

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Vocational High School Teachers: A Qualitative Case Study on Teacher Experiences During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Friday, March 25, 2022

1:30 pm- 3:00 pm

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/my/karlaloya> (Password: EDD)

**Dissertation Defense by
Shalyn R Kastanis**

This qualitative case study examined the experiences of vocational high school teachers from one school in the Northeast United States to determine how their social and emotional awareness, occupational stress levels, and trauma exposure influenced their instructional practices. There is currently a gap in the existing research examining how teachers are effected by collective, individual, and secondary trauma, and this study sought to address this gap. The primary source of data collection was semi-structured interviews with 13 participants, including Academic and Trade Teachers and Instructional Support Staff (which may include Special Education Teachers, English Language Teachers, and School Counselors).

This study's findings can be organized into five categories: (a) Professional Experiences, (b) Student Learning and Engagement, (c) Losing and Rebuilding Community, (d) Trauma Exposure, and (e) The Journey to a New Normal. During the Coronavirus Pandemic, participants struggled to foster authentic relationships and engagement with their students during hybrid and remote learning modalities, which influenced academic performance. Participants also found it difficult to effectively cope with the increased occupational stress levels and changes to professional expectations. Teaching from the building while their students learned from home lead to increased feelings of isolation, demoralization, and a lack of trust towards school and district-based administrators. While this study occurred in a vocational high school during the pandemic, these findings may be transferred to other educational settings and instructional disruptions. These findings may also inform pre-service and in-service teacher training opportunities, and provide the necessary skills to safeguard teachers against stress, burnout, demoralization, trauma exposure, and attrition.

Shalyn Kastanis is an English Instructor in a vocational high school in New England. She holds a Master's Degree in Education, with a focus in Educational Leadership from Stetson University, and a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from Florida State University.