers during this period. Research highlights these patterns clearly. Changes reach further than instruction style alone (Kraft et al., 2021). Long-term career choices around employment now reflect earlier disruptions. Inner motivation has shifted under constant pressure. Well-being shows lasting marks even after conditions eased slightly. Effects linger within personal career views shaped by crisis years. Shifts in daily routines opened deeper questions about purpose. Outside events redefined what schoolwork feels like today. Each role adjustment carried quiet but steady consequences. Professional paths now bend differently because of that stretch of uncertainty.

1.4.1 Teacher Stress and Burnout

Stress among teachers after the pandemic grew heavier because of new duties piling up. Juggling impacts at work and home became part of daily life. Facing educational disruptions tied to COVID-19 tested their resilience deeply. Shifting between teaching formats, handling student conduct, and endless paperwork wore many down completely. Overwhelm crept in quietly, tied closely to slipping control. A state of burnout followed - persistent exhaustion, mental depletion - fueled by unrelenting stress over time (Robinson et al., 2022). A study was conducted on school and university teachers from different countries, including the U.S., shows that American teachers dealt with burnout because of COVID-19. The table below reveals the cases of burnout that were experienced by university teachers from the U.S. (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023).

Table 1.3**Characteristics of the studies included in the meta-analysis.**

First Author (Publication Year)	Sample Country	Population	Sample Size (n)	Mean Age (SD)	% Females (n)	Response Rate (%)	Sampling Method	Burnout Scale	No. Cases (Prevalence, %)	Quality Assessment
Amri et al. (2020) [40]	Morocco	School teachers	125	38.6 (9.9)	56.8% (71)	NR	NR	MBI	68 (54%)	3
Higgins et al. (2021) [41]	United States	University teachers	456	NR	37.5% (171)	NR	Convenience	PFI	162 (37.4%)	4
Jarrín-García et al. (2022) [42]	Ecuador	University teachers	399	NR	47.9% (191)	NR	Convenience	MBI	123 (30.83%)	5
Miguel et al. (2021) [43]	Portugal	University teachers	51	48 (1)	68.6% (35)	NR	Convenience	CBI	21 (41.2%)	3
Minihan et al. (2021) [44]	Ireland	School teachers	245	44 (10.23)	89% (224)	NR	Cluster	CBI	202 (82.4%)	5
Pereira et al. (2021) [45]	Brazil	All teachers	302	46.75 (11.02)	55% (166)	17%	Convenience	BAT	67 (22.1%)	4
Sánchez- Pujalte et al. (2021) [46]	Spain	School teachers	430	41.40 (11.07)	46.28% (199)	NR	Convenience	MBI	310 (72.1%)	4
Silva et al. (2020) [47]	Brazil	University teachers	210	NR	54.8% (115)	NR	NR	MBI	86 (40.9%)	4
Xu et al. (2021) [48]	China	University teachers	1372	NR	98.2% (1348)	NR	Convenience	MBI	1156 (85%)	4

Note: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10049404/>

The table demonstrates that American teachers dealt with burnout, as it was the case with other countries. This shows that COVID-19 has indeed impacted teachers and caused them stress to the level of feeling burnt out. Teacher burnout is often characterized by three main dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of professional accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being overwhelmed by work-related demands, while depersonalization involves developing a detached or negative attitude toward students or colleagues. When teachers experience these conditions over long periods, their motivation and commitment to the profession may significantly decline.

This growing level of stress and exhaustion naturally influences how teachers feel about their profession and their level of job satisfaction.

1.4.2 Job Satisfaction and Morale

COVID-19 left teachers less satisfied with their profession and caused them to lose motivation. They felt unfulfilled and undervalued due to many reasons: being in a continuous state of stress when dealing with teaching in a new way, students' learning loss and outcomes, increased workload, and having to meet the high standards expected of them. Quitting seemed like an option once success felt out of reach because of the unacknowledged efforts. Without assistance, appreciation, or motivation around, energy faded under growing pressure. Tasks weighed more when no one noticed effort or offered a hand. The drive to keep going slipped as isolation took hold (Pressley et al., 2025).

According to research by Marshall et al. (2023), teachers' morale has lowered since COVID-19 started. The increased workloads without support from the administrations or parents diminished their confidence and enthusiasm. This led teachers to leave their jobs and change to other professions, affecting the educational system balance as a result to teacher shortages.

When teachers begin to feel dissatisfied with their work, this can also affect their decision to remain in the profession, which contributes to teacher shortages.

1.4.3 Teacher Retention and Shortages

Teacher shortages have become a serious problem for the American education system after COVID-19. The pandemic affected the teachers' supply in the U.S., as teacher shortages increased, and retaining them proved to be a serious problem. Feeling dissatisfied and discouraged with their profession, teachers decided to leave it. Working under such tough conditions made staying on the job feel nearly impossible - so leaving seemed like the only real option. With too few people available, officials found it difficult to hire teachers or find replacements when needed (Paguia et al., 2025)

Furthermore, schools face difficulties in hiring qualified teachers, and to fill the vacancies, they have to hire underqualified ones. This could affect the students' achievement, especially the ones of the schools with high teacher shortages. The figure below shows the number of vacancies in the American states (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Figure 1.3

Raw Counts of Reported Teacher Vacancy by State

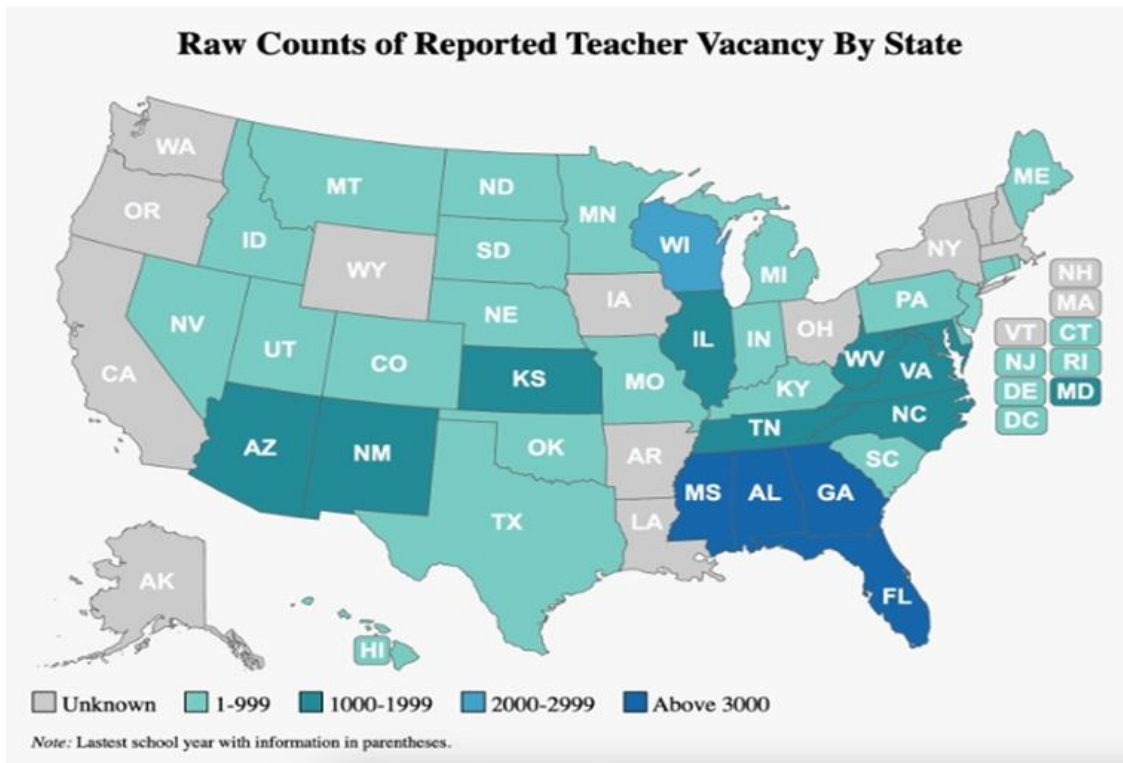


Figure 5. Teacher vacancies in the U.S. by state

The figure demonstrates the high rate of vacancies in the American states, ranging from 1000 to more than 3000 cases of vacancy; 18 states have up to 1000 shortage cases, 8 states reach up to 2000 cases, one state has up to 3000 vacancies and 4 states report an alarming number of more than 3000 shortages.

In addition to staffing issues, the pressures experienced by teachers can also have serious effects on their emotional and mental health.

1.4.4 Emotional and Mental Health Consequences

Unexpectedly, the pandemic placed teachers under pressure that quietly wore down emotional resilience. Not only did classrooms shift, but personal boundaries blurred without a clear separation between duty and home. Despite added oversight from officials, many found themselves overwhelmed by invisible loads carried each day. While managing lessons, some faced rising tension within - silent signs of unease taking root. Pressure built slowly, fed by constant changes beyond their control. Emotional fatigue settled in where support felt distant or delayed. Their well-being was affected by being in a constant state of burnout because of overworking themselves to meet the needs of students and the overload of information needed to keep up with the implementation of online learning. Additionally, they were pressured to achieve the best outcomes with their students and manage more administrative tasks, which increased public scrutiny if they did not meet that goal. Moreover, they felt depressed as they did not have time to interact with others, such as friends outside of school, and this can make the learning process less effective as they are not in their best state (Huseth-Zosel et al., 2024).

Because of these serious impacts on teachers' professional and personal lives, many educational institutions have started to recognize the importance of providing stronger support systems for teachers.

1.5 Current Teacher Support Systems

After the pandemic, schools across the United States began to see a clearer need: helping teachers handle the shifting demands of today's classrooms. These struggles matter beyond theory; they shape real changes in how education works. At the heart of learning sit teachers; what they go through reveals deeper patterns in how the system functions. Since educator wellness ties directly to teaching effectiveness and student success, backing them becomes critical. Despite access to

school-based assistance, its real value lies in how well it helps instructors manage daily hurdles, sustain effort, maintain drive, yet stick with teaching long-term. Without dependable backing, many face heightened pressure, exhaustion, and even exit from the field altogether (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Following this, attention shifts toward forms of support rooted in personal context - starting where each educator stands. These support systems operate at multiple levels, including school-based support, professional development opportunities, and administrative policies.

1.5.1 School Level Support

Right away, help at school can shape how teachers experience their work. Often put in place by principals or teams on site, these efforts grow from collaboration among staff and shared learning groups. A teacher's sense of being respected hinges on such backing. Facing today's classroom pressures means having steady guidance close at hand. Post-crisis schooling requires conditions that sustain energy, not just effort.

In schools, help can show up in different ways - counseling, training programs - that aim to lower pressure while sharpening teaching methods. A setting where staff feel backed up matters greatly when it comes to staying driven and avoiding exhaustion. Clear directions from administrators, along with empathy and usable tools, often lead teachers to handle daily struggles with greater belief in their abilities. This sense of stability becomes especially vital amid the intense expectations tied to catching students up after pandemic disruptions. Such aids go beyond extras - they're necessary steps meant to retain seasoned instructors right where they are needed most. (Yu et al., 2025)

1.5.1.1 Counseling Services

Coping became harder for teachers when schools changed suddenly. Emotional weight grew as they managed online classes plus worried students at home. Support from advisors emerged quietly during this time. Overnight shifts left little room for adjustment. Those guiding others often felt stretched thin themselves. Reopening did not erase those pressures; instead, gaps in student progress and rising classroom disruptions kept strain alive. Emotional tolls lingered long after buildings welcomed back staff and children (Tutt, 2026).

Recognizing that teachers are not only educators but also individuals who require emotional support, many schools began offering more accessible mental health resources.

Some schools now make mental health help easier to reach, seeing teachers both as staff and people who need emotional care to do their jobs well. When stress piles up in classrooms, a listening ear helps teachers stay balanced while growing stronger over time. Talking things through may happen alone with a mentor, during team gatherings, or in workshops focused on coping with routine demands. Whether it is confidential chats, insights from specialists, or stories exchanged among peers, each option adds support where it counts most - right when classroom pressures rise.

Even though more people now see how useful counseling can be, not every school offers it equally. Where one district runs full mental health initiatives for staff, another might only give minimal help - often because of budget limits or staffing gaps. Because of this imbalance, plenty of educators continue facing emotional challenges without proper backing at work. While emotional support is very important, teachers also need professional training and development in order to deal effectively with the new educational challenges they face.

1.5.1.2 Professional Development Opportunities

Now more than ever, teacher growth shapes how well schools function across America after the health crisis. When classrooms moved online, instruction changed overnight - forcing educators to learn digital tools while balancing uneven access among learners. Because of these sudden changes, continuous training became critical for navigating modern educational demands. Some programs now focus on emotional support for students, yet they simultaneously build inner strength within teaching staff. Learning opportunities like these do more than address behavior - they prepare instructors to stay effective under pressure (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Teachers grow their skills when they join learning efforts that boost how they teach, use tech, and manage their classes. These moments hit harder when others are involved, tied right into real days at school. Good shifts happen - better lessons, stronger results for learners - if the conditions line up just so. Sharing inside groups, attending sessions, and diving into training help teachers trade stories, tackle issues together, and stay grounded through tough patches (Healey, 2025).

In the post-pandemic context, professional development programs increasingly focus on areas such as digital pedagogy, trauma-informed teaching practices, and strategies for addressing learning loss. These programs aim to help teachers develop practical tools that allow them to respond effectively to the evolving needs of students in post-pandemic classrooms.

Even when schools offer growth opportunities, a few educators say current workshops miss urgent challenges they face daily. That happens since lessons often highlight abstract ideas instead of what unfolds between classroom walls. To truly help, learning for teachers should shift quickly, adapt easily, and root itself deeply in day-to-day teaching moments.

At the same time, supportive administrative policies also play a key role in improving teachers' working conditions and helping them manage their responsibilities.

1.5.1.3 Administrative Policies

Working conditions for educators often depend on how rules are set inside schools after major disruptions like pandemics. When leaders make choices about tasks, feedback methods, or daily demands, those shape classroom experiences. What happens behind closed doors - planning time, support levels, clarity of direction - influences morale more than expected. Decisions handed down from administration quietly impact energy, focus, and long-term commitment. The mechanism of unfolding things day to day reveals whether staff feel heard or strained under pressure (Steiner et al., 2023).

After the pandemic, demands on teachers grew heavier, influenced strongly by how leaders make decisions. Not only do they run lessons, but they also support students dealing with private difficulties, manage conduct issues, and adapt coursework to address learning gaps caused by past shutdowns. If organizations overlook these added duties, tension increases quietly, reducing stamina and affecting outcomes over time. The way structures react decides if exhaustion spreads broadly or stays under control (Barton, 2020).

Listening closely to teachers' concerns tends to boost their sense of belonging in the school environment. When staff help shape key decisions, respect becomes visible through actions, not words alone. A climate where educators feel heard often shows fewer signs of tension and greater collaboration across departments. Research suggests leadership strategies work best when they reflect actual classroom experiences rather than top-down assumptions. Supportive oversight - rooted in empathy and practical insight - can quietly strengthen both morale and instruction quality over time (Hargreaves&Fullan, 2012).

Taken together, these different forms of support are essential for helping teachers manage the complex realities of post-pandemic education and continue providing effective learning experiences for their students.

Conclusion

This chapter provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding the post-pandemic challenges faced by teachers in the United States education system after COVID-19 which are not simply professional obstacles, but they are also deeply human experiences shaped by uncertainty, adaptation, and emotional strain. By examining how schools functioned before COVID-19, when classrooms were place of routine and structure. The pandemic disrupted these structures abruptly, forcing an unplanned shift to remote and hybrid models that exposed technological gaps, instructional limitations, and systematic inequalities. It has been shown that transition back to in-person learning creates conditions that have intensified stress, affected morale, and contributed to ongoing concerns around burnout and teacher retention. They have adapted often without sufficient support and become not only educators, but also emotional supporters, mediators, and problem-solvers in an environment marked by uncertainty and change. By precisely establishing the boundaries of the study and defining the key concepts and terminology, this chapter seeks to eliminate potential ambiguity and provide a coherent theoretical foundation for subsequent analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

Teacher Experiences and Gaps in Institutional Support

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Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the key challenges that teachers face in the post-pandemic American educational landscape, including academic, behavioral, technological, and systemic difficulties. It also reviewed the existing support systems at the school, district, and governmental levels designed to alleviate those pressures. However, while these structures address the challenges in theory, the extent to which their goals are achieved in practice remains uncertain. This chapter shifts the focus from general and structural description to lived experiences and critical analysis. It investigates how teachers genuinely experience those challenges in their daily professional lives, drawing upon research and reported testimonies. Furthermore, it identifies significant gaps in the current support systems, analyzing how these gaps are insufficient in both quality and quantity. By exploring the discrepancy between institutional intentions and the lived reality, this chapter seeks to provide a clear understanding of the challenges facing existing support measures and emphasize the areas that require improvement.

2.1 Analysis of Teacher Experiences

2.1.1 Academic Pressure: The Burden of "Catching Up"

In the post-pandemic classroom, academic pressure extends beyond an increased workload. Rather, it reflects a fundamental imbalance between rising institutional expectations and teachers' diminished capacity to meet them. Teachers find themselves trapped between the urgent need to address significant learning loss and the rigid demand to "catch up" to standard curriculum timelines. Research consistently refers to this phenomenon as a "dual burden"; however, the full extent of this pressure is best understood through the lived experiences of teachers.

Baker (2024) offers an important systematic perspective. In her study of 13 middle school teachers, Baker found that "job demands post pandemic outweigh the resources provided to meet them, resulting in teachers feeling the onset of burnout and attrition intentions". (Baker,2024) This finding is important because it moves the problem beyond individual feelings of stress to a structural imbalance: when expectations continually outweigh available support, emotional exhaustion becomes a predictable outcome rather than personal weakness. Teachers reported being expected to lead academic recovery without additional planning time, support staff, or adjusted performance evaluation criteria, creating an environment where burnout becomes an institutional inevitability rather than an individual exception.

A qualitative study of 34 U.S. K-12 educators published in BMC Public Health explores the psychological dimensions of this strain. The study revealed that "the primary stressor mentioned by the majority (82%) of teachers in the focus groups was the overwhelming demands posed by the school or district". This is further broken down, with 91% of educators citing stressors related to "excessive or increased demands". These numbers are stark, but the teachers' own words reveal the specific nature of this "overwhelming" pressure. One educator captured the loss of professional identity, stating: "I feel like, I'm now like an epidemiologist, I'm a first responder, I'm a detective, I'm a social worker, I'm a crisis interventionist and then, at some point, I'm also a teacher, and that's actually my main job that I get paid for and I've been trained to do".

This statement illustrates how the academic demand to "catch up" is deeply entangled with an expansion of non-academic responsibilities. The expectation to deliver the standard curriculum becomes unattainable when significant portions of the school day are consumed by non-academic crisis management. Furthermore, the pressure is both external and internalized. The study notes that "some educators (18%) described the pressure teachers placed on themselves to take on more

responsibility and to go above and beyond". This combination of systemic pressure and self-imposed responsibility creates a constant state of anticipation and anxiety. The study further reports that "teachers described feelings of anxiety and overwhelm, and noted they felt as though they were waiting for the 'other shoe to drop'". This permanent state of full alert creates the feeling that any moment could bring a new, impossible demand which lead to direct consequences of the untenable academic pressure to perform recovery miracles.

The 2025 EdWeek article, "Teaching in 2025: 'Every Day Is a Crazy Day. It's Fine,'" shows that these pressures have not diminished but have instead become normalized. The article notes that "Monegan and other teachers continue to feel pressure to help students regain lost academic ground, as the number of struggling students has grown—and their needs have deepened". This highlights a worsening direction: teachers continue to feel responsible for helping students regain lost academic ground, even as the number of struggling students and their needs become increasingly complex. A key quote from math teacher Rachel Griggs-Hopkins reveals a quite resignation to ongoing stress that has become normal: "Every day is a crazy day. It's fine". The seemingly casual remark "It's fine" indicates that chronic stress has been quietly accepted as part of everyday life. It also reflects a state of exhaustion in which the idea for a "good day" has been reduced to simply surviving ongoing chaos. This sentiment is repeated in the article's description of teachers "running faster and faster to stay in place." The article employs this metaphor to capture the impossible expectation of closing past learning gaps while simultaneously advancing students through new material, a task that is inherently unachievable.

All in all, these three sources present a troubling but coherent picture. Baker (2024) highlights the structural inequality between demands and resources. The BMC Public Health study (2024) illustrates the psychological consequences of this inequality, showing that teachers feel

overwhelmed, anxious, and forced into multiple non-teaching roles. Finally, the EdWeek reporting (2025) demonstrates how these conditions and the ongoing crisis have become normalized. The analysis reveals that the pressure to "catch up" is not about teachers being required to work harder; it is evidence of a systemic failure. Teachers are required to fix learning gaps while managing a growing list of non-academic duties, and without the resources required to succeed. Furthermore, teachers' anxiety and fatigue are not signs of personal weakness but are logical, rational responses to an unsustainable professional reality. The "crazy day" has become the standard, and the quiet acceptance of this as "fine" represents a deeply concerning shift in teacher identity and well-being.

2.1.2 Emotional Burden

The pandemic had a significant impact on teachers as it shifted their role from educators to mental health experts. Teachers were required to deal with mental health problems, such as traumas and students' emotional problems, in addition to delivering the curriculum. This additional task has integrated the psychological aspect in teaching with no professional training or appreciation, yet it became expected of them to deal with such problems (Conroy et al., 2024; Cavallari et al., 2024).

Conroy et al. (2024), in a qualitative study of 12 elementary school teachers in an urban Florida district, indicate that teachers are the first point of contact when it comes to dealing with students' mental crises. Their research found that teachers in marginalized communities are "serving as first responders". These educators are required to perform additional roles as well as their regular job (Conroy et al., 2024). The study highlighted the profound transition in the concept of teaching, as teachers have to abide by vague tasks with no proper training in a new reform of education (Conroy et al., 2024).

The measurable consequences of this increased workload are evident. In a separate qualitative study of 34 K-12 teachers in Connecticut, Cavallari et al. (2024) identified that 62% of

teachers suffer from "emotional exhaustion, anxiety, [and] negative self-evaluation". These effects were caused by the school and district, as reported by 94% teachers, with 91% of teachers indicating that "excessive or increased demands" being the main factor (Cavallari et al., 2024). These findings indicate that the whole system of education was affected, with teachers taking the major impact.

The statistical results are further proven and brought into real focus by teachers' experiences and testimonies. The study of Conroy et al. (2024) in the state of Florida reveals how teachers have impossible expectations due to the pandemic. One elementary school teacher expressed how these expectations impacted her: "I feel like, I'm now like an epidemiologist, I'm a first responder, I'm a detective, I'm a social worker, I'm a crisis interventionist and then, at some point, I'm also a teacher, and that's actually my main job that I get paid for and I've been trained to do" (Conroy et al., 2024, para 12.).

This testimony underscores the conflict between teachers' roles and their contribution to the emotional toll affecting them. When instructional duties are neglected in favor of ambiguous tasks for which teachers are unprepared, and when higher academic outcomes are still expected, the resulting pressure adversely affects teachers' mental health. Furthermore, it affects their professional identity as teachers feel unsure when performing those tasks and do not know what they are being assigned. All of these cause teachers to feel burned out and be in a state of continuous anxiety.

The incessant emotional management has a critical impact on teachers as it goes beyond the professional environment to their personal one, causing a syndrome known as "Compassion fatigue". Research on how technology has a direct link to stress found that there is a positive correlation between digital stress and work-family dynamic, showing that the pressures of managing students'

behavior and communicating with their parents via online platforms - has a direct impact on teachers' ability to operate in their personal lives (Zhang et al., 2023). Cavallari et al. (2024) further support this finding, reporting 68% of teachers reported how such job pressures affected their social relationships and wellbeing, especially "connections with family or friends" (Cavallari et al., 2024). One teacher's profound experience on this linkage was highlighted in the same study: "I'm still dealing with taking on everyone else's worries and feeling responsible for them on top of teaching" (Cavallari et al., 2024, p. 11).

This declaration shows the emotional strain experienced by teachers. The teacher is not merely performing her job, but also has a sense of responsibility in managing students' feelings to the extent that it affects their personal lives. This results in "emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion from feeling too much for others" (Cavallari et al., 2024, p. [page number unavailable]). A national survey of 1,479 teachers indicates that they feel unmotivated as they are neither acknowledged nor compensated for their extra efforts. The RAND Corporation highlighted that only 36% teachers required a \$16,000 increase in their pay base as fair compensation (Doan et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the post-pandemic emotional challenges faced by teachers are not an individual responsibility but rather of the whole system. Teachers are managing an overload of tasks that they have not received the appropriate training for, and are not being appreciated and supported (Conroy et al., 2024; Cavallari et al., 2024). The finding that 62% teachers feeling burnout reflects the dramatic expectations that they have to meet without a clear, defined role or the required support. The educational system will have to address this challenge by defining the role of teaching and providing the needed resources, as the emotional burden remains a significant reason for teachers leaving the profession.

2.1.3 Classroom Disruptions

The post-pandemic American classroom faces constant behavioral challenges that were an occasional occurrence before. The frequent classroom disruptions have become a problem for teachers; they have to manage the continuous students' misbehavior, which interrupts them from providing instruction. Teachers are always in a state of stress, as they are unable to properly perform their job and are dealing with disruptions at the same time. Data shows that the behavioral challenges are increasing and becoming worse, leaving teachers unprepared for this new debilitating occurrence.

The problem is prevalent and is demonstrated by a survey. In December 2024, EdWeek Research Center conducted a national survey of 990 educators, which revealed that 72% of teachers, principals, and district leaders stating students' misbehavior in classrooms, schools, and districts. The survey documented the students' behavioral issues "a little" (24 percent) or "a lot" (48 percent), compared to how it was before COVID-19 in the last semester in the fall of 2019. Moreover, the misbehavior of students is even more concerning as educators reported an escalation of this issue over the years after the pandemic; increasing from 66 percent (2021) to 70 percent (2023) to 72 percent (2024). Approximately half of all educators —48 percent— declared that students' misbehavior was significantly worse this fall than it was before and noted a worrying rise in comparison with early 2023 (33 percent). This finding shows how this problem is long-lasting and exacerbating.

In December 2024, the George Mason University EdPolicy Forward Center published research on classroom challenges after the pandemic the precise characteristics of these difficulties. Teachers stated "a lack of respect for authority among students and of receptiveness for redirection, increase in behavioral issues such as fighting and swearing in schools". These violations are

significant as they affect the regular standards of the classroom that keep it in an appropriate atmosphere for learning. Furthermore, the research underscores that "teachers now identify managing student behaviors as one of their two largest job-related stressors (in addition to dealing with the pandemic learning loss) ". This finding holds an analytical significance as it shows that both managing student misbehavior and attending serve as another main stressor for teachers in relation to attending to students' learning loss.

State-level data support the national surveys as it further highlights the seriousness of this critical situation. Research on teacher working conditions in Illinois, examining the responses from roughly 123,000 to 130,000 on an annual basis from 2019 to 2023, has shown the worsening working conditions even after the pandemic. The notable and escalating classroom disruptions served as a concerning change; the study's authors reinforced that "the pandemic was not a low point: teacher working conditions have continued to decline during the post-pandemic period". Teachers stated that these critical circumstances extend to various aspects encompassing "the level of classroom disruptions, student responsibility, and safety, among others," alongside "declines in trust between themselves and principals, parents, and other teachers". This finding challenges the prior beliefs of education returning to its normal conditions, as research demonstrates the reality of the post-pandemic classroom that is alarmingly precarious.

Importantly, teachers are not denying that they are not adequately able to address current behavioral issues. The George Mason University brief explicitly states that "many teachers feel that they do not possess the appropriate skill sets to address their students' new behavioral needs". This blunt statement highlights that this difficult situation is a system failure, indicating that students' misbehavior is a problem because the educational system has not provided the appropriate training for teachers. Teachers are expected to attend to these new behavioral challenges and be

well-informed to deal with them when they have not received the professional training for such problems.

The impact of these disruptions extends beyond teachers' emotional distress and limits the classroom instructional time. Research analyzing the assigned instructional time in the post-pandemic classrooms has shown that students' disruptions diminished by seven percent from instructional time, in addition to technological issues taking another nine percent. For instance, in a regular six-hour school day, managing students' misbehavior consumes 25 minutes of instructional time on a daily basis. The continuous occurrence over a 180-day school year costs roughly 75 hours of decrease in learning time, which exceeds two full weeks of instruction. A survey of Delaware teachers in 2024 examined this loss directly and found that there was a seven-hour loss of class time per month because of behavioral problems management. These findings serve as concrete evidence of disruptions being a significant issue since teachers have to deal with it and attend to the academic expectations placed upon them.

The accumulated impact of these disruptions is teachers' burnout, leading to their exodus from the occupation. Research on this correlation before the pandemic had indicated that "the stress of dealing with student maladaptive behaviors and heightened disciplinary issues can increase the likelihood that a teacher will leave their position". This crisis has reached new levels in the post-pandemic landscape. The George Mason University research highlights that "working in this environment can cause chronic stress, eventually leading to teacher burnout and eventual turnover". Additionally, it shows that teachers in Virginia who left the profession precisely "identified inadequate support and ineffective leadership as two of the largest contributing factors to their decision".

The brief's analytical framework directly associates COVID-19-related disruptions, encompassing online instruction in the early years, the lack of social interaction, and limited opportunities for socioemotional development, with the dysfunctional behaviors, handling classroom challenges, burnout, and eventual attrition.

The evident conclusion of this analysis shows that the post-pandemic classroom disruptions represent a new phenomenon, with behavioral challenges exceeding the regular and pre-pandemic levels. The continuous increase in students' misbehavior is alarming because it has significant impacts on instructional time, teacher well-being, and the rate of turnover. Teachers are expected to manage these misbehaviors without receiving professional training and to attend to the academic loss that is being hindered by those disruptions. School systems have to implement strategic approaches for these behavioral issues and resource teachers with the required training and support, and recognize the different underlying structure of the post-pandemic classroom, which calls for distinct resources than the ones required in the pre-pandemic era. Otherwise, escalating behavioral challenges, teacher burnout, and attrition rate will persist.

2.2 Gaps in Support

2.2.1 Mismatch Between Training and Reality

In theory, the American education system provides a variety of professional development (PD) opportunities and teacher preparation programs to support educators. In the post-post pandemic, however, a significant and ongoing gap has emerged between what teachers are trained to do and what they actually encounter in their classrooms. Although training opportunities, they are often theoretical, generic, detached from daily contexts, and delivered by individuals who have been direct teaching for many years.

2.2.1.1 Teachers and Leaders Experience Training Differently

A clear sign of this disconnect appears in the contrast between how teachers and school administrators view professional development. Kimberli Stoffel (2024), writing in Kappan Online, reflected on her transition from teacher educator to classroom practitioner: "I returned to the public school system for eight years and am now once again a faculty member in teacher preparation. I can state from my own experience that teachers are correct that public school education is not what it was 20 or 30 years ago" (Stoffel, 2024, para. 8). Drawing on her time as an instructional coach, Stoffel noted that "teachers have told me they do not want cookie-cutter professional development in which they get some handouts and put them in a folder, never to look at them again. Teachers want meaningful information that they can take back to the classroom and implement. They want solutions to the problems they face every day, presented by professionals with relevant classroom experience" (Stoffel, 2024, para. 9). Moreover, "teachers have stated that the 'one and done' approach to professional development is less useful than an approach that includes follow-up sessions and/or coaching" (Stoffel, 2024, para. 10).

The difference in perception gap is not merely anecdotal. Evidence from a large-scale survey conducted by the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) in 2025, which included over 1,000 teachers and leaders, shows that "nearly 40% of respondents feel that continuing professional development (CPD) has not clearly improved their ability to perform their role. Classroom teachers, in particular, are more likely than senior leaders to report limited impact (46% vs 33%)" (Conyard, 2025, p. 3). The survey also revealed "a significant perception gaps between leaders and teachers: 33% of leaders believe teachers' needs are effectively identified, compared to just 16% of teachers themselves" (Conyard, 2025, p. 12). This disconnect suggests that, despite good intentions and significant investments, professional development initiatives fail

to hit their target because teachers are excluded from decisions regarding their own professional growth.

2.2.1.2 When Training Does Not Match Classroom Needs

A growing body of evidence shows that professional development often fails to respond to the immediate and pressing realities of post-pandemic classrooms. Findings from the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) survey that "only 24% of teachers believe CPD adequately takes the needs of students into account, despite this being the ultimate purpose of teacher development" (Conyard, 2025, p. 9). Additionally, "teachers identify SEND (39%), technology integration (34%), and leadership (29%) as top development priorities, yet many report insufficient opportunities to address these needs" (Conyard, 2025, p. 15). Time remains the critical barrier, cited by 67% of respondents, "with many reporting CPD lacks relevance, follow-up support, or connection to their specific needs" (Conyard, 2025, p. 11).

This misalignment is further supported by research from the EdWeek Research Center, which confirms that the issue persists at the state level. A nationally representative survey of 5,802 teachers conducted in 2025 found that "slightly less than a quarter of respondents nationally may say they need no PD at all at the moment - the top answer on the survey" (Caffrey, 2026, p. 18). This finding suggests that a significant portion of teachers perceive available professional development as irrelevant to their immediate challenges. Stoffel (2024) argued that this irrelevance stems from a fundamental disconnect: "One of the most common complaints I heard from teachers was that the professional development they were receiving was coming from people who hadn't spent time in classrooms in years - maybe even decades" (Stoffel, 2024, para. 3). When trainers lack recent classroom experience, the strategies they present often appear abstract rather than applicable.

2.2.1.3 The Classroom Management Gap: A Crisis of Unpreparedness

A particularly significant disconnect between teacher preparation and classroom practice is evident in the area of classroom management. Despite increasing behavioral challenges in post-pandemic classrooms, training remains insufficient, as "only about a third of teachers are effectively trained to manage challenging behaviors" and "39% of K-12 educators say they never received explicit classroom-management instruction... and 68%... said their preparation programs should have spent more time" (Whalen, 2025). Many programs emphasize basic routines while neglecting more complex issues, with "only about half... address[ing] ways... to respond to serious misbehavior, and only a quarter... discuss[ing] positive reinforcement" (Sparks, 2026).

As a consequence, many novice teachers enter the profession feeling unprepared and unsupported, often describing their training as inadequate or superficial. They are left to navigate complex classrooms independently. This gap has significant consequences, contributing to teacher attrition, as "pre-service teacher preparation programs are often ineffective... [which] contributes to high teacher-turnover rates" (Golubtchik, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified these weaknesses. Importantly, research suggests that teachers' primary needs are not financial but professional: "number one for them was respect and time" and greater autonomy in decision-making (Pressley, as cited in CNU, 2024). Moreover, teachers consistently emphasize the importance of having their perspectives acknowledged, highlighting how current systems frequently overlook teacher viewpoints.

Overall, the section concludes that the problem is not in the quantity of training provided but in the way it is designed. Professional development remains overly theoretical, generic, and detached from classroom realities. Effective reform requires practical, context-specific, and

teacher-driven training that acknowledges teachers' expertise and directly addresses post-pandemic challenges.

2.2.2 Mental Health Support Gap

Despite the presence of counseling services and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) in school systems, post pandemic educators face a significant gap between the theoretical availability and the practical accessibility. This systemic shortcoming leaves teachers coping with a high level of stress without sufficient support from these resources. A 2024 study found that 76% of school employees reported moderate to severe stress, and nearly half showed clinically significant anxiety or depression (Cavallari et al., 2025). Nationally, 59% of teachers report that their work is often or always stressful, which is twice the rate observed among other working adults, while earning about \$30,000 less (Stratford, 2024; RAND, 2025).

The ongoing crisis in post-pandemic American education is driven by a critical shortage of mental health professionals. While the recommended psychologist-to-student ratio is 1:500, the national average stands at 1:1,400 (Chu&Fitzpatrick, 2025). Some states meet only 57% of counselor staffing needs (Managed Healthcare Executive, 2025). Consequently, teachers become default first responders to students, a role for which they are neither trained nor prepared. Furthermore, current safety nets, such as Employee Assistance programs (EAPs), are failing to bridge this gap: despite 97% of employers offering mental health services, utilization rate remains at only 3-5% due to stigma, limited sessions (3-6), and rigid hours (EBRI–Path Forward, 2025; Hub Southwest Advisors, 2025). As one teacher attested: “I’m primarily playing the role of a therapist ... the effects of that are not sustainable for anyone” (Gloster, 2025, 7:03:36).

Administrative support is equally inadequate. Only 11% of teachers report that principals provide substantial mental health support, while one in three receive none (Scholastic, 2024). As

one teacher expressed, “I feel completely alone in managing it” (DSEA, 2024, para. 10). Another teacher added, “Teaching has become mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausting... we cannot afford to lose more teachers” (NEA, 2024, p. 5). The evidence points to a system in crisis until schools invest in licensed professionals and forward -thinking administrative support.

2.2.3 Structural Limitations

In addition to the inadequacies of teacher support systems, teachers are met with significant structural constraints that cannot be fixed merely through professional training. Bureaucracy, slow system changes, and escalating political pressures serve as the most critical limitations in the post-pandemic support. These issues not only represent the lack of efforts to resolve them; rather, they reflect a broader failure of the educational system to acknowledge and align with teachers’ needs.

Teachers in the post-pandemic era face an overload of administrative tasks, including data entry, compliance, and extensive documentation requirements. In October 2025, the RAND survey revealed that 46% of teachers expressed concerns about their draining job and how it affected their personal life in comparison with only 13% of other working adults. Additionally, 42% stated that they worry about work even after leaving school, while similar working adults reported the same (K12 Dive, 2025). 72% of teachers said that adapting their work schedule for private life concerns is difficult compared to 22% of other adults (K12 Dive, 2025). Fewer than half of teachers reported the help of their district in adjusting to the dynamic of work and life (K12 Dive, 2025). Bureaucracy-related matters, such as paperwork, rigid schedules, and expectations of continuous accessibility, negatively affect teachers’ well-being, yet these issues are largely overlooked.

The expiry of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds contributes to the system’s lack of stability. The Congress assigned an allocation of around \$190 billion between 2020 and 2022, which was spent on hiring counselors, increasing teacher pay, and

supporting mental health by the districts (EdSurge, 2025). The depletion of these funds has resulted in the elimination of significant positions. Brian Ingram of Memphis-Shelby County Schools stated: “As quickly as we bring new hires in, they're going back out... if we can't afford them, how do we sustain them?” (New Leaders, 2025, para. 6). The effect is more devastating in low-income communities. Sasha Pudelski explained: “Those districts disproportionately felt the impact of the expiration of ESSER” (EdSurge, 2025, para. 45-50).

Political pressures and legal constraints have led teachers to fear teaching topics that can be deemed divisive and prevent them from teaching freely, so that they do not lose their careers. Drew Gitomer noted: “COVID exacerbated things, and teachers are caught in the middle of political battles ... It's not a healthy work environment” (The Seattle Times, 2025, para. 9). Oklahoma’s HB 1775 “has contributed to widespread fear and self-censorship among educators” (ACLU, 2025, para. 2). West Virginia’s SB 277 “could lead to a reduction in comprehensive discussions of race and equity... educators may opt to avoid these topics to prevent potential job losses” (LegiPlex, 2025, para. 3). Dawn Sibby, a teacher from California, reported that a censorship policy “drove teachers... to stop teaching ‘Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry’” (Public Counsel, 2025, para. 15). The ACLU of Mississippi warned that a state law “could prevent classroom discussions on slavery, the Civil War, the civil rights movement” (ACLU of Mississippi, 2025, para. 12). Katie Adams claimed that teachers face “a broad and vague category of things that may be in violation, and a rigorous system of reporting and punishment” (The Lion, 2026, para. 8).

These challenges have resulted in a significant teacher shortage: “1 in 8 teaching positions [are] either vacant or filled by an underqualified educator” (The Seattle Times, 2025, para. 1). As one veteran teacher stated, “I have never worked so hard... yet never felt like such a big failure. That carries a lot of emotional weight” (DSEA, 2024, para. 12). Professional training and

counseling alone do not address structural limitations such as bureaucracy, expiring funds, and political pressures. These challenges call for maintaining investment, legal security, and reframing the system. Martin Gloster declares, “the effects of that are not sustainable for anyone” (Gloster, 2025, 7:03:38).

2.3 Discussion

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American public education system already had formal structures in place intended to support teachers. These included professional development programs, counseling services, administrative policies, and federal funding mechanisms designed to support teachers. Chapter One reviewed how these supports functioned in policy and practice before and during the early pandemic years. On paper, teachers had access to training in digital pedagogy and trauma-informed instruction, mental health resources through Employee Assistance Programs, and district policies aimed at managing workload. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that these supports consistently fail to meet the needs of post-pandemic classrooms. The gap between institutional provisions and teachers’ actual experience is not accidental; rather, it points to deeper problems in how these systems are designed and aligned with real classroom demands.

The literature reviewed in Chapter One confirms that school districts offer numerous training opportunities, particularly in technology integration and behavioral management. However, teacher testimonies and surveys analyzed in Section 2.2.1 show that nearly half of educators find this training irrelevant to their daily work. Only about one-third feel adequately prepared to manage the severe behavioral challenges now common in post-pandemic classrooms. Teachers entering the profession through alternative certification paths, often recruited to address shortages, report feeling especially unprepared for essential instructional tasks. The problem is not the absence of

training, but rather its conception and delivery. Professional development is frequently designed without meaningful teacher input and is often led by individuals who have not recently worked in a classroom. As a result, teachers leave these sessions with strategies perceived as theoretical rather than practical. In other words, the existence of professional development does not ensure its effectiveness. Teachers consistently express a need for time to collaborate with colleagues, observe peers, and engage in sustained coaching on problems they identify as priorities.

Chapter One noted that many schools offer counseling services and Employee Assistance Programs as resources for teacher wellbeing. Yet Section 2.2.2 showed that utilization of EAPs is abysmally low - typically 3-5% - despite 76% of school employees reporting moderate to severe stress and nearly one third showing clinically significant anxiety or depression. Barriers include stigma, confidentiality concerns, a very limited number of sessions (often three to six), and appointment hours that conflict with teaching schedules. Even more troubling, only 11% of teachers say their principals provide substantial mental health support, and one in three receive no support at all. The availability of a counseling program on a district website does not mean that teachers can access it easily or find it helpful. When teachers are told to “use the EAP,” they encounter a system designed for generic workplace stress, not for the specific, compounded trauma associated with post-pandemic education. The gap in this context is not one of presence, but of accessibility and relevance.

While the administrative policies discussed in chapter one were intended to reduce workload and improve their working conditions. The data from Section 2.2.3 documented that teachers work 53 hours per week—nine hours more than their peers in other professions—while facing significant pay inequities. The psychologist-to-student ratio stands at 1:1,400 against a recommended 1:500, meaning that teachers are effectively being forced into the role of primary mental health providers.

Federal ESSER funds, which have left high poverty districts in a fiscal crisis, and by paid for additional counselors and interventionists. Meanwhile, state-level political legislation restricting discussions of race, gender, and history is forcing many educators into self-censorship, adding immense psychological weight to an already exhausted workforce. It has become clear that the amount of administrative empathy or individual wellness training can solve these structural failures. Therefore, they require systemic solutions including sustained funding, legislative protection, and systemic redesign.

The American education system does claim to invest in teacher support, but that investment is misaligned with the realities of the post-pandemic classroom. Moreover, professional development remains too theoretical, mental health services are out of reach, and working conditions are too resistant to piecemeal fixes. Teachers are not failing because they are not using the support provided, rather the supports systems themselves are failing to meet the actual needs of teachers. This disconnect drives the burnout, attrition, and morale crisis documented throughout this chapter. Closing the gap will require not more of the same - not another wellness webinar or resilience workshop. Instead, we need a fundamental shift in the delivery of support, the provision of mental health care, and the development of policies that address the root causes of educator stress.

2.4 Recommendations

The evidence discussed in this chapter reveals that post-pandemic American teachers are carrying far more than academic pressure; they are navigating emotional burdens, classroom disruptions, and technological stress. Although support systems such as professional development, counseling services, and administrative policies exist, they systematically fail in practice. The

following recommendations arise directly from teachers' testimonies and research findings, and are grouped into pedagogical, institutional, and policy categories.

2.4.1 Pedagogical Recommendations

Teachers frequently report that much of the training they receive is overly theoretical, generic, and different from the realities of daily classroom practice. Professional development needs to move beyond isolated workshops to include sustained, job-embedded coaching. This involves replacing "one and done" sessions with ongoing support, such as classroom observation with feedback, peer mentoring, and structured reflection over months. Training should be designed with teachers rather than imposed on them, and facilitated by educators with recent classroom experience. As one teacher noted, "Teachers want meaningful information that they can take back to the classroom and implement" (Stoffel, 2024, para. 9).

Only about one-third of teachers receive effective training for handling challenging student behaviors (Whalen, 2025). Both teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development should intentionally focus on evidence-based behavior management, including de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed responses, and positive reinforcement systems. The National Council on Teacher Quality emphasizes that future teachers must understand both their own and students' behaviors, emotions, and cultural backgrounds, set clear expectations, and view misbehavior as a skill gap rather than a character flaw" (Sparks, 2026, para. 60–64). Schools should also provide ongoing training in trauma-informed practices, recognizing that many post-pandemic students' behaviors arise from distress rather than defiance.

Teachers often experience technostress not because they cannot learn new tools, but because they are expected to navigate numerous platforms without guidance on how to integrate them instructionally (Edutopia, 2026). Schools should simplify their technology ecosystems by

removing redundant or rarely used applications and providing training focused on pedagogical integration rather than technical navigation. Additionally, training should address digital fatigue and work-life boundary management.

2.4.2 Institutional Recommendations

Teachers work 53 hours per week on average - nine hours more than comparable working adults - yet earn \$18,000 less (Doan et al., 2024). These challenges are not an individual time-management problem, but a structural design problem. Schools and districts should conduct workload audits, eliminate duplicative data entry and paperwork, provide clerical assistance for non-instructional tasks, protect planning time from meetings and coverage duties, and reconsider whether every compliance requirement remains necessary. As Dr. Tim Pressley's nationwide research found, teachers' number one request was time - time to plan, collaborate, and recover (CNU, 2024). Reducing workload should be understood as a retention strategy rather than an optional benefit.

Only 11% of teachers report strong mental health support from principals, and one in three receives no support at all (Scholastic, 2024). Administrators should establish safe, confidential mechanisms for teachers to voice concerns without fear of consequences. This includes regular well-being surveys with published results and action plans, teacher representation in decision making bodies, and clear grievance processes for when support fails. Most importantly, administrators must recognize that "teachers are very knowledgeable about what's going on in the classroom. Their voices should be listened to" (Pressley, as cited in CNU, 2024, para. 43–45). This means involving teachers in decisions about professional development, scheduling, and discipline policies.

Despite 97% of employers offering mental health services, EAP utilization languishes at 3–5% due to stigma, limited sessions, and rigid hours (EBRI–Path Forward, 2025; Hub Southwest Advisors, 2025). Schools should offer confidential, easily accessible mental health services during non-teaching hours (e.g., immediately after school or during planning periods with coverage), and delivered by providers with expertise in educator stress. Services should be located in schools or near buildings to reduce access barriers. Most importantly, seeking support must carry no professional risk and should be normalized as part of responsible professional practice.

2.4.3 Policy Recommendations

The allocation of \$190 billion in ESSER funds enabled districts to hire counselors, interventionists, and behavior specialists. The states and federal government are required to supply consistent and adaptable funding to support the school staffing beyond the expiry of ESSER funds. The absence of such support leads to the setback of the achieved improvements in the post-pandemic will be undermined, particularly in districts with lower property tax bases and higher student needs (EdSurge, 2025). Funding must be directed at increasing the number of mental health professionals as the National Association of School Psychologists' recommended ratio of one psychologist per 500 students from the current 1:1,400 (Chu&Fitzpatrick, 2025). Moreover, it should aid in raising competitive teacher salaries, reaching the \$18,000 pay gap with similar professionals (Doan et al., 2024).

Policymakers should take into account providing teachers with mental health support, as was the case with states mandating counselor-to-student ratios. This support could be implemented as an EAP access with maximum wait times, such as a first appointment within one week, in addition to devoting mental health positions at school for the staff' well-being, or investing in state funding

wellness programs, cost-free for teachers. Mandates allow clear and consistent support, which research indicates is currently insufficient.

Political and legal constraints made teacher fear discussions of sensitive topics such as race, gender, and American history, which added another psychological strain to their existing stress (ACLU, 2025). Policymakers should reject ambiguous "divisive concepts" laws that restrict legitimate instruction and establish complaint procedures that risk teachers' professional security. Alternatively, there should be policies that encourage and trust teachers to deliver state-mandated curriculum without fear of punitive measures. Teachers will not be able to support students effectively if they fear losing their careers for doing their professional responsibilities.

The time teachers spend on additional and administrative tasks, such as paperwork, data entry, or compliance documentation, detracts from both instructional and personal time. State and federal education departments should set goals for eliminating unnecessary paperwork, systematically review the requirements of reporting, and remove tasks that do not contribute to enhancing students' achievements. Teacher time should be respected and protected as a valuable finite resource and not be endlessly available to be used.

Conclusion

This chapter critically examined teachers' experiences and the deficiencies within the institutional support system. It showed the built and added pressures on teachers, including academic recovery, the emotional burden of managing student behavioral needs, and the increasing demands of technological implementation and administrative tasks while dealing with political and legislative constraints. The chapter also highlighted important gaps in support systems, indicating that training programs, mental health counseling, and policy initiatives are impractical, inaccessible, insufficient, and do not match the classroom realities. Moreover, it adds more than it

alleviates stress on teachers. By connecting these findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter One, the chapter highlights the mismatch between institutional intentions and teachers' needs, and illustrates how current support systems are more reactive than transformative. It is essential to implement a practical, targeted, and accessible support system to overcome the current limitations and sustain teachers in their professional roles so that they thrive rather than survive.

General Conclusion

This research investigates the key challenges facing teachers in the post-pandemic American education. It provides insights into the required support, and it is divided into three specific objectives. First, it identifies the most significant post-pandemic challenges for teachers, including academic, social, and emotional pressures. Second, it examines how these challenges impact teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and their decision to stay in the profession. Third, it investigates the current support systems available to teachers and determine where they are falling short as well as how these can be translated into effective institutional policies.

This dissertation consists of two chapters; the first reviews the literature and identifies the main challenges that face teachers in the post-pandemic educational landscape in different categories, and the current support measures. The Second chapter analyzes teachers' lived experiences and identifies the gaps in the support system, both in quality and quantity, and provides recommendations for strengthening the support system and policy improvement.

This study answers one main research question on the most critical challenges facing teachers in the post-pandemic American public school system, and the impact of these challenges on the teaching profession. To provide a comprehensive answer to this question, three sub-questions were addressed: (a) what are the specific academic, behavioral, and well-being-related challenges that teachers reported as their most significant post-pandemic obstacles? (b) In what ways do these challenges affect teachers' morale, burnout rates, and career decisions? (c) How can policymakers translate teachers' lived experience into sustainable support systems that enhance retention, morale, and instructional quality? In order to answer these questions. This study adopts a mixed-method approach combining qualitative analysis of teachers' testimonies with quantitative data from educational reports and surveys.

By identifying the main challenges and exploring the support system in the first chapter and analyzing the teachers' testimonies and reports in the second one, it can be said that this research reaches its objectives and answers its questions. The results obtained are as follows:

The challenges that teachers face after COVID-19 include: Academic, behavioral, and well-being pressures. Adapting to the implementation of technology and the new way of providing instructions without prior professional training, in addition to dealing with students' learning loss, were the main obstacles that teachers have dealt with academically. As for the behavioral aspect, teachers had to manage students' mental health problems and act as professionals in addition to

dealing with the increase in classroom disruptions and students' misbehavior. Teachers also had to handle an overload of tasks, including administrative work such as paperwork and documentation. All of these challenges affected teachers' well-being.

Those challenges had a significant impact on teachers' morale, burnout rates, and career decisions. They added more workload and pressure than teachers can handle. Having to adapt to digital learning and achieve better academic outcomes while dealing with students' learning loss increased teachers' stress levels. Teachers had unintentionally gained a new role acting as mental health experts and managing students' behavioral issues in addition to providing instruction, which made it impossible to achieve better outcomes and lowered their morale. Moreover, dealing with this work overload left them no time for their social and personal matters and caused them to burn out as they are always working. All these obstacles added strain on teachers' well-being and caused them high levels of stress and burnout in addition to low morale, and as a result, feeling the need to leave the profession.

To manage these challenges, policymakers have to take teachers' lived experiences into consideration by implementing support systems and improving policies. Creating professional development programs for teachers can help them adapt to the integration of digital learning, in addition to preparing them to deal with students' behavior. Moreover, schools and districts should be mindful of teachers' time and reduce administrative tasks, as well as involve teachers in decision making. Furthermore, policymakers should allocate continuous and stable funding for support systems on-site and outside schools for students and teachers, mandate mental health support for teachers to cope with these challenges, and protect teachers' autonomy when they do their job from political pressure so they can perform freely and stay in the profession.

Recommendations

This research investigates the challenges and the support systems for managing them. It may be extended in future research by focusing more on examining how learning loss differs across grade levels and subject areas, particularly in mathematics and reading, in order to better understand which students were most affected academically. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to explore the effectiveness of intervention programs designed to reduce learning gaps among students after the pandemic. Furthermore, future research can focus on the relationship between teacher workload and job satisfaction in the post-pandemic educational environment.

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الملخص

أعادت جائحة كوفيد-19 تشكيل الواقع اليومي للمعلمين في النظام التعليمي الأمريكي. فعند إعادة فتح الفصول الدراسية، وجد المعلمون أنفسهم في بيئة تبدو مألوفة في ظاهرها، لكنها متغيرة في حقيقتها. تستكشف هذه الدراسة التحديات الأساسية التي يواجهها المعلمون في مرحلة ما بعد الجائحة في النظام التعليمي الأمريكي، وتنطلق من الحاجة إلى فهم كيف لا تزال الضغوط ما بعد الجائحة تؤثر على مهنتهم كمعلمين. كما يهدف هذا

البحث إلى تحديد أهم التحديات التي يواجهها المعلمون ودراسة تأثيرها على أدائهم التدريسي، وتبسيط الضوء على أنواع الدعم التي يحتاجها المعلمون للتكيف مع هذا الواقع التعليمي الجديد. وتكمن أهمية هذا البحث في أنه يمنح صوتًا لتجارب المعلمين الواقعية، ويساهم في فهم أعمق لطبيعة الدعم الذي يحتاجونه في مرحلة ما بعد الجائحة. تم اعتماد منهجية جمع البيانات من معلمين داخل النظام التعليمي الأمريكي من خلال الجمع بين الرؤية الكمية والنوعية. وقد كشفت النتائج عن زيادة في الاضطرابات داخل الفصول الدراسية، وفجوات تعليمية ونفسية ملحوظة، مما يفرض تحديات على أساليب التدريس التقليدية. كما أظهرت النتائج ارتفاع مستويات الضغط والإرهاق لدى المعلمين، والحاجة الملحة إلى دعم مؤسسي وتدريب وموارد نفسية تساعدهم على التكيف بفعالية.

كلمات مفتاحية: التعليم الأمريكي العام، تعليم ما بعد الجائحة، تحديات الأساتذة.