CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Chapter 4 details the qualitative data analysis approach used to address the study's three research questions: (1) What types of value are created through new teacher synchronous online learning communities? (2) How does participation in a collaborative online network support new teachers in developing literacy PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships? (3) What challenges do teachers raise in their discussions during community meetings, and how do these challenges relate to literacy instruction? The following sections describe the coding process employed to answer these questions and the presentation of the resulting data.

***Cycle 1—Immediate Value***

The first cycle, immediate value, focuses on the intrinsic value of community activities and interactions as they occur (Wenger et al., 2011). Table X outlines the typical indicators and potential data sources for immediate value, as described by Wenger and colleagues (2011), along with evidence from the study that corresponds to these indicators. Data sources include vNTLC transcripts, interview transcripts, session memos, and my research journal. Indicators specific to online asynchronous networks, such as thread length, comment timeliness, and site subscriptions, are excluded, as they are not relevant to this study. Quantitative data, including meeting attendance, frequency, and discussion length, were used to measure participation, activity, and engagement, all derived from the vNTLC transcripts.

**Table X**

*Indicators of Immediate Value and Supporting Evidence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Typical indicator | Source of data | Evidence from the study |
| Level of participation  | Meeting attendance, active participant count  | There were 5 active participants, with an average of 5.2 (65%) sessions attended per participant.  |
| Level of activity | Meeting frequency Top of FormBottom of Form | The study consisted of 8 vNTLC sessions, totaling 383 minutes, with an average duration of 48 minutes per session. |
| Level of engagement | Emotional engagement, length of discussionsTop of FormBottom of Form | Participants spoke for a total of 242 minutes across all sessions, averaging 30 minutes of discussion per session. Emotional engagement was also observed. |
| Quality of interactions | Bringing practical experience into learning, feedback on response quality | Participants shared strategies, offered immediate solutions, and engaged in empathetic exchanges, demonstrating meaningful, supportive interactions that promoted professional and emotional growth. |
| Value of participation | Participant feedback, re-engagement with the community, signs of fun (e.g., laughter).Top of FormBottom of Form | Participants reported that active involvement in discussions, such as responding to challenges and sharing personal experiences, helped them feel more supported and empowered in their teaching practices. |
| Networking | New connections made | Participants emphasized that connecting with educators from diverse grade levels, specializations, and schools broadened their perspectives and enhanced both their professional growth and emotional support. |
| Value of connections | Self-reports | Participants emphasized the value of connecting with others outside their usual circle. One participant said, “Unless you’re in the trenches, there’s no way to relate to others going through the same thing.” |
| Collaboration | Joint projects, co-authorship | While participants shared ideas and resources, there was no direct evidence of tangible collaboration or collaboration beyond the community itself.  |
| Reflection | Meta-conversations about community | Participants saw the community as a space for problem-solving and emotional support, with one participant describing it as a “problem-solving box” for new teachers.  |

Data from the session and interview transcripts suggest that the vNTLC provided immediate value through active engagement, emotional support, collaboration, reflection, and networking—key themes that emerged across the sessions. These themes seemed to facilitate idea exchange, personal and professional growth, and foster a sense of community among teachers. Each theme is introduced with a participant quote, followed by an exploration of the related data. A holistic summary and synthesis of the themes will be provided before transitioning to cycle two.

**Active Engagement.** "I feel like the first couple of times, maybe we were just kind of nervous about sharing our stuff. But as time went on— well, I’ve seen you several times this month, so at this point, I know you. I’m just going to share, no problems about it. It’s just like getting rid of that new dust, like ‘Oh, I know you now.’” (Nicole)

Five participants initially joined the vNTLC, with four attending consistently. Kayla attended the first two sessions but did not return or participate in the final interview. Although her reasons for discontinuing are unknown, when present, she actively contributed and expressed gratitude for the group’s support and the strategies that were suggested.

The four consistent participants displayed high levels of engagement, being punctual and participating actively. They initiated discussions, responded to others’ challenges, and shared strategies. For instance, during session two, Feyre shared her classroom management challenges, and Nicole responded with a strategy involving callbacks: "I do 'Oh, oh, oh, O’Reilly...' and they say, ‘Auto parts, OW!’ That works. They like to say those." This exchange highlights how participants not only contributed their own experiences but also offered specific solutions to others’ challenges.

On average, participants spent 48 minutes per session in the vNTLC, with about 31 minutes dedicated to discussions (excluding facilitator time). As the sessions progressed, participants took greater ownership of the conversations. For example, in session one, I spoke for 27 minutes, while participants spoke for 29 minutes. By session five, I spoke for 11 minutes, while participants spoke for 42 minutes. As Nicole shared in her interview, “I feel like the first couple of times, maybe we were just kind of nervous about sharing our stuff. But as time went on— well, I’ve seen you several times this month, so at this point, I know you. I’m just going to share, no problems about it. It’s just like getting rid of that new dust, like ‘Oh, I know you now.’” Elsie also noted this change in her interview, saying, “We all kind of figured, hey, they’re comfortable talking about this, maybe I’ll bring this in... it’s just like in a classroom. They’re unsure at first, but after a while, they’re feeding off each other. That’s exactly how I had expected it and hoped it would go.” This shift suggests growing comfort and engagement as the sessions went on.

Despite varying attendance, participants maintained high engagement. For example, in session six, Elsie spoke eight times, six in response to others and twice to introduce new topics. Feyre and Nicole emphasized the value of active participation in their interviews. Feyre explained, “The value comes from what you’re willing to put into it. If you’re willing to show up and ask for help or offer advice, you’ll get something out of it.” Nicole said something similar, highlighting the relief of connecting with others who understand: “It’s also about that relief of just being able to talk with someone who understands... That relief is valuable.” The vNTLC seemed to foster a strong sense of value through active participation and mutual support. Participants expressed that immediate feedback provided in the sessions allowed them to gain diverse perspectives and apply practical solutions in their classrooms.

**Emotional Support.** “Even if I didn’t exactly have a ‘This is the answer, it’s solved, we’re moving on’, I had at least somewhere to go with it emotionally.” (Feyre)

Evidence from the sessions and interviews suggests that the vNTLC was not only a space for sharing strategies but also a critical source of emotional support. Teachers often shared frustrations, vulnerabilities, and concerns, creating an environment where participants said they could process the emotional challenges of teaching together. Participants noted that this emotional engagement played a significant role in building strong bonds within the group.

For example, when Kayla shared her struggle of managing both Tier 2 and Tier 3 students without a dedicated interventionist, the group responded with immediate emotional support. Feyre expressed her frustration for Kayla’s situation: “I’m angry for you [Kayla].” Nicole responded with empathy: “Oh, that's insane. I’m so sorry for you. God bless you. You are a trooper.” These emotional reactions illustrated the group's concern and provided a sense of solidarity, reinforcing the emotional safety within the group.

Facial expressions and nonverbal cues further emphasized the perceived emotional depth of the group’s support. When Kayla spoke about her challenges, participants’ faces reflected genuine concern—Feyre shook her head with exasperation, Elsie nodded with pursed lips, and Nicole widened her eyes in shock. These nonverbal responses seemed to enhance the emotional atmosphere, creating a supportive space where members said they felt heard and understood.

Despite the group’s focus on problem-solving, there were moments when conversations shifted toward venting frustrations. In her interview, Feyre pointed out that sometimes the group moved away from sharing challenges in an effort to find solutions: “Sometimes I noticed at the end of a call that it was a little less like problem-solving and a little more venting.” However, Rina saw this as a beneficial aspect of the group, emphasizing that the vNTLC was a “no hate zone,” where the group maintained confidentiality and developed a sense of trust: “People aren’t going back and saying, ‘Oh, so-and-so said this.’” She said this characteristic of emotional safety allowed teachers to express their struggles without fear of judgment.

The smaller group dynamic seemed to further fostered emotional support. In her interview, Feyre explained, “I think that’s one of the things that makes the smaller group so nice, is that it’s much easier to interact with each other. In a bigger group, I might not feel as comfortable just throwing something out there. But in a smaller group, you feel much more comfortable sharing ideas and hearing others’ responses.” The intimacy of the group seemed to provide a safe space for emotional release, which participants said reduced stress and promoted camaraderie.

Ultimately, participants expressed that the vNTLC became a space for teachers to process their emotions, vent, and receive support, even when concrete solutions weren’t always possible. Participants said this emotional support helped them feel less isolated, more understood, and better equipped to navigate the emotional challenges of their teaching careers.

 **Collaboration.** “Just getting their perspective on something you might also be dealing with... has been really helpful.” (Nicole)

Evidence from the sessions and interviews suggest that collaboration within the vNTLC was centered around the exchange of ideas, problem-solving, and mutual support. While formal, long-term collaborative projects did not emerge, participants expressed that the informal, real-time collaboration that occurred in each session was impactful. Teachers said they were able to work together on specific challenges, share resources, and provide immediate, actionable feedback.

During session two, Nicole sought behavior management strategies. Kayla shared her reward card system, and when Nicole asked for clarification, Feyre introduced her own ClassDojo coupon strategy. This exchange demonstrated a fluid, cooperative process of refining strategies. While it wasn’t a formal collaboration, it reflects the group's natural inclination to help each other find solutions in real-time.

Collaboration in the vNTLC was not limited to the sharing of resources—it also included offering different perspectives on the same challenges. For example, when Rina expressed concerns about a student struggling with reading and math, the group provided a mix of practical solutions and emotional support. As Nicole mentioned in her interview, “Just getting their perspective on something you might also be dealing with... has been really helpful.” This collaboration wasn’t just about offering strategies; it was about bringing together diverse insights to create a fuller picture of how to address challenges.

Participants also expressed that members in the group supported each other’s professional growth through the exchange of strategies and experiences. For instance, Nicole learned a new reading comprehension strategy from Elsie, which she modified and implemented in her classroom. Nicole explained, “They use highlighters, go over the text three times, first reading together, then focusing on vocabulary, and finally answering comprehension questions. I modified it, but that's what I’ve used.” Participants shared that this strategy-sharing helped broaden their instructional toolkits, showing how collaboration led to both immediate problem-solving and professional development.

The group’s collaboration also seemed to reflect a sense of community and shared experience. Teachers in the group faced similar challenges as early-career educators, so their collaborative discussions often focused on understanding and validating each other’s struggles. Feyre described the group as a “problem-solving box,” where teachers could both talk through their challenges and receive feedback from peers who understood their situation.

The sense of mutual support and collaboration seemed evident in how the group responded to Rina’s concerns about a student’s learning needs. The group’s collaborative conversation, which included emotional and practical guidance, was a moment where participants worked together to find the next steps for Rina’s student. Below is an excerpt from that session:

**Rina**: “I have a student in my class who's at a kindergarten level in reading and math. He came to me with a Tier 3 reading and math plan. As a general ed teacher, I try to make time to work with him on those areas, but when every other student in my class is ready to move on, I can't let them fall behind while I catch him up. I struggle with this every day—how do I decide who to work with? Do I keep going and hope he catches up, or do I stop everything and focus on him while the others wait? It feels like I'm leaving students hanging. They're ready to move on, but I'm still helping him with basic vocabulary or simple words, like first-grade Fry words. He doesn't have an IEP, a 504 plan, or any additional help besides me and the interventionists who pull him twice a day for 30 minutes.”

**Feyre** (nodding her head): “Has he ever had a referral?”

**Rina**: “No. I've talked to his mom, but she doesn't really know what to do. He can’t succeed in my classroom like this.”

**Elsie**: “It sounds like he needs a referral, but you’ll have to go through interventions first. You need a certain number of intervention weeks before you can start the referral process.”

**Rina**: “Yeah, he’s had interventions since first grade. We have enough data to refer him.”

**Elsie**: “He definitely needs to be referred. Then his mom can decide whether to proceed.”

**Rina** (taking a deep breath):“Okay, I’ll do that. I’ve talked to my special ed teacher, and she’s great, but she has 40 kids on her caseload. She’s not self-contained, so there’s a lot going on. I hate to ask her for another referral, but I think it’s time.”

**Elsie**: “Legally, you’re required to refer him at this point. If he’s that far behind and has had interventions for so long, according to Child Find, he needs a referral or someone else needs to assess him. You’re not adding something to her plate that isn’t supposed to be there.”

**Rina** (writing something down):“Got it. I’m meeting with my principal tomorrow about some classroom issues, so I’ll bring this up.”

This collaboration extended beyond simply providing solutions; it also involved guiding each other through the process of decision-making and understanding the broader implications of those decisions. Through these discussions, participants shared that they not only addressed immediate challenges but also developed a deeper sense of connection and professional growth.

Overall, the collaboration within the vNTLC seemed to allow teachers to work together effectively, whether through strategy-sharing, problem-solving, or offering diverse perspectives. Evidence from interviews suggests that this collaborative environment helped participants feel supported and empowered, reinforcing the value of collective problem-solving in addressing the day-to-day challenges of teaching.

 **Reflection.** “We often revisit things that haven’t been resolved. We talk about what’s working, what we need to change, and you end up learning from that kind of feedback.” (Feyre)

The vNTLC seemed to serve as a valuable space for problem-solving, sharing strategies, and offering emotional support, all of which participants said contributed to their professional and personal growth. Feyre described teaching as an ongoing process of self-reflection: “You have to constantly check in with yourself, see what’s working, what’s not working, and make adjustments.” She said the group facilitated this process by revisiting unresolved issues, discussing successes, and identifying areas for improvement. Elsie echoed this in her interview, noting how the exchange of strategies boosted her confidence: “I’m realizing, hey, they have some of those same ideas and thoughts that I’m having. It was an overall confidence boost for me.”

Data from the transcripts suggests that reflection was a central element of the vNTLC, providing teachers with the space to critically assess their methods and refine their approaches. Through peer feedback, emotional support, and problem-solving, participants said they gained new insights, increased confidence, and grew both professionally and personally.

The group’s commitment to reflection was evident in the ongoing dialogue. For example, in session five, Nicole asked Feyre how she determined which learning targets to display, and in the following session, Feyre followed up, asking if Nicole had adjusted her approach. This continuity of conversation seemed to reinforce the group's support for each other’s development.

**Networking.** “I like talking about different ways that we are teaching in our classrooms… especially having, like, that diverse group and having like a sped person working with us… Being able to get that other insight from multiple perspectives was nice.” (Rina)

 The vNTLC seemed to foster professional support and fresh perspectives, with diversity emerging as a key theme. Participants generally shared that engaging with a varied group of educators allowed them to expand their networks and gain valuable insights. The group included teachers from different grade levels and specialties, including special education, which participants said enriched the discussions. For example, Rina said she particularly valued the insights from a special education teacher, noting how the diversity in the group allowed for a variety of strategies and perspectives.

Comments from participants’ interviews suggest networking within the vNTLC was especially beneficial. Feyre, for instance, valued hearing from teachers outside her school: “It’s great to hear how they handle similar situations. You can learn a lot just by hearing someone else’s perspective. It feels good to know that other people are going through the same stuff.” Participants expressed that these interactions helped them feel less isolated and offered emotional and practical support.

Participants said the diverse group dynamic reduced professional isolation, exposing them to new ways of thinking about teaching. Rina appreciated the opportunity to learn from colleagues in special education, while Feyre found comfort in connecting with other early-career teachers. Teachers said these connections broadened their understanding of their challenges, offering new strategies for addressing them.

 **Summary and Synthesis.** Data from the sessions and interviews suggest that the vNTLC provided immediate value to participants through activities and interactions that were both engaging and inspiring. Each session seemed to offer opportunities for teachers to receive answers to questions, find solutions to problems, and receive support with challenges they were facing. Participants expressed that the collective reflection that occurred during the sessions often sparked creative thinking and opened new perspectives, encouraging them to approach their challenges from different angles.

Participants said the exchange of ideas allowed for the cooperative development of solutions and allowed them to draw on each other’s experiences and insights to tackle issues. The space also seemed to offer emotional relief, as teachers said they were able to connect with others who understood the unique struggles of their profession.

In addition to these practical and emotional benefits, the group dynamic seemed to foster a sense of community, where teachers could share strategies, reflect on their practices, and feel supported by colleagues who had similar experiences. Participants reported that this sense of connection and the immediate value of each session contributed to enhancing their practices, but also provided a source of inspiration and relief, helping them navigate the everyday difficulties they encountered in their profession.

***Cycle 2—Potential Value***

Potential value refers to value generated by a community or network that is not immediately realized but holds potential for future use. It produces "knowledge capital" that can be valuable even if never fully realized. This value can take various forms, such as personal assets, relationships, connections, or resources (Wenger et al., 2011).

Table X presents the typical indicators and data sources for potential value, as outlined by Wenger and colleagues (2011), along with evidence from the study related to these indicators. Data includes both interview and session transcripts.

While all identified indicators are relevant to synchronous communities of practice, some were excluded as they fell outside the scope of the study. Specifically, indicators such as "Production of tools and documents to inform practice," "Quality of output," and "Documentation" were not included, as data collection on these aspects was not part of this study, which focused on participants' experiences and perceptions of the value generated within the community. Additionally, some indicators lack supporting evidence, which is noted below.

**Table X**

*Indicators of Potential Value and Supporting Evidence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Typical indicator | Source of data | Evidence from the study |
| Skills acquired | Self-reports, community reflections | Participants reported gaining practical teaching strategies, particularly in literacy, behavior management, and technology integration, which they were able to implement in their classrooms to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. |
| Information received | Self-reports | Participants reported receiving valuable insights on addressing classroom challenges, such as behavior management and differentiated instruction, with a particular focus on using technology tools like AI and educational platforms to enhance their teaching practices. |
| Change in perspective | Self-reports | One instance of a participant experiencing a shift in her perspective on using AI tools in education, moving from skepticism and concerns about compromising quality to embracing AI as a valuable tool that enhances efficiency and effectiveness in her teaching. |
| Inspiration | Self-reports, retention rates of members | The strong retention of participants, with four of the original five remaining engaged throughout the sessions, and Feyre’s interest in potentially leading a support group, indicate that the vNTLC inspired participants to become more involved and consider leadership roles. |
| Confidence | Self-reports | Participants reported enhanced confidence through emotional support, practical strategies, and a strong sense of community, all of which helped them feel more capable and assured in their teaching roles. |
| Types of intensity of social relationships | Social network analysis  | No evidence. |
| Structural shape of networks | Application of certain metrics and software to network graphs | No evidence. |
| Level of trust | Discussing difficult problems and failures from practice | Participants demonstrated a high level of trust in the vNTLC community by openly sharing their struggles, emotions, and professional challenges, and seeking advice and support from peers. |
| Reputation of the community | Stakeholder feedback | Participants consistently said the vNTLC fostered trust, self-reflection, and diverse perspectives. |
| New view of learning  | Self-reports, interest in learning and leadership activities | Participants shared evolving perspectives on learning and leadership, with Rina suggesting a year-long community for new teachers.  |

Drawing on Wenger and colleagues’ (2011) framework, the community’s potential value can be categorized into human, social, tangible, reputational, and learning capital.

**Human Capital: Skills Acquired and Information Received.** Teachers expressed that they gained valuable skills, strategies, and resources that enhanced their teaching practices. Based on their interview transcripts, key areas of growth included behavior management, teaching strategies, and technology tools.

***Teaching Strategies.***Teachers said they gained strategies tailored to their specific needs. Nicole said she improved her management of reading centers by learning techniques to guide students’ activities and movement. She also began using manipulatives, which helped with engagement. Rina said she benefited from feedback on teaching writing, an area of difficulty for her students. In her interview, she shared, “I take ideas from other people, and I implement them in a way that works for me,” demonstrating how the community's shared insights allowed her to adapt strategies to her classroom.

While there were discussions on literacy strategies, data from the session transcripts suggest these often gave way to participants’ more pressing concerns, such as learning targets on lesson plans. Elsie reflected in her interview, “We spent a couple of sessions on literacy standards, but I learned more from the community’s support than from structured strategy discussions,” which seems to emphasize the value of peer support over formal discussions in addressing immediate challenges.

***Classroom Management.*** Classroom management, especially regarding difficult behaviors and administrative tasks, was another area where participants said they received support. Feyre said she found support when preparing for a parent conference about a disruptive student: “I felt better knowing others were also apprehensive about talking to parents.” Nicole shared her struggles with a rowdy class, saying, “It’s hard to get them to be still and productive for even five minutes,” highlighting how the community helped normalize challenges and provided emotional support.

In addition to emotional support, the community exchanged practical solutions related to classroom management. For instance, Feyre suggested using brain breaks to maintain student engagement during long lessons, and Elsie recommended a cubby system for missed work, which Feyre later found effective: “It’s getting better, not perfect, but I’m seeing progress.” These exchanges illustrate how shared experiences seemed to lead to meaningful solutions.

***Technology Tools.*** Participants said technology tools played a significant role in enhancing their classroom efficiency. Initially hesitant, Feyre said she began using ChatGPT to create differentiated quizzes: “I made a multiple-choice version and a free-response one. It worked out pretty well,” and she expressed that the use of technology alleviated stress and improved her ability to tailor assessments. Similarly, Elsie said she found MagicSchool useful for generating assessments, saving her time: “It’s great for creating comprehension questions from phonics passages. That’s something I can do, but it takes me so much time. So it just makes that quicker and easier for me.”

Additionally, Rina and Nicole said they used Seesaw and Keynote for real-time feedback and student engagement. In her interview, Nicole shared, “We’ve been using Seesaw for students to write more and track their progress,” while Rina said she used Keynote to prepare students for state assessments: “We started using Keynote to send work back and forth. And I was like, okay, well this is kind of what ACAP is—you’re going to type it up, send it in, and it’s either going to make sense or not.”

**Social Capital: Relationships and Connections.** The vNTLC seemed to provide a supportive space for teachers to build relationships, share experiences, and foster personal and professional growth. Participants said open communication and trust within the group helped them navigate challenges, reduce isolation, and enhance problem-solving abilities. These relationships and connections seemed to springboard inspiration, engagement, confidence, and emotional support for participants.

***Inspiration and Engagement.*** The group demonstrated strong engagement, with four of the five original participants remaining active. Feyre expressed how the experience inspired her to consider leadership of a similar group in the future: “I’m not considering it right now, but you’ve planted that seed. Now that bug’s gonna be there. In the next few years, I could see myself moving up into something.” This reflection indicates how the community seemed to instill a sense of leadership and growth potential.

***Confidence and Emotional Support.*** Participants consistently shared that the vNTLC provided emotional support, which helped boost their confidence. Rina shared in her interview, “Sometimes I feel like I’m drowning... And then I talk to somebody else and they're also drowning. And I’m like, okay, it’s not just me.” This highlights how the group’s emotional support made teachers feel less isolated. Nicole also noted her increasing confidence in her own interview: “At first, I was like, I don’t really know what I’m doing, but now I’m like, yeah, I got it a lot better.”

Elsie mentioned how the group helped her feel more confident and comfortable: “It brought me out of my shell,” further illustrating the perceived positive emotional impact of the vNTLC.

**Tangible Capital: Resources Shared.** Teachers said they gained access to valuable resources that enhanced classroom efficiency and reduced stress. Feyre said she starting using AI programs, such as ChatGPT and MagicSchool, to create differentiated assessments, saying, “It’s taken the weight of making my own assessments from scratch off my plate. That was huge,” which underscores how digital tools saved her time and effort. Elsie also used MagicSchool to streamline the creation of comprehension questions: “It just makes that quicker and easier for me.”

Similarly, Nicole said she started implementing Seesaw and Rina said she is using Keynote for real-time student feedback and tracking progress, showcasing how shared resources seemed to allow for better classroom management and engagement.

**Reputational Capital: Collective Intangible Assets.** The vNTLC seemed to help build a collective reputation for reflection, growth, and collaboration. Teachers generally said they valued engaging with peers outside their schools because they gainied new perspectives and insights. In her interview, Nicole reflected on how this broadened her approach: “It was valuable to get another perspective,” particularly in navigating day-to-day teaching challenges.

By the end of the sessions, teachers expressed a desire to continue the group, seemingly highlighting the lasting connections and trust formed: “It could even turn into, like, hey, would you guys want to go get coffee? For one session every month?”

**Learning Capital: Transformed Ability to Learn.** Participants said their participation in the vNTLC transformed their ability to learn and adapt to new teaching practices. Rina gave an example of adapting feedback strategies and sentence starters to improve writing lessons, while Nicole shared that she began using Seesaw to enhance student engagement in writing.

Feyre’s transformation in thinking regarding AI tools exemplifies the group’s impact: “I’m starting to understand that using AI is just a tool. It’s not cutting corners because there’s still effort involved to ensure accuracy.” As previously discussed, she said that this shift has impacted her efficiency and refocused her planning efforts, which she found beneficial.

**Summary and Synthesis.** Evidence from session and interview transcripts seems to suggest that the vNTLC fostered the development of human, social, tangible, reputational, and learning capital, contributing to the teachers' professional growth. Teachers mentioned gaining valuable skills, strategies, and emotional support, and through collaborative problem-solving, they said they adapted to classroom challenges. Data suggests that the group not only provided immediate value, but also long-term potential as teachers expressed becoming more confident, reflective, and open to new learning opportunities.

***Cycle 3—Applied Value***

Applied value refers to how knowledge is leveraged and applied to specific situations, resulting in changes or innovations in actions, tools, or approaches (Wenger et al., 2011). This section presents the applied value derived from participants’ involvement in the vNTLC, focusing on how they implemented knowledge gained from the community into their teaching practices.

Table X outlines the typical indicators and data sources for applied value, as defined by Wenger and colleagues (2011), including the use of knowledge, tools, and social relationships. While all the recommended indicators are included, some lack supporting evidence.

**Table X**

*Indicators of Applied Value and Supporting Evidence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Typical indicator | Source of data | Evidence from the study |
| Implementation of advice/solutions/insights | Self-reports, follow-up on how many members apply advice | All participants mentioned applying at least one strategy shared within the community.  |
| Innovation in practice | New approaches, perspectives, or concepts  | Participants demonstrated innovation by adapting new approaches learned from the community. Elsie employed student-centered literacy strategies, Feyre used AI to improve her time management for greater efficiency, Nicole replaced traditional textbooks with Seesaw to boost student engagement, and Rina fostered emotional resilience in her teaching approach. |
| Use of tools and documents to inform practice | Self-reports | Teachers utilized various tools and resources shared within the community to inform their practices, such as Seesaw, Keynote, and AI tools.  |
| Reuse of products | Self-reports | No evidence.  |
| Use of social connections | Collaborative arrangements, leveraging connections to accomplish tasks | Participants said the emotional and professional support from the community played a key role in the teachers' practices. Elsie and Feyre valued the feedback and reassurance, which boosted their confidence. Nicole benefitted from peer feedback, including advice from Elsie on addressing challenges with special education students. Rina appreciated the shared experiences and camaraderie that helped build her emotional resilience. |
| Innovation in systems | New processes or policies | Participants seemed to innovate both personal and classroom systems through their community participation. Feyre improved her time and workload management, Nicole and Rina integrated technology into their writing instruction, and Elsie incorporated a new system for managing her groups’ learning targets.  |
| Transferring learning practices | Applying tools for learning in other contexts | No evidence.  |

Analysis of session transcripts, interview transcripts, and value creation narratives revealed several key themes related to the practical application of knowledge in teaching, including the adoption of new teaching strategies, integration of technology, emotional support, and improvements in classroom management and efficiency.

**Adoption of New Teaching Strategies.** In their interviews or value creation narratives, all teachers shared at least one example of their application of strategies learned through the community. Elsie said she implemented a comprehension strategy—drawing pictures in the margins of the text—which students found engaging and effective. Nicole adopted behavior management techniques discussed in the community, particularly in handling disruptive students and engaging with parents, which helped improve classroom focus and structure. Feyre applied a cubby system for keeping up with students’ makeup work, and Rina incorporated Keynote to enhance student engagement and feedback.

**Integration of Technology for Student Engagement and Efficiency.** Participants mentioned several ways technology played a major role in enhancing student engagement and efficiency. Teachers, including Nicole and Rina, replaced traditional methods with tools like Seesaw and Keynote. They expressed that these digital tools not only promoted interactive and student-centered learning but also facilitated collaboration and individualized feedback.

Other participants reported increased efficiency in their practices due to the use of technology, particularly in the form of educational AI platforms. For example, Feyre said she appreciated not having to create assessments from scratch, saving time and reducing stress.

**Emotional Support and Confidence-Building.** Participants said the community provided valuable emotional support, helping them build confidence in their practices. Feyre noted in her interview that hearing validation from peers boosted her confidence, while Rina said she appreciated the shared experiences that helped alleviate feelings of isolation. This emotional support seemed to contribute to teachers’ resilience, enabling them to navigate both personal and professional challenges.

**Summary and Synthesis.** Data suggests the vNTLC provided teachers with practical insights that directly enhanced their teaching practices. Participants said the exchange of ideas within the community facilitated the adoption of effective strategies, the integration of technology, emotional support, and improvements in classroom efficiency. They shared that these experiences seemed to contribute to more engaging, effective, and confident teaching, fostering both professional growth and emotional resilience. The knowledge gained from the community seemed to empower teachers to manage their classrooms more efficiently, prioritize tasks, and implement innovative approaches that benefited student learning and development.

***Cycle 4—Realized Value***

Wenger and colleagues (2011) emphasize that merely implementing new practices and tools is insufficient. Realized value refers to the improvements in performance that result from applying new ideas. However, it’s crucial to avoid assuming that performance has improved just because practices have changed. Instead, reflection is necessary to assess the actual impact of knowledge application on performance outcomes (Wenger et al., 2011).

This study focuses on participants' experiences within the vNTLC, not their professional performance. As measuring teachers' performance is outside the study’s scope, I do not assess “performance improvement” as recommended by Wenger and colleagues (2011). Instead, I rely on participants' reflections about how they applied new ideas and resources to gain insights into their perceived changes in performance.

Instances of realized value were somewhat limited, so I will present a table that outlines typical indicators and data sources for measuring realized value (Wenger et al., 2011) and then provide a holistic summary of participants' reflections on whether, and how, their application of new ideas influenced their performance.

Table X outlines typical indicators and data sources for measuring performance improvement (Wenger et al., 2011). All recommended indicators are included, and evidence comes directly from teachers’ reflections. To strengthen the evidence, particularly in organizational areas, additional data would be needed. This could include insights into how teachers’ involvement impacted the broader teaching environment or the school, such as changes in satisfaction, student achievement, or the school’s reputation.

**Table X**

*Indicators of Realized Value and Supporting Evidence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Typical indicator | Source of data | Evidence from the study |
| Personal performance | Participant feedback | Participants reported improvements in their emotional resilience, confidence, and overall teaching efficacy.  |
| Organizational performance | Stakeholder feedback | No evidence. |
| Organizational reputation | Stakeholder feedback | No evidence.  |
| Knowledge products as performance | Participant feedback | The community seemed to provide a range of knowledge products—tools, strategies, and feedback—that participants said contributed to improvements in teaching practice, even though specific measurable outcomes were not provided. |

Evidence from interview transcripts revealed the realized value of participating in the vNTLC was primarily reflected in emotional support, increased efficiency, and enhanced teaching practices. However, the direct impact on measurable student outcomes was not evident, as data on student performance was not collected. The insights shared here are based on participants' perceptions and reflections of their experience in the community, gathered from their interview trasnscripts.

Teachers consistently reported that the community helped improve their emotional resilience and professional confidence. All participants highlighted the emotional support they received, which made them feel more grounded and capable in their roles. For instance, Elsie shared, “I feel like it impacted me as a teacher because I was always checking to see, like, ‘Oh, that would be something that I could discuss in the group,’” showing how the community provided a space to process challenges and bolster emotional well-being.

In terms of efficiency, teachers reported saving time and reducing their workload by implementing strategies and tools learned from the group. Three teachers mentioned that the community provided resources that helped streamline planning and reduce time spent on tasks like creating assessments or designing lessons. Feyre noted, “I’ve definitely become more efficient. Just learning how to manage my time better, doing things more effectively. I feel like I’ve learned to prioritize what’s most important.” This seemed to allow teachers to focus more on teaching and less on administrative tasks.

Some teachers also reported improvements in specific areas of their teaching, such as literacy strategies and classroom management. These changes were often accompanied by feelings of increased empowerment and confidence. One teacher reflected, "I just looked forward to it... Being able to talk with others and know that I'm being heard... it’s just really good experience." Another added, "Elsie giving her feedback was really amazing because seeing it from a special education teacher is awesome," emphasizing the value of diverse perspectives in refining teaching strategies.

Despite these perceived improvements in emotional support, efficiency, and teaching practices, measurable impacts on student outcomes were rarely mentioned. While a few teachers noted positive reactions from students to new strategies, these were not consistently linked to specific improvements in student achievement. As Elsie shared, "I remember that the students reacted positively to it," but there was no direct evidence of improved student performance.

In conclusion, the realized value of the teacher learning community was most evident in enhanced teacher confidence, emotional resilience, and efficiency. While these benefits seemed to contribute to teacher development and well-being, the direct impact on student outcomes was not consistently reported. The emotional and professional support offered by the community appeared to be the primary source of realized value for most participants.

***Cycle 5—Reframing Value***

The last cycle of value creation is achieved when social learning causes a reconsideration of the learning imperatives and the criteria by which success is defined (Wenger et al., 2011). This includes reframing strategies, goals, as well as values, and can also include proposing new metrics for performance that reflect the new definition of success. This redefinition of success can happen at individual, collective, and organizational levels (Wenger et al., 2011). Because this study only includes individual teachers as participants rather than administrations and districts, the redefinition of success could only potential happen at the individual level.

However, there were few instances of reframing value present in the study. Table X outlines typical indicators and data sources for measuring performance improvement (Wenger et al., 2011). While all recommended indicators are included, some lack supporting evidence due to data limitations in this study. Because of the limited data available to support reframed value, the analysis is again provided in a holistic sense.

**Table X**

*Indicators of Reframed Value and Supporting Evidence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Typical indicator | Source of data | Evidence from the study |
| Community aspirations | New learning agenda, new discourse about value, new vision | Many participants expressed a desire for a more supportive and collaborative teaching environment. The community’s shared aspirations seemed to help participants recognize the importance of emotional support, collaboration, and a collective approach to teaching. |
| Assessment | New assessment processes | Feyre's change in perspective on the role of technology, particularly AI, reflects a shift in how assessment is approached.  |
| Relationships with stakeholders | Involvement of new stakeholders | No evidence. |
| Institutional changes | New strategic directions that reflect the newunderstanding | While the desire for institutional change seemed evident in several participants' reflections, there is no direct evidence of new institutional direction.  |
| New frameworks | New social, institutional, legal or political systems | No evidence. |

Evidence from interview transcripts seems to support that participants' involvement in the community led to a few shifts in their understanding of what constitutes success in teaching, particularly in how they viewed teaching goals and values.

One significant theme that emerged in teacher interviews was the importance of emotional resilience and support. Participants highlighted that emotional well-being is crucial for creating a successful teaching environment. For example, Rina shared how the community helped her stay committed during difficult times: “I make my kids show up when they don’t want to, so I’m gonna show up.” This reflects a renewed emphasis on perseverance and emotional resilience in teaching. She also expressed the value of having a support system: “It’s nice to know that I’m not the only one.” This suggests that the emotional and social support from the community strengthened her resilience and provided reassurance. However, it is unclear whether this support changed her view of success, as her perspective on success prior to joining the community is not explicitly addressed.

The role of technology emerged as a key area of reframing. Feyre, who initially viewed AI with skepticism, now seems to see it as a tool for enhancing efficiency: “Using that is more of a tool… it’s just a tool to maximize efficiency and to save time to do what we already do well.” This change in perspective shows that Feyre now views technology as a means to support her existing teaching practices, not as a shortcut. She also highlighted how AI can tailor resources to better meet her students' needs: “I’ve made several assessments from it… tailored specifically to ideas and prompts and other things that are beneficial to my class.” This shift indicates that success in teaching is increasingly defined by the ability to use technology to provide personalized instruction.

Lastly, many participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and support structures. Nicole expressed a desire for a more collaborative teaching environment: “It’s kind of given me like, I won’t say motivation, but like, I am seeking more of a community-based school to work at.” This shows her shift toward valuing a supportive community that fosters collaboration and shared learning. Similarly, Elsie noted the benefit of learning from others’ perspectives: “Every teacher has a different ideology, and to be able to see how that is incorporated into their learning environments and hearing their perspectives is very beneficial.” This seems to highlight participants’ views of the collective nature of teaching, where success is measured not only by individual accomplishments but by the strength of the community.

The reframing of value in teaching appeared to involve a broader, more holistic understanding of success. Participants shared that the community experience helped them recognize that success is not just about academic achievement, but also about fostering emotional resilience, promoting collaborative support, and utilizing available tools to enhance teaching and planning.

**Synthesis of Findings**

The vNTLC provided a platform for professional growth through five interconnected value cycles: immediate value, potential value, applied value, realized value, and reframing value. These cycles seem to demonstrate how the community’s activities, interactions, and shared experiences contributed to teachers’ development and well-being.

Participants shared that the vNTLC provided immediate value by helping them find solutions to their classroom challenges. Evidence from session transcripts suggest that sessions allowed teachers to receive feedback, share insights, and connect with peers who understood their struggles. This exchange seemed to foster emotional relief and creative problem-solving, which teachers said enabled them to approach their work with renewed energy and fresh perspectives. The immediate value of these interactions appeared to act as a catalyst for both practical problem-solving and emotional resilience.

As teachers exchanged ideas and experiences, the vNTLC seemed to help them develop knowledge capital—valuable skills, strategies, and tools that contributed to both their practical and emotional growth. Evidence suggests that teachers refined their teaching practices and adopted new approaches, improving classroom efficiency and student engagement. This potential value seemed to lay a foundation for ongoing professional development, which teachers said helped build their confidence, self-reflect, and remain open to new learning opportunities.

The community also seemed to provide applied value, as teachers reported beginning to use the strategies and tools they gained in their classrooms. With the support of their peers, they expressed they made tangible changes in addressing students’ needs and enhancing learning experiences. Evidence from interview transcripts suggests that this cycle of applied value reflected how the community’s shared resources empowered teachers to transform some of their practices, enhancing efficiency and confidence.

The realized value of the vNTLC seemed to be evident in teachers’ reports of increased confidence, emotional resilience, and efficiency in the classroom. Teachers reported feeling more capable and empowered as they implemented new strategies and tools. The emotional support provided by the community seemed to play a significant role in strengthening their resilience, enabling them to handle classroom challenges with greater composure. Although the direct impact on student outcomes was less consistently reported, evidence suggests that the primary realized benefits for teachers were enhanced confidence and emotional well-being.

While evidence for reframing success was more limited, the community experience seemed to encourage teachers to adopt a more holistic view of success. This reframing appeared to emphasize emotional resilience, the effective use of technology to maximize efficiency and personalize learning, and the importance of collaborative support within the teaching environment.

Three common themes emerged across all five value cycles. First, teachers consistently reported enhanced teaching practices through the exchange of strategies and resources. Evidence suggests that this collaborative sharing helped them refine their methods, improve classroom efficiency, and foster greater student engagement. Second, the adoption and integration of technology appeared to play a significant role in enhancing teaching practices. Technology tools were the most commonly applied resource, and participants shared that their integration led to greater efficiency and more engaging and relevant learning experiences for students. Finally, emotional support emerged as the most recurring theme throughout all value cycles. Teachers frequently highlighted how support from their peers boosted their confidence and emotional resilience, helping them navigate the challenges of teaching with greater ease and perseverance.

In conclusion, the vNTLC seemed to facilitate a continuous cycle of value creation that supported teachers’ immediate, potential, and realized growth. By offering a space for knowledge-sharing, emotional support, and practical application, the community appears to have contributed to both the professional and personal development of its members. Evidence from the study seems to demonstrate the importance of peer-driven professional development, showing how collaboration can enhance teaching practices, reduce isolation, and promote professional growth.

**Supporting New Teachers’ Development of Literacy PCK, Self-Efficacy, and Professional Relationships through the Collaborative Community**

Research Question 2 examines how participation in a collaborative online network supports new teachers in developing literacy PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships. I used subcoding to categorize data related to these components. PCK was analyzed using a priori codes from the grand PCK rubric (Chan et al., 2019), while self-efficacy and professional relationships were analyzed based on emergent subcodes from vNTLC session and interview transcripts. The following sections delve into each component: PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

To examine how participants’ PCK developed, I applied the grand PCK rubric (Chan et al., 2019) and used a priori subcodes: curricular saliency, conceptual teaching strategies, student understanding of literacy, integration of PCK components, and pedagogical reasoning. These components were observed across the value cycles. Curricular saliency focused on selecting relevant content, conceptual teaching strategies emphasized student-centered approaches, and student understanding of literacy targeted addressing misconceptions. Integration of PCK involved adapting strategies based on student feedback, while pedagogical reasoning required justifying teaching decisions. Table X indicates each PCK rubric subcode, the frequency with which it appeared in vNTLC session transcripts, interview transcripts, and value creation narratives, along with an example quote.

**Table X**

*PCK Rubric Subcodes and Example Quotes*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PCK rubric subcode | # of times coded | Example quote |
| Knowledge and Skills Related to Conceptual Teaching Strategies | 33 | "Have you ever thought about looking up some of these poems or whatever it is you're using to see if they have someone reading it online or if there's a video with maybe some animation or something that goes with it?” (Elsie) |
| Knowledge and Skills Related to Student Understanding of Literacy | 23 | "[When I taught sequencing,] I even had somebody tell me what they do in the morning. And then I had them tell me what the sequence of that was. And that helped a little bit more too.” (Kayla) |
| Knowledge and Skills Related to Curricular Saliency | 18 | "Yeah, I would definitely pull up their I-Ready stuff and see what is making them red because it might be something that y 'all are not covering. It might be something that y 'all are not focusing on, and they're testing them on it, and that's what's bringing them down." (Rina)  |
| Integration Between PCK Components | 18 | “I often have to come up with new discussion questions and ideas to just kind of drive a conversation a little easier, because teacher guides can only do so much. But when you know your class specifically and what you think they might struggle with, or you can anticipate beforehand what kind of conversations might come up.” (Nicole)  |
| Pedagogical Reasoning | 6 | “For elementary students especially, I feel like it's very easy to find poetic devices that are visual or auditory, like alliteration and repetition. Things that when you say, ‘say that out loud,’ it's easier to identify, it's easier to create… But when we get into things, like types of figurative language, it gets a lot harder. For example, one in our book was about horses, and the teacher guide was like, so students may tell you that the horses represent different characteristics of the author's personality. And I was like, there's no way.” (Feyre) |

The analysis revealed that "Knowledge and Skills Related to Conceptual Teaching Strategies" was the most frequently discussed PCK component. Participants seemed to frequently discuss strategies focused on student engagement, student-centered teaching, and creating meaningful learning experiences. Some of these discussions also touched on literacy, which overlapped with the "Knowledge and Skills Related to Student Understanding of Literacy" category. Discussions about curricular saliency and integration between PCK components were less frequent but still present. Pedagogical reasoning, in particular, was coded much less often compared to other PCK components.

In follow-up interviews, participants noted that the group’s discussions centered more on the “how” of teaching—specifically, strategies for engaging students—rather than the “what” of teaching, such as curriculum selection or addressing misconceptions. Rina summed it up by saying, “It’s not that those things aren’t important, we just focused on how we teach rather than what we teach.” This emphasis on engagement was echoed by Elsie, who emphasized that the discussions primarily focused on methods for involving and maintaining students' engagement in lessons.

Nicole found the vNTLC sessions valuable in learning how to effectively teach the curriculum mandated by administration. She stated, “I can find those resources that I need, but just knowing how to teach it to students made it a lot more productive to me.” Although the group's discussions were largely centered around engagement strategies, Elsie acknowledged that discussing curricular materials in more detail—specifically, lesson content and structure—could have been useful, though she noted it did not seem to be the group’s primary focus.

Overall, participants seemed to feel that the curriculum, largely determined by their districts and administration, was less relevant to discuss in these sessions. The emphasis was instead on practical, engagement-driven strategies, with less attention given to curriculum selection, addressing misconceptions, and lesson structure. While the study focused on how participants developed literacy PCK, there were occasional discussions outside of literacy, such as math and assessment data. However, literacy-related conversations were more frequent, likely because I specifically guided the discussions around literacy. Without this direction, the focus on literacy may have been less prominent, as teachers generally seemed to seek emotional support rather than specific PCK.

A notable finding is that there were significantly fewer coded instances of pedagogical reasoning compared to other PCK components. Pedagogical reasoning, which involves providing a rationale for teacher decision-making and actions within the teaching context, is considered essential for the development of PCK (Chan et al., 2019). There were only a few instances of pedagogical reasoning. One example comes from Nicole, who reflected on her decision-making process when teaching literacy:

“No, I don’t feel like the reading curriculum supports teachers’ thinking at all. Like, the way that I can see, like the math book. The math book will show, like, stuff like that. That's perfect. It gives me background knowledge. It gives me student work. It like, it will give me examples and everything the reading curriculum does not. And like, some of the stuff I'm able to understand and know, but some stuff I have to like, take out of the book and search it up. Like, what is it? How can I teach this? What's the way to teach it? Because sometimes the curriculum over-explains it or under-explains it, and I'll get to teaching it, and it's like, they don’t understand what I’m saying. So, I will have to re-explain it, not using the curriculum.”

In this example, which arose during a one-on-one discussion between Nicole and me when no other teachers were present in a vNTLC session, I specifically asked Nicole for her thoughts on the reading curriculum. In her response, Nicole acknowledges the curriculum's limitations in providing adequate explanations and emphasizes the need to adjust her approach. She recognizes the importance of seeking additional resources and re-explaining concepts to ensure student understanding. This illustrates her pedagogical reasoning in addressing curriculum gaps and highlights her thoughtful decision-making to meet students' needs.

The reasons for the limited presence of pedagogical reasoning are explored further in the next chapter.

**Self-Efficacy**

The analysis of “self-efficacy” revealed several themes that influence teachers' confidence and perceived ability to succeed in their roles. These themes were captured through emergent subcodes, including stress, uncertainty, pressure from administration, self-doubt, confidence, professional growth, and self-reflection. These subcodes reflect both barriers and facilitators to teachers' self-efficacy. In the following sections, I will explore these barriers and facilitators, drawing on data from vNTLC session and interview transcripts. I will then examine the impact of participation in the community on self-efficacy, largely based on insights from participant interviews. Finally, a summary of the findings is provided.

**Barriers to Self-Efficacy.** Participants in the vNTLC sessions identified various barriers to self-efficacy, including stress, uncertainty, pressure, and self-doubt. Teachers described feeling overwhelmed, with one participant stating, “It feels like starting from square one some days.” This sense of being overwhelmed and facing burnout led to feelings of frustration, as evidenced by another participant saying, “I don’t want to do this... it’s so much.” Uncertainty also seemed to play a significant role, as teachers expressed doubts about their lesson plans and teaching expectations. For example, Elsie said in a session, “I’m struggling with lesson plans right now… it’s overwhelming.”

Lack of support within the school environment seemed to be another barrier. Nicole expressed frustration as a first-year teacher, saying, “Having a team that you can’t talk to and ask for help is so frustrating.” Feyre also noted that, despite seeing improvements in her students’ data, discussing it with parents left her feeling “scared of the data,” reflecting a lack of confidence in handling the pressure of relaying student data to parents in an effective way. Additionally, the multifaceted roles that teachers often take on—such as nurse, counselor, parent, and teacher—seemed to add to the strain, with one participant remarking, “I can only do so much by myself.”

**Facilitators to Self-Efficacy.** Despite these challenges, participants identified several facilitators that helped boost their self-efficacy, particularly through adaptation in teaching practices, professional growth, and self-reflection. Teachers mentioned that small changes, like organizing learning targets on the board, contributed to a sense of professional growth: “It’s getting there... it’s still not perfect, but it’s a lot easier to manage than when I first started out.”

Participants also found confidence in their students' progress. Rina highlighted one student’s growth of 60 points between the fall and winter tests, which she saw as a major accomplishment. Nicole expressed excitement about her evolving teaching methods, saying, “I already know a bunch of things I want to do starting in August next year to get them ready,” signaling growth in her planning and preparedness.

**Impact of Community Support.** Participation in the vNTLC community seemed to have a notable impact on teachers' self-efficacy, particularly in terms of confidence and their ability to navigate classroom challenges. Participants mentioned that emotional support and the sharing of practical strategies within the group were central to fostering a sense of empowerment.

Evidence from the interview transcripts seems to support that a key factor in the development of self-efficacy was the emotional support teachers received from the community. Many participants highlighted the value of sharing experiences with others facing similar challenges. This mutual understanding seemed to help alleviate feelings of isolation and stress. For example, Rina shared, “Sometimes I feel like I’m drowning and not doing well. And then I talk to somebody else and they’re also drowning. And I’m like, okay, well, it’s not just me.” It seems that this sense of solidarity provided reassurance and helped teachers feel less overwhelmed.

Similarly, Elsie described how the community’s emotional support boosted her overall confidence. She explained, “It was an overall confidence boost to me,” noting how the opportunity to reflect on her practice with others helped her feel more capable in her role. Data also seems to support that this supportive environment allowed participants to explore their teaching challenges, making them feel validated and understood.

In addition to emotional support, teachers aid the exchange of practical strategies played a critical role in building their confidence. Nicole reflected on how the feedback and strategies shared by others helped her feel more competent in her role. She initially felt uncertain, saying, “At first I was like, I don’t really know what I’m doing, but now I’m like, yeah, I got it a lot better.” She said the guidance she received, particularly regarding her learning targets, gave her a sense of direction and reassurance in her teaching practice. Nicole also emphasized the importance of the strategies she gained from the group, stating, “Just being able to share my experience with other teachers... getting more feedback and getting more strategies.” She expressed that exchanges within the group made her feel more confident in her ability to implement new methods and manage her classroom.

Evidence from the transcripts also supports that the opportunity for self-reflection was another important aspect of the community’s impact. Teachers said they appreciated the space to reflect on their practices, identify areas of improvement, and receive feedback. Elsie highlighted how this process allowed her to evaluate her role and teaching methods: “It allowed me again to self-reflect on what it is I'm doing, how I'm presenting myself, how am I working with the community inside my school and outside the administrators?” This reflective practice seemed to help teachers assess their strengths and areas for growth, which they said further contributed to their sense of self-efficacy.

**Summary.** The combination of emotional support, practical strategies, and opportunities for self-reflection seemed to contribute to teachers’ self-efficacy. Through shared experiences, feedback, and the exchange of teaching strategies, participants said they gained confidence in their teaching abilities and felt better equipped to handle classroom challenges. This collective support seemed to help teachers feel more capable and empowered in their roles, fostering a stronger sense of self-efficacy.

**Professional Relationships**

Teachers in the vNTLC consistently identified relationships with other educators as one of the most valuable aspects of joining the community. Evidence from session and interview transcripts supports that these relationships provided emotional support, facilitated collaborative learning, and allowed for flexible, informal professional interactions. These benefits were expressed across three key themes: emotional support and reassurance, collaborative learning and professional development, and flexibility and informality.

 **Emotional Support and Reassurance.** Evidence from the sessions and interviews suggests the vNTLC served as a source of emotional support, offering new teachers reassurance as they navigated the challenges of their first few years. Teachers consistently said they found comfort in knowing they were not alone in their struggles. Feyre, for example, described the value of having a “sounding board and accountability partners,” sharing that it was reassuring to connect with others who understood the challenges she faced. She said this sense of solidarity helped her overcome feelings of isolation. Similarly, Rina said she appreciated the “no hate zone” environment of the community, where teachers could discuss difficulties without fear of judgment. She emphasized the importance of a safe space for honest, supportive conversations.

Nicole echoed these sentiments, finding solace in hearing from peers who were experiencing similar challenges. She shared, “Hearing it from newer teachers, knowing that they are experiencing the same thing... is very beneficial.” This shared understanding helped her feel more confident and less isolated in her role. Kayla, although unable to participate due to her busy schedule, said she recognized the value of such emotional support. She reflected on the lack of a safe space at her school and said she saw the vNTLC as a potential resource for managing stress and venting frustrations.

**Collaborative Learning and Professional Development.** Data also suggests the vNTLC fostered a collaborative environment where teachers exchanged ideas, shared strategies, and received feedback. Rina said she appreciated the diverse perspectives offered by teachers from various backgrounds, especially those from special education. She noted, “It was nice having that other insight from multiple perspectives,” which helped refine her literacy strategies and broaden her teaching approach. Similarly, Nicole said she valued the opportunity to connect with teachers outside her immediate school system, gaining new insights and strategies that were not available locally.

Elsie found the community’s collaborative nature particularly beneficial, noting that hearing different teaching ideologies and perspectives enriched her own professional growth. She stated, “Every teacher has a different ideology, and being able to see how that is incorporated into their learning environments... has been very beneficial.” She said these exchanges of ideas and strategies contributed to her development as a teacher.

**Flexibility and Informality in Professional Relationships.** It seemed that one of the most appreciated aspects of the vNTLC was its flexibility and informality, which participants said allowed for more natural and spontaneous interactions. Teachers like Feyre valued the informal nature of the community, which seemed to allow for more relaxed, unstructured conversations.

Kayla, despite her inability to participate, expressed a preference for the informal and on-demand nature of the vNTLC. She noted that the rigid structure of formal meetings, like PLCs, felt overwhelming, and the flexibility of the vNTLC would have been more manageable. She explained, “It would be a lot easier... because that way we can go in. It’s not necessarily a set time.” This preference seems to highlight the appeal of flexible, online communities that allow teachers to engage and connect according to their own schedules.

Other teachers also mentioned the differences between the vNTLC and the PLCs in which they participate at their schools. In general, they said that while PLCs are “focused a lot on curriculum and data,” there may be less freedom to express concerns or share new ideas. Karen said, “Sometimes I walk in PLC and I’m like, I just need to tell somebody about my day for 10 minutes. I need to tell y’all what’s going on in my classroom, and we don’t have time for that.” Generally, they expressed that the informal space for sharing ideas and frustrations was less prevalent in their school PLCs and a key component of the vNTLC.

**Summary.** Evidence from the sessions and interviews suggests the professional relationships formed within the vNTLC were centered around emotional support, collaborative learning, and flexibility. Teachers said they valued the reassurance and solidarity they gained from their peers, particularly in the emotionally demanding early stages of their careers. The community's collaborative nature seemed to provide opportunities to exchange strategies and perspectives, enhancing teachers' professional development. Additionally, teachers said the informal and flexible format allowed for connections that suited their individual needs, offering both emotional support and opportunities for professional growth. Teachers generally felt that the relationships they formed in the vNTLC played a crucial role in helping them navigate the complexities of their first years of teaching.

**Synthesis of Findings**

All teachers who participated in the vNTLC reported that it fostered emotional support, boosted self-efficacy, and promoted professional relationships. Teachers consistently highlighted the reassurance they gained from connecting with peers who shared similar challenges. Both session and interview data suggest that this emotional solidarity helped alleviate feelings of isolation and stress, which most participants noted as common in their teaching experiences. Participants generally felt the community's informal and flexible structure further facilitated natural, supportive interactions, offering a safe space to share frustrations and seek advice without the constraints of formal systems, like PLCs.

Within the vNTLC, teachers exchanged teaching strategies and received practical feedback, which may have contributed to the development of their PCK. Discussions primarily focused on the “how” of teaching—particularly strategies for engaging students and addressing literacy concepts—while the “what” of teaching, such as curriculum selection and integration, received less attention. Instances of pedagogical reasoning were also limited. However, the focus on student-centered strategies seemed to provide new teachers with actionable methods to enhance their classroom practices. Many participants shared examples of adapting their approaches based on insights from diverse perspectives.

Participants said the vNTLC also played a role in boosting their self-efficacy. Through opportunities for self-reflection and the exchange of experiences, teachers said they gained confidence in their abilities to manage classroom challenges and gained a stronger sense of control over their practices. The emotional support and shared strategies cultivated in the community seemed to help teachers feel more capable and equipped to navigate the complexities of their roles.

Several recurring themes emerged across all three areas. Emotional support appeared central in creating a positive environment where teachers felt safe to share, reflect, and grow. In both PCK and self-efficacy, emotional support was seen as essential for helping teachers feel confident and valued. In professional relationships, teachers said emotional support established a foundation of trust and reassurance, making collaboration and growth more feasible.

Collaboration and shared learning were also key themes. In PCK, teachers exchanged strategies, while in self-efficacy, they reported that shared experiences and feedback boosted confidence. Evidence suggests that professional relationships, built on collaboration, provided ongoing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and support each other’s development.

Reflection and continuous development emerged as another common theme. In PCK, teachers continuously reported refining their strategies based on reflection, ensuring that their teaching was always improving. In self-efficacy, teachers said opportunities for reflection allowed them to gain insight into their practices, boosting their confidence. Professional relationships also provided spaces for reflective conversations, contributing to teachers' ongoing professional growth.

Finally, practical support seemed to play an essential role in all three areas. Teachers emphasized the importance of having concrete, immediately applicable strategies, whether in PCK or self-efficacy. In professional relationships, practical support was often shared informally, helping teachers solve real-time challenges.

Overall, evidence suggests the vNTLC contributed to teachers' PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships by offering emotional reassurance and collaborative learning opportunities. Participants said its flexible, informal structure facilitated meaningful connections and support, making it a valuable resource for teachers seeking to develop their skills, build confidence, and foster professional relationships. Recurring themes suggest that PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships are interconnected, with emotional support, collaboration, reflection, and practical strategies emerging as foundational elements.

**Identifying Common Challenges within the Community**

Research Question 3 asks: What challenges do teachers raise in their discussions during community meetings, and how do these challenges relate to literacy instruction? This question was added during data collection after noticing recurring mentions of common challenges among participants. To highlight these experiences, I incorporated this research question as part of my reflexive process. I present two distinct methods of data analysis: coding and word cloud generation. Both methods are described below, followed by an overall analysis of the data and a summary.

**Emergent Coding**

To answer Research Question 3, I first coded the vNTLC transcripts for mentions of “challenges.” I then used emergent subcoding to identify key themes. I began by reviewing the transcripts and highlighting instances where participants specifically mentioned challenges, such as responding to the prompt, “What challenges have you faced in your classroom this week?” These moments were summarized and assigned conceptual codes, such as "classroom management" or "planning."

Once I completed an initial round of coding, I refined and adjusted the subcodes as needed. For example, I combined the codes for “student behavior” and “student engagement” into a single subcode, “classroom management,” which encompassed issues like student conflicts, restlessness, talking at inopportune times, and attention span challenges. Similarly, I split the “planning” code into three distinct subcodes: general planning, differentiation, and organization, based on emerging patterns in the data.

After applying the refined subcodes to the session transcripts, I maintained a detailed spreadsheet to track each code and the corresponding instances. This allowed for continuous refinement, ensuring that the subcodes remained aligned with the evolving themes. I chose not to include other data sources, such as value creation narratives or interview transcripts, in the analysis, focusing specifically on the session transcripts. These provided authentic insights into the conversations and challenges most relevant to the teachers, typically shared with minimal prompting or interference.

Table X presents each code derived from the emergent coding process, along with its definition from the codebook, the frequency with which it appeared, and an example of the code.

**Table X**

*Challenge Subcodes, Frequency, and Examples*

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Code | Definition | # of times coded | # of vNTLC sessions | Example |
| Overwhelm/stress | The emotional and mental strain educators experience, including feeling overloaded, balancing multiple roles, and dealing with tight deadlines. | 20 | 8 | “I'm tired. I have no words. They just don't come to me. I’m just going through the motions at this point.” |
| Classroom management/challenging student behaviors | Difficulties in maintaining a productive and orderly classroom, managing disruptive behaviors, and keeping students engaged.Bottom of Form | 12 | 7 | “I have a very rowdy class, they interrupt me or break into jokes… it's hard to get them to be still and productive.”  |
| PCK | The educator’s ability to teach specific subject matter effectively, including difficulties in presenting content and adapting materials.Bottom of Form | 14 | 5 | “But when we get into figurative language… I was like, there’s no way this [teacher guide] works for students.”  |
| Administrative tasks | The challenges educators face in lesson and curriculum planning, including time and frustration in preparing for whole-group instruction.Bottom of Form | 10 | 5 | “My hardest thing is figuring out makeup work... finding time without taking away from instruction is difficult.” |
| General planning | The challenges educators face in lesson and curriculum planning, including time and frustration in preparing for whole-group instruction.Bottom of Form | 8 | 5 | “It shouldn't take three hours to do a lesson plan. It’s a lot.” |
| Standardized testing and data | The challenges surrounding standardized testing, progress assessments, and how data impacts teaching and student learning. | 8 | 5 | “Test after test... I feel like I'm not getting time with my kids on their actual goals.” |
| Differentiation in planning | The difficulty of planning lessons for students with varying academic levels and needs. Includes adapting for multiple groups and providing individualized support. Bottom of Form | 7 | 5 | “I’ve got eight different groups with three different math levels... there’s just so much of it.” |
| Professional relationships | Frustrations in collaborating with colleagues, including team dynamics, lack of support, and unproductive professional development experiences. Bottom of Form | 8 | 4 | “As a first-year teacher, it’s frustrating... I feel like I can’t get help. I need guidance and shared resources to avoid burnout.” |
| Parent partnerships | The difficulties in establishing communication and collaboration with parents, addressing concerns, and involving them in student progress. Bottom of Form | 7 | 4 | “I need mom to be on my side... something is happening with her child’s progress.” |
| Academic gaps/ meeting students’ needs | Challenges in addressing academic gaps and providing appropriate interventions for students who are not meeting grade-level expectations.  | 6 | 5 | “There’s one student failing, and they’re not holding her back... I can help as much as I can, but I don’t know… she’s not ready to go to fourth grade.” |
| School structure | Issues related to the structure of the school day, such as scheduling and the lack of prep time before classes begin. | 5 | 3 | “Our kids come straight from the car or bus to the classroom with no gap for prep time... it's difficult.” |
| Organizational planning | The challenges of managing classroom materials, student work, and balancing time for makeup assignments and regular instruction. | 4 | 4 | “How do y’all keep up with lesson plans? I’m struggling with where to put them... having to flip through everything.” |

***Analysis of Subcoding***

The data revealed several key challenges faced by educators across multiple domains. Overwhelm and stress emerged as the most frequently coded issue, with participants frequently expressing feelings of mental and emotional strain due to the pressures of their roles. Many educators described being overloaded with tasks, often citing a sense of exhaustion and the emotional toll of trying to balance teaching, testing, and administrative responsibilities.

Classroom management and handling challenging student behaviors were also prominent concerns. Educators highlighted difficulties in maintaining a productive classroom environment, with many describing how disruptive behaviors, such as students interrupting lessons or not staying focused, made it hard to keep the class on task. This issue was especially prevalent in classrooms with students who had varying levels of engagement and attention.

Other common themes included struggles with general planning and differentiation in planning. Educators noted the significant amount of time required to plan lessons, with some expressing frustration over the complexity of catering to diverse student needs. The challenges of managing multiple student groups with different academic levels and learning needs were also frequently mentioned.

PCK was highly coded, most likely because I directed teachers to those conversations. I would frequently prompt teachers with things such as, “What is your upcoming literacy standard?” or “Have you noticed any issues when trying to teach literacy lately?”, which may have led to an inflated code for PCK. However, teachers did bring up their own challenges with PCK, even in literacy, occasionally.

Additionally, administrative tasks such as managing makeup work, attending meetings, and balancing other non-teaching responsibilities were cited as significant stressors. Educators expressed frustration with the administrative burden, particularly in finding time to complete these tasks without compromising instructional time.

Parent partnerships and communication with families were another area of concern, with some educators reporting difficulties in reaching parents and ensuring that they were actively involved in supporting student progress. Standardized testing was also frequently mentioned, with many participants expressing frustration over the amount of testing and its impact on instructional time.

Finally, the challenges of professional relationships and collaboration with colleagues were noted, particularly by newer educators who felt they lacked support and guidance from their teams. School structure also emerged as a concern, particularly regarding the lack of preparation time before the school day began, which made it difficult for teachers to organize and plan for their classes effectively.

**Word Cloud**

A word cloud visually represents word frequency, highlighting the most frequently used terms in a dataset. It is increasingly used to identify the focus of written material (Atenstaedt, 2012). A word cloud displays words, often in tags, with attributes like size, weight, or color reflecting features such as frequency (Havley & Keane, 2007). Words that appear most frequently are presented in varying sizes and colors (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014). While word clouds have limitations, such as lack of context and details about the text, they can serve as a quick, initial visualization tool (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014).

Several researchers have used word clouds for data representation and analysis (e.g., Stanca et al., 2023; Turki & Roy, 2022; Vilela et al., 2020). My approach aligns more closely with Robinette (2016), who created a “code cloud” (p. 81) that evolved as she added codes throughout the study. For both Robinette (2016) and myself, the cloud serves more as an interesting data point rather than a primary source of analysis.

To visualize the most frequently discussed challenges, I created a word cloud using my qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. I inputted all transcripts, including vNTLC and interview transcripts, into NVivo for coding, excluding the value creation narratives completed by participants. NVivo generates word clouds by analyzing word frequency within a set of sources. I selected “Explore” then “Word Frequency” in the program, adjusting settings to focus solely on words from the “challenges” code. I also opted to include stemmed words (e.g., “talking”).

 I eliminated stop words in several ways. NVivo automatically excludes a predefined list of stop words, which I expanded to include terms like “like,” “got,” and “then.” Additionally, I filtered out words shorter than three letters, such as “as” and “a,” and asked NVivo to display only the top 100 most frequent words. After running the query, I reviewed the list and removed any additional stop words (e.g., “let,” “gonna,” “bit”). Once finalizing the list in the “Summary” tab, I clicked the “Word Cloud” tab to generate the final product, shown in Figure X. The colors were automatically selected by NVivo and do not carry specific meaning.

**Figure X**

*Challenge Word Cloud*



***Analysis of Word Cloud***

The most frequently used words included “testing,” “plan,” “different,” “work,” “reading,” “time,” “parents,” “groups,” “lesson,” and “targets.” These align with the emergent codes from the challenge subcoding, particularly *standardized testing and data*, *differentiation in planning*, *PCK*, and *parent partnerships*.

Although *overwhelm/stress* was the most commonly coded subcode, it didn’t appear in the word cloud due to the variety of expressions teachers used to describe stress. Phrases like “I’m stressed,” “I’m overwhelmed,” “it’s a lot,” “I’m struggling,” “I’m so tired” were common, leading to different terms being used in the data. However, the word cloud did reflect stress through terms like “help,” “stress,” “chaotic,” “struggle,” “confused,” “juggle,” and “frustrating,” indicating teachers' frequent mentions of feeling overwhelmed by having too much on their plates, feeling behind, or not knowing what to do.

Teachers often discussed challenges related to testing, particularly the time it takes away from actual teaching. They expressed frustration with the time spent on assessments, noting they “never get to be in the classroom, teaching.” Teachers also highlighted difficulties in communicating testing data to parents, especially the confusing I-Ready reports. Some, like Feyre, detailed the extensive time spent explaining the reports to parents in an effort to avoid unnecessary follow-up questions.

The ongoing cycle of testing and data collection, including standardized tests and diagnostic assessments, was frequently cited as a disruptive force. Testing consumed valuable instructional time, leaving limited opportunities for actual teaching. Teachers also faced the pressure of ensuring that absent students caught up, further adding to their workload.

Another common challenge was planning for diverse groups of students, including those requiring interventions or small-group support. Teachers struggled to find time to effectively pull these groups while still conducting whole-group lessons. Some teachers managed multiple groups for different subjects, such as “two groups for math and three groups for reading,” along with Tier 2 interventions. This required creating individualized plans and learning targets for each group, which was both time-consuming and overwhelming. The increased administrative workload, such as lesson planning and organizing activities for various levels, left many teachers feeling stretched thin. The constant need to adjust lessons to meet the needs of different groups within limited time was a frequent point of frustration.

Classroom management also emerged in the word cloud, with terms like “engaging,” “behavior,” “issues,” and “talk.” Several teachers identified maintaining students' attention as a significant challenge, with many classrooms dealing with highly talkative or disruptive students. Teachers often needed to redirect students or implement consequences to manage behavior, further contributing to classroom stress.

Lastly, engagement, particularly in reading, was a concern. Despite efforts to make lessons interactive and engaging, teachers struggled to maintain student interest, especially when using traditional methods or the mandated CKLA curriculum. This challenge was particularly evident in reading lessons, where teachers felt restricted in their ability to make content dynamic and captivating for students.

**Synthesis of Findings**

Research Question 3 explores the challenges teachers raise during community meetings and how these relate to literacy instruction. Through a combination of coding and word cloud analysis, several key challenges were identified, revealing how they impact teaching practices, particularly in literacy.

The most frequently discussed challenges revolved around *overwhelm/stress*, *classroom management*, *differentiation in planning*, and *standardized testing and data*. Teachers expressed significant stress, often feeling overloaded by the demands of balancing instruction, administrative duties, and testing. Many educators noted that stress wasn’t always expressed directly using the word “stress”; instead, they used varied phrases like “I’m struggling” or “I’m tired,” which still reflected underlying feelings of being overwhelmed. This emotional strain was closely tied to the pressures of managing diverse classroom needs and meeting testing expectations.

Classroom management emerged as a significant concern, with teachers struggling to maintain control and keep students engaged. Disruptive behaviors, such as interruptions and lack of focus, made it difficult to deliver effective lessons. Teachers also faced challenges related to *differentiation in planning*, where they had to create individualized plans for different student groups, such as small groups for intervention or varying academic levels. The time and effort required for this type of planning was overwhelming, especially when trying to maintain whole-group instruction.

The issue of *standardized testing and data* was frequently raised, particularly regarding the time taken away from actual teaching. Teachers expressed frustration over the amount of time spent on assessments, which detracted from their ability to focus on literacy instruction. Additionally, the complexity of testing data, such as I-Ready reports, posed challenges in communication with parents, further contributing to the administrative burden. Teachers often had to invest extra time explaining these reports to ensure parents understood their child’s progress.

Issues around engagement in literacy instruction were evident, with teachers finding it difficult to maintain students' interest in reading, particularly when relying on traditional or mandated curricula like CKLA. Despite efforts to make lessons more engaging, teachers struggled to connect with students and keep them motivated.

In conclusion, the challenges raised by teachers in community meetings are interwoven with the demands of literacy instruction. Evidence from session and interview transcripts suggest that teachers are often caught in a cycle of stress, administrative tasks, and testing pressures that make it harder to provide dynamic, engaging, and individualized literacy instruction. Addressing these challenges could help alleviate the stress educators face and improve literacy outcomes for students.

**Emerging Themes Across Findings**

Findings from this study highlight the vNTLC’s influence on teachers’ professional growth, emotional well-being, and instructional practices.

For Research Question 1, which examined the types of value created through the vNTLC, findings suggest that teachers most frequently reported immediate and potential value, while applied, realized, and reframing value were less common. Three recurring themes emerged across all value cycles: enhanced teaching practices through shared strategies, technology integration to improve efficiency and student engagement, and emotional support from peers.

For Research Question 2, which explored how participation in the vNTLC supports new teachers in developing literacy PCK, self-efficacy, and professional relationships, findings indicate that discussions primarily focused on teaching strategies (“how” to teach) rather than content or pedagogical reasoning (“what” to teach). Teachers gained confidence through shared experiences, practical strategies, and self-reflection. Additionally, peer relationships were consistently identified as one of the most valuable aspects of the vNTLC, providing emotional support, collaborative learning opportunities, and flexible, informal professional interactions.

For Research Question 3, which examined the challenges teachers raised during community meetings and their connection to literacy instruction, findings reveal that teachers struggled with stress, classroom management, differentiation, and standardized testing pressures. Many also found it difficult to maintain student engagement in literacy instruction, particularly when using traditional or mandated curricula such as CKLA. Teachers frequently linked these broader challenges to their experiences in literacy instruction.

These findings illustrate the interplay between professional challenges, support systems, and instructional outcomes, which can be consolidated into three overarching themes:

1. Teachers in the vNTLC face significant professional challenges—including stress, classroom management issues, differentiation demands, and standardized testing pressures—that are especially pronounced in literacy instruction, where traditional curricula often hinder student engagement.
2. The vNTLC fostered strong peer support, providing emotional encouragement, practical strategies, and collaborative learning that enhance confidence and self-efficacy.
3. Participation in the vNTLC primarily led to immediate instructional benefits, such as actionable strategies and technology integration.

**Summary of Results**

The findings from this study highlight the role of the vNTLC in supporting new teachers through value creation, professional development, self-efficacy, and shared experiences. Evidence from the study suggests participation in the vNTLC provided value to participants through enhanced practical teaching practices and enhanced confidence and emotional support.

Evidence suggests the vNTLC facilitated cycles of value creation, where teachers reported gaining practical solutions to challenges, receiving emotional support, and sharing strategies. According to participants, this helped alleviate isolation and stress, encouraging creative problem-solving and boosting confidence. Teachers shared ways they applied these new strategies to their classrooms, leading to improvements in both teaching practices and emotional resilience, contributing to their ongoing professional development.

In terms of PCK, vNTLC discussions primarily emphasized teaching strategies (“how” to teach) rather than pedagogical reasoning or curricular integration (“what” to teach). While teachers reported that this focus equipped them with tools to navigate instruction and engage students, discussions lacked deeper exploration of content knowledge and pedagogy.

Evidence suggests a key strength of the vNTLC was its ability to foster professional relationships. Teachers consistently valued the informal and flexible structure, which allowed them to connect with peers facing similar challenges. These collaborative interactions provided emotional reassurance, reduced feelings of isolation, and bolstered self-efficacy.

However, despite these benefits, teachers faced persistent professional challenges, particularly stress, classroom management, differentiation, and standardized testing pressures. These challenges were especially pronounced in literacy instruction, where traditional curricula—such as CKLA—were often seen as limiting student engagement. While evidence suggests the vNTLC helped teachers navigate some of these difficulties by sharing strategies and providing peer support, external pressures continued to impact their instructional practices.

Overall, findings suggest that the vNTLC provided valuable emotional support, enhanced self-efficacy, and contributed to professional growth. By emphasizing practical teaching strategies and peer collaboration, teachers reported that the community empowered them to improve their practices. However, ongoing challenges such as stress, classroom management, and testing pressures sometimes appeared to hinder vNTLC discussions, limiting the depth of pedagogical conversations.