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The Effects Of Teachers' Self-Efficacy & A Positive Learning Environment On Marginal Students In Mainstream High School Settings

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THE EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY & A POSITIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT ON MARGINAL STUDENTS
IN MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty

of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

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2016

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Abstract

Research from data and anecdotal research from high school students informs us that many traditional high schools are not able to meet the academic, as well as the social and emotional needs of all students, particularly marginal students. The purpose of this research study was to determine how high schools may support marginal students in achieving success by the implementation of teacher self-efficacy and a positive classroom environment. In addition, the research will articulate the critical role of teachers and how their impact shapes the future of their students. The research questions posed will identify what interventions and strategies teachers may implement to establish a positive classroom environment and whether or not a positive classroom environment will keep most marginal students in a traditional high school setting. The literature review included the research and application of the following relevant themes associated with supporting the needs of marginal students: 1) a positive learning environment, 2) the teacher's role, 3) teacher efficacy, 4) collective efficacy, 5) Responsive Classroom and 6) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The conceptual framework of this study was crafted by Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which is based upon the theory that learning occurs from observing others. Social Cognitive Theory describes learning as being shaped by three factors, Cognitive (personal), Environmental and Behavioral. These three factors complement one another to create balance. I used both qualitative and quantitative

research designs. The first method of gathering data was in the form of a teacher efficacy survey (quantitative), which was used to determine areas of strength in teacher efficacy as well as areas needing additional support in efficacy. The second method of gathering data was observing five video-taped classrooms (qualitative). The specific purpose of the classroom observations was to closely and accurately view and document the interactions between the teacher and students to gather evidence of a positive classroom environment. Results from the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey revealed 66% of the teachers responding (16:39) indicating a sense of self-efficacy, believing they have *some influence*, *quite a bit* of influence or *a great deal* of influence. Survey results also revealed that teachers who took the survey believe they are able to control their classroom management and instruction better than engaging with students and/or keeping students engaged. The classroom observations provided extensive evidence on characteristics that define a positive classroom environment. These include, but are not limited to: 1) teachers speaking in a calm tone, 2) using positive language, 3) being willing to work longer with struggling students, 4) providing explicit instructions, and 5) evidence of enjoying being with their students, such as smiling and laughing. Conclusions of the research study suggest that communication with parents may create anxiety for teachers. In addition, most teachers who took the survey display some teacher efficacy and the classroom observations validate that teacher-efficacy and positive classrooms will meet the academic, social and behavioral needs of most students. I recommend: 1) colleges offer teacher-efficacy in their educational courses, 2) schools consider the idea of a full implementation of Collective Efficacy school wide, 3) high schools explore the possibility of embedding the philosophy of the Responsive Classroom model, and 4) schools identify characteristics of teacher-efficacy and a positive classroom

environment, both of which provide evidence of improving and increasing the success of marginal students and keeping the students in a traditional high school.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students identified as at-risk or marginal in American public schools share common behaviors that limit learning opportunities. They often bounce from school to school, have low attendance beginning as early as the 3rd grade, and have behavioral issues that often result in suspensions and after school detentions. Marginal students have not developed basic learning skills, which may limit academic and behavioral success (Balfanz and Fox, 2009; Ellis, 2015). The data and ongoing evidence suggests that many high schools are unable to meet the needs of marginal students and therefore are unable to keep these students enrolled in high school. Research suggests that schools may not be doing enough to support marginal students. Students report their high school had not prepared them for college and career plans following high school (Leal, 2015; Buchanan and Fanelli, 2015) and lack of preparation often results in not remaining in school. The literature concurs that schools and teachers may be able to provide a positive learning environment, support students to remain enrolled in mainstream high school settings through intentional promoting of self-efficacy, provide teacher praise and foster student creativity, which contributes to increase in academic, social and behavioral success.

The school dropout status creates a significant barrier to the student who is not successful in school, as well as the economy. Dropouts are at a disadvantage in not being able to secure stable and meaningful jobs, which often results in a life of poverty and dependence on public assistance (Chidamber, 2013; Reyna, 2011). Students who do not complete their high school career tend to be single parents who will typically have children that are not successful in school. They are also usually male, minority, living in an urban environment and are from low socio-

economic families, as well as unstable home lives (Ellis, 2015; Renya, 2011; Swanson, 2009; U.S. DOE, 2015; Building a Grad Nation, 2015). The literature confirms and will identify non-cognitive approaches to support students by establishing a positive learning environment. In addition, the research is supported by the work of Albert Bandura and The Social Cognitive Theory, including self-efficacy. The *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* survey provides a framework of teacher attitudes and understanding of self-efficacy. Teacher observations conducted throughout the research further the evidence by identifying specific methods and tools experienced teachers apply in their classrooms to connect with marginal students and provide a positive learning environment.

Statement of the Problem

The research about high school graduation and ongoing patterns of dropout suggest that many high school students have not acquired the academic skills to complete high school. Research suggests that mainstream high schools do not work for many students and possibly educators can do more. High school teachers may have good intentions of teaching students to acquire responsibility by providing more autonomy with less structure and accountability. However, research indicates that less adult monitoring results in students giving less effort (Rosengranz, de la Torre, Stevens and Allensworth, 2014; Miles and Ferris, 2015).

Students report that the lack of accountability and structure makes it easier to skip school and not complete their homework and class assignments. High school teachers are less likely to maintain a classroom environment in which students are motivated to do their work based upon a positive teacher and student relationship. High school teachers are less likely to praise students for their efforts and instead, put the responsibility of learning on the students with little support. A 9th grade student comments, “teachers in eighth grade pushed us more . . . on us to do our

work . . . [now], they're like 'You guys don't want to do it, then it's up to you guys'
(Rosengranz et al., 2014, p. 7).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to identify strategies that teachers may develop and implement to support marginal students who struggle to stay enrolled in the mainstream school setting. The research is intended to articulate the critical role that educators play in reducing high school student retention. Self-efficacy, praise, modeling respect and clear and concise communication will be researched and possibly endorsed as necessary interventions to provide a foundation that will contribute to a positive learning environment. The research examines classroom methods in which educators establish and foster a positive learning environment.

Research Questions

The over arching questions for this research problem are based on how educators and schools may recognize the critical role they must play to keep marginal students engaged and enrolled in mainstream high school:

What interventions and strategies may be implemented by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment? How will a positive classroom-learning environment respond to the needs of marginal students so that most students remain in a mainstream high school setting?

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this research is based upon the works of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory and the teacher administered survey, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Ozkal, 2014; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk, 2001). Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura includes an individual's beliefs about their capabilities and provides "the foundation for human motivation,

well-being, and personal accomplishment” (Pajares, 2002, p. 4). Self-efficacy is a product of Bandura’s social cognitive theory and complements the components that provide teachers with the skill set to motivate, inspire and develop successful learners by creating an environment that will support most high school students. Figure 2 represents Bandura’s social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory is based upon three reciprocal factors: “a) personal factors b) behavior, and c) environmental influences” (Dai and Sternberg, 2004, p. 325). Appendix A represents the *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). The *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* is administered to determine areas in which teachers need additional support.

Assumptions

The assumptions in this research are based upon the theory that the development of a positive classroom-learning environment will meet the needs of marginal high school students and encourage high school students to remain in the mainstream high school setting. The development of a positive learning environment is solely based upon the attitude, interest and commitment from teachers. Teachers must be willing to apply and implement strategies, such as sincere praise, positive behavior and fostering creativity in their students. My personal bias is that many educators may think they are providing a positive learning environment. Many teachers are rigid and maintain a teacher-centered classroom, dismissing the opinions of students, thinking this approach is teaching students to be responsible and preparing them for life beyond high school.

Teachers are often guilty of providing more resources and opportunities to the higher-level students, in addition to placing the more experienced and qualified teachers with the academically gifted students. The experienced teachers may be more likely to provide a positive

learning environment for their students. This idea suggests inequity amongst classrooms in which students that need the resources and more qualified teachers, may actually be placed in classrooms in which teachers may not have developed the skills and experience to provide a positive learning environment.

Limitations of the study include the selection of teachers who demonstrate a positive learning environment and are agreeable to allow a videotaped classroom observation, followed by an interview. My position in the school as principal may have some teachers either feeling coerced into participating or fearing the survey process may become evaluative.

Rationale & Significance

There are many reasons why some high school students often lack the academic skills and endurance to demonstrate academic success. Many schools, particularly high schools, maintain the attitude that in preparing students for the real world, the approach is ultimately up to the student to learn. High school teachers tend to provide a more hands off approach, which may be perceived as lack of concern for the success of students, “I taught it, they didn’t learn, I did my job” (Anonymous, 2014). The relaxed rules and larger classrooms may create less structure and more freedom for students, giving students the impression that not attending school or doing classwork is a choice rather than an obligation (Rosenkranz et al., 2014).

In addition, research suggests that teachers at the lower grade levels most often provide a more positive learning environment, particularly with the implementation of a Responsive Classroom model, which is used by “several thousand schools across the U.S. and Canada . . . more than 70,000 teachers per year receive [the] newsletter and over 6,000 teachers per year attend a weeklong training . . . so it’s safe to say that hundreds of thousands of students per year are in some way impacted by Responsive Classrooms ideas and methodology” (Mercier, Blog

Post, 2015). The Responsive Classroom model is only offered at the elementary level, which maintains the theory that some high school teachers may not know how to provide a positive learning environment for students. Teachers who apply the philosophy of a Responsive Classroom imbed the following practices into their daily instruction: establish clear and concise communication and feedback, practice intentional positive language, model respect, an awareness of meeting students social and emotional needs, choosing the right tone of voice and a sensitivity to student needs (Jones, 2015; Meredith, 2014; Curby, Rimm-Kaufman and Abry, 2013; Wood and Freeman-Loftis, 2012), resulting in a “noticeably calmer, friendlier, kinder [environment] more conducive to learning” (Jones, 2015, p. 2), an improvement “in student engagement, decreases [in] behavior problems, . . . more high quality teaching” (Meredith, 2014, p. 2), and “an overall tone of safety and caring” (Wood & Freeman-Loftis, 2012).

Implementing and applying the principles and strategies of a Responsive Classroom model may represent a more elementary approach to teaching children, also suggesting why the Responsive Classroom model was designed for elementary children. For example, the idea of modeling democracy by students’ voices being heard and opinions valued are often through strategies such as a morning meeting to bond, teaching the importance of sharing and taking turns, learning each other’s names and getting to know one another and their interests (Gimbert, 2002). These skills strengthen a child’s social and emotional development, also areas of human growth that may not be as important at the high school level, as high school teachers are typically more focused on academic success and less interested to engage students in activities that include “fostering a sense of community . . . increased communication with parents . . . [and] to promote caring” (Gimbert, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, n.d.).

Definition of Terms

Definition of key terms used during this research are defined as follows:

- 1) *Social Cognitive Theory* – Albert Bandura’s theory based upon the idea that “individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions . . . individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions, that what people think, believe and feel affects how they behave . . . individuals are imbued with capabilities to symbolize, plan alternative strategies (forethought), learn through vicarious experience, self-regulate, and self-reflect” (Pajares, 2002, pp. 2-3).
- 2) *Dropout* – used to describe a student who does not finish high school; a student that leaves high school before their projected graduation and does not acquire a high school diploma.
- 3) *Self-efficacy* – “refers to subjective judgments of one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated goals (Bandura, 1977, 1997) . . . a belief about what a person can do rather than personal judgments about one’s physical or personality attributes . . . self-efficacy address ‘how well can I do something?’ rather than ‘what am I like?’” (Pajares and Urdan, 2006, p. 47).
- 4) *Retention* – in regards to school, repeating an academic year of school. Retention is the most likely predictor of students who may drop out of high school. “Being retained one grade increases the risk of dropping out by 40 to 50 percent” (Encyclopedia of Children’s Health, n.d.).
- 5) *At-risk* – factors that impact the decision to drop out of school. At risk factors include but are not limited to disengagement, poor attendance, early adult responsibilities, conduct

and social misbehavior, low achievement, retention and a challenging home life (Chidamber, 2013).

- 6) *Praise* – praise may be in the form of verbal communication or a written memo; in regards to education and this research, praise is used to “recognize a desired or correct behavior . . . [and] a tool for instruction and for increasing social and academic behaviors” (Curran, 2003, p. 6). Praise must be “nonjudgmental; specific and descriptive; contingent and immediate; and sincere” (Curran, 2003, p. 6).
- 7) *Creativity* – “creating totally new things out of known materials, reaching a new and original synthesis and providing new solutions to problems . . . the skill to design or produce something novel . . . also an attitude . . . both a cognitive and affective effort” (Ozkal, 2014, p. 724-725).
- 8) *Marginal* – the student that acquires less than the average student; students that are referred to as marginal acquire the minimal or almost insufficient skills and academic abilities.
- 9) *Responsive Classroom* – a widely used and researched based approach to education “that is associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved social climate” (FAQs, 2015). The Responsive Classroom approach “emphasizes the importance of building a strong, positive learning community as a foundation for strong academics” (Jones, 2015).
- 10) *Hierarchy of Needs* – College professor and humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow introduced his hierarchy of needs in 1947 as the result of his studies on human behavior and interest explaining how an individual is motivated to achieve and basic needs. Maslow proposed that the desire to “fulfill basic needs must be met before moving on to

other, more advanced needs” (Cherry, 2015, p. 1). The original hierarchy of needs includes: biological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. The original five needs were expanded in 1970 to include cognitive / aesthetic needs and later transcendence needs (Cherry, 2015; Boeree, 2006; McLeod, 2014).

11) *CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)* – A scoring protocol, which focuses on the interactions between teachers and students. The CLASS scoring protocol “measures the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions” (Kane, Kerr, Pianta, 2014, p. 207) in three domains: “emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support” (Kane, Kerr, and Pianta, 2014, p. 60).

Conclusion

The research suggests that teachers are able to do more to support most students. The literature identifies strategies that help develop and sustain positive classroom learning environments and the benefit for teachers to provide praise to their students, to foster student creativity and to establish a strong personal sense of self-efficacy. Data gathered from a teacher self-efficacy survey will identify areas in which teachers may experience challenges and need more support in connecting with students. The literature will emphasize the difference in attitudes between high school teachers and lower level (K-8) teachers, in which students (K-8) are held more accountable and held to a higher level of academic expectation than high school students. Literature for this study will further support and provide applicable strategies teachers may imbed within their daily classroom conversations with students and their instructional plans. Lastly, the survey from teachers, teacher classroom observations and a follow-up interview with

the observed classroom teachers, using a case study research design will provide data for future planning and goal setting.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The data and ongoing evidence suggests that many high school teachers are unable to respond to the needs of marginal students and therefore are unable to keep these students enrolled in the mainstream school setting. The literature review identifies methods in which educators provide a positive learning environment, which may result in an increase of student retention through the intentional implementation of self-efficacy, teacher praise and fostering student creativity.

The national graduation rate is 81.4% and remains static (2015 Building a Grad Nation, 2015). Currently, our most vulnerable population of students who are typically categorized as at risk students are least likely to complete their high school education (Ellis, 2015; Chidamber, 2013; Campbell, 2013). At-risk students or marginal students include, but may not be limited to students experiencing poverty, homelessness, unstable home and living conditions, children of single parents, minorities and children from urban and rural areas (2015 Report, 2015; Balfanz, Fox et al, 2009). Research suggests that teachers may not be doing enough to support marginal students. Students report that their high school has not prepared them for college and career plans following high school (Leal, 2015; Buchanan & Fanelli, 2015) and lack of preparation often results in students giving up and dropping out. High school students often need increased adult support and accountability as they transition into high school, “motivation and engagement in school on average drops as they move from the elementary school into the secondary school system . . . attendance, getting into trouble, in drop outs from high school . . . “ (Brooks, 2015, p. 3).

Students who drop out of school create an enormous negative impact on society, including but not limited to the increase of health cost, incarceration costs, increase in welfare benefits and an increase in the crime rate (Campbell, 2013; Chidamber, 2013). Research suggests that students are motivated to stay in school when they are provided with a positive learning environment. A positive learning environment includes, but is not limited to teacher praise, specific and clear classroom norms, predictable routines and consequences, an environment which fosters creativity, student choice and voice, encouraging and supporting students taking risks and students being confident to learn from their mistakes (Marchant and Anderson, 2012; Ozkal, 2014).

Self-efficacy, creativity and praise are all associated with student achievement. Research suggests personal qualities that promote a student's ability to continue to pursue goals after mistakes or failures or disappointing efforts have been experienced, develop a strong sense of self-efficacy (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly, 2007; Yeager and Dweck, 2012; Bandura, 1994). This literature review includes theories about non-cognitive approaches in which educators may implement strategies to support and increase student retention. Strategies that may guide and support educators in establishing a positive learning environment are examined and critiqued.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify strategies that teachers may develop and implement to support their marginal students who often end up pursuing alternative options rather than staying in the traditional high school setting. The research is intended to articulate the critical role that educators play in their ability to influence high school student retention. Self-efficacy, praise and creativity may provide a foundation that contributes to a positive

learning environment, therefore impacting a student's attitude and decision to remain in the mainstream high school (Soh, 2015; Ozkal, 2014; Marchant and Anderson, 2012). The research examines classroom methods in which educators establish and foster a positive learning environment.

Key words

Social Cognitive Theory, dropout, self-efficacy, retention, at-risk, marginal, praise, creativity, Responsive Classroom, Hierarchy of Needs, and CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura played a significant role in the evolution of the social cognitive theory, which is based upon the role of self-beliefs. The social cognitive perspective maintains the theory that “all individuals, in some ways, attend to self-regulate their actions and manage their behaviors purposefully to secure attainment of goals” (Zimmerman, 2000, by Bembenutty, 2006, p. 4). According to Bandura and the social cognitive perspective, “individuals are viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulating rather than as reactive organisms shaped by environmental forces . . .” (Pajares and Urdan, 2006, p. 340). Individuals are better prepared to manage and control their actions and beliefs by the application of Bandura's “conception of reciprocal determinism” (Pajares & Urdan, 2006, p. 340) also referred to as “triadic forms of self-regulation (Dai & Sternberg, 2004, p. 327). This theory is based upon the idea that individuals are consistently striving to find balance amongst the constant changes and fluctuations between three conditions, “personal, behavioral, and environmental conditions” (Dai & Sternberg, 2004, p. 326). The ability of an individual to develop the coping skills and the belief to overcome challenging and even threatening situations is explained within the elements

of social cognitive theory as successfully applying mastery. The skill in developing mastery is “the principal means of personality change” (Bandura, 1994, p. 4). The most immediate and sustainable progress for developing and perfecting new skills, controlling one’s consciousness and reducing anxiety caused by change is for an individual to experience and master a variety of performance mastery aids. Successfully developing control over threatening situations results in a resiliency to cope, which develops efficacy and the ability to manage and endure difficult and demanding life situations (Bandura, 1994; Bandura, 1986; Gibbs and Powell, 2012).

Self-efficacy

Albert Bandura and his development of Social Cognitive Theory provide a relevant framework to the topic. The basis of teacher efficacy is from the works of a study by the Rand Foundation, 1976 and 1977, in which a sense of self-efficacy, as reported by Denham & Michael, “to be positively related to student achievement” (Denham & Michael, 1981, by Barnes, 2000, p. 2). There are two theories of teacher efficacy that arose from two similar studies of teacher efficacy: 1) general teaching efficacy, which is the belief that students achieve academic success and 2) personal teaching efficacy, the belief that a teacher has the influence for students to learn under their guidance and instruction (Barnes, 2000; Silverman and Davis, 2009).

Self-efficacy, the core foundation of the social cognitive theory provides a foundation for this research topic. Bandura’s social cognitive theory is based upon three influences that complement one another: 1) personal factors 2) behavior factors and 3) environmental factors (Pajares, 2002; Bandura, 1994). In applying these identified factors of the social cognitive framework to education, “teachers can work to improve their students’ emotional states and to correct their faulty self-beliefs and habits of thinking (personal factors), improve their academic

skills and self-regulatory practices (behavior) and alter the school and classroom structures that may work to undermine student success (environmental)” (Pajares, 2002, p. 2).

Bandura’s work with social cognition led to a definition of *self-efficacy*. The introduction of self-efficacy as a “psychological construct [is] one of the most important developments in the history of psychology” (Pajares & Urdan, 2006, p. ix). Self-efficacy is a powerful belief in one’s ability “that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions, that what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Pajaras, 2002, p. 3) and “that he/she has specific performance capabilities . . . and confidence in his/her ability to perform (Ames, 1987 p. 127-128). Individuals who are able to acquire self-efficacy are better prepared to make decisions based upon sound and thoughtful judgments, which leads “to skill development and performance accomplishments” (Ames, 1987, p. 128). Individuals are able to reason and self-reflect, resulting in modifying current decisions or thinking ahead to make improved and more appropriate choices, and intentional, goal-directed behavior (Dai & Sternberg, 2004; Shazadi, Khatoon, Aziz, and Hassan, 2011; Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs and Powell, 2012). Self-efficacy empowers one to recover quickly after a challenge or setback, providing a feeling of being in control over one’s decisions (Al-Alwan and Mahasneh, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2012). Being in control “produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression” (Bandura, 1994, p.1). Bandura has identified four sources of self-efficacy beliefs for individuals to develop, which results in a strong sense of self-efficacy (1994):

- Mastery Experiences
- Vicarious Experiences
- Social Persuasion

- Somatic and Emotional States when judging capabilities (p. 2)

The first source identified, mastery, is the most important in developing one's self-efficacy. The way an individual learns from experience determines how developed their self-efficacy will become. When overcoming defeat or challenges by applying past experiences and using resiliency and self-reflection, one becomes more convinced of the ability to face challenges with success. Each success builds and enhances a stronger sense of self-efficacy. If the outcome is not successful, self-efficacy is decreased and an individual's belief in their ability to overcome barriers is diminished (Bandura, 1994, p. 2; Bandura, 1986; Gibbs & Powell, 2012).

Individuals strengthen their self-efficacy by observing and modeling other's actions through vicarious tasks. If the model being observed is either someone they admire or someone that they are able to connect with, the ability to increase one's self-efficacy is enforced. For example, "a girl will raise her physical efficacy on seeing a woman model exhibit physical strength but not after seeing a male model do so" (Pajares, 2002, p. 7).

Supplementary authors

Additional authors, Robert J. Sternberg, Alfred Binet and Abraham Maslow also contribute to the topic. Sternberg, who supports the adaptability of the mind, defines intelligence as "... behavior [which] involves adapting to your environment, changing your environment, or selecting a better environment" (Wilson, 1997). French psychologist Dr. Binet was designated by a French commission, appointed by the French Minister of Public Education in 1904 to study mentally challenged students. Dr. Binet's focus on human intelligence and how to measure intelligence resulted in the first scale, which measured human intelligence (Binet and Simon, 1916). Abraham Maslow sought to understand how people are motivated, "unrelated to rewards or unconscious desires . . . concluding that human motivation is based on people seeking

fulfillment and change through personal growth” (McLeod, 2014, pp. 1 & 3). In relation to a classroom setting, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs states “children need to have their feelings of emotional security met before they can learn effectively” (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Abry, 2013, p. 557). Research based on the application of a Responsive Classroom approach, designed for elementary teachers, suggests that intentional practices provide positive and caring classrooms and will show evidence of improving students’ learning (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Arby, 2013).

Positive Learning Environment

Research of this topic identified an area emerging that needs further research. Rather than the onus of the responsibility being on high school students to learn coping skills that may determine whether or not their high school experience is successful, the role of educators is researched and studied. Research suggests that educators may not be fulfilling their role of providing students with the interest and academic skills to remain in a mainstream school setting. Students who tend to be more at-risk may be overwhelmed with obstacles that distract and impede the learning process, resulting in a lack of skills and support to achieve success (Sternberg & Subotnik, 2006, p. 3). While this may be the norm, the limited research is beginning to uncover the theory that a positive learning environment provides the skills and tenacity for students to remain in a traditional school setting. Research states that one’s environment may be modified or ‘shaped’ by individuals to support their thinking and behavior (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2007; Gibbs & Powell, 2012; Bembenutty, 2006). Dr. Binet defined the traditional meaning, “of intelligence [as] emphasizing the importance of adaption to the environment” (Binet & Simon, 1916) and as stated by Bandura (1997), “in order to attain vital

goals, individuals influence and control their environment” (Bandura, 1997 by Bembenutty, 2006).

I am seeking to determine how schools, specifically teachers, may better support the large population of marginal students who often struggle in a traditional high school setting through the intentional practice of a positive learning environment.

Educators

A powerful quote from Sandy Lenning, a teacher at Denali Elementary in Fairbanks, Alaska, states, “We realized that if anything is going to happen, teachers have to make it happen” (Gerstner, Semerad, Doyle, and Johnston, 1994, p. 142). This quote sets the stage for the critical role and responsibility of educators. Students who report feeling safe, supported and confident in taking risks contribute that to being cared for. This feeling of trust and caring typically lead to academic and behavioral success for students. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs supports the realization that students “basic needs must be met before they can meet higher-order needs” (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman & Arby, 2013, p. 557). The basic needs of individuals are physiological, biological and safety, which include but are not limited to food, shelter, warmth, sleep, security, order, stability and freedom from fear (McLeod, 2014). Maslow’s hierarchy of needs suggests that an individual’s necessity to meet basic needs must be fulfilled before the individual is able to achieve more advanced needs, such as achieving academic accomplishment (Cherry, 2015; Maslow’s Hierarchy, 2015). Academic accomplishment and the ability to inquire or know how to ask questions for understanding are achieved at the highest level, which is self-actualization. Self-actualization is also referred to as growth motivation. These needs include the “continuous desire to fulfill potentials, to ‘be all that you can be’ . . . and are a matter of becoming the most complete, the fullest, you” (Boeree, 2006, p. 4).

Data from the research indicates how important it is for students to develop a more close and caring relationship with their teachers (Kaniuka and Vickers, 2010; Capern and Hammond, 2014). The traditional role of teaching, in which teachers remain in isolation, teaching behind closed doors with little interest or involvement in students' lives and "rely heavily on extrinsic inducements and negative sanctions to get students to study" (Bandura, 1993, p. 140), is being replaced by "the task of creating environments conducive to learning [which] rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers" (Bandura, 1993, p. 143) and "an examination centered on teachers' beliefs and self-regulatory skills necessary for teaching and learning" (Dembo, 2001; Randi, 2004 by Bembenuddy, 2006). Developing a strong sense of self-efficacy often includes a change in one's approach and delivery of instruction. Teachers who collaborate together as opposed to working in isolation and have conversations about interventions that help to change and expand their students' intelligence impact their own learning and that of their students (Blazer, 2011).

Positive & encouraging feedback

Research suggests praise is an effective way to recognize and shape desired behavior in students and to also redirect undesirable behavior. According to Conroy et al. (2009), "a positive and engaging classroom climate is one of the most influential tools teachers have to support children's learning and prevent problem behavior" (Marchant & Anderson, 2012, p. 22). Praise may be given verbally or also in the form of written notes to students. Praise has the most desirable impact on changing student behavior when it is viewed by the student as being genuine, specific, immediate and motivational (Marchant & Anderson, 2012; Curran, 2003; Johnson and Wright, 2014).

An example of praise that is often viewed or perceived as not sincere and less effective is the overuse of telling students, ‘good job.’ The phrase ‘good job’ is a judgment or based on conditions. When students are told ‘good job’ they begin to seek approval on what they have accomplished rather than on the efforts of how they accomplished the task. Educators are encouraged to praise what is seen. For example, a student passes a math test because studying, asking questions, and learning by making errors was accepted and supported by the teacher (Kohn, 2001; Gainsley, 2001; Johnson & Wright, 2014). Educators do not “have to evaluate in order to encourage” (Kohn, 2001, p. 4), in other words, praising students for their effort rather than “their innate abilities” (Gainsley, 2001, p.11). Praise must also be individualized to the specific needs of each student and given more frequently than reprimanding a student (Curran, 2003; Johnson & Wright, 2014).

Positive behavior

Creating a positive learning environment begins with a teacher modeling positive behavior. Research recommends teachers seek professional growth and practice to create a positive learning environment that becomes routine (Marchant & Anderson, 2012; Allensworth, Gwyne, Pareja, Sebastian and Stevens, 2014). Strategies to increase a positive learning environment must be imbedded into daily norms. These strategies include but are not limited to: specific and clear communication regarding classroom procedures, delivery of instruction and student outcomes, addressing inappropriate behavior early and consistently, monitoring students’ work with frequent feedback and individualized attention (Marchant & Anderson, 2012; Rosenkranz, de le Torre, Stevens and Allensworth, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Students state that a positive learning environment means the teacher “explains things right, and are willing to cover materials several times and in several ways” (Rosenkranz, et al., 2014).

When students feel supported by teachers, students become more engaged, work habits improve and students try harder (Marchant & Anderson, 2012; Rosenkranz et al., 2014). The aforementioned accomplishments parallel with Maslow's highest level of fulfillment, self-actualization. Self-actualization includes, but is not limited to the following characteristics:

- Embracing the unknown and ambiguous.
- Acceptance of oneself, including their deficiencies.
- Motivated by growth, rather than satisfying individual needs.
- Have a purpose in life, a mission or obligation that involves others rather than self-fulfillment.
- Embraced problems as requiring a solution, rather than see problems as personal inconveniences.
- Exhibited "human kinship – social interest, compassion, and humanity . . . accompanied by strong ethics" (Boeree, 2006, p.6).
- Ability to develop and maintain meaningful and deeper personal relationships.
- Are confident in making their own decisions and determining their own journey, without influence by others, cultural traditions or expectations.

(Cherry, 2015; Boeree, 2006; Sze, 2015; McLeod, 2014).

Maslow acknowledged that self-actualized individuals were not perfect, but possessed skills to develop into healthy and balanced individuals (Boeree, 2006; McLeod, 2014).

Fostering creativity

The teachers and their classroom environment may provide the most meaningful opportunities for developing a student's creativity. When a student is encouraged to think creatively, they are able to "make connections to the whole educational system" (Ozkal, 2014).

The current generation of students are encouraged to demonstrate mastery of how to access knowledge, how to comprehend and then synthesize information, evaluate information and lastly, a combination of each (Wessling, Cator, Munson, and Ravitch, 2010, p. 32). Students must not limit their creativity to the visual and performing arts, but must also use creativity and imagination in other curriculums, such as science and social sciences (Ozkal, 2014). Teachers foster creativity in students when teachers provide a culture which promotes student freedom of expression, maintains a non-judgmental attitude toward student ideas and goals, and encourage student self-evaluation (Soh, 2014; Ozkal, 2014; Dikici, 2013).

Teachers must also role model creativity to students by maintaining daily interactions with students, which include mutual respect of opinions, unconventional ways to deliver instruction and assign work, and have a “socially integrative and cooperative teaching style” (Soh, 2014, p. 725). Also, teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy beliefs “are open to novel ideas and new methods . . . they support students’ autonomy (Guvenc, 2011) . . . [and] are patient towards failure when students make mistakes” (Soh, 2014, p. 726). Teachers who have less self-efficacy and are less likely to promote creativity and tend to have classroom environments which are rigid, support rote learning, discourage student choice and have higher levels of career dissatisfaction (Soh, 2014; Ozkal, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2012; Batdi, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this research is based upon the works of Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory and the teacher administered survey, *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Ozkal, 2014; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk, 2001). Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura includes an individual’s beliefs about their capabilities and provides “the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment” (Pajares, 2002, p. 4). A teacher self-efficacy refers

to “their beliefs in their ability to have a positive effect on student learning” (Ashton, 1985, p. 142, by Bembenutty, 2006). Self-efficacy is a product of Bandura’s social cognitive theory and complements the components that may provide teachers with the skill set to motivate, inspire and develop successful learners by creating an environment to support most high school students. Figure 1 represents Bandura’s social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory is based upon three reciprocal factors: “a) personal factors b) behavior, and c) environmental influences” (Dai and Sternberg, 2004, p. 325). Appendix A represents the *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). The *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* is used to determine areas in which teachers may need additional support and also to reveal areas of strength. Experienced teachers who have demonstrated success with and who have an understanding of marginal students are interviewed, followed by a classroom observation. The purpose of the observation is to observe teachers engage with students and identify methods used to model positive behavior and components that have established a positive learning environment.

The Class Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) influences the scoring guide used for the classroom observations. The CLASS observation scoring guide is based upon research, which suggests that the daily interactions between the teacher and the students has the most impact on student learning and development, more so than “programs that focused solely on curricula and/or technology (Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012, p. 1). The CLASS scoring guide focuses on observing interactions from three domains: emotional, classroom organization and instructional. In maintaining the purpose and focus of this study, I rely upon the Positive Climate category of the emotional domain, which concentrates on “creating an environment of respect and rapport . .

. communicated through by verbal and non-verbal interactions” (Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012, p. 21).

Proposed Research Questions

The over arching questions for this research problem are:

What interventions and strategies may be implemented by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment? How will a positive classroom-learning environment respond to the needs of marginal students so that most students remain in a mainstream high school setting?

Conclusion

The research led me to become more aware of what educators may be able to do to increase student retention by the intentional practice of developing and maintaining a positive learning environment. The literature review addresses Bandura’s social cognitive theory, self-efficacy and how the impact of teacher praise and the fostering of student creativity may influence student retention. The *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* is used to provide compelling and relevant data regarding personal beliefs about teacher self-efficacy and how teachers may impact students by the creation of a positive learning environment.

The data is shared with teachers in the experimental high school and also with stakeholders of the school district, including the superintendent and school board members. The intent of this research is to determine if teachers should be doing more, based upon the survey results and the teacher observations and interview results. I am attempting to provide sufficient evidence to support the theory, which states that when teachers intentionally establish a positive learning environment and role model positive behavior, such as providing appropriate praise and

fostering creativity the outcomes result in students who are engaged and academically successful.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was a qualitative method, using an ethnography research design, specifically, a case study. As stated by Patton (2002), a case study research design “should take the reader into the case situation and experience—a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life” (Merriam, 2009, p. 258). For this research, the classroom observations allowed me to have a snapshot of the daily interactions and conversations between a teacher and students. I observed the interactions and communications in five teacher classrooms and identified possible skills and strategies that promote a positive learning environment. In order to provide evidence of teachers’ self-efficacy, all teachers were asked to take the *Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale* survey.

The overarching question for this study was to identify interventions and strategies that teachers currently use to create a positive classroom environment. Secondary questions were designed to determine how the interventions and strategies support the academic and behavioral needs of most students. A positive classroom environment, which includes teacher praise and fostering student creativity may encourage many students to remain enrolled in the mainstream high school setting. The research is based upon Bandura’s theory of social cognition and self-efficacy. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are most likely to possess high academic skills. They are able to develop the skills and resources, also referred to as mastery aids, to overcome and persevere through challenges and threatening situations. Teachers who display efficacious skills often develop positive relationships with parents, they are able to plan and attain professional goals, they do not give up or show discouragement, they believe in their students’ ability to achieve academic success, produce student outcomes which demonstrate

higher performance on achievement tests, implement a variety of strategies to accommodate students' needs, and are more likely to stay in the teacher profession without displaying signs of job burnout (Silverman and Davis, 2009; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2012; Al-Alwan and Mahasneh, 2014; Gibbs & Powell, 2012).

Teachers were asked to respond to questions from the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*, which determined the areas needing supplementary support (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk, 2001). The survey measured three critical areas of teachers' practice: student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk, 2001). In addition, a follow-up interview after the classroom observations was conducted with the five volunteer teachers (see Appendix D).

The CLASS scoring system was used as a guide for the conversations conducted during the follow-up interview, in which myself and each teacher reviewed the scoring criteria (see Table 3), analyzed the data and made inferences of the classroom environment, after reviewing the videotaped classroom.

Research suggests that teacher efficacy may be the most single predictor of a positive learning environment, impacting and shaping students' attitudes towards school and having a positive impact on a students' life (Al-Alwan, 2014; Shazadi, Khatoon, Aziz and Hassan, 2011; Bembenuddy, 2006)). As stated by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011) teacher self-efficacy results in a teacher being hopeful about student success, compared to a teacher that is not hopeful and "tends to put in less effort in preparation for teaching" . . . resulting in a highly ineffective learning environment (Tschannen-Moran and Johnson by Batdi, 2014, p. 24). Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy show less anger while in class, believe they are able to better manage their classroom and student behaviors and have more control of their workload, resulting

in less stress and autonomy (Shazadi et al., 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2012; Batdi, 2014; Gibbs & Powell, 2012).

Setting of the Study

The setting of the study is a public high school, grades 10-12 located on the coast of Maine. There is a strong sense of community support and rich traditions that are typical of a coastal community in which lobstering and the marine trades are generational careers. The graduation rate is 78%, as compared to the state average of 86% (Maine Department of Education, 2014). Many students feel as if they are not able to be successful in academic learning and stop coming to school. Students often state that teachers are not always open to giving them additional support or opportunities to retake assignments and tests. Once the downward spiral begins for students who are not strong academically, the feeling of being overwhelmed consumes many students, prompting a large percentage to drop out. Students who typically stop coming to school may be living in challenging conditions, such as living below the poverty level, they may be homeless or they may be working to provide for a family. Marginal students are often ethnic and come from a background in which formal education is not valued (Chidamber, 2013; Ellis, 2015; Swanson, 2009). Students may not be forced to attend school and once they begin to disengage themselves from their academics, it becomes more difficult for teachers to re-engage them (Swanson, 2009).

Most faculty members are from the area and return to establish their careers and families in the same community. Therefore, there are many veteran faculty members who have only worked in this school and will remain here until they retire. It is also not unusual that graduating students from this high school return and are now employed as teachers. The point to be made here are the traditions and culture of the community that often discourage a student from looking

at careers and opportunities beyond this community. “I only knew of two career options . . . what my parents did and I did not want to do either of those and my teachers. I thought I could be a teacher, so I became a teacher” (Tribou, High School Teacher, 2015).

The setting was in my school, therefore a relationship already exists between the myself and the participating teachers. Ethical implications about the perceived formal observation process between a building administrator and the teachers must remain separate. The study included observing teacher classrooms to acquire data and information about teacher interactions with students, while ensuring teachers the observation and data would not result in an evaluative outcome. I was acting as a participant observer (Smith, 1997). According to Mac an Ghaill (1994), this observation approach “is close to everyday interaction, involving conversations to discover participants’ interpretations of situations they are involved in” (Mac an Ghaill cited by Smith, 1997, p. 2). The purpose of the role of a participant observer includes “observation, informant interviewing, document analysis, respondent interviewing and participation self-analysis (Smith, 1997, p. 2). It was necessary to be aware of my role and the purpose of the observation, which is not from the eyes of a supervisor but that of a researcher, attempting to gather data with the help and support of the teachers (Becker, 1976 cited by Smith, 1997). I was careful and intentional to maintain transparency throughout the study, being open about the purpose of the study, being clear that there was not an overt plan and being cognizant to maintain the dignity of the teachers who volunteered by not misrepresenting data or information (Creswell, 2012).

Participants

There are 42 teachers at this high school; 21 female teachers and 21 male teachers. This does not include two school counselors, library media specialist and school nurse. The Teacher’s

Self-Efficacy Survey is voluntary, therefore, attempted to acquire at least 90% participation in order to collect sufficient data. Teachers were informed that the purpose of the survey was to identify ways to support current students to remain enrolled in school. The survey reveals teachers' beliefs about areas in which they may intervene in order to provide students with increased academic and behavioral skills. The survey did not ask personal questions, but rather, focused strictly on professional skills and practice. Teachers were informed that the survey was completely anonymous and all data acquired and analyzed was presented to the faculty.

Teachers whom volunteer to participate in the survey were given a consent letter, thoroughly explaining the purpose of the study, their role, privacy rights and the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix E).

Teacher self-efficacy supports student academic and behavioral success “to the extent [that] the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” and “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Pajares and Urda, 2006, p. 117). See Figure 2 for the cyclical nature of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy, 1998). The cyclical nature of teacher efficacy describes the goals that teachers set for themselves when teachers acquire a sense of self-efficacy. Goals are reached based upon the amount of “effort they invest in reaching these goals and their persistence when facing difficulties” (Pajares & Urda, 2006, p. 118). When teachers achieve their goals, they obtain increased proficiency in reaching more goals and this accomplishment created strong efficacy beliefs (Pajares & Urda, 2006, p. 119 Gibbs, 2002; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2012). As teachers develop a strong self-efficacy, they are able to relate to situations more positively, including learning and instructional outcomes, which results in greater levels of “planning, organization, direct teaching and enthusiasm” (Pajares &

Urdu, 2006, p. 120), “carry out activities required to attain instructional goals” (Al-Alwan & Mahasneh, 2014, p. 1), and “influence goal-setting and the willingness to persist at pursuing these goals” (Gibbs, 2002, p. 6).

I asked for five teacher volunteers to participate in a classroom observation protocol. Criteria to participate was explicit and included: 1) teachers must be on a teacher contract, 2) teachers must have proven success and a level of comfort with marginal students 3) teachers must agree to a classroom lesson to be videotaped and 4) teachers were willing to conduct a follow-up interview. The observation did not interrupt or distract from the regular day-to-day operations of the school and class environment. Teachers knew in advance the day and time of the observation. A pre-observation meeting between the teacher and the observer revealed my asking the teachers to reflect on a set of pre-determined questions, given in advance of the pre-observation meeting (Appendix B). During the pre-observation the questions were discussed. Questions included topics such as teacher actions that may positively impact student academic success and their behavior, how the teacher made a difference in a student’s life, how colleagues or the culture of the school may affect their interaction with students, their personal sense of self-efficacy, how they communicated with parents and colleagues, the role of administration in supporting their work and instruction, and what may have contributed to them feeling efficacious in the classroom.

Following the observation, the video was transcribed. The teacher and myself met to review the videotape and unpack the observation. With the guidance and input from the teacher, I sought to gather evidence of intentional and non-intentional methods of a positive learning environment and interactions with students that promoted engagement, using the Class Assessment Scoring System as a model. Methods teachers may have implemented included, but

are not limited to: providing genuine and specific praise, demonstrating patience, encouraging student freedom of expression, maintaining a non-judgmental attitude, specific and clear and communication when delivering instruction and/or classroom norms, addressing inappropriate behavior early and consistently, monitoring students' work with frequent feedback and individualized attention (Soh, 2014; Ozkal, 2014, Dikici, 2013; Pianta et al, 2012). I asked pre-determined questions to further understand the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the classroom climate they have established (Appendix D). Questions focused on a reflection of the observation and also included: how teacher actions may have contributed to student academic success (a specific incident), strategies the teacher used to promote classroom discussion and student engagement, how the teacher may have clarified any confusion regarding the delivery of instruction or classroom norms and what the teacher's description is for a positive learning environment.

The setting of this study was relevant to this research problem as it provided a context for information about how qualified teachers reach most students by the intentional development of positive learning environments. I specifically looked for intentional methods in which teachers were interacting and communicating with students in an efficacious manner. The methods are based upon research, which suggests that they are the most significant in creating a positive learning environment: students receiving appropriate and meaningful praise and if creativity is encouraged and fostered. Praise and creativity raise expectations for students, improve student behaviors, which typically promote high-quality instruction, encourage students to increase their critical thinking and inquiry and also helps to develop student reflection of their own work (Soh, 2015; Marchant and Anderson, 2012).

Data

I used an ethnographic design case study. This research design was selected for many reasons. First, ethnography means “writing about groups of people” (Creswell, 2012, p. 461). Five classroom teachers were observed in their own classrooms, to “get as close to the subject of interest as . . . possible” (Merriam, 2009, p. 46). Data gathered from the observations were compiled and inferences were made on how teachers engage with students, noting such characteristics as how they spoke with their students, instructed their students, redirected their students and their overall ability to connect with their students. Secondly, how the study may have related to the culture of the high school setting in this research study. Ethnographic designs include the culture of the study group. In this case study, the “language, rituals, economic and political structures, life stages, interactions, and communication styles” (Creswell, 2012, p. 462) of the high school, the teachers and students all comprise the culture. Lastly, an ethnographic study provides an understanding of a larger issue. In this case study, the challenge of how to keep most high school students enrolled in the traditional high school setting and whether or not the school was able to motivate students to stay in school by identifying strategies that increased a positive learning environment was the larger issue needing additional understanding.

An online survey was administered to all high school teachers and was conducted to determine teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. The survey had a ranking between 1-9, representing responses such as “nothing, very little, some influence, quite a bit and a great deal . . . and used a 9-point Likert type scale composed of 24 items and three sub-scales” (Ozkal, 2014, p. 727). The three sub-scales include student engagement, instructional practices and classroom management (see Appendix A). Five volunteer classroom teachers were observed and videotaped followed by a qualitative interview with me. The interview included open-ended

questions and were conducted one-on-one. I recorded teacher responses and analyzed the data in conjunction with the teacher classroom observations. During the classroom visits, I looked for strategies in which teachers were fostering creativity and positive behavior. These interactions with students included emotional support, promoting independence, reaching difficult students, ability to maintain composure during distractions or interruptions and supporting the diverse needs of all students to express themselves without judgment (Ozkal, 2014; Schwarzer, Schmitz, and Daytner, 1999; Dikici, 2013).

Analysis

The data from the teachers' self-efficacy survey was scored and analyzed to determine the overall attitudes and self-efficacy of teachers. Teacher responses from the survey support and clarify the overarching questions of this research study. Specifically, the survey encompasses three critical areas that contributed to a positive learning environment: efficacy of student engagement, efficacy of instructional strategies and efficacy of classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Once the survey results were analyzed, I was able to use the data to predict the self-efficacious beliefs of the teachers. "High self-efficacy of teachers shows a positive impact on their students' life" (Shazadi, et al p. 386), therefore, the survey results are able to predict the degree that teachers created a positive learning environment at this high school of study. The teacher survey addressed specific strategies that research suggests contribute to a positive learning environment, including but not limited to: a teachers ability to control disruptive behavior, whether or not a teacher may be able to motivate a disengaged student, if teachers believe they can get their students to do well in school work, and if teachers believe they are able to improve the understanding of a student who is failing (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Data from this school survey determined how

many teachers have a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy and therefore, are creating a positive learning environment for their students.

Data gathered from the teacher observations and interviews were specific to identifying strategies that created a positive learning environment. The data was be carefully interpreted, looking for themes “and providing an interpretation of the meaning of [the] information” (Creswell, 2012, p. 478-479). I examined and analyzed each teacher observation individually and then “conduct[ed] a cross-case analysis to identify common and different themes . . . “ (Creswell, 2012, p. 479). The Class Assessment Scoring System was completed within minutes of the classroom observations. The teachers were given the scoring guide selected, using the recommended 7-point scoring range (Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012; Kane, Kerr, & Pianta, 2014). The scoring guide was not a checklist, but rather a result of the teacher and I basing our final interpretation of the observation as “low, mid, or high range” (Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012, p. 13).

The data was coded based upon common themes and patterns that arose. Common themes and patterns became topics and were then converted to columns and rows. The columns and rows were coded based upon the “appropriate segments of text” (Roberts, 2010, p. 159). The final interpretation of the results confirmed that the school and teachers are able to create a positive learning environment that strengthens many students’ academic and behavioral skills, with the intent and desire to keep students enrolled in school.

The application of multiple methods of research, referred to as triangulation, “strengthens [the] study by combining methods” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 108) and “reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 107) by verifying the results from

more than one data point. This study used a teacher survey research, classroom observations and teacher interviews.

Participant rights

The participants in this research study consisted of high school teachers. I went to extreme lengths to ensure the privacy and rights of all participating teachers were protected. All permissions from participating teachers were acquired prior to beginning the research. This included, but was not limited to school board and superintendent approval and classroom teachers who volunteered to participate. Permissions were obtained in writing by the issuance of an informed consent form. According to Creswell, an informed consent form “should state that [the researcher] will guarantee them certain rights, and when they sign the form, they are agreeing to be involved in the study and acknowledge the protection of their rights” (Creswell, 2012, p. 149).

Potential Limitations

Limitations of the study included a commitment from five volunteer teachers to agree to a classroom observation, followed by an interview. The exclusion of one public high school in a small rural setting in the state of Maine, 42 teacher responses and five classroom observations may have presented a limitation on the results, as it limits a cross-section of diversity, ethnicity and cultural influence. The restriction of a small sample size may have also limited the opportunity to predict the generalizability to other schools and districts. Lastly, since I was “the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 52), personal interest in the subject remained objective and did not influence the outcome of the study. Maintaining an impartial and neutral approach must be the position I took throughout the survey, observation and interviews.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose and focus of this research, as stated in Chapter 1, is to determine if a positive classroom environment may have an impact on marginal students, specifically, how might teachers better support the large population of marginal students who often struggle in a traditional high school setting through the intentional practice of a positive learning environment? And, what strategies might teachers implement that will establish a positive classroom environment?

This chapter presents the findings from the research study, which employs a triangulation method of data collection, including a teacher survey to determine teacher self-efficacy, 5-videotaped classroom observations, followed by a principal/teacher interview, and documents relevant to the aforementioned components of data collection (Appendices B & D and Tables 3 & 4). The purpose of applying a triangulation method of validating the data is to increase the accuracy of data by using multiple methods. Triangulation “is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e. g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). All teachers received an invitation to participate (Appendix G) and, in an effort to maintain anonymity, all teachers were asked to complete an informed consent letter (Appendix E), regardless of an intention to participate.

Teacher Survey

The purpose of the self-efficacy survey was to discover if and how a teacher's sense of self-efficacy influences their students. Research suggests that teachers who have a strong sense of self-efficacy often develop positive relationships with parents, are able to plan and attain professional goals, do not give up or show discouragement, believe in their students' ability to achieve academic success, produce student outcomes which demonstrate higher performance on achievement tests, implement a variety of strategies to accommodate students' needs, and are more likely to stay in the teacher profession without displaying signs of job burnout (Silverman and Davis, 2009; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2012; Al-Alwan and Mahasneh, 2014; Gibbs & Powell, 2012). The survey measured three areas of significance in determining a teachers' strength in the classroom: 1) student engagement, 2) instructional strategies and 3) classroom management (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk, 2001). Data from the survey was analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Creswell, 2012). A histogram will be presented, which indicates the data is skewed left, the interpretation of the mean, the standard deviation, the median and mode and lastly, examines the possible correlation of coefficients between the survey questions.

Classroom Observations

The purpose of the videotaped classrooms provided me with daily interactions between teacher and students. Evidence of strategies observed during the observation that promote a positive classroom environment provide recommendations to an original research question, *What interventions and strategies may be implemented by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment?* The five classroom observations included a pre-conference meeting and a post-conference meeting between myself and each teacher, individually. Prior to each meeting,

the five teachers completed the pre-conference and post-conference forms (Appendix B and D, respectively). The questions from both the pre and post-conference forced each teacher to self-reflect on their personal self-efficacy and examine their current teaching practice as it relates to their effectiveness to provide a positive classroom environment. In broad terms, the questions focused on if and how the teachers may be able to make a difference in students' lives. Questions asked for specific examples and allowed me to gain an understanding of each teacher's personal thoughts on their own self-efficacy. Final conclusions from the classroom observations have been analyzed, using the CLASS scoring guide. The videotapes of each classroom observation have been studied and analyzed to discover common themes and strategies that are identified as contributing to a positive classroom environment. I have included an analysis and conclusion in the form of a compilation from the five teacher observations.

Presentation of Findings

Findings emerging from the research study include: 1) teacher self-efficacy, based upon data from the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey, indicates most teacher responses indicate a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy, 2) teacher responses in the sub scale *Engagement*, suggests teachers may not be certain that they are able to engage with students and/or keep students engaged, 3) question #22, referencing teachers' ability to help families in supporting their children correlates with a self-efficacy and warrants further research 4) strategies observed during the 5-classroom observations reveal a strong correlation in creating a positive classroom environment. Findings from the research address and respond to the original research questions:

What interventions and strategies may be implemented by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment? How will a positive

*classroom-learning environment respond to the needs of marginal students
so that most students remain in a mainstream high school setting?*

Quantitative Data

Finding 1: Self-efficacy survey

The teacher survey was a 9-point Likert scale composed of 24 questions and three subscales: Engagement, Instruction and Classroom Management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Sixteen teachers, from a total of 39 possible teachers completed the survey and all questions were answered, for a 40% participation rate. The majority of teacher responses were from female teachers, 68.8% female versus 31.3% male. The majority of teacher responses were from teachers who have less than 5 years in education, 43.8% and the least responses were from teachers who have more than 20 years experience in education, 6.1%.

Statistical tests were performed, which shows correlations between questions and a histogram with a skewed left shape. The mean, median, standard deviation and mode were calculated for each question. The survey was constructed from Bandura's recommendation and designed to determine whether or not a teacher "can" or will "be able to" make a difference for their students' based upon self-efficacy (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010, p. 1059). The desired responses, which indicate a strong sense of self-efficacy, fall within the 7-9 range on the Likert scale, indicating 'quite a bit' and 'a great deal.' Responses that fall within the 1-4 range on the Likert scale represent a low to very little sense of self-efficacy, suggesting teachers impact on students is 'nothing' or 'very little.'

Three of the 24 questions or 8% of the teacher responses indicate teachers "can" or will "be able to" make an impact 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' (questions 3, 5, and 7). The single

question with the most favorable response, suggesting teachers “can” or will “be able to” have the most impact with students is question # 5 (87.5%): *To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?* Fourteen of the 24 questions or 58% of the teacher responses fell within the mid range, responses 5 & 6 on the Likert scale, indicating teachers may have ‘some influence’ (questions 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 24). Six of the 24 questions or 25% of the teacher responses fell at the lower range, responses 1-4 on the Likert scale, indicating teachers impact may be ‘nothing’ to ‘very little’ (questions 1, 2, 4, 11, 19, and 23). The question which received the most teacher responses within the 1-4 range is question # 22, *How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?*

Data gathered from the mode value results in teachers who took the survey are more likely to be efficacious and exhibit signs of teacher self-efficacy. Teacher responses from the 24 survey questions resulted in 13 responses, or 54% in the 7-8 range, or the belief that teachers may be able to ‘quite a bit’ make an impact. Six responses, or 25% of teacher responses fall within the 5-6 range, or the belief that teachers may have ‘some influence’ with students. Lastly, 5 of the responses, or 21% are in the highest value of 9, indicating that teachers believe they may be able to ‘a great deal’ impact their students. Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy is “the beliefs in their capability to make a difference in student learning, to be able to get through even to students who are difficult or unmotivated” (Survey Instruments, n.d.). Research on teacher self-efficacy suggests a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy directly strengthens students’ academic abilities, as well as their social and behavioral skills. Teachers who have a low self-efficacy may have the following characteristics: lack of confidence in ones’ ability to perform, decreased ability to make decisions based upon sound and thoughtful judgments (Ames, 1987), inability to self-reflect and reason, often not being able to think ahead, make appropriate choices and create

intentional goals (Dai & Sternberg, 2004; Shazadi, Khatoon, Aziz and Hasson, 2011; Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs and Powell, 2012), find challenging situations difficult and unable to recover or move ahead (Al-Awan and Mahasneh, 2014; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2012), may not be willing to keep trying with students who are difficult, avoids seeking out a variety of resources and materials to support and improve student success, a lack of ability or interest to teach and/or reteach in ways that support students that have different learning needs (Schunk, 1991), and lastly, not having control over one's ability to reduce stress and achieve personal accomplishments (Bandura, 1994).

Three of the questions, numbers 11, 19 and 23 displayed a distinct peak between teacher responses, indicating teachers either have "some influence" or "quite a bit" of impact for the following questions:

11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students? 26.7% responded "some influence" and 26.7% responded "quite a bit."

19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson? 25% responded "some influence" and 37.5% responded "quite a bit."

23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom? 26.7% responded "some influence" and 26.7% responded "quite a bit."

This data suggests that, while a large percentage of teachers believe that they are certain they will "quite a bit" be able to impact students, a similar percentage falls on the lower range, indicating that teachers believe their ability to have an meaningful impact on students is "some influence." This data suggests that there are significant gaps between teachers who believe they may be able devise good questions, be able to keep a few students from ruining an entire lesson and be able to implement alternative strategies in the classroom. The responses to these

questions suggest that there are just as many teachers who believe their ability to have “some influence” when their students require different strategies to maintain a sense of interest or engagement. And there are just as many teachers who believe they, “quite a bit” of the time are able to create strategies that keep students interested and engaged. Questions 11 and 23 fall within the Instruction subscale and question 19 falls within Classroom Management.

Another finding from the survey is the range of responses from teachers on 7 of the 24 questions. Teachers who took the survey responded above or below the acceptable value and also within the acceptable value. The following questions (6, 9, 10, 14, 18, 21 and 22) indicate that responses span across a wider scope of being able to do ‘nothing’ up to and including teachers believe they can have ‘a great deal’ of impact on their students:

6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?

9. How much can you do to help your students’ value learning?

10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?

14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?

18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?

21. How well can you respond to defiant students?

22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?

Four of the 7 questions fall within the Engagement subscale; two questions fall within the Instruction subscale and one question is in the Classroom Management subscale.

Finding 2: Three subscales

Data from the 3-subcales of the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey has been disaggregated. I noticed a finding in one of the subscales that revealed a difference between the other two subscales (see Table 5). In comparing the three subscales, *Engagement* received responses that were lower than *Classroom Management* and *Instruction*. I propose that teacher responses indicate a stronger ability for teachers to control their own classroom management and to also control their instruction strategies. However, maintaining the ability to either engage with students and/or keep students engaged provides more challenge. Survey results indicate teachers who took the survey, indicate that within the *Engagement* subscale, they may not be certain that they are able to:

Question 1. Get through to the most difficult students (6.5626).

Question 4. Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork (6.5625).

Question 22. Assist families in helping their children do well in school (5.6875).

In contrast, teacher responses within the *Engagement* subscale, indicate they are more certain they may be able to:

Questions 6. Get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork (7.4375).

Question 12. Foster student creativity (7.3125).

Teachers responding to the survey believe that they are able to manage their classroom behavior better than they may be able to develop instructional strategies. However, it is a very narrow margin of classroom management (7.2375) compared to instruction (7.1625).

Within the subscale of *Classroom Management*, teachers believe that they are more certain they are able to:

Questions 5. Make their expectations clear about student behavior (8.0625).

Question 8. Establish classroom routines to keep activities running smoothly (7.5).

Question 13. Get their students to follow classroom rules (7.625).

In contrast, within the subscale of *Classroom Management*, teachers believe they are somewhat less certain that they may be able to:

Question 19. Keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson (6.6875).

Within the subscale of *Instruction*, teachers believe that they are more certain they are able to:

Question 7. Respond to difficult questions from their students (7.375).

Question 10. Gauge student comprehension of what they have taught (7.375).

Question 20. Provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused (7.5625).

Question 24. Provide appropriate challenges for very capable students (7.375).

Within the subscale of *Instruction*, teachers believe they are somewhat less certain that they are able to:

Question 11. Craft good questions for their students (7.25).

Question 18. Use a variety of assessment strategies (6.875).

Question 23. Implement alternative strategies in their classroom (6.8).

In summary, I notice a pattern between questions 11, 18, 19, 22 and 23. These 5 identified questions are in the low to mid value range, indicating teachers believe they have ‘very little’ to ‘some influence.’ Questions 11, 19, and 23 display a peak pattern, indicating that respondents feel strongly that they either have ‘very little’ impact or ‘a great deal’ with little in between, in this case ‘very little’ impact. Questions 18 and 22 are categorized as being in a range on the Likert scale, and fall at the lower value. The 5 identified questions tend to encompass all areas of the scale that would indicate teachers believe that they are able to do

‘nothing’ to ‘very little.’ Therefore, I would suggest that teachers who took the survey feel the least confident about these 5 questions and would need further professional development to strengthen their belief that they may be able to impact students ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a great deal’ in the following areas:

Question 11. Crafting good questions for their students (Instruction).

Question 18. Using a variety of assessment strategies (Instruction).

Question 19. Keeping a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson (Classroom Management).

Question 22. Assisting families in helping their children do well in school (Engagement).

Question 23. Implementing alternative strategies in their classroom (Instruction).

Finding 3: Question #22

I identified the correlation between question #22 on the teacher survey and the assumed role a teacher has between a students’ parent and themselves. The question, *How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?* resulted in the following outcome by teacher responses: 3 responses ‘nothing’ to ‘very little,’ 10 responses ‘some influence,’ and 3 responses ‘quite a bit’ to ‘a great deal.’

Data from the Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey suggests that 81% of teachers who took the survey may display evidence of a low sense of self-efficacy when it comes to whether or not they believe they may “be able to” assist families in helping their children do well in school. Specifically, teachers believe they may be able to do ‘nothing,’ ‘very little,’ or have ‘some influence’ to assist families in helping their children do well in school. Teachers may feel that the parent/teacher relationship creates a strain, due the expectation of communicating with parents and may directly impact a teacher’s job satisfaction resulting in teacher burnout

(Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), Oh, 2011; Protheroe, 2008). Skaalvik and Skaalvik report that the strain caused from poor or difficult parent relations may “increase anxiety, create a feeling that one is not doing a good job, and promote a need for self-protection” (2010, p. 1061). Research from Silverman and Davis confirm this theory, suggesting involvement with parents decline with a low teacher sense of self-efficacy (Silverman & Davis, 2009). In addition, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy may fault areas out of the students’ control of learning, such as “factors external to teaching, such as students’ abilities and home environments” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Rose & Medway, 1981, as cited by Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy may attribute the aforementioned external reasons to explain why students may not learn, “rather than the influence a teacher may have” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Additional research by Roger Goddard supports this theory, suggesting “schools had a greater positive impact on student achievement than the locale of the school (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) and individual student demographic variables (e.g., race, gender, socio-economic status)” (Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy, 2000, p. 497).

Qualitative Data

Finding 4: Classroom observations

Data acquired from the 5-classroom observations (Teacher Demographics, Table 6), supports research suggesting that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy are able to increase a students’ academic capabilities, in addition to develop and strengthen their social and behavioral skills. In addition, research gathered from Ashton and Webb (1986) and reported by Schunk (1991) leads to the belief that teachers having a strong sense of self-efficacy “were more likely to have a positive classroom environment (e.g., less student anxiety and teacher criticism), support students’ ideas, and meet the needs of all students. High teaching efficacy was

positively associated with use of praise, individual attention to students, [and] checking on students' progress in learning" (Schunk, 1991, p. 219). Research and data from the 5-classroom observations support the aforementioned characteristics and further support the following student outcomes, all having been observed and documented during the classroom observations:

Authentic student outcomes observed from the five teacher classroom observations supporting
the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey

Self-Efficacy Survey	Student Outcome
<p>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</p> <p>2. How much can you do to help students think critically?</p> <p>6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?</p> <p>9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?</p>	<p>Increased student motivation, which contributes to “learner satisfaction . . . learners have a higher sense of achievement, improving their learning motivation in order to learning more and continuously . . . reducing the drop out rate: as student learning satisfaction rises, learning failure falls” (Tai, Hu, Wang and Chen, 2012) and “motivation is enhanced when students perceive they are making progress in learning” (Schunk, 1991, p. 208).</p>
<p>4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?</p> <p>6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?</p> <p>22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?</p>	<p>Interest from students to seek mentor relationship with teacher, to “help students envision a ‘future self’ and to guide them in [their] pursuit” (Pajares & Urdan, 2006, p. 123).</p>
<p>2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?</p> <p>9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?</p> <p>12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?</p>	<p>Students are more inclined to take on challenges and persevere to achieve the challenge, “resulting in increased student achievement . . . and improvement in cognitive development” (Mojavezi and Tamiz, 2012, p. 488-489).</p>
<p>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</p> <p>4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?</p> <p>14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?</p> <p>17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level of individual students?</p> <p>20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?</p>	<p>Students feel cared for by the teacher and, they try and do not give up (teachers who care about students have the following characteristics: “patience, humor, ability to listen, and expressions of interest in and concern for students . . . particularly for students who were experiencing pressures and problems at home . . .” (Phelan, Yu and Davidson, 1994 by Pajares & Urdan, 2006, p. 130).</p>
<p>5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</p> <p>8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?</p> <p>13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?</p> <p>19. How well can you keep a few problem students</p>	<p>Students’ ability to self-regulate, manage their behavior, and act in ways that encourage cooperation with their peers.</p>

from ruining an entire lesson?	
3. How much can you control disruptive behavior in the classroom? 10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught? 16. How well can you establish classroom management system with each group of students?	Increased positive attitudes towards school, created by “a learning environment in which students feel comfortable and confident, enhancing positive attitudes towards school” (Al-Alwan & Mahasneh, 2014, p. 172).

Comparatively, the five teacher volunteers observed for this research exhibit characteristics, which research suggests contributes to a strong sense of self-efficacy. Data from the literature, as well as data gathered from the classroom observations identifies efficacious teachers embrace the following characteristics:

Authentic teacher characteristics observed from the five teacher classroom observations,
supporting the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey

Self-Efficacy Survey	Teacher Characteristics
<p>2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?</p> <p>5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</p> <p>11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?</p> <p>18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?</p> <p>23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?</p>	<p>Teachers are open to new ideas and implement new instructional methods and strategies that specifically support student learning and student needs, which “press students towards completing more complex tasks and developing deeper understandings” (Silverman and Davis, 2009).</p>
<p>4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?</p> <p>6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?</p> <p>17. How much can you do to adjust your lesson to the proper level for individual students?</p>	<p>Apply more challenging, but meaningful and innovative instructional methods and learning activities, such as small group work, rather than whole-class instruction, “thereby allowing the opportunity for more individualized instruction” (Pajares, 2002, p. 1).</p>
<p>7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?</p> <p>9. How much can you do to help your students’ value learning?</p> <p>14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?</p>	<p>Teachers are less critical of students making errors and admit to their own need for improvement, resulting in “students . . . understand what it means to be a lifelong learner” Pajares & Urdan, 2001, p. 129).</p>
<p>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</p> <p>16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?</p> <p>20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?</p>	<p>Work longer with struggling students.</p>
<p>12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?</p>	<p>Encourage and foster student autonomy.</p>
<p>5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</p> <p>7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?</p> <p>24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?</p>	<p>Provide cues and feedback on how well students are learning and how they may improve, “rather than scores on assignments” (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012, p. 484).</p>
<p>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</p> <p>3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?</p> <p>10. How much can you gauge student</p>	<p>Continue to persist, even when a lesson or student has not produced desirable outcomes.</p>

comprehension of what you have taught? 23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	
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Research supports teachers who have a strong sense of self-efficacy are motivated to teach, devote more time to academic instruction, are driven to help students who may be marginal and difficult to teach, have students who learn and are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Oh, 2011; Pajares & Urdan, 2006; Schunk, 1991; Gavora, 2010). Quotes from the five teachers who were observed validate their strong sense of self-efficacy, while also supporting the literature on teacher self-efficacy. The following direct teacher quotes confirm their dedication to students and student success, as well as their commitment to remain in the teaching profession:

“The only kid I cannot reach is the one that doesn’t come to school.”

“I can help [students] enjoy school and believe learning is fun . . . I want them to know I enjoy spending my days with them.”

“I am here to help, not hurt . . . I leave my ego at the door.”

“I ask students if they are okay.”

“I work to change my tone and attitude to be more compassionate and positive . . . [and] validate a job well done.”

“I can best impact students lives by establishing a relationship, a safe place and trust.”

“I am looking for growth, not perfection . . . I celebrate growth and acknowledge my own mistakes . . . “

The following evidence represent authentic strategies, comments and quotes documented from the 5-classroom observations, as they relate to the 4-domains using the CLASS scoring guide (Table 3), and as they relate to the questions from the Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey:

Relationships: Physical Proximity, Peer Interactions, Shared Positive Affect, Social Conversation (Pianta, Hamre and Mintz, 2012)

Questions	Teacher evidence from classroom observations
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	Teacher kneels next to frustrated student, speaks in a soft and calming manner, validates the student frustration and encourages him to write about what he is currently struggling with.
2. How much can you do to help students think critically?	“Can you try to do the second page independently and then double check your work?” and “ Nice job synthesizing that information and putting it together.”
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	“When you’re ready, let me know . . . I’m right here.” Teacher leans into students appropriately, smiles and gently asks for work, reminding student of what they need to submit next.
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	Teacher reminds students of classroom norms, “Guys, I need to remind you that part of this is to politely encourage and engage others in discussion.” Students raise their hands and wait to be called upon before speaking.
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	“That was really good, thank you.” Frequent praise and genuine feedback for students as they complete their assignments.
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	Strengthens a student’s ability to discover his mistake by collaborating with a peer, “Look at his [paper] and see what’s different.” Student looks closely then exclaims, “Oh!” realizing his mistake. A student walks in to class and the teacher immediately makes eye contact and enthusiastically greets the student by name, welcoming him to class.
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	Classroom norms are understood and respected by all. Teacher discreetly kneels next to student and gently reminds him to put away his iPad without creating a scene or calling the student out.
16. How much can you do to establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	Most students sit at a round table when reading with the teacher. Two students, who work best independently, work near the others, but at their own desk, still able to participate in discussions.
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	Anticipates possible student misconception when explaining the assignment and provides an exemplar, using the overhead, providing an alternative explanation and using both visual and verbal communication.
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	Instructional methods are unique, diverse and provide a sense of enjoyment, as well as meaningful learning for students.
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	Teacher listens to student conversations before offering guidance, allowing students to grapple with the work on their own, but gently pushing them to keep trying, “You’ve got this, look back at your notes . . .”

Positive Affect: Smiling, Laughter and Enthusiasm (Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012).

Questions	Teacher evidence from classroom observations
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	A more difficult student needs help; teacher responds with appropriate nodding of head, smiling and through non-verbal communication gently redirects students.
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	Teacher uses strategy of hand gestures to guide students and appropriately get their attention in quiet and discreet manner.
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	Student completes part of the assignment correctly and teacher raises both arms in excitement and enthusiastically says, "YAY!" "Look at you, you have almost 4 paragraphs . . . woohoo!"
8. How much can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	Students raise hands before they speak and wait to be called on from their peer, who is presenting. Teacher uses a timer to keep the transitions flowing, to avoid loss of instructional time, and students on task, announcing, "we have one-minute to complete the writing assignment."
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	Teacher expresses enthusiasm about the class reading, stating it is one of her favorites.
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	Teacher patiently listens to student walk through the process of solving the problem, waiting until the student completes her problem solving before the teacher provides feedback.
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	Teacher walks about the room, checking student's pre-assessment, following the class discussion, providing feedback when necessary, smiling and engaging with students, preparing them for their summative assessment, a written summary of teacher assigned themes.
19. To what extent can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	During the group activity, teacher smiles and laughs with the students, keeping near their group and maintaining frequent engagement with the students in the group.

Positive Communications: Positive Comments and Positive Expectations (Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012)

Questions	Teacher evidence from classroom observations
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	“The good thing is, you have done all the thinking to develop and design this chart, now you put everything together for a first draft.”
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	“If you want to use whole numbers, I am fine with that; don’t make it more complicated.”
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	“Now let’s get into our circles for our reading assignment . . . it will be helpful if we’re facing each other and you can see each other’s faces when you’re reading.”
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	Repeats instructions more than once, asking students questions about the assignment to ensure student understanding. Uses Habits for Success to prepare students for today’s assignment and to go review goals prior lesson.
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	Teacher continued to probe student, not giving up until he was able to explain the answer, “and what next? . . . how can we be sure? . . . show me!”
12. How much can you do to foster creativity?	Students are given a choice between which prompt to write about, “You can address 1, 2 . . . or all of them” as she points to the prompts displayed on the board.
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	Frequent praise when student demonstrates success, “You are doing a good job . . . I knew you had it . . . how ‘bout we read together . . . can you read with me?”
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	Teacher using a calm voice, appropriately touching the student on the back, leans into him and asks if he needs to take a walk. Student leaves the classroom for about 3 minutes, returns and is calm and able to focus on the assignment.
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	Teacher uses verbal and non-verbal communication to reach all students, such as showing the class a book they may access for further research, using the penlight to direct them to a word on the board or a poster in the room, using visuals such as a PowerPoint and explaining the assignment, then asking students to repeat what is expected.
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation of example when students are confused?	“I don’t want it to confuse you . . . different terminology but they mean the same thing.” Teacher demonstrates a more simple way to solve the problem, while achieving the same results, “They try to show you, you’re dividing; you don’t need to do it that way . . . you can simply write the answer . . .” Teacher repeats instruction more than once, asking students questions about the assignment and asking student to repeat the instructions back to her to ensure student understanding.

Respect: Respectful Language, Use of Each Other's Names, Warm, Calm Voice, Listening to Each Other, Cooperation (Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012).

Questions	Teacher evidence from classroom observations
3. How much can you control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	Teacher uses a calm voice when speaking; her patient demeanor creates a sense of tranquility that promotes a relaxing and supportive environment, reducing chaos.
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	Teacher praises student by name, and thanks each student as they submit their assignment. Teacher appropriately speaks with student who has been absent, providing him with missed work, helping to keep him organized with the next lesson and asking how may she help him get caught up?
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	Students listen thoughtfully to one another when speaking and respect their peers' responses. Classroom tone moves at a relaxing pace, allowing students appropriate wait time to think and reflect.
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	Students do not talk out of order and provide each other with the space and quiet to work.
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	Aware of a student who is struggling, teacher anticipates the student is confused and asks her how she can help, before the student becomes agitated and gives up.
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	Aware that students are moving at a faster pace and may become confused, teacher states, "You guys are getting ahead; talk through the problem out loud . . . simplify this."
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	Students listen thoughtfully to one another when presenting, anticipating the peer-assessment they provided for one another.
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	"Come on 'pookie' can you give me a little more work? We're almost done!"

Every question, except question #22, *How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?* was observed during the classroom observations at least once.

Common strategies I observed in each of the classrooms included: teachers who exhibited signs of enjoying what they were doing (smiling, laughing with students and being overall happy about being a teacher), teachers were polite and respectful towards all students, all classrooms display a warm and welcome environment, communication is clear and teachers' anticipate possible student confusion, offering alternative explanation/strategies without students seeking clarity, students know that making mistakes are okay and they are confident to ask teachers for guidance

and lastly, all teachers used student names frequently. One teacher summed up what I observed from all 5 volunteer teachers, “I believe I can help [students] enjoy school and believe that learning is fun . . . I want them to know I enjoy spending my days with them . . . I try to be gentle and thoughtful in my interactions with everyone” (Lamkins, 2016).

Limitations of Data Collection

The number of respondents who took the teacher survey and the classroom teachers observed who did not complete all questions on the pre-conference and/or post-conference forms may limit complete accuracy of the research study. The teachers’ survey included 16 teacher responses, or 40% participation. The pre and post-conference documents may have been selectively incomplete, limiting complete accuracy of data collection I gathered. Teachers and students in the classrooms which I observed were aware of the observation and students may have been primed for the impending observation. While this is a heuristic conclusion and I do not believe this to be the case, advance notice and possible preparation for the observation may have skewed the data.

Summary of Findings

Research informs us that high schools continue to struggle to narrow the gap between students dis-enrolling, possibly exploring non-traditional methods of schooling and students receiving a high school diploma. Marginal students, who present with a wide array of unique needs, often discover that the traditional high school setting is not effective and does not support them. I hypothesize that high school teachers may have good intentions, but are unable to maintain a classroom environment in which students are praised, students are confident to make mistakes and they know their teachers are committed to their success. Rather, high school teachers often place the responsibility of learning on the student with little teacher support,

guidance, resources and personal attention, providing a less structured environment that may give students more freedom and a message that not attending school or doing classwork is a choice rather than an obligation (Rosenkrantz et al., 2014). Based upon research and data, I am strongly convinced that teachers play an integral role in their skills and ability to influence high school retention and keep marginal students in a traditional high school setting on the pathway to achieving a high school diploma.

I suggest that teachers may develop and implement strategies that promote a positive learning environment, in which marginal students are motivated to stay in school and overcome barriers to achieve academic success (Rosengranz, de la Torre, Stevens and Allensworth, 2014; Miles and Ferris, 2015). I also suggest that efficacious teachers are more likely to contribute to the academic success of all students and develop a relationship with marginal students who often need a variety of instructional strategies to be successful. Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy tend to apply the philosophy of a Responsive Classroom Model, which embraces a positive classroom environment by imbedding the following practices in their daily instruction: establish clear and concise communication and feedback, practice intentional positive language, model respect, maintain an awareness of meeting students social and emotional needs, choosing the right tone of voice and displaying sensitivity to student needs (Jones, 2015; Meredith, 2014; Curby, Rimm-Kaufman and Abry, 2013; Wood and Freeman-Loftis, 2012), resulting in a “noticeably calmer, friendlier, kinder [environment] more conducive to learning” (Jones, 2015, p. 2), an improvement “in student engagement, decreases [in] behavior problems, . . . more high quality teaching” (Meredith, 2014, p. 2), and “an overall tone of safety and caring” (Wood & Freeman-Loftis, 2012).

This chapter presented the four findings that emerged from the data. The findings are intended to reveal solutions and recommendations to the research questions:

What interventions and strategies may be implemented by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment? How will a positive classroom-learning environment respond to the needs of marginal students so that most students remain in a mainstream high school setting?

The teacher survey results revealed 3 of the 4 findings that emerged from the data: 1) teachers who responded to the survey may be less likely to exhibit characteristics of self-efficacy 2) the subscale, *Engagement*, predicts that teachers may be less certain of their ability to engage with students and/or keep students engaged and, 3) teachers who responded indicate they may be able to do ‘nothing’ or ‘very little’ to help families support their children to do well in school.

The 4th finding is an outcome of the 5-classroom observations, which show a strong correlation in teachers who have a positive classroom environment are able to reach and maintain relationships and academic success with the more at-risk or marginal students. The findings from the observations are convincing and support the theory that I pose, which states that when teachers imbed efficacious strategies, students are more likely to remain engaged, are more likely to stay in school and are less likely to give up and demonstrate increased academic success. See Table 6 for the demographics on the 5 volunteer teachers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research study was to discover if teacher self-efficacy and a positive classroom environment may be able to support the academic success of marginal students and support their commitment to remain in a traditional high school setting. If data supports teacher efficacy and a positive classroom environment, thus maintaining and encouraging marginal students to remain in school, what does the classroom environment look like? Specifically, what strategies do teachers imbed into their classroom norms and instruction that contribute to a positive learning environment?

Interpretation of Findings

Teachers' self-efficacy survey

Data from the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Survey was less revealing and more contradictory than what I expected. Questions relating to similar topics, such as providing alternative assessments to students, providing motivation or student behavior were inconsistent. Teachers responded that they could "quite a bit" provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused. However, teachers responded that they may have "some influence" when using a variety of assessment strategies or implementing alternative strategies. This may suggest that teachers are able to quickly alleviate a student's confusion by a verbal explanation, but are less able to provide a tangible resource (strategy) for struggling students.

Teachers responded that they could "quite a bit" get students to believe they can do well in school. However, when it comes to getting through to more difficult students or motivating students who show low interest in schoolwork, teachers responded that they might have "some

influence.” Therefore, it may be proposed that getting students to believe they can do well in school is very different than actually getting students to demonstrate academic success.

Teachers who responded that they could “quite a bit” make their expectations clear about student behavior. However, controlling disruptive behavior, keeping a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson and responding to defiant students was “some influence.” This data may suggest that teachers know how they want students to behave and are clear in explaining their behavioral norms, but are less able to enforce and maintain their expectations, particularly to students that may require more guidance/direction.

Lastly, data from the survey regarding question #22 on how much can teachers assist families in helping their children do well in school is curious, as research from the literature suggests strong implications about teachers not being able to communicate to parents. Specifically, the strain from difficult parent relations may “increase anxiety, create a feeling that one is not doing a good job, and promote a need for self-protection” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, p. 1061) and result in a lack of job satisfaction and burnout (Majavazi & Tamiz, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; and Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). Literature also supports the theory that teachers may blame external factors unrelated to teaching, “such as students’ abilities and home environments” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 612) as a reason why students are unable to learn, rather than contributing this lack of academic success to their own influence (Goddard, 2000).

While the teacher self-efficacy survey is not as definitive, literature and data support the impact that teacher efficacy has on student achievement and specifically, the potential implications of a positive classroom environment. This research and the literature corroborate a correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student achievement. In addition, literature throughout this research, as well as data collected from the classroom observations support

specific classroom-teaching strategies that teachers implement in their classrooms that support and promote a positive classroom environment.

Classroom observations

The finding that emerged with the most validation is data from the classroom observations, in which the many strategies observed prove to support and enrich a positive classroom environment. The 5 teachers observed are highly committed to their students, and go above and beyond to make sure their students learn, while also valuing the importance of establishing a rapport with students, in which students feel welcome, safe and supported. These characteristics were not only documented during the observation, but also substantiated in the literature. Students in the observed classrooms represent a wide array of students, including marginal students that may struggle and/or not attend some classes, but attend these classes and are able to display satisfactory levels of academic success. Data obtained from the classroom observations are able to provide support that a positive classroom environment meets the needs of most marginal students, keeping them engaged in the traditional high school setting. Specific data documented from the 5 volunteer teachers, in which they apply specific strategies to ensure a positive and conducive learning environment, include but are not limited to: smiling and nodding towards students to validate student questions/concerns, explicit instructions using appropriate language, maintaining close proximity to students to provide immediate and meaningful feedback, enthusiastically praising students and acknowledging success, patience, calm and kindness towards all students, repeating instructions in multiple ways and anticipating possible student confusion, uses student names and/or affectionate nicknames, teacher listens thoughtfully before responding, thank students by name, sincere display of being a teacher and wanting to help students learn.

Implications & Further Research

The results of this data is most useful to high schools that may experience undesirable drop-out rates and are aware of marginal students who may seek alternative options to their education based upon the traditional high school setting not being able to meet their academic, social and behavioral needs. The results of the research suggests that efficacious teachers and positive classroom environments may narrow the drop-out rate, increase student achievement and reduce the number of marginal students from becoming dis-engaged in the traditional high school setting.

The research may be further advanced and possibly result in more accurate and meaningful data if all teachers had taken the survey and all teachers were observed using the CLASS scoring guide. Acquiring data from all 39 teachers, as compared to a much smaller sampling could certainly reveal a completely different outcome, likely resulting in different recommendations. In addition, data from all teachers, resulting in a shift in the culture of the school to embrace teacher self-efficacy may result in collective efficacy, which supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Collective self-efficacy is the "perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students . . ." (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000, p. 480).

I wholeheartedly recommend that undergraduate students who are pursuing careers in education be provided with opportunities in their coursework to better understand teacher self-efficacy and further self-efficacy to have intentional impact in their classrooms and with students. In addition, school districts may benefit from acquiring more knowledge of teacher self-efficacy and require teacher candidates to explain self-efficacy and how they may be using self-efficacy to motivate and help students learn and be academically successful.

Further research to develop a Responsive Classroom approach at the high school level may be critical and instrumental in contributing to a positive learning environment, in addition to recognizing the importance of social and emotional learning and providing opportunities for student voices to be heard and valued (Gimbert, 2002; *The Responsive Classroom Approach*, 2014). Traditionally, the Responsive Classroom approach was developed for implementation at the elementary levels. However, this research-based approach, which fosters a positive climate, warrants more research at the high school level, as it “emphasizes the importance of building a strong, positive learning community as a foundation for strong academics” (Jones, 2015). A Responsive Classroom model builds social and emotional development into the academic curriculum, “stemming from the notion that children learn best through social interaction and when they are explicitly taught social and emotional skills along with the academic lessons” (*The Responsive Classroom Approach*, n.d.). A high school teacher, Dawn Agdomar, proposed a morning meeting approach, replicating a Responsive Classroom strategy designed to help students feel a sense of belonging and caring for one another (Gimbert, 2002; Jones, 2015, Finley, 2014). The results of this idea was well received by high school students, as all students “were in attendance . . . participated . . . [and] loved the thought of getting to know something personal about their classmates and saying something nice to students in the class” (Finley, p. 3. 2014).

Lastly, teachers at the site school who took the Teachers’ Sense of Self-Efficacy survey may find the most beneficial professional development in having support with the following 5 questions: 11, 18, 19, 22 and 23.

Recommendations for Action

A recommendation for action suggests a collective efficacy approach, as mentioned above. Teachers are less likely to work in isolation today, than many years ago. The expectation and reality of a team approach, requiring frequent collaboration from teachers to provide common alignment of content and commonly aligned assessments, has become the norm in education. This shift in education would support an organized and collective effort for all teachers to have a unified front on understanding and applying self-efficacy for increased student achievement (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Goddard, Hoy and Hoy theorize that “the consequences of high school collective teacher efficacy will be the acceptance of challenging goals, strong organizational effort, and a persistence that leads to better performance” (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000, p. 486). A collective approach to increasing student achievement versus an individual approach results in a stronger and more influential teacher model to meet students’ needs, in addition to themselves becoming master teachers. The difference between a collective approach and an individual approach may be better understood with this example:

“Individual orientation: *I am able to get through to the most difficult students.*

Group orientation: *Teachers in this school can get through to the most difficult students”*

(Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000, p. 486-487).

Creating, practicing and maintaining a common belief of values, norms, instructional strategies and a common vision brings teachers together as a powerful entity. When teachers collectively embrace a common approach to meeting students’ academic needs, in addition to their social and emotional needs through collective self-efficacy, it is more likely that marginal students are supported and achieve academic success. Research suggests when teachers shared

beliefs of a strong and determined collective self-efficacy permeates to reach the most difficult students, student achievement is improved overall (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Protheore, 2008). Teachers who embrace collective self-efficacy are more likely to band together to support a student and not give up on that student (Protheroe, 2008).

Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy, who took the teacher survey, believe they are able to make a difference with these survey questions: supporting the most difficult students, ability to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork, are able to help their students value learning, can calm students who may be disruptive or become elevated, are able to create lessons and assessments that meet the needs of individual students, and are able to create a classroom environment that has the structure necessary for student success and the flexibility to assist students with diverse needs. Research suggests, and the classroom observations have verified that these strategies, whether intentional or unintentional support marginal students, contributing to their ability to achieve academic, social and behavioral success and keep them in a traditional high school setting.

In addition to the characteristics of an efficacious teacher, intentional and non-intentional efforts to develop and preserve strategies create a positive learning environment are also essential in supporting marginal students. The following classroom strategies, which are supported by the literature, the survey and the classroom observations, when implemented and maintained by teachers, have been proven to support marginal students: establish clear and concise communication and feedback, practice intentional positive language, model respect, an awareness of meeting students social and emotional needs, choosing the right tone of voice and a sensitivity to student needs (Jones, 2015; Meredith, 2014; Curby, Rimm-Kaufman and Abry, 2013; Wood and Freeman-Loftis, 2012), resulting in a “noticeably calmer, friendlier, kinder

[environment] more conducive to learning” (Jones, 2015, p. 2), an improvement “in student engagement, decreases [in] behavior problems, . . . more high quality teaching” (Meredith, 2014, p. 2), and “an overall tone of safety and caring” (Wood & Freeman-Loftis, 2012).

The teacher survey resulted in interesting outcomes, which may warrant further study and follow-up. I was surprised that teachers who took the survey believe they may be less able to do ‘very little’ or have ‘some influence’ with student engagement. It is compelling to conclude that this may be the result of teachers being able to control their classroom management and instruction, but less able to control student engagement, which is often connected to emotions, trust, relationships and respect, i.e., engagement. I was surprised and pleased that, within the subscale of Instruction, teachers believe they are able to ‘quite a bit’ support students when it comes to responding to difficult questions, gauge student comprehension of what they taught and be able to provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused.

In contrast and also within the Instruction subscale, I was not surprised that teachers who took the survey believe they can do ‘very little’ to have ‘some influence’ when crafting good questions for their students, use a variety of assessment strategies and implement alternative strategies in their classroom.

I would expect that the results of question #22 regarding teachers and how they may be able to assist families with their children’s academic success may have been ‘nothing’ to ‘very little’. Data indicates that 81% of teachers who took the survey may not feel as if they are able to assist families in helping their children do well in school. However, I did not expect that the literature explaining and validating the rationale surrounding this question would be as interesting and revealing as it was. Literature suggests that communicating with parents in an attempt to form a relationship on the behalf of student progress/concerns may create a level of

anxiety for teachers. This anxiety may lead to teachers not feeling satisfied in their careers and contribute to teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), Oh, 2011; Protheroe, 2008). A low teacher self-efficacy may result in attributing “students’ abilities and home environments” to their lack of academic success, (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Rose & Medway, 1981, as cited by Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) “rather than the influence a teacher may have” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), indicating a teacher’s reluctance to reach out to parents and offer assistance.

Lastly, I was not surprised about the findings from the classroom observations, and am inspired by these 5 teachers and how many students they are impacting everyday by their commitment and passion to stay in education. They remain in education because they truly adore their students, love coming to work knowing they can make a difference and they display personal characteristics and implement classroom strategies which, not only promote a positive learning environment, but also help to shape the culture of the school in becoming more efficacious and support our marginal students.

Concluding Remarks

My commitment to at-risk (marginal) students was the driving force of this research paper. These students continue to inspire me and force me to think everyday how I might be able to meet their needs and support them in achieving academic success. I continue to witness students that are academically capable of succeeding in a traditional high setting, yet struggle to achieve success and often, at the hands of the adults that have committed their lives to students and education. It is critical that administrators and teachers realize the fragility of marginal students and that our tone, demeanor, role modeling and persona influence and shape the attitudes, decisions, character and future of the students we come in contact with every single day. The data, research and findings from this research have convinced me that teachers must

develop and sustain a strong sense of self-efficacy, as this has the most meaningful and long lasting impact on students.

I have witnessed student's lives being changed by caring, patient and humane teachers. The students we have today often come from lives that are difficult and out of their control. Many of these students need to make adult decisions with little to no adult mentors in their lives. The research presented verifies the importance of teacher efficacy and how a positive classroom environment provides all students, but particularly marginal students, the opportunities to accomplish their goals. These students need an adult to believe in them. The literature from this research supports teachers that have a strong sense of self-efficacy believes that all their students experience academic success. In addition, the research, literature, classroom observations and survey results presented, provides ample evidence of interventions and strategies that, when implemented by teachers, contribute to a positive classroom-learning environment.

Personal Reflection

This study has inspired me to further research the reality of creating a collective self-efficacy in my own school. The data strongly supports how effective a single teacher is when epitomizing a strong sense of self-efficacy and the impact he/she has on their students. But to multiply this impact on how an entire school of unified teachers, all epitomizing a strong sense of self-efficacy would be remarkable, life changing and truly have the power to change the paradigm shift for high school teachers. I envision this changing a schools daily attendance, graduation rate and keeping marginal students in school and experiencing success. However, the most significant change would be the students who would discover academic success for the first time of their school career.

I would see teachers that genuinely cared about their students and would not give up on their students, but continued to believe in them, support them and would treat students with equity and no personal bias. They know and believe that a child's socio-economic status, race, or background does not stand in the way of a student achieving academic success and accomplishing goals. Teachers would arrive to school prepared, ready to present engaging lesson and deliver instruction that would be understood and applied by all students. They know that their planning must offer various methods of delivering instruction. Teachers are excited to be teaching and it shows in the way they smile, use student names in a positive way and connect in meaningful ways with their students. Teachers would have frequent and collaborative conversations with each other about their instruction and their students, for the purpose of ensuring all students are achieving success and are prepared for college and career readiness. Teacher self-reflection would be the norm and would guide teachers in their future planning and instruction. Personal and professional growth is searched out, requested and supported by administrators and the school district.

Students would feel valued and would know that making mistakes is not only okay, but also part of improving and learning. Students know that giving up is not an option; the norm is to persevere when things become difficult and their teachers try different ways to help them learn. Students are challenged and are not be set up for failure. They experience an environment that is safe, they arrive to school on time, they are prepared and motivated to learn. Like their teachers, who role model compassion, students also are kind to one another and know how to self-regulate their behavior.

Bandura's social cognitive theory is based on the theory that individuals are able to change their behavior and make things happen by their own actions (Pajares, 2002).

Specifically, “individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions, that what people think, believe and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Self-efficacy is a product of Bandura’s social cognitive theory and complements the components that provide teachers with the skill set to motivate, inspire and develop successful learners by creating an environment that supports most high school students. Acquiring a strong sense of self-efficacy strengthens an individual’s ability to perform and accomplish difficult tasks. They do not see challenges as being threatening and something to avoid, but rather see challenges as attainable goals and work harder when facing challenges. If they do not know how to overcome a challenge, they learn, research, ask questions and keep trying until success is achieved. Individuals who embrace self-efficacy achieve personal success, experience less stress and are less likely to experience depression and job burn-out (Bandura, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009; Skunk, 1991; Dai & Sternberg, 2004).

I am unsure how an organization as diverse as a school, with many initiatives, personalities and challenges would embrace collective self-efficacy. However, I am committed and empowered by the work of Bandura and the many, many other researchers in this study who have studied self-efficacy and a positive learning environment and have the data and evidence that supports collective self-efficacy as an essential characteristic of a school, “positively affecting numerous teacher behaviors that tend to increase student achievement” (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000, p. 498).

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Appendix A
Teachers Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale

A 9-point Likert scale composed of 24 items and three subscales: Engagement, Instruction and Classroom Management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001)

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?
9. How much can you do to help your students' value learning?
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?

Appendix B
Teacher Pre-Observation Questions

- 1) Describe how you believe you can make a difference in a child's life.
- 2) Explain what part of your students' lives do you feel that you have the most impact on.
- 3) Explain how you think your colleagues feel about teaching and how that affects the way you interact with students.
- 4) Describe how colleagues' strong sense of self-efficacy or low sense of self-efficacy might impact your level of self-efficacy.
- 5) Explain how communicating with parents help you to feel as though you can achieve more with your students in terms of academic success, behavior and social responsibility.
- 6) Explain how communicating with colleagues help you to feel as though you can achieve more with your students in terms of academic success, behavior and social responsibility.
- 7) Explain how you think your level of self-efficacy, or feeling as if you really make a difference in your students' lives really impact their academic success. Identify one example.
- 8) Identify ways that administration can improve your self-efficacy in your classroom and instruction.
- 9) Identify factors outside of your professional domain add to or take away from you feeling efficacious in the classroom (exercise, participating in religious activities, advancing your education, family, how administration treats you, how your colleagues treat you, community involvement, etc.).
- 10) Do you ever want to leave the teaching profession? Explain why you remain committed to stay in education.

- 11) Reflect on what actions you imbed that may positively impact students' academic performance and their behavior.

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Appendix C

The Videotaped Observation

The purpose of the observation is to observe teachers engage with students and identify methods used to model positive behavior and components that have established a positive learning environment.

During the observation, I will be looking for:

- Teachers role-modeling positive behavior (providing appropriate praise)
- No signs of anger or impatience
- Specific and clear communication
- Addressing inappropriate behavior early and consistently
- Monitoring students' work with frequent feedback and individualized attention
- Student freedom of expression
- Maintaining a non-judgmental attitude toward student ideas and goals
- Encourage student self-evaluation
- Unconventional ways to deliver instruction

The impact of a positive learning environment may result in:

- Students who are engaged and academically successful
- Students developing confidence to take risks, learn from their mistakes and improve their academic performance
- Students who do not become discouraged and give up
- Students and teachers who go above and beyond to excel
- Students and teachers who are motivated and resilient
- Teachers able to better manage their classroom and students' behavior
- More control of their workload, resulting in increased job satisfaction, less stress and more autonomy
- Full command over their curriculum and content
- Setting challenging goals and persistent in achieving goals
- Collective school-wide sense of self-efficacy, creating an overall positive school learning environment

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Appendix D
Teacher Post-Observation Questions

- 1) Comment on the overall outcome of the lesson. Did the students' respond or behave differently than how you expected? Explain.
- 2) Do you feel as if your instructions were explicit enough to avoid confusion? If not, describe what you plan to do different next time.
- 3) Describe how your actions may have contributed to student academic performance and appropriate student behavior (what do you think helps students learn?).
- 4) Are you able to recall an incident in which you knew your actions would have a direct impact on a student's attitude and performance? Explain.
- 5) Explain how you encourage classroom discussion? Is this an intentional process or does it come naturally?
- 6) Describe any strategies you used during this lesson that contributed to effective student engagement.
- 7) Describe any interaction you had with a student that you would do differently if given another chance.
- 8) Comment on your description of a positive learning environment. What strategies do you contribute and/or role model to achieve a positive learning environment?

Appendix E Teacher Informed Consent

Supporting High School Students using Non-Cognitive Approaches of a Positive Learning Environment and Applying the Framework of Social Cognitive Theory

A research study by Renée Thompson (Principal Investigator)
University of New England, College of Education

Introduction:

Please read this form. You are invited to take part in a research study about marginal students and strategies that may or may not be effective to support most students' ability to remain in the mainstream high school setting. Self-efficacy, praise and creativity will be recommended as necessary to provide a foundation that will contribute to a positive learning environment. The research will examine classroom methods in which educators establish and foster a positive learning environment.

The following information may help you decide whether you would like to participate in the study. Please know that you may withdraw at any time and not participate without judgment and with no risk to your current or future professional teaching career at this school or any other school and without affecting your current or future relationship with the researcher or school district. Deciding to withdraw simply requires an email to the Principal Investigator, stating your interest to no longer participate in the study.

Why is this study being done?

Students identified as at-risk or marginal in American public schools share common behaviors that limit learning opportunities. Marginal students have not developed basic learning skills, which may limit academic and behavioral success (Balfanz and Fox, 2009; Ellis, 2015). The data and ongoing evidence suggests that many high schools are unable to meet the needs of marginal students and therefore are unable to keep these students enrolled in high school. Research suggests that schools may not be doing enough to support marginal students. Students report their high school had not prepared them for college and career plans following high school (Leal, 2015; YouthTruth, 2015) and lack of preparation often results in not remaining in school

The school dropout status creates a significant barrier to the student who is not successful in school, as well as the economy. Dropouts are at a disadvantage of not being able to secure stable and meaningful jobs, which often results in a life of poverty and dependence on public assistance (Chidamber, 2013; Reyna, 2011). Students who do not complete their high school career tend to be single parents who will typically have children that are not successful in school. They are also usually male, ethnic, living in an urban environment and are from low socio-economic families, as well as unstable home lives (Ellis, 2015; Renya, 2011; Grad Nation, 2009; U.S. DOE, 2015; Progress and Challenge, 2015).

Who will be in this study?

Five (5) teachers will volunteer to a videotaped classroom observation, followed up with an interview. The purpose of the observation is to note the interactions and dialogue between the teacher and his/her students. Teachers must be on a current teaching contract and will have experience with marginal students (at-risk). There will be no questions or inquiry regarding personal information. All information gathered for this study will be strictly professional in nature and acquired only during the classroom observation and interview questions. No information or data gathered will become part of any teachers' personnel file or evaluative process.

In addition, all teachers will be asked to take an anonymous online survey, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*. The survey is designed to provide information and better understanding of the challenges teachers often face in the classroom regarding student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management. To maintain anonymity, please sign the consent form regardless of your intent to participate.

What will teachers be asked to do?

The five (5) teacher volunteers will be observed during a regularly scheduled class with no changes necessary to instruction and teacher practice. The classroom observation will be followed with a one-to-one reflection interview with the principal investigator. The time for the interview will not exceed 60 minutes. The teacher may leave the interview at anytime.

What are possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no known risks to participate in this study. Research will be designed and implemented in an extremely ethical manner, with no intended harm to any participant. Possible risks may include: some discomfort or feelings of vulnerability due to a videotaped observation, inconvenience in planning for the classroom observation, inconvenience for a follow-up interview, possible concerns about the results impacting your current position, possible fear of colleagues being informed of the results of the study by teacher names and/or subject area taught.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

The benefits of this subject is the possible impact it may have on the current students that experience a lack of academic success and often struggle to remain in the mainstream high school setting. A possible benefit may be your contribution to further the work and implementation of identifying methods to support marginal students and their enrollment in the mainstream high school setting. The results of this study may have an impact on many students who struggle to find academic success and stay enrolled in the mainstream high school setting. However, I cannot guarantee you will receive any direct benefits from being in this study.

What will it cost me?

There are no costs to participating in this study.

How will my privacy be protected?

All findings will be shared with the participants anytime during the study and also after the study is concluded. No name or content area will be shared or will be associated with the research outcome. The researcher will use carefully selected language and descriptions, which will not suggest bias or imply assumptions. Participants will be identified in broad terms, being intentional to not identify a specific gender, age or subject area taught (Creswell, 2012).

Data will be gathered, analyzed and reported with extreme caution to protect all participants, by ensuring methods of honesty, personal judgment or plagiarism was never part of the research or final results. Credibility of the data and participant confidentiality will be strengthened by frequent self-reflection from the researcher to ensure the participants responses “accurately represents what the participants think, feel, and do” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 112). Videotaped classrooms will only be shared with the specific classroom teacher who is the subject of the observation and video. All videotapes will be destroyed or returned to the volunteer teachers. During the study, all records and data will be locked in the office of the principal investigator.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the principal investigator of the school or school district. You may skip or refuse to answer any question on the survey for any reason and are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the research.

What other options do I have?

You may choose to not participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Renee Thompson, Principal Investigator. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact the principal investigator at 207.577.7980 or renee.thompson@rsu13.org.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at 207.221.4171 or irb@une.edu.

Also, questions or concerns may be directed to Dr. Ella Benson, Lead Advisor for the principal investigator at ebenson@une.edu

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix F Superintendent Consent

To: Superintendent and Members of the RSU #13 School Board

From: Renée Thompson, Principal Oceanside High School East and Doctorate
Student in Educational Leadership, University of New England, Biddeford

As a dedicated educator, a leader of change, and currently both Principal of Oceanside High School and a student in the Doctoral Program for Educational Leadership at the University of New England, I have become intrigued about the large numbers of marginal students in our district that continue to struggle academically and behaviorally in the mainstream high school setting.

To determine the role of educators on how to support our marginal students, I am seeking approval and support to conduct a research study at Oceanside High School East. I have included the following information so that you may understand the purpose of this research, the methodology, and potential value of the study. I welcome any comments and/or questions you may have.

The purpose of this study is to identify strategies that teachers may develop and implement to establish a positive learning environment. The overarching question is whether or not a positive learning environment will support most students and encourage them to remain in the mainstream high school setting. A secondary question will determine how the strategies may be implemented in order to support the academic and behavioral needs of most students and keep them enrolled in the mainstream high school setting. Additional areas of research for this study are the impact of teacher praise, the fostering of student creativity and determining the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) will be conducted. All faculty will be asked to take the survey (strictly volunteer). The survey is designed to provide information and better understanding of what may be causing difficulties for teachers. The survey focuses on three areas: Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management.

The research design for this study is a qualitative method, specifically a case study. As stated by Patton (2002), and quoted by Merriam, a case study research design “should take the reader into the case situation and experience – a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life”

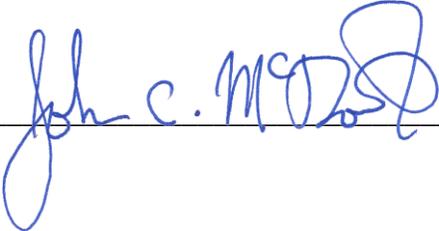
(Merriam, 2009, p. 258). For this research, the classroom will allow the researcher to acquire a snapshot of the daily interactions and conversations in five (5) teacher classrooms to identify possible skills and strategies that may promote a positive learning environment.

Five classroom teachers will be asked to volunteer for a classroom observation. The observation will be videotaped. I will be looking at the dialogue the teachers are having with his/her students, specifically, how are teachers engaging with students? How do teachers motivate students? How does the teacher re-direct a student? How does the teacher keep students engaged and interested? Teachers must be on a teacher contract and must agree to and sign a consent form prior to participating. Teacher volunteers must have heterogeneous groupings of students in order to have a true sampling of all students. A pre-observation interview will be conducted with pre-determined questions (Appendix B).

Following the classroom observation, the five teacher volunteers will then participate in an interview (see Appendix D). The researcher will analyze the teacher/student dialogue from the observations to conduct interview questions. The observation and interview will further the research to better identify strategies that teachers are implementing at Oceanside East that may help support students that are at risk of not graduating and keeping them enrolled in the mainstream school setting.

The five volunteer teachers will receive a consent form thoroughly explaining the study and that the study is completely voluntary and they may opt out at any time with no current or future affect on their relationship with the school, the school district or myself (Appendix E).

I have read and understand the description and purpose of the study, including any known risks and benefits associated with teacher/school participation and agree to support this study.

Superintendent:  Date: 01/12/16

Reference:

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Appendix G Invitation to Participate

Dear Faculty of Oceanside High School,

Many of you may know I am in my final months of completing a doctorate program at UNE in Educational Leadership. The capstone of this program includes a qualitative case study research design to answer my overarching question:

What interventions and strategies may be integrated by educators to establish a positive classroom-learning environment? How will a positive classroom-learning environment respond to the needs of marginal students so that most students remain in a mainstream high school setting?

I am applying a triangulation method of research instruments, using multiple methods of research to “reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation . . . and strengthen [the] study by combining methods” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, pps. 107-108). One of the survey instruments is an online survey.

I am inviting you to participate in an anonymous online survey to determine the overall self-efficacy beliefs of teachers at Oceanside High School. The survey has a ranking between 1-9, representing responses such as “nothing, very little, some influence, quite a bit and a great deal . . . and uses a 9-point Likert type scale composed of 24 items and three sub-scales” (Ozkal, 2014, p. 727).

Please take a few moments to click on the link below and respond to the survey:

https://docs.google.com/a/rsu13.org/forms/d/1HGBSy71TI7QwudaC-sdUMF_juPCuBURU8JEfw5OV078/edit?usp=drive_web

Data will be analyzed and coded based on common themes and patterns that arise. Once data has been compiled, it will be shared with all faculty.

Thank you in advance for your support and participation. This is important to me as a professional but more importantly, how might we better support the many students at Oceanside that struggle to maintain academic success and enrollment in the mainstream setting?

With appreciation,

Renée

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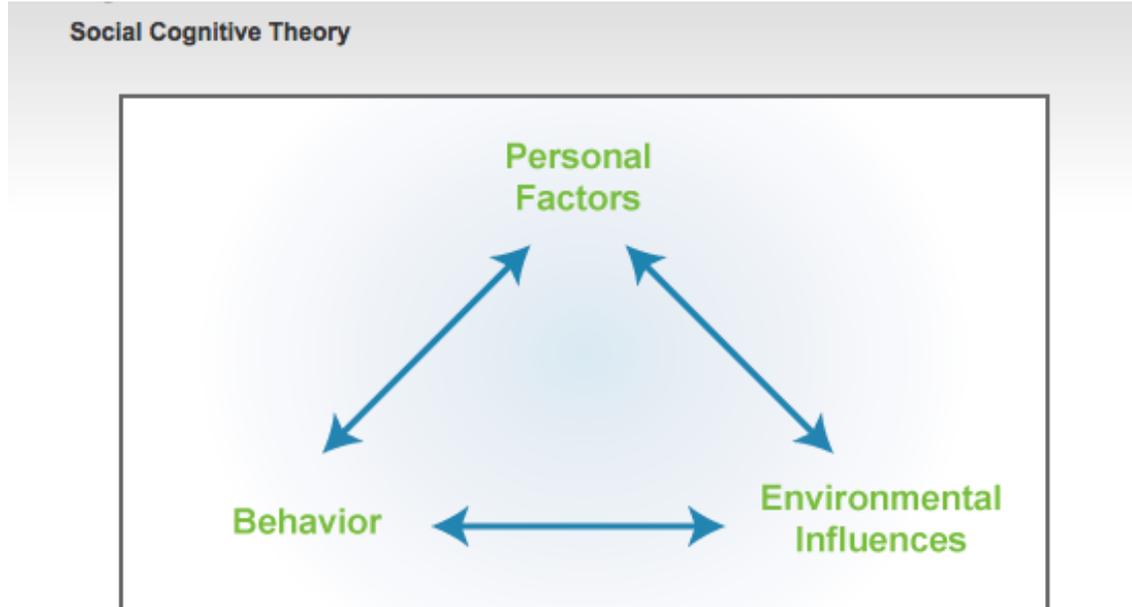


Figure 1
Bandura's Triadic Form

This triadic form is based upon an individual's ability to self-regulate (control/manage) their "proactive use of strategies" (Dai & Sternberg, 2004, p. 326), which results in consistent monitoring or self-assessment using the bi-directional paths of "personal (emotional) reactions, [which] are linked to behavioral performance in specific environmental settings via motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy, task interest or valuing" (Dai & Sternberg, 2004, p. 327).

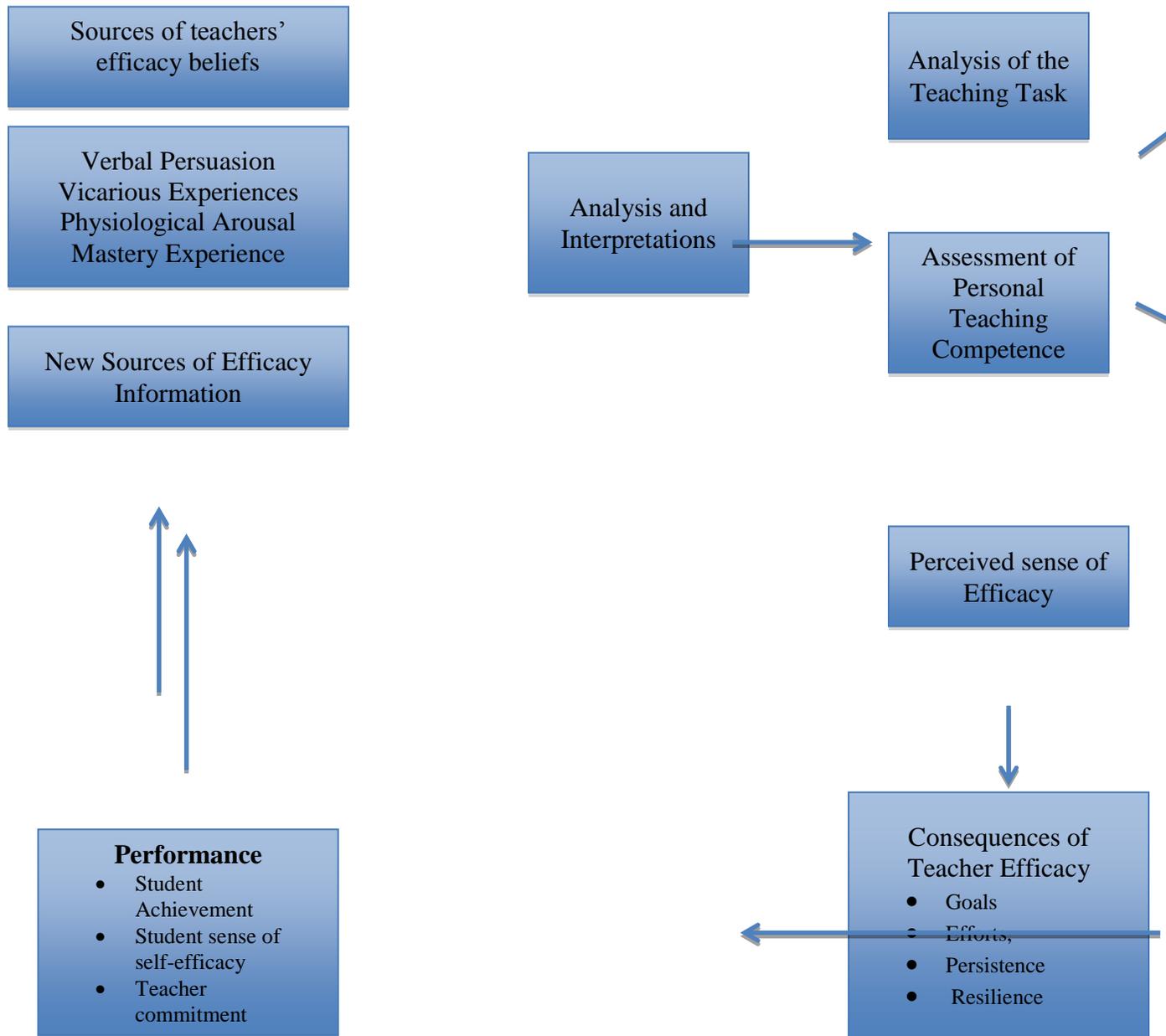


Figure 2
The Cyclical Nature of Teacher Efficacy
 (Tshcannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy, 1998)

Table 1**Differentiating between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth.**

Construct	Definitions	Characteristics	Sample Items	Related articles
Teachers' sense of self-efficacy	Teachers' perceptions of their ability to accomplish specific tasks in a given context	Task and context specific; Future-oriented; not based on comparisons with other people or with other aspects of the self – rather the question is “Can I do it?” Judgment of capacity.	<p>“How much can you do to help your students think critically?” (Instructional)</p> <p>“How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?” (Classroom Management)</p> <p>“How much can you do to motivate students' who show low interest in school work?” (Motivation)</p> <p>“Students would come to me when they have problems in their daily life because they know I can help.” (Relationships)</p>	<p>Tschannon-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998</p> <p>TSES: Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) Ho & Hau, 2004</p>
Teacher self-concept	Global perceptions of my competence as a teacher	Global; present orientation; includes self-efficacy and other self-judgments; based on comparisons with others (e.g. “I work with parents better than most teachers”) or with self (“I'm better at lecturing than guiding group work”).	<p>“I am a good teacher.”</p> <p>“My students learn many important things from me.”</p>	<p>Friedman & Father (1992)</p> <p>Brown (2004)</p>
Teacher self-esteem	Global affective statement reflecting teachers' self-evaluations of their accomplishments.	Judgment of self-worth; not necessarily related to self-efficacy—can have low efficacy for a task, but not value the task, so self-esteem is unaffected.	<p>“On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.”</p> <p>“I wish I could have more respect for myself.”</p>	<p>Singh (1984) Juhasz (1990) Christou, Phillpou, & Menon (2001)</p>
Locus of control and teachers' sense of responsibility	Teachers' beliefs about their responsibility for student outcomes	Teachers' attributions for student outcomes (Guskey) Teachers' acceptance or rejection of responsibility for implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (Kozel).	<p>“If a student does well in your class, would it probably be: a) because that student had the natural ability to do well or b) because of the encouragement you offered?”</p> <p>“It is my responsibility to ensure that all students are able to participate in every lesson.” (Global beliefs about inclusion).</p>	<p>Guskey (1998) Kozel (2007)</p>

			<p>“It is my responsibility to provide accurate information about sexual orientations (Specific beliefs about racial, religious, and social minorities).</p>	
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Table 2
Bandura's Sources of Self-Efficacy
(Bandura, 1994)

Mastery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most effective source of achieving efficacy. • Experience is required to overcome obstacles, master experiences and rebound • Each challenging obstacle mastered strengthens an individual to be prepared to cope with more diverse and demanding experiences • Failure undermines self-efficacy
Vicarious Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling of others who have overcome challenges • Observing individuals with similar interests succeed • Encourages self-reflection to perform in similar situations • Observing an individual model activities different from their own, has a less impact on self-efficacy
Verbal Persuasion (Social)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages an individual to try hard to overcome difficulties and to persist. • Encouragement from another person strengthens an individual's belief that they have the capabilities to accomplish a task • Ability to perfect activities and persevere without doubts
Emotional and Somatic State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to reduce and alter negative feelings • Positive state of mind enhances self-efficacy • Anxiety and depression negatively effects self-efficacy • Strong self-efficacy creates awareness of one's physiological arousal, emotions and moods • Impacts individual's attitude in health and athletic activities

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Table 3

Classroom Observation Scoring Guide
Secondary Class Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
(Pianta, Hamre and Mintz, 2012)

LOW		MID			HIGH	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The low range description fits the classroom teacher very well. All indicators are in the low range.	The low range description mostly fits the classroom teacher, but there are one or two indicators in the mid-range.	The mid-range description mostly fits the classroom teacher, but there are one or two indicators in the low range.	The mid-range description fits the classroom teacher very well. All indicators are in the mid-range.	The mid-range description fits the classroom teacher, but one or two indicators are in the high range.	The high-range description mostly fits the classroom teacher, but one or two indicators are in the mid-range.	The high-range description fits the classroom teacher very well. All indicators are in the high range.

(Pianta, Hamre and Mintz, 2012, p. 13)

POSITIVE CLIMATE

“The positive climate reflects the emotional connection and relationships among teachers and students, and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and non-verbal interactions” (Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012, p. 21).

	LOW (1-2)	MID (3,4,5)	HIGH (6-7)
Relationships			
Physical Proximity	Teacher & student appear distant from one another &	Teacher & some students appear supportive and	Many indications that teacher and students enjoy warm and
Peer Interactions	disinterested in one another	interested in one another, but these interactions are subdued and not representative of the majority of the students.	supportive relationships with one another.
Shared positive affect			
Social conversation			
Positive Affect			
Smiling	Teacher & students display flat affect & seldom appear to enjoy their time together.	Teacher & students demonstrate some indications of genuine positive affect; however, these displays may be brief, subdued, or not characteristic of most students.	There are frequent genuine displays of positive affect among the teacher and students.
Laughter			
Enthusiasm			

<p>Positive Communi- cations Positive comments Positive expectations</p>	<p>Teacher & students rarely provide positive comments or indicate positive expectations of one another.</p>	<p>Teacher & students sometimes provide positive comments or indicate positive expectations of one another; however, these communications may be brief, somewhat perfunctory, or not observed among most students.</p>	<p>There are frequent positive communications among the teacher and students.</p>
<p>Respect Respectful language Use of each others' names Warm, calm voice Listening to each other Cooperation</p>	<p>Teacher & students rarely, if ever, demonstrate respect for one another.</p>	<p>Teacher & students sometimes demonstrate respect for one another; however, these interactions are not consistently observed across time or students.</p>	<p>Teacher and students consistently demonstrate respect for one another.</p>

(Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012, p. 21)

Table 4
Positive Climate Classroom Examples

Relationships	Low	High
Physical proximity	As students enter class, teacher stays at desk checking email on his/her laptop.	As students enter class, teacher approaches several students and asks about their thoughts on the new school board vote regarding dress code policy.
Peer interactions	Prior to class beginning, students do not talk with one another and many are using their iPads for personal use.	Students discuss the superintendent's decision to consolidate 9 th graders to the high school.
Shared positive affect	Students are enthusiastic about the reading assignment and creating a character analysis, and the teacher tells them they need to get to their assigned seats.	Teacher shares students' enthusiasm on the chosen character analysis, stating, "I see everyone's excitement about this project and cannot wait to hear your oral presentations!"
Social conversation	Students towards the back of the room discuss last night's varsity basketball, but the teacher does not ask them about the game.	The teacher asks the students, "Who plans to attend the fall musical this weekend?"
Positive affect	Low	High
Smiling	The teacher and students discuss a satiric essay, but there is little smiling or lack of enjoying the examples of ridicule and irony.	The teacher and students smile and laugh together as they watch student videos explaining how a volcano erupts.
Laughter	When the teacher tells a joke, students do not laugh and some students exchange glances and roll their eyes.	Students enjoy and laugh at the humor of a student's essay, describing his experience on the Boston subway.
Enthusiasm	Students are subdued and show no sign of interest or pleasure to be in the class. The teacher's affect is also flat.	The teacher greets each student by name at the doorway as students enter the classroom and asks how they are doing on their Lewis & Clark posters.
Positive communications	Low	High
Positive comments	As students get excited about the upcoming Homecoming Parade, they ask the teacher if he/she is attending and the teacher replies, "No."	Teacher provides frequent and appropriate feedback, supporting students progress, "Great idea! John, share this with the class."
Positive expectations	"I've covered all the material for tomorrow's quiz, but I doubt you will do any better than the last quiz."	"You have all done so well on your daily assignments and homework! I know you will apply those skills and do great on the quiz tomorrow!"

Respect	Low	High
Respectful language	A student picks up some pencils the teacher has dropped and the teacher takes them, without thanking him.	“I want to thank everyone for giving 100% on today’s discussion.”
Use of each other’s names	The teacher nods at a student and asks, “What is the answer to question #7?”	The teacher asks a question about geometric shapes, and calls a student by name to respond.
Warm, calm voice	The teacher asks for the homework in a demanding tone.	As students prepare to work on the problem of the day, the teacher encourages them in a supportive and calm voice.
Listening to each other	As a student presents her experiment, many students remain on their iPad, playing games and checking email.	Students are engaged in a class discussion, “I notice and appreciate the way you all listened to each other’s point of view.”
Cooperation	When the teacher asks a student to get back to work, the student ignores her.	When the teacher assigns groups, students quickly and eagerly join their assigned group and begin collaborative discussions.

(Pianta, Hamre, and Mintz, 2012, p. 25-26).

Table 5
Three Subscales

Subscale	Question	Mean	Median	s deviation
Engagement	1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	6.5625	6.5	1.459166429
	2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	6.875	7	1.408308678
	4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	6.5625	7	1.631716887
	6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	7.4375	8	1.824600413
	9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	6.9375	7	1.730847577
	12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	7.3125	8	1.447699324
	14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	6.9375	7	1.842778699
	22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	5.6875	6	1.621470526
Instruction	7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	7.375	8	1.408308678
	10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	7.375	8	1.62788206
	11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	7.25	7	1.437590577
	17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	7.875	7.5	1.515200757
	18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	6.875	7	1.892969449
	20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	7.5625	8	1.412739655
	23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	6.8	7	1.740279124
	24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	7.375	8	1.454876856
Classroom Management	3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	7.4375	7.5	1.504160896
	5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	8.0625	8.5	1.236594787
	8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	7.5	8.5	1.788854382
	13. How much can you do to get your students to follow classroom rules?	7.625	8	1.408308678

	15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	7	8	1.460593487
	16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	7.0625	7	1.481834449
	19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	6.6875	7	1.537042615
	21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	6.875	7.5	1.7078255128

Table 6
Classroom Teacher Observation Demographics

Teacher Identification	Current Age	Gender	Total Years Teaching	Degree
Teacher A	40	Female	11	MA +15
Teacher B	32	Female	10	MA +15
Teacher C	37	Female	14	BA +15
Teacher D	58	Female	21	MA +15
Teacher E	37	Female	9	BA