SOLUTION-ORIENTED TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY
AND HOW IT INFLUENCES PERCEIVED
SELF-EFFICACY: A CASE STUDY

by
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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how accountability requirements influenced teacher understanding self-efficacy at one high school located in Southern Mississippi. Research questions focused on teacher understanding of how accountability requirements influenced their self-efficacy, the strategies that teachers reported they used to develop solutions to improve self-efficacy, and how teachers reported that administrative support, student discipline, and workload influence their self-efficacy as well. The researcher used field notes, interviews, and an online focus group to collect data from a purposive sample of 10 teachers. Survey results indicated teachers possessed high levels of self-efficacy. Six themes emerged from data analysis. These themes included several ideas: Teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence; accountability is a collaborative effort; knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements; knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements; personal and professional solutions can be applied to help teachers overcome barriers to accountability, and; teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. The research may help establish how positive teacher self-efficacy and constructive school accountability will help students achieve their full potential and academically excel, while helping teachers develop job satisfaction.

Keywords: teacher morale, teacher self-efficacy, student achievement, and accountability
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Rickie and our children, Kytryck, Kytrevian, K’veon, Karson, and Karrington. I will always have a special feeling of gratitude to my husband. He spent countless hours driving me back and forth to Lynchburg. Words cannot express how grateful I am. When I wanted to give up, I would always think of my children. You all are my life, and everything that I do is for you. Thanks for the patience and understanding. I love each and every one of you.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Many students in the United States do not perform as well on international assessments as compared to students from other industrialized countries (Armario, 2010). Various studies have established that the levels of self-efficacy borne by instructors may have positive effects on the attitudes of the learners as well as the whole learning process (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Likewise, low teacher-self efficacy could be a major contributor to low levels of student performance (Houchard, 2005). Though self-efficacy has been defined in various ways by different scholars, this study adopted Ormrod’s (2006) definition that self-efficacy is the extent to which a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals. In today’s teaching milieu, teacher self-efficacy has dwindled drastically due to high-stakes testing, school accountability requirements, and the absence of support systems designed to make the teaching profession both enjoyable and gainful (Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). In the context of this study, teachers and administrators were responsible for the delivery of quality education and held accountable for any failure to realize the same.

In the early 1970s researchers began to uncover some key challenges to a teacher’s career, including poor working conditions, work overload, poor remuneration, and lack of administrative support (Cedoline, 2005). Today, teachers face high expectations with negligible motivators put in place to ensure they are equipped to meet the daily challenges of their jobs (Maeoff, 2006). Freudenberger (2004) revealed that teachers are often overextended and disappointed social workers expected to give much with minimal gains or no gains at all in student achievement. The status of teacher self-efficacy is low in school systems across the country, with teachers struggling harder each year for social credibility and job security (Greene,
2008; Maeroff, 2006). Many teachers report that the demands of high stakes testing and meeting the requirements of NCLB add to this low level of perceived ability to be effective in their job roles (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009).

In order for teachers to be able to confront the challenges associated with the stresses of the job, they must be empowered to engender self-efficacy, which is pivotal in enhancing their productivity. The teacher’s drive for work significantly affects the level of student performance (Dworkin, 2008). If a teacher is in a bad mood or has a negative attitude in the classroom environment, the impact gradually hampers student performance (Dworkin, 2008). The essence of enhancing the teachers’ self-efficacy is not only geared towards making the teaching practice easy and pleasant for teachers, but it is also intended to make the learning experience satisfying for the students. Pines and Aronson (2007) found that in schools where teacher productivity was high, student performance was higher as well. On the other hand, when teachers were demoralized and less satisfied, they tended to diminish in productivity, and they burned out (Pine & Aronson, 2007). Exhausted teachers are not always enthusiastic about their work; this means that they may offer compromised quality work, which directly affects the students’ performance (Greene, 2008).

According to Hale (2002), there are important variables that affect a teacher’s energy and self-efficacy. These variables include professional growth, administrative leadership, and support, personal drive, and student performance. Some of the ways school administrators can bolster teachers’ individual drives is by involving them in the decision-making process and acknowledging their output and expertise (Greene, 2008). Teacher self-efficacy can be boosted through assistance with matters pertaining student discipline, enforcing policies, and exercising authority (Maslach, 2006).
Self-efficacy is an inherent psychological concept comprised of innumerable qualities such as courage, fortitude, resolution, and confidence (Callan, 2006). The best way to enhance self-efficacy at the work place is by embracing the correct spirit and acceptable attitude together with strong leadership (Feinberg, 2007). Many administrators have fallen short in their leadership by failing to bolster teachers’ confidence (Palmer, 2008). This could serve to explain the many cases of teachers abandoning their professions for other promising jobs. Against this backdrop, teacher self-efficacy is becoming a major challenge among educators.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influenced their perceived self-efficacy at Delta High School, located in Southern Mississippi. Delta High School is a pseudonym that was created for the actual high school, for the purpose of this study. Prior research studies focused on the problem of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Fink, 2012; Hallinan & Danaher, 1994), but few focused on solutions that teachers generated as individuals to maintain their perceived ability to do their jobs in light of high-stakes testing and accountability requirements. Research questions for the study focused on teacher perceptions of how accountability requirements influenced their self-efficacy. I also explored the strategies that teachers reported they used to develop solutions for their lack of self-efficacy, their perceived administrative support in dealing with low self-efficacy, and the influence of students’ discipline and workload on their self-efficacy.

**Situation to Self**

Watching teachers walk away from this noble and gratifying profession has caused me to question the issue that mires teachers’ career paths as they mold young students for the future. As an experienced teacher and having worked in an administrative position, I have come to realize that no one has the ability to encourage and support teachers enough in their profession
and duties; true renewal comes from within. The best that the school management and administration can do is to foster a better working environment to allow teachers to grow and pursue their visions. However, experience has taught me that the teachers do not always work in supportive environments, and this contributes to some of them leaving the profession, while others stay but perform below their potential due to the challenges in the environment.

This study proceeded from an interpretivist perspective; hence, I assumed that knowledge is gained through people’s individual experiences, their expectations, and their memories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). As such, teachers who are experienced in this particular field are best positioned to provide knowledge and information on teacher self-efficacy. The ontological assumption adopted in this study is that reality is socially constructed. As such, the reality of the support the school administration gives to the teachers can be sufficiently gauged through the teachers’ understandings of such support. This research paradigm serves to shape the data collection and analysis techniques adopted in this study.

**Problem Statement**

Students in the United States perform relatively poorly on international assessments compared to students from other industrialized countries (Armario, 2010). Though the poor performance could be a result of many different factors, low teacher-self efficacy could be one major contributor to the lower levels of student performance in the country, given that studies have shown that the levels of self-efficacy borne by instructors may have significant effects on the attitudes of the learners as well as the whole learning process (Fink, 2012). This is further supported by the fact that teacher self-efficacy has dwindled drastically in recent years due to such factors as high-stakes testing, school accountability requirements, and the absence of support systems designed to make the teaching profession both enjoyable and gainful (Schwarzer
& Hallum, 2008). This study was designed to begin to address this gap by using a qualitative methodology designed to explore how teachers perceive that accountability requirements have influenced their self-efficacy and the strategies they use to maintain or build their perceived capacities to do their jobs.

Possible detrimental effects of accountability requirements were established by Donovan, Figlio, and Rush (2006). According to these researchers, school accountability plans potentially have broad negative effects on the performance and study habits of well-performing students. Specifically, it is likely to cultivate a cramming tendency, particularly for the students studying in schools threatened with sanctions. They further note that the cramming habit is negatively correlated with poor class performance. They attribute the drop in performance to poor study habits, unfulfilled expectations (to score good grades) by the teachers and administration (which is an inadvertent product of efforts to meet accountability requirements), and eventual apathy that culminates due to failure achieve. The essence of this study was that accountability requirements might create unproductive pressure, which is resolved though poor study habits and eventually culminates into apathy, leading to poor student performance. Once students have lost control of their academic futures, the teachers need to intervene to assist the students (Noguera, 2003). The study, however, does not saliently bring out the role of teachers in salvaging complexities arising from accountability requirements. This makes it necessary to conduct an intensive study on how accountability requirements affect teacher self-efficacy and how self-efficacy may be improved in order to improve student performance.

To conduct an intensive study that would adequately explore the subject under study, it was necessary to concentrate on a small study population to increase the level of accuracy. In this regard, this study focused on a suburban high school located in Mississippi. For years, the
suburban high school under study has performed poorly on high-stakes, standardized tests. The students’ average scores in the Subject Assessment Testing Program (SATP) are lower than the district and state averages. The teaching staff at the school reported experiencing stress surrounding their ability to meet accountability requirements. Chapter Three will discuss this point further with specific data relating to SATP. Innumerable reasons deduced for this trend point to the fact that the degree of grasping concepts amongst the students has decreased.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore high school teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influenced perceived self-efficacy in southern Mississippi. Prior research studies focused on the problem of self-efficacy (Fink, 2012; Hallinan & Danaher, 1994), but few (Klassen & Chiu, 2010) focused on solutions that teachers generated as individuals to maintain their perceived ability to do their jobs in light of high stakes testing and accountability requirements (Ormrod, 2006). For the purposes of this study, accountability referred to holding educators responsible for the delivery of quality education and making them accountable for any failure to realize the same, while self-efficacy focused on the extent to which a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals (Ormrod, 2006). As Ormrod explained, this ability helps an individual have self-confidence and the drive towards achievement of a stipulated objective. In order for teachers to have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they must be confident in their work, and assured their contribution is of great significance to student learning. Following this definition, it follows that the state of mind of teachers can indirectly influence students’ achievement. Given that the downward trends in the American education system could be attributed in part to low teacher self-efficacy, it was
necessary to conduct this study to establish how teachers’ perception of accountability requirements, administration support, and students’ discipline influence their self-efficacy.

**Significance of the Study**

This study could add to the literature regarding the problems of self-efficacy as experienced by teachers. This study provided literature on solutions to teachers experiencing low self-efficacy in order to promote student learning. I sought to explore and reveal how accountability requirements influenced teacher self-efficacy, and the solutions that teachers developed to overcome the pressures of their jobs. The mounting degree of indifference in the workplace can produce a negative working environment and reduce teacher’s determination to perform well in their careers.

The problems pertaining to the morale of teachers have vital implications for educators, practitioners, students, as well as administrators. According to Black (2001), self-efficacy not only affects the productivity of teachers and student achievement, but also, in part, determines the school’s climate. Against this backdrop, this study relied on the data collected from a school district to explore the subject. Teachers shared their understanding and views concerning how high-stakes testing and accountability requirements influenced their self-efficacy and the solutions they developed to maintain their ability to do their jobs in light of these demands. The underlying influence is that such research can broaden the district’s and stakeholders’ outlook about the role played by teachers in the level of achievement of students, not just in one school, but all high schools across the nation. The student will benefit from this study as well since this study addresses areas of improvement in the education sector. It will result in increased quality of education among teachers who will provide more knowledge to
students. School administrators will also benefit from the study since they can use its recommendations to improve the manner in which they run their schools.

Research conducted by Lumsden (1998) indicated that teacher morale and self-efficacy have a direct effect on student performance. The authors established that in schools where teachers recorded high morale and understanding of their jobs, students demonstrated increased achievement. Teachers sometimes have low self-efficacy levels, and it can have long-term negative effects on teachers as well as students, thus, the need to address these issues has become timely. It is in response to this need that I established a study exploring the causes of poor self-efficacy issues in schools and how teachers generate solutions to overcome these barriers. The research may help develop positive teacher self-efficacy, which will, in turn, help students achieve their fullest potential academically.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided data collection in this study:

1. How do select teachers in a high school in Southern Mississippi describe self-efficacy?
2. How do teachers perceive that accountability requirements influence their self-efficacy?
3. How do teachers generate solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements?
4. How do teachers report that administrative support, student discipline, and workload that are a subset of accountability requirements influence their ability to do their jobs?

Definition of Terms

Self-efficacy: A term used to express how a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals (Ormrod’s, 2006).
Ontology: Refers to the researcher’s assumption of the nature of reality, whether the researcher views reality to be an objective entity that actually exists or a subjective entity created within our minds (Babbie, 2001).

School Accountability: Refers to holding the schools (and therefore the teachers) responsible for the delivery of quality education and making them accountable for any failure to realize the same (Valli & Buese, 2007).

Research Plan

A qualitative case study framed the data collection in this study. This methodology created a way for me to investigate the issue at hand in a real-life context, given that the same accountability requirements apply to all the public schools in the country. Different units of analysis can occur within an isolated case, which in this study included teachers in one school district located in Mississippi (Yin, 2009). Creswell (2007) explained that qualitative research has assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. By using this approach, I was able to gather data in a natural setting, paving a way to carry authentic interpretation of the information at hand (Creswell, 2005). In this study, Research Question 1 focused on how teachers perceived that accountability requirements influence their ability to fulfill their job roles. Data collection for this question consisted of the administration of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Schwarzer, Gerdamarie, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999) to teachers in a high school located in southern Mississippi. I used the results of this survey to develop questions for an online focus group and individual interviews. Research Question 2 was designed to focus on the solutions or strategies that teachers reported they implemented in order to maintain or increase their self-efficacy in light of accountability requirements. Data collection
for this question occurred through an online focus group and individual interviews. Research Question 3 focused on the factors such as administrative support, student discipline, and workload that are a subset of accountability requirements, but still influence self-efficacy. Data collection for this question occurred through an online focus group and individual interviews to get first-hand information from the panelists and respondents (who are teachers) on how these factors influenced their self-efficacy. The TSES survey was available for two weeks, and a personal invitation was sent to prospective respondents. Since the survey is intended for teachers, the participants, too, will be limited to teachers. The number of participants was 10 teachers.

**Delimitations**

To limit the boundaries of this study to the actual understanding of the teachers on the accountability requirements, this study was exclusively conducted with teachers teaching at the suburban high school under study. I did not seek specialists’ opinions on the teachers’ understanding, but focused on the teachers themselves. I investigated the teachers’ definitions of self-efficacy, their perceptions of the effects of administrative support, and students’ discipline on their self-efficacy and the strategies they report to use to improve or maintain their self-efficacy. I took the necessary measures to ensure that only teachers currently teaching in the school under focus gave this information to make sure that this study did not simply replicate theoretical ideas held by professionals or that could be obtained from other secondary sources, but rather to collect the actual data from the concerned teachers. As such, this information was not sought from specialists, but from the very teachers whose self-efficacy was in question. This study was delimited to one school located in the Mississippi delta region; therefore, the results cannot be applied to other settings or states.
Key Assumptions and Limitations

The following assumptions are presented in the study:

1. It was assumed that teachers would provide responses that were relevant to the purpose and objectives of the study.
2. It was assumed that responses given by the teachers were truthful and unbiased.

Key limitations of this research are as follows:

1. Since the focus of this research was on one high school, the data gathered may not be applicable to schools in other districts or in demographic areas. The scope of this research was limited to one school in one district located in Mississippi.
2. The perceptions of teachers regarding their morale and student achievement may have been varied due to individual experiences, temperaments, and professional backgrounds.

The Scope of the Study

To conduct an effective study within the limits of time and resources available, this study had a limited scope. The study was limited to teacher understanding of self-efficacy, the strategies they used to improve it, and the support the teachers received from the school administration on improving teacher self-efficacy. The study did not explore the perceptions of the school leaders on the matter or how the school administrators report the existence of support for teacher self-efficacy in theirs school, but rather the study only explored the teachers’ reports and perceptions of self-efficacy. The study did not relate self-efficacy to student performance, though I acknowledge the existence of possible connections through a review of previous studies.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research problem in detail and its application in the research.
The research problem was discussed and examined and the purpose of the research was established. It was further established that teachers are affected by low self-efficacy levels, which can have long-term negative effects on teachers as well as students. Thus, the need to address these issues has become timely. It was in response to this need, that I established a comprehensive study exploring the causes of poor self-efficacy issues in schools, and how teachers generated solutions to overcome these barriers. Finally, the limitations of the research were stressed for further research practitioners to avoid the same pitfalls and develop studies by taking into consideration those limitations.

Chapter One of this research has focused on introducing the study of teacher self-efficacy. The chapter has provided a background of the study, stated the research problem, identified the purpose of the study, defined the research objectives and aims, and expressed the desired outcomes. Chapter Two will provide a comprehensive literature review of previous research on teacher self-efficacy, effects on the attitudes of the learners, as well as the whole learning processes, including school accountability. The second phase of the chapter will cover the various theories applied to this study. Chapter Three of the dissertation will undertake to discuss the research methodology adopted for this study. The discussion will describe the research design and strategy, the data collection strategies and instruments, research materials, the target population, the sampling techniques and procedure, sample size and characteristics, data analysis strategies, ethical parameters, as well as the methodological measures employed to improve and maintain the reliability and validity of the empirical findings. Chapter Four of the dissertation will present the research findings and discuss them in relation to other research reviewed in the literature. The interview and survey results will be examined qualitatively to establish and explain the inter-relationships I set out to study. Chapter Five of the dissertation
will discuss conclusions and recommendations derived from the study. Chapter Five will also contain information on the implications for further research and practice, specifically about teacher self-efficacy and school accountability.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The concepts of school accountability and teacher self-efficacy, which are central to the present study, have received significant scholarly attention. This chapter will provide the conceptual framework of the study and review relevant literature. The literature review will consist of three parts; (1) teacher perceptions of school accountability; (2) teacher perceived self-efficacy, and; (3) solutions and strategies teachers employ to overcome resulting hurdles to self-efficacy. Literature relevant to any of the three parts will be reviewed, though with close reference to teachers’ self-efficacy (a concept that links all the parts of the study). Consistent with the research aims, two key concepts will be reviewed: the concept of educational accountability and self-efficacy (focus being on teachers). Theories of self-efficacy, especially those pertinent to teachers’ circumstances, together with those linking educational accountability and teachers’ perception of self-efficacy are also reviewed. The goal of the chapter is three-fold. The first goal is to put forward the theoretical and conceptual foundation upon which analysis and interpretations of the findings will be based. The second goal is to identify and present scholarly contributions to the body of knowledge in the subject of study, and the third goal is to identify the research gaps existing in the current body of knowledge, and show the role of the present study in filling in the gaps.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura’s social cognitive theory (SCT) forms the conceptual framework of this study. The premise of this theory is that learning is a social function. American psychologists Walter Mischel and Albert Bandura (1959) iterated that behavior is controlled not by hypothetical traits, but according to the degree of regularity of external stimuli a person experiences. Thus,
personality traits can vary as the external environment changes. Bandura’s theory (1977) can also be defined from a behaviorist view based on the assumption that personality is a product of learning. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is based on learning through various mechanisms such as observation, experience, and reciprocal determinism, which include the interaction between individuals, the environment, and their behaviors. As Bandura emphasized, an individual’s cognitive skills, coupled with his or her abilities and attitude, is termed the self-system, which includes how individuals see and take things in their daily lives. This self-system comprises one’s ability to take in the responses from any situation, and self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in this self-system. Bandura (1995) described self-efficacy as: “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2).

Self-efficacy can be further explained as a set of beliefs that a person possesses in terms of his or her abilities at any given time. In total, these determine how individuals feel, think, and behave (Bandura, 1994). Bandura’s theory has become a foundation for educators and social scientists to pursue the topic of self-efficacy and its importance due to its enormous impact on an individual’s behavior and state of mind (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1994), an individual’s goals in life depend on the factors of self-efficacy. In other words, a person will have many plans, challenges, and goals in different phases of his or her lifetime. Self-efficacy becomes the determining factor on how one sets out to approach goals or challenges in life. As such, it becomes a vital part of an individual’s life at all stages. Self-efficacy makes it possible to achieve goals in life by being the silent push that forces individuals to realize tasks in the day-to-day life.
Bandura (1994) explained that people with strong and weak self-efficacy possess a set of personality traits defined in certain terms. He brought out the distinctions in two categories. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered, show deep interest in the activities in which they participate, form a strong sense of commitment to their interests and activities, and recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. On the other hand, people with a weak sense of self-efficacy avoid challenging tasks, believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities, focus on personal failings and negative outcomes, and quickly lose confidence in personal abilities (Bandura, 1992; 1994). These beliefs begin to form in early childhood as children deal with a wide variety of experiences, tasks, and situations. However, the growth of self-efficacy does not end during youth, but continues to evolve throughout life as people acquire new skills, experiences, and understanding (Bandura, 1992).

According to Bandura (1994), there are four sources of self-efficacy determined by several factors, and the level of impact is dependent on a person’s individual traits. These sources include mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses. Mastery experiences entail developing self-efficacy though successful repetitive performance of tasks. On the other hand, failure to adequately deal with tasks and challenges weakens self-efficacy. Social modeling, which entails witnessing other people successfully completing a task, is another important source of self-efficacy. In Bandura’s (1994) view, seeing one’s equal (in terms of comparable capability) succeed promotes self-efficacy, as it raises observers’ belief that they could also succeed. Social persuasion entails encouragement from others, especially those who have been successful in overcoming self-doubt. Such encouragement enhances capabilities and skills. Finally, psychological responses refer to moods,
psychological reactions, emotional states, and stress levels that affect or influence one’s feeling of ability in a particular situation. Adverse psychological responses, such as extreme nervousness, would negatively influence self-efficacy.

Bandura’s (1994) conceptual discussions on the meaning and dynamics of self-efficacy provide the conceptual framework for the study. The theorist’s views guide the study in choosing the most suitable definition of self-efficacy, a concept central to the study. In fact, Ormrod’s (2006) definition of self-efficacy expresses how a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals, and largely borrows from Bandura’s definitions and discussions of the key concept. Further, Bandura’s discussions on sources of self-efficacy and factors influencing self-efficacy provide insights in explaining findings on the level of teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. They also offer insights on how best to develop solutions that will generate or maintain better levels of self-efficacy. For instance, in working out solutions, one would need to pay due regard to teachers’ mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses, which are all dimensions identified and explained by Bandura (1994).

**School and Teacher Accountability**

In the interest of promoting educational quality, the government has prescribed various accountability mechanisms. The essence of the accountability requirements is to give teachers the responsibility of ensuring quality educational delivery and accountability for any failure to realize the same (Valli & Buese, 2007). Thus, the value of holding a teacher accountable in the academic achievement of students is vital to maintain the required standards offered by schools. It is, therefore, of paramount importance. Teachers are held accountable for educational outcomes through specific statutes such as No Child Left Behind (United States Department of
Education, 2006). On the other hand, accountability could be imposed indirectly through imposing goals and targets on schools (school accountability), but which eventually narrow down to teachers who have to individually and collectively work to ensure the schools’ targets are achieved (Sato & Rabinowitz, 2010). Thus, both school and teacher accountability policies have a common convergence as both imply a duty on the part of the teacher undertaking classroom curriculum delivery, the duty being to take all the necessary and legitimate measures to facilitate quality education.

In the United States, accountability requirements are imposed by federal and state education laws and policies, particularly the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which also gives government organizations a wide range of mechanisms to enforce accountability (Bales, 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was signed into law in January 2002, with an aim of ensuring that every child becomes proficient in all subject matter by 2014 (United States Department of Education, 2006). Under NCLB, schools in every state must make annual progress toward stated goals. NCLB further imposed on states the duty to set proficiency goals, in the form of yearly progress targets. Schools, in turn, bear the responsibility to meet the proficiency targets set under NCLB. All students must achieve the state-determined passing rates. When inadequate proportions of students fail to obtain the required passing rate, schools are labeled as failing schools. Parents then have the option of transferring their children to other schools. Similarly, schools that fail to meet proficiency targets risk having state funding withdrawn unless they account for the failure. Central to the realization of teachers’ accountability goals, including under NCLB, is the need to keep track of students’ academic records, and assess if they are improving, steady, or dwindling. With statutory and policy accountability obligations, accountability became a source of pressure for teachers, as they have
the effect of compelling performance (Valli & Buese, 2007) and would evoke a wide range of perceptions on teachers, and affect teacher self-efficacy (Jones & Egley, 2004). Further discussions on efficacy-accountability dynamics are presented later on in this chapter.

The concept of teacher accountability has received a significant amount of criticism among educators and scholars. Critics have argued that the effectiveness of teachers is not based on a teacher’s role only, and to that extent, it is not fair to base teachers’ accountability on learning outcomes and learner’s educational achievements (Bales, 2006; Goddard & Goddard, 2006; Mausethagen, 2013). For instance, a teacher who is given the necessary support needed by parents, school administrators such as principals, and school policies is likely to emerge not necessarily because of the teachers own efforts, but more so because of the support from the third parties (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). It has also been pointed out that a teacher’s effect on students’ performance depends heavily on the context of the school. For instance, where cooperation is offered by fellow staff members or the principal, teachers are likely to be more receptive to students’ needs (Mausethagen, 2013). Similarly, realization of accountability is dependent on the curriculum design. If the curriculum is student-focused and is in line with what is necessary to achieve the fullest potential of students, then that too can be taken as cooperation offered by the school to help students achieve their fullest potential (Goddard & Goddard, 2006; RAND Corporation, 2003).

A wide range of existing theories offers insights for the present study. Central to the study are self-efficacy theories, which are obviously of interest to the study for the reason that they help explain self-efficacy and accountability pressure dynamics. On this topic, Bandura’s self-efficacy theory will be examined. Further, the pressure to meet accountability requirements and the need to find solutions to accountability challenges, more so where perceived self-efficacy
is threatened, brings motivation and behavior theories within the scope of the present study. This study will explore two theories in this category, Maslow’s theory of motivation and hierarchy of needs, and Deci and Ryan’s (1991, 1995, 2002) self-determination theory.

**Maslow’s Theory of Motivation and Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow’s theory of motivation and hierarchy of needs is widely credited for offering an apt theoretical framework for explaining mechanisms of human motivation (Maslow, 1943). In this study, the theory is useful in understanding the motivation of teachers as they work to fulfill school accountability requirements against the backdrop of the need to build perceived self-efficacy. Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs rests on the supposition that individuals take to comparable guidelines or successions in satisfying their needs. According to Maslow (1943), the needs are hierarchically arranged in order of importance and urgency, with the most urgent and important ones being lower in the hierarchy. People pursue higher-level needs after their lower level needs are satisfied. However, once a need is fulfilled, it ceases to be a motivating factor; thus, one pursues the immediate next need or set of needs.

Maslow (1943) identified the needs and represented them in a pyramid, as shown in Figure 1, starting with the universal basic needs at the base. Self-efficacy falls in the fourth highest level of hierarchy of needs, just below physiological needs, safety needs, and love/belonging. Thus, in seeking to understand the dynamics of the level of teacher’s self-efficacy in this study, the study will seek to examine the extent to which schools meet teachers’ lower needs, such as physiological needs or safety needs such as their health or job security.
From the pyramid, it appears that teacher accountability, as far as it is a policy obligation, would fall under the second level of the hierarchy of needs. It is vital to safeguarding the security of a teacher’s career since failing to meet accountability goals would lead to disciplinary action against the teacher. On the other hand, concentrating on building the teacher’s sense of self-efficacy would be two steps higher; it is basically essential in building a sense of achievement, the teacher’s self-esteem, and confidence (Cianci & Gambrel, 2003; Tay & Diener, 2011). For instance, in classrooms there are different needs in the teacher-learner relationship. These include needs associated with accomplishments, authority, and attachment. Instructors want learners to view them as authoritative within the learning environment, influential on all the decisions made, and effective mentors. If teachers have their accountability goals met, then building a strong sense of self-efficacy would be higher and would be sought. Thus, efforts to help teachers realize accountability goals and build positive perception of accountability.
requirements would be very necessary if positive perception of self-efficacy is to be fostered, as the lower need (in this case accountability) has to be first satisfied.

In addition, motivation and need fulfillment are key factors in establishing teacher efficacy. According to McGuire (2012), the question of how employees remain fully engaged is a central issue that determines the effectiveness of workers. It is critical for teachers and administrators to understand the issues of their environment that determine their levels of motivation. Maslow’s theory of hierarchy of needs is a suitable tool to determine how the school environment can be used to motivate teachers. This theory that was developed in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States of America is still extremely applicable in the workplace today. The responsibility of school administrations to provide an environment that allows teachers to achieve their own self-actualization is more pertinent than ever. In order to understand the relevance of self-actualization in the context of teacher efficacy, it is important to note that self-actualization cannot be achieved if there are gaps in the lower levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

In the school environment, teacher’s needs are fulfilled in different ways. Nonetheless, there are factors that have to be in place in order to ensure self-actualization among teachers. As stated earlier, teacher motivation has declined in schools around the United States. This situation is a contributing factor to the lower performance of American students in comparison with learners from other industrialized countries. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (as shown in Figure 1), the three lower levels dealing with physiological, safety, and love/belonging needs are easy to achieve in many schools in America. However, the upper levels of self-esteem and self-actualization are more difficult to achieve. School administrations as well as the federal and state governments are responsible for the improvement of school environments for both
teachers and learners. If there is a considerable effort to improve the working conditions in schools, there would be a huge improvement in teacher self-efficacy among educational institutions.

**Self-determination Theory**

Self-determination theory (SDT) puts forward the view that individuals have an intrinsic sense of motivation or volition, which propels them to pursue opportunities and combat challenges they encounter, subject to presence of some psychosocial needs called nutrients (Deci & Ryan 1991; Ryan, 2009). The nutrients essential to build volition are drawn from one’s social environment, three of which are basic and universal in the sense that they are fundamentally required by everyone to build volition (or self-determination). These basic elements are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In addition to the universal and basic nutriments, other nutriments will be needed depending on circumstances, an individual or group of individuals, the environment, and desired outcomes. Failure to provide appropriate nutriments has the effect of thwarting one’s self-determination and frustrating achievement. This, in turn, will ordinarily translate into lower motivation to pursue goals, underperformance, and rejection or shun of responsibility (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

Gagne (2014) opined that socialization is not something done to people, but what people do within their different environments and thus determine their self-determination. The SDT is a critical theory in the study of teacher self-efficacy and school accountability. In the context of a school environment, teachers’ perception of the school’s accountability tremendously affects their self-efficacy. For instance, teachers who perceive that the school is sufficiently accountable for the outcomes of the education process have better chances of having more determination as opposed to those who perceive otherwise.
Self-determination among teachers can easily translate to self-determination among students. According to Gagne (2014) since socialization is what people do within their environment, the possibility of student motivation and determination being high is hugely affected by the determination of the teachers, which forms a critical part of the learners’ immediate environment. Furthermore, SDT can be used to understand how teachers perceive the school administration. In an effort to understand solution-oriented teacher understanding of school accountability, SDT will provide insights into the self-efficacy dynamics that will be a determinant in the analysis of teacher perceptions within the case study.

Moreover, SDT offers significant insight to this study. It offers a broader framework within which perception of teachers towards accountability requirements may be understood against the backdrop of the extent to which the policymakers, policy implementers, and school administration offer supportive environment (which amounts to nutriments in this case). Further, SDT offers insight on dynamics of building teachers’ self-motivation to boost self-driven solutions to accountability challenges. After a thorough review of the theories that are pertinent to this study, it is clear that school accountability and teacher self-efficacy are related and affect each other. Having established the conceptual framework for the study, the following section will now proceed to review various literatures that are pertinent to the study. An elaborate look into the concept of self-efficacy paves way to deeper and more meaningful review of previous works in this topic.
The concepts of self-efficacy or perceived self-efficacy are central to the current study. Washington and Watson (1976) indicated that self-efficacy includes the attitude of a person towards his or her duties or job anchored on his or her perception about him or herself at the workplace and the extent of viewing the workplace as satisfying his or her expectations and needs. Closely related to Washington and Watson’s definition is Ormrod’s (2006) definition, which views self-efficacy as the extent to which a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals. Whereas both definitions view fulfillment of goals as the central element of self-efficacy, Ormrod’s definition does not include subjective elements. For him, the attitude of the person pursuing the goals is the central focus of the definition. However, both definitions create the perception that adequate support of the teachers enhances their self-efficacy (Rousmaniere, 2007; Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

According to Bentley and Rempel (1980), self-efficacy is the expert awareness and interest displayed by individuals in the direction of accomplishing collective and personal objectives in the workplaces. Instructors with high self-efficacy levels positively view one another and concurrently draw satisfaction from their duties (Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). All instructors should consider ways of energizing and uplifting their drive followed by integrating the ways into their everyday activities (Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

Fink (2012) described efficacy as a person’s or a team’s collective spirit projected outwardly by self-confidence, readiness to carry out allocated tasks, cheeriness, and restraint. Efficacy lowers hierarchies of authority other than the other way around, and there is no single aspect that may adequately delineate between low and high efficacy, or bad and good efficacy (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2007; Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). A multitude of factors should be used in such delineations. Interestingly,
Fink (2012) also asserted that efficacy is not a collective team phenomenon, but a personal matter, with a team’s efficacy being the sum of the personal efficacy within the group.

Many other scholars concurred that self-efficacy is distinct from collective efficacy, which is the equivalent of self-efficacy in the context of a group (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Self-efficacy is a building block of collective efficacy in a team, which translates into either low or high team efficacy (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). High team efficacy is indicative of good personal “esprit-senses” (Tye & O’Brien, 2002, p. 25). Esprit refers to vigor of spirit and mind, which is described as sprightliness. To bolster a team’s esprit, especially by the administrators, the individuals’ efficacy should be enhanced (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Efficacy levels hinge on the perception that individuals have regarding assigned tasks or duties, which can thus be widely seen as constituting individual focuses and responses at workplaces (Beck, 1999; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

For the purposes of this study, self-efficacy was used to express how a person is able to judge his or her ability to complete tasks and meet goals (Ormrod, 2006). This definition is preferred since it is straightforward and not overly complex. Thus, the terms perceived self-efficacy, or teacher perception of self-efficacy, will thus be a qualified statement referring to the teachers’ attitudes or judgments on their own capabilities to do their jobs in light of accountability. The perceived self-efficacy involves seeking to establish whether the teacher believes or feels that he or she has met the expected goals; that is, whether the teacher indeed feels that he or she has been effective in doing his or her part in meeting the accountability requirements. Teacher perceptions and views of their own achievements in meeting high stakes testing and accountability requirements are therefore central to perceived self-efficacy.
There are many surveys conducted to determine levels of efficacy within various populations; however, they have not been of significant value in authoritatively citing how self-efficacy ought to be measured, mainly because the pollsters involved in such surveys make little or no attempts to give the operational definitions of the term self-efficacy (Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

Beck (1999) indicated that it is possible to determine the level of an instructor’s efficacy by evaluating his or her dedication to and contentment with teammates, the organization, as well as the job as a teacher. The instructor focus-component would revolve around the job, teammates at the schools, and the schooling environment as a whole (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). Commitment and satisfaction levels will inform teacher responses. Teachers experience personal fulfillment and demonstrate dedication to teammates and their jobs, but may express lower fulfillment and dedication to the organization (Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessen, 2006; Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). Most people are likely to have perceptions on the organizations that are akin to those concerning the management or administrators (Beck, 1999; Nguni et al., 2006).

Mulholland (2012) conducted a study on the levels of efficacy within teaching populations, which did not provide such a definition even though it suggested that teacher efficacy was measured as though one is measuring effectiveness in meeting teacher accountability requirements. Thus, in view of this framework, a teacher’s efficacy measures the extent to which a teacher achieves accountability goals. I endorsed this perspective, as it links teacher efficacy to accountability goals, and the focus of this study is on the dynamics of accountability pressures, teachers’ perceived self-efficacy, and adaptive strategies. Mulholland (2012) indicated that many instructors are markedly demoralized, overworked, and burdened
with unrealistic prospects and facing continuous criticisms. According to Mulholland 42% of the participating teachers indicated their levels of efficacy as exceedingly low or just low; 59% indicated a decline in the levels in the preceding two years, and 27% described the levels as high (Mulholland, 2012).

In terms related to this study, teacher self-efficacy is overtly imperative to the determination of teacher accountability. According to Henson (2014), measurement of teacher efficacy was not clear in the time of Bandura. Despite the confusion in the measurement of efficacy, it is understood that teacher efficacy is a vital variable in educational research. On the basis of teacher accountability, it was found that efficacious teachers are more dedicated while dealing with struggling students and are less likely to criticize wrong answers from learners (Henson, 2014). Teacher accountability and efficacy are proportionally related.

The concept of teacher efficacy has borne fruit in previous studies (Henson, 2014), and it is clearly beneficial in this current study. In the development of educational research, better methods of measuring teacher efficacy have been developed. Despite the debates on the meaning and measurement of teacher efficacy, there are some reliable concepts that are vital. Recently, there have been several scales developed for the measurement of self-efficacy. The Gibson and Dembo’s Teacher Efficacy Scale is one of the most developed scales that was created in the efforts to measure efficacy. This scale is based upon cognitive theory. Another important milestone was the model developed by Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) that brings together the history of self-efficacy in educational context. In the model, the main concept is related to the comprehensive look at self-efficacy and how it relates to teachers. However, Tschannen-Moran et al.’s model has undergone criticism and scrutiny, raising
concerns about such issues as that the sources of efficacy information have been hugely unexamined in relation to teacher efficacy (Henson, 2014).

**Self-Efficacy Dynamics**

Numerous studies have established that the levels of self-efficacy borne by instructors may have affirmative effects on the attitudes of the learners as well as the whole learning process (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy view their teaching and motivational roles within the classrooms in a positive manner (Fink, 2012). In such cases, the classrooms become conducive for teacher-learner interactions (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Research has indicated that there are high correlations between instructors with high self-efficacy levels and the achievement of students (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). When teachers have high morale, they affect the attitude exhibited by students, and ultimately, the student’s performance increases (Fink, 2012). In essence, raising teacher morale is both beneficial to the teachers and the students, for it enhances high performance and creates an environment conducive for teaching and learning. Teacher’s morale, therefore, garners far-reaching implications for student learning, the health of the organization, and the health of the teacher (Fink, 2012; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

The innumerable changes experienced in modern society directly affect the teaching profession and teachers’ self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). As society becomes more complicated, so does classroom experience. Teachers are skilled with social responsibility and accountability because they serve as mentors and tutors. As a result, the teaching profession stretches teachers physically, mentally, and intellectually. Teachers’ roles in the contemporary world are exhaustive and unrelenting, although their primary duty is to teach. Some of the extra
activities that teachers have to deal with include designing and developing curriculum, school planning and marketing of the school, enhancing community relations, overseeing workplace health and safety, resource management, and student welfare, along with playground and sports supervision. The teaching profession is becoming increasingly difficult because teachers are unable to cater to all students’ personal problems. Because of inclusion policies requiring that disabled students be integrated with those who are not disabled (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), the number of disabled students is increasing in the mainstream classrooms, making the teaching practice more demanding. While the demands upon teachers have increased, there has been little change in patterns of employment, compensation, and career advancement of teachers. This has augmented stress on the teachers, leading to burnout, which in return affects how they teach their students (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Conversely, low satisfaction levels can diminish instructors’ efficiency and make them susceptible to burnout (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). This stems from decreasing attachment to and concerns towards the people with whom they interact, lessening the quality of performance of their duties, including frequently seeking sick-leaves, which keeps them away from their duties. Demoralized teachers express high desires of switching careers to nonteaching ones and have dehumanizing perceptions regarding the learners (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). This study keenly scrutinized the attention paid to enhancing teachers’ satisfaction levels and compared it to teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. Considering influence of satisfaction level on self-efficacy, any analysis on accountability and self-efficacy relationships will need to closely examine how the accountability requirements influence satisfaction levels. Where a negative relationship is established, it will be important for solution purposes to find out how any negative impact to teacher satisfaction may be countered in a bid to boosting self-efficacy.
Teacher Perceptions of School Accountability and Self-Efficacy

Teachers generally hold a negative perception of accountability, with some viewing it as a hindrance to their service delivery (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Diaz, 2004; McNeil, 2000). McNeil (2000) explained that accountability is increasingly a source of stress for many teachers, making even some of the teachers opt out of the profession. The increased pressure resulting from accountability requirements contributes significantly to burnout. In fact, higher rates of burnouts are registered in schools that overemphasize measurable academic goals. In a study conducted by Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009), a large percentage of teachers reported having too many accountability-related tasks to complete within the available time.

Accountability creates time pressure on teachers, as they strive to put most of their efforts into completing instruction and preparing students to pass exams so as to meet the accountability requirements (Berryhill et al., 2009. This pressure, thus, leads to a change of teaching style to one adapted to preparing students to pass exams. Consequently, this can negatively influence instructors’ instructional delivery, denying them the opportunity to ensure that all the students master the core principles of a topic before moving on to the next topic. Accountability policies are also perceived to be emphasized more in teacher-centered learning. This could negatively influence the learning outcome in schools where accountability is over-emphasized.

Although accountability improves student performance, it also serves against this very purpose (Clotfelter et al., 2004). Accountability creates pressure on teachers, hence posing the risk of making some teachers have a negative attitude towards it, while at the same time denying them the opportunity to deliver instruction to the students in the best manner they deem possible. The negative perception of accountability can erode teachers’ self-efficacy; however, little
research exists on how teachers develop solutions to the challenges brought by over-emphasis of accountability and the influence of such emphasis on their self-efficacy.

Despite the limited research on how teachers develop solutions to challenges brought about by overemphasis on accountability, this research advanced the knowledge about teacher self-efficacy. Since there is a general negative perception towards accountability among teachers, it is extremely vital to understand the ways in which teachers seek solutions for the challenges they face. The negative impact of the emphasis on accountability to teachers has significant impacts on the teaching profession. Nevertheless, there are teachers who have come up with solutions to their challenges. The solutions are important in understanding how to improve efficacy among teachers in the event of challenging situations brought on by the pressures of accountability.

Teacher accountability has several benefits towards the improvement of instruction. According to Dwyer (2013), teacher accountability has been in force due to recent educational reforms. These reforms focus on making teachers more accountable for the future of the learners. In spite of the constraints that emanate from the measurement of effective teaching, there are perceived benefits to teacher accountability. One of the greatest benefits of teacher accountability is that it may make teachers work harder to achieve the goals and visions of the educational institutions. This presumed benefit is the major reason why proponents of teacher accountability argue that accountability is critical. However, there are negative effects of teacher accountability such as those mentioned earlier, including burnout, low morale, and teachers leaving the profession altogether. Based on these facts, it is vital to determine the solutions that teachers use in order to alleviate the adverse effects brought about by teacher accountability.
Teacher accountability is imposed by educational policy requirements, and is implemented, enforced, or overseen by various educational administrative organizations (Mulholland, 2012). Framing of such policies and the nature of administration influences self-efficacy, as shown in the following discussions. Mulholland (2012) noted that 92% of teachers viewed their presence in classrooms as highly rewarding. Of those who were highly demoralized, 63% claimed that their efficacy was highly affected by continuously varying initiatives regarding policy, variations of pensions, and compensation.

Efficacy, being an interaction of schools’ goals and the needs of the teachers, will only be high if the approaches of reaching the school’s goals also meet the teachers’ needs (Nguni et al., 2006; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Researchers have established that teachers who draw minimal meaning from their professional engagements tend to have low efficacy levels (Kelley et al., 2005; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004). This is because they are continually frustrated and are hopeless about affecting favorable changes within the schools. School administrators expend resources, time, and efforts looking for teachers who are competent (Usdan et al., 2000).

However, once such teachers enter into employment, the administrators are often inexperienced in how to support the teachers in their duties and their pursuit for professional development (Rhodes et al., 2004). Thus, teachers are limited in their capacities for achieving their individual objectives, remaining within the status quo, even when their capacity for thriving easily outstrips the accomplishments associated with the status quo (Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

Environments that are not adequately challenging, or those that do not adequately offer quality professional development can negatively affect the teachers’ efficacy-levels (Usdan et al., 2000). Additionally, self-efficacy levels are affected negatively by the incompetence of administrators (Nguni et al., 2006). Such incompetence includes the inability to issue proper
communication to the teachers and maintain open, interactive channels for affecting such communications. The administrators may also be inadequately prepared for fostering the teachers’ individual empowerment or may be averse to such empowerments or energizing of the teachers (Rhodes et al., 2004).

Other forms of leader incompetence that may erode teacher self-efficacy include the inability to inculcate trust among the staff concerning the management, having poor, unpolished interpersonal relationships and skills, and the teachers seeing implementing conditions at the workplaces as being markedly inflexible (Rhodes et al., 2004; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Other aspects associated with low teacher efficacy include unwarranted closures or layoffs, protracted or disputed labor and contractual negotiations, frequent and high turnovers among the staff, frequent leadership-changes, corporate trends, and imprecise expectations (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Nguni et al., 2006). Many teachers who harbor feelings that they are not treated and appreciated by administrators and the general community also exhibit low efficacy (Schulz & Teddlie, 1989; Usdan et al., 2000). NCLB is the foundation of the accountability requirements, thereby making meeting accountability requirements a matter of legal obligation. However, the Act makes no clear provision on how to address resentments from such teachers, and to this extent is failing to nurture teacher efficacy.

In addition, the enforcement of teacher accountability has been a matter of contention between teachers and administrators. In an effort to make the education sector improved and efficient, teacher accountability has been on the forefront of educational reforms, not only in the United States, but other parts of the world as well. Sindhi (2013) agreed that teacher accountability had positive impacts on teacher performance in India. The success stories of using teacher accountability, however, should not mask the fact that a majority of teachers find it
difficult to work under the pressures that teacher accountability brings in the education sector. The resistances to the policies that advocate for teacher accountability are justifiable, but not absolutely right. It is the prerogative of every teacher to use their skills and expertise to teach the curriculum to learners. On the same note, teachers are obliged to object the environmental factors that may hinder their efficacy.

It is not certain that teacher accountability negatively impacts teacher efficacy, but the problems that arise from the teacher accountability measures have disrupted the ability of some teachers to achieve their full potential. This study endeavored to show how teachers develop solutions to keep motivated and preserve their self-efficacy as well as be accountable. Since there are limited studies done in line with this topic, it is vital to use a case study in order to draw indicative conclusions about the solution-oriented teacher understanding of school accountability and its influence on teacher efficacy. The complications and debates that emanate from the enforcement of teacher accountability cannot be solved easily. However, studies of how teachers successfully get solutions to the challenges the new reforms pose to their professions can give insights to a better education for the learners.

**Learners’ Achievement as an Influential Factor on Teacher Efficacy**

Student achievement is not only a parameter for determining accountability compliance, but it eventually influences teachers’ perceived self-efficacy and should therefore be examined to establish the link between perceived teacher self-efficacy and accountability. Several studies established that the level of a teacher’s motivation in schools and classrooms closely correlated to the attitudes of the learners towards the processes of learning and the learner-instructor interactivity (Nguni et al., 2006; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Enhancement of self-efficacy makes the processes of delivering instruction more pleasant for teaching personnel, as it has the effect of
bringing about appreciably conducive settings for working (Rousmaniere, 2007). Efficacy of teachers is closely related to the learners’ accomplishments; schools whose staffs have high efficacy levels exhibit high learner accomplishments (Rousmaniere, 2007; Usdan et al., 2000).

Low fulfillment levels are noted to decrease the productivity of teachers, and most of them experience frequent burnouts. This is tied to their losses of consideration for others within the school communities and growing detachments from them (Rhodes et al., 2004; Rousmaniere, 2007). As such, these can harm teamwork among teachers, erode the quality of how they teach, trigger depression, lead to frequent abstentions from classes and from schools, and make teachers desire to join other professions (Schulz & Teddlie, 1989; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Demoralized instructors can additionally have a contemptuous and disdainful sensitivity towards students. Being positive generates environments that are adequately encouraging to processes of teaching and learning, which bolsters learners’ performance and bequeaths the teacher’s loss of satisfaction (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Usdan et al., 2000).

Student performance is a critical part in keeping teachers motivated. Self-efficacy among teachers is an integral part in the determination of student performance. If a teacher is not goal-oriented and does not keep encouraging the learners, the result is poor performance. Teacher accountability, teacher efficacy, and student performance are all related and affect each other. Teacher performance levels would not increase only because of the new educational reforms that advocate for teacher accountability, but also because of a school environment conducive to learning. Student performance is directly linked to teacher efficacy. Since the policies on teacher accountability affect teacher efficacy, it follows that student performance will also be affected by the teacher accountability reforms.
Teachers are highly motivated when learners are performing well and showing interest in education. This means that learner achievement also affects teacher efficacy in one of two ways. First, high-achieving learners tend to make their teachers achieve their goals and feel fulfilled. This leads to high self-efficacy among the teachers. On the other hand, low-performing learners often demotivate teachers, thus leading to low self-efficacy among their instructors. In order to show these effects, this study integrated the effects of learner achievement in the investigation of teacher efficacy and how it is influenced by teacher accountability. Studies have shown that teachers with low self-efficacy have low expectations for their students. They often cast blame on the students and have a negative outlook on student behavior (Richardson, 2011).

**Accountability Pressure and Self-Efficacy Hurdles**

In the quest to comply with teacher accountability obligations, teachers face myriads of challenges. Developing solutions to these challenges is vital in achieving both the accountability goals, as well as building a positive sense of self-efficacy. This has already been pointed out as being vital in enhancing student achievement, which is discussed below.

**Teacher Leadership and Student Performance**

Research has established that performance is a product of many factors, the most important being how well the employees of an organization are motivated to perform (Bray & Qin, 2001). In school systems, students’ desire to perform is also a factor to be considered. Motivation is the genesis of all achievements and attainments since it is the driving force that makes individuals commit to something and keep at it with determination with the hope that they will reach the desired outcome. Motivation is required in all levels of society and among all ages. Children, for instance, can attend school because it is mandatory, but they can learn only
as much as they are individually motivated. In the same way that motivation is the primary ingredient of organizational performance, it is the primary ingredient in learning.

Consequently, motivating students to participate in the educational process, willingly and enthusiastically, is one of the primary roles of teachers. The fact that individual participants in the education system do not immediately grasp the inherent worth of education creates a communicative barrier, whereby teachers find it difficult to transfer the value of education to the learners.

Lack of motivation in the classroom is a problem currently plaguing the global education sector (Bray & Qin, 2001). In developed economies, most children care more about winning a video game than passing a school test (Olson, 2010). Research has shown that a large number of school children are more motivated to learn the lyrics of the chart-leading hit songs than they are to learn Algebra (Villani, Olson, & Jellinek, 2005; Von Salisch, Oppl, & Kristen, 2006; Yee, 2006). The result is that performance in most public schools in America has suffered.

In America, many public schools are struggling to get their students to participate in the learning process, a task that is increasingly becoming difficult despite increased funding, improved teacher education, and continued research (Villani et al., 2005). To a certain extent, the very genesis of these contemporary learning problems in American public schools, which often translates into juvenile crime and poor grade averages, can perhaps be traced to the question of motivation (Villani et al., 2005; Von Salisch et al., 2006; Yee, 2006).

This seemingly global problem impacts local school systems as well. In many school systems, schools are suffering from lack of government funding (Byrnes, 2011). As such, local entities have been forced to decrease expenditures, which could be detrimental in terms of the quality of education that students receive (Byrnes, 2011). There are some possibilities that could
result from lack of funding. One possible outcome is that local entities could underfund teacher training and remuneration, which would decrease qualifications, dedication, and quality of individuals teaching students in the area (Byrnes, 2011). The entities could also decide or result to underfunding the access to scholastic reading materials and other resources. Such funding cuts could result in the use of outdated information, which makes the teachers’ job even harder in their attempt to identify and correct associated inaccuracies (Byrnes, 2011). The prospects of ever-decreasing funding make the issue of education planning in local settings overly sensitive. In this line of thought, one can imagine the priorities that these entities will place on teaching techniques that produce results in the most economical way possible.

In recent years, the graduation rates across the country have been in a state of transition (McKeever, 2011). This is increasingly problematic considering the fact that the country is witnessing a need to change skill sets necessary to get jobs. Traditional jobs such as textile manufacturing and even telecommunications are outsourced to countries where cost of labor is cheaper (McKeever, 2010). This means that individuals within the U.S. are required to have increasingly competitive skill sets to remain competitive in the markets at large. Nearly 5% of individuals who fail to complete their high school education are uniquely disadvantaged in terms of the job market (McKeever, 2010). Notably, teacher motivation is important in molding students in such a way that will help them improve motivational skills necessary to encourage students to complete high school and seek postsecondary educational opportunities (Usdan et al., 2000).

Empowered persons commonly have significant levels of efficacy, because people are enthusiastic to work hard towards realization of organizational objectives if they partake in deciding their actions and model the environments in which they work (Rhodes et al., 2004;
Usdan et al., 2000). They also work much harder if they draw significance and meaning from their activities geared towards realization of higher resolves (Kelley et al., 2005; Rousmaniere, 2007; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989). Thus, in a school setting, if a teacher is adequately supported by the administration in its determination towards and aim of realizing organizational objectives, more desired outcomes would result (Nguni et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2004; Tye & O’Brien, 2002).

Administrators should give serious consideration to empowering teachers (Nguni et al., 2006; Rousmaniere, 2007), allowing them to partake in the formulation of policies, decisions, and practices. Additionally, school leaders should appreciate teacher professionalism and work to enhance teacher self-efficacy (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Nguni et al., 2006; Rousmaniere, 2007; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989). Excluding teachers from such formulation of policies, decisions, and practices can make them feel hopeless, incompetent, unappreciated and even discredited (Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Consequently, they lack the incentive to hold up the resolutions reached. This tends to arouse discontentment within schools, adversely affecting the achievement of shared goals, and may trigger industrial actions (Rousmaniere, 2007; Tye & O’Brien, 2002; Usdan et al., 2000).

Decision-making in highly inclusive schools connects teachers and administrators, bolsters interactivity, and ensures that decisions are adequately broad in their motivation (Rhodes et al., 2004; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Principals are able to reinforce the efficacy of teachers by vigorously supporting teacher decisions (Kelley et al., 2005). In doing so, leaders serve as the custodians of instructors’ teaching time, allowing them time to instruct (Nguni et al., 2006; Rousmaniere, 2007; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989). Even though teachers are able to safeguard their own professional contentment and drive, they ought to be fostered, shored up,
and appreciated by all within the school environment and communities. This benefits the teachers, the administrators, the communities, and most importantly, the learners (Rhodes et al., 2004).

**Teacher Self-Efficacy Studies**

Self-efficacy involves the belief of individuals in their own ability to plan and perform activities in a way that the outcomes meet the objectives of the plan (Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). Additionally, researchers have indicated that this belief influences one’s behavior towards attaining a certain goal (Curt & Patrick, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Suzanne, 2000). Various scholars have moved away from general self-efficacy to study teacher self-efficacy, where they stipulated that teacher self-efficacy has influenced their teaching outcomes and their behavior towards meeting instructional goals (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) sought to examine sources and factors related to teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. Drawing from a survey of 255 teachers, the researchers noted two determinants of teacher efficacy: verbal persuasion and mastery experiences, which related to a teachers’ satisfaction with their past professional performance. Mastery experiences, or those in which teachers had positive outcomes related to improving student performance, had the strongest influence on teacher efficacy. Factors such as context (such as urban teaching environments as compared to suburban or rural contexts) and interpersonal support were found to have a substantial influence on efficacy for novice teachers, but an insignificant effect among the experienced teachers. Factors such as demographics (like race and gender) were found to have insignificant effect on teacher efficacy.

Most research done in the last decade on teacher self-efficacy showed that self-efficacy is dynamic and keeps changing. The belief in one’s ability and capability keeps changing as the
teachers progress through their teaching program. They tend to be more concerned with the external factors rather than themselves (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). It is also evident from literature that self-efficacy can be built since an individual has the power to increase his or her belief in his or her ability and capacity to perform tasks (Saracaloğlu & Dinçer, 2009).

When teachers have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they become more responsible in their work and more goal-oriented (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Moreover, they have become more cautious with respect to student performance and discipline. Some teachers with low self-efficacy are not bothered with the student level of discipline and do not care about student actions (Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). Teachers’ self-efficacy can, therefore, influence student behavior. In a study of the relationship between student motivation and teacher self-efficacy, Hallinan and Danaher (1994) stated that teacher self-efficacy influenced learning and the motivation of the students towards attaining success, even if students were originally unmotivated.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found in a study of over 2,000 elementary and middle school educators that teacher self-efficacy was highly dependent on relationships with parents, and also related to the supervisory support that teachers received from school administrators. Teachers who felt cognitive and emotional support from principals also had higher levels of efficacy. Thus, school context and leadership impacts self-efficacy.

Aziz, Hassan, and Shazadi (2010) studied the correlation between demographics such as age, gender, years of experience, and the qualifications of secondary school teachers and their perceived self-efficacy. Participants completed a self-report measure. Results of the study showed that a teacher’s gender, academic preparation, years of experience, and locality were significantly correlated to self-efficacy, but age and professional qualifications were not.
Ross and Gray (2006) conducted a study that showed the factors of principal leadership, the school’s socioeconomic status, and a teacher’s prior experiences related to student achievement directly impacted their self-efficacy. Specifically, when teachers had prior positive experiences with raising student performance, levels, then their self-efficacy in subsequent change efforts was higher. Kaniuka (2012) conducted a case study to explore how teachers’ self-efficacy evolved as they implemented a reading intervention program. Results were not surprising as teachers expressed initial doubts about their ability to implement the program and improve student reading achievement; however, as the program progressed, teachers became more confident in their work and students did improve. The main finding emerging from the study was that mastery experiences or positive implementations on the job enhanced teacher perceived ability to embrace reform and initiate change. As teacher self-efficacy changes, so does their thinking about students, their profession, and their capacity to embrace change and make decisions (Ball & Cohen 1996; Ross & Gray 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). By extension, empowerment helps improve students’ performance, as noted by Curt and Patrick (2006) who observed that the performance of the students was greatly improved if their teachers were empowered and encouraged to believe in themselves when conducting any learning activities.

In a study conducted by John and Paul (2009) on teacher self-efficacy and occupational stress, the scholars discovered that teachers with high levels of efficacy were least affected by the occupational stresses and therefore allowed them to provide quality work that resulted in improved performance. Türker et al. (2012) also found similar observations in their study of teacher efficacy, where they found that quality performance was obtained with reduced levels of stress at work place.
Teacher Self-Efficacy Measurements

Various instruments have been used to measure teacher self-efficacy. The multidimensional 24-item Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Avanzi, L., et al. 2013) (TSES) is one of the instruments used to measure teacher self-efficacy. The scale has six dimensions, which are measured using four items (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). It involves the measurement of self-efficacy in relation to instructions, student needs, student motivation, student discipline, student cooperation with their colleagues, and adapting to education (Saracaloğlu & Dinçer, 2009). Participants are given in a 7-point scale to determine the certainty of the teachers in conducting the aforementioned dimensions.

There is also Teacher Self-efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer, Schmitz, and Daytner in 1999 (Schmitz & Schwarzer, 2000). This scale measures teacher efficacy using 10 point items associated with job skill. But the items can be broadly divided into four main areas, namely: (a) job accomplishment, (b) coping with job stress, (c) social interaction with students, colleagues, and parents, and (d) skill development on the job (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999). The items essentially focus on questions that are personal, as evident by the use of the pronoun “I” and terms connoting ability such as “be able to” or “can.” The specific questions to elicit teacher efficacy are presented in Appendix J below. The responses are then to be given in a Likert scale of 1-4 where (1) represents “not at all true” and 4 represents “exactly true.”

The Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) was developed by Gibson and Dembo to determine the potential levels of teachers in relation to their efficacy (Hallinan and Danaher, 1994). They developed a 16-item instrument in a 6-point Likert scale for responses. TES became the predominant scale and is applied by other researchers examining the aspect of teacher efficacy on education. Teachers’ self-efficacy can also be determined collectively. In this case, the
perceived collective efficacy is measured (Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). This measurement is done on a seven-item scale that makes use of student motivation, instructions, student’s needs, students’ behavior, and creation of a safe environment. The measurement is based on what all the teachers can do or are able to do in relation to the dimensions mentioned in the scale (Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). The responses are provided in a 6-point scale with extreme ends marked false and true for answers on the ability of the teachers to provide the aforementioned items to be obtained. These studies have focused on the influences of teacher self-efficacy on student performance and motivation. The measurement of teacher self-efficacy is also presented from research with the instruments for measurements being highlighted by different scholars. There is however, not much work done on the influences of teaching guidelines on the teacher self-efficacy.

**Summary**

From the preceding review of literature, the past research largely dwelt on the operational definitions of efficacy, which were used in this study. Broadly, efficacy deems an individual’s or a group’s shared spirit projected outwardly as assurance, eagerness to fulfill due tasks, liveliness, and self-discipline. Past research has also established the aspects that erode teachers’ efficacy, the correlations between the efficacy and achievement of learners, as well as the value of leadership in bolstering efficacy-level. However, the articles reviewed did not amply explore the specific ways in which the instructors’ adjust to self-efficacy challenges caused by accountability requirements. This study contributed to bridging the gap in literature by specifically examining strategies that teachers do develop to solve their lack of self-efficacy at times when it is low, especially in relation to accountability challenges.
The reviewed literature indicates that significant research has been conducted in teachers’ accountability challenges as well as in self-efficacy challenges. Researchers have also explored the challenges of self-efficacy. However, limited focus has been given to the solutions that would help in the maintenance of perceived self-efficacy.

The existing body of knowledge, however, has hardly focused on how teachers go about solving issues arising from self-efficacy challenges attributed to accountability hurdles, or negative perception of teacher/school accountability requirements; a gap that this dissertation seeks to contribute in mending. Self-efficacy as well as motivation theories explored in this chapter seem to suggest that solutions to accountability perception hurdles lie in building motivation, competence development, and self-efficacy enhancement. In order for the educational system to be successful in spawning good student performance, teachers must be efficient. For teachers to garner excellent results, their morale must be “high,” as their morale determines the quality of knowledge and education imparted on the students. The schooling administration should play a pivotal role in developing curricula, books, and teaching methods. Above all, teachers must be given the best drive and morale for work, because they have the ability to give life and meaning to the curriculum and make books fascinating or dull, which can make teaching methods stimulating.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explored teacher understanding of accountability requirements and how it influenced their self-efficacy, at one high school located in Mississippi. I explored solutions that teachers generated to maintain their levels of self-efficacy in light of these pressures. Specific focus was given to teacher understanding of how accountability requirements influence their self-efficacy, the strategies that they report they use to develop solutions to their reduced or lack of self-efficacy, and the influence of the administrative support, student discipline, and the workload on the teachers’ self-efficacy as reported by the teachers.

This chapter identifies the participants in the study, the setting, procedures used in the collection and analysis of the data, the manner in which the trustworthiness was ensured, and the ethical considerations made during the study. The chapter presents the data collection plan, the validity of such data, and the results that determine the overall outcome of the study.

Research Design

A case study design was selected as the most appropriate for this study. Yin (2013) stated that case studies are appropriate for social science studies and are a viable design to use when the research focuses on how or why questions, when the researcher has limited control over behavioral events, and when the topic under study is contemporary rather than focused on a historical phenomenon. This study focused on teacher perceptions of how events within their schools and careers influenced their self-efficacy. These events included high-stakes accountability requirements, which are current topics. I entered the field to study a real life event, that of how teachers handled high-stakes accountability during their daily work. Case study based research offers the respondents a space to express themselves and give their points
of view. Additionally, the study focused on the strategies (current) that teachers generate to handle this contemporary event. Finally, the research questions focused on “how” or why things happen (Yin, 2009).

The qualitative case study design was settled upon not only because of its convenience, but also because it was deemed the most reasonable and accurate design that could help achieve the objectives of the research at hand, as evidenced in various literature (Denzin, Norman, & Lincoln, 2005; Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Jeanne, 2011; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Denzin, Norman, and Lincoln (2005) explained the effectiveness of qualitative research in the understanding of human behavior and the reasons behind such behavior; hence, the above design is appropriate for this study.

Qualitative research is concerned with naturalistic inquiry of events; hence this is enough evident to prove that this is a qualitative study. The meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions of patterns, and it forms the basis of the researcher’s curiosity, hence the need for the research. Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork since the respondents are scattered in different places, and the field gives a good representation of the whole population in research (Nicholls, 2011). This implies that the researcher must go to the people, and observe behavior in data collection so that he or she gets the true view of the whole process. The product of qualitative research is deeply descriptive, and the researcher’s personal experience is important for the inquiry and is critical to understanding the phenomenon so that he or she develops better results and conclusions. An empathic stance during interviews allows the researcher neutrality by showing openness and mindfulness to the research process since the results largely depend on this. By receiving ethical approval prior to conducting research, the researcher is sensitive to research outcomes, and therefore wants the respondents to be open-
minded. The researcher places his or her findings within the social, historical, and temporal context to prove that he or she is context sensitive, a characteristic of qualitative research. The data are based on participants’ own categories of meaning about the research topic (Nicholls, 2011).

Qualitative research methods can make it possible for a study of a limited number of cases to be in-depth, compared to quantitative research, which is often a more shallow form of research. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research can provide individual case information. Qualitative research also provides understanding and description of personal experiences of phenomena, making it possible to get as many views as possible, which helps to make the research more accurate (Kielborn, 2001).

Qualitative research is systematic and requires the correct application of methodology and design to be successful in its outputs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are numerous tools for conducting the fieldwork of qualitative research. The most popular are interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document reviews. The topic, subject, and question of the research proposal dictate the most appropriate methods and tools (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study employed a survey, focus group, and individual interviews.

**Justification of the Research Design**

A case study was deemed appropriate for this research. There were several other alternative qualitative research designs that had the potential of being used, but were discarded. Those considered, but discarded, include ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Ethnography refers to a qualitative research designed for studying cultural phenomena, and is used to derive results that reflect the system of meanings and the knowledge about a cultural group (Agar, 1996). Given that this study focused on teachers who are typically from a wide
range of cultural groups, and whose perceptions are not shaped by a single cultural background, ethnography was ruled out as a research design for the study (Agar, 1996). The phenomenological approach seeks to explore and develop an accurate, articulate, complete, and clear understanding of a given human experiential moment or experiences and meanings attached to the experiences (Amphora, 2007). This goal is often achieved through investigative approaches such as systematic treatment of data, engaging specialized participants, or information solicitation (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach was discarded as using this approach would have led to greater focus being given to experiences of teachers (in relation to their perceived efficacy) at the expense of other vital factors associated with the experience, such as strategies employed to counter self-efficacy. Also, I was more concerned with the need to conceptualize and explain perceived teacher self-efficacy, especially in terms of its relationship with accountability requirements, than to understand teacher self-efficacy in itself. Typically, phenomenological approaches have little interest in seeking to conceptualize the human experiences revealed in the course of investigation (Creswell, 2007). Thus, this design was not selected as the best for this study.

Grounded theoretical approaches entail the use of individual data cases by the researcher so as to come up with a theory based on the specific findings (Creswell, 2007). The researcher begins with no theory or hypothesis, and lets the theory emerge from collection of data collected over a period of time, and eventually conceptualizes to develop a theory or hypothesis through an inductive, rather than deductive approach (Malhotra, 2007). I discarded this approach, as the study was generally investigative and did not seek to establish any substantive theory. Additionally, the present study was based on the premise of a certain conceptual framework –
meaning that analysis of the study is anticipated to be partly deductive rather than being wholly inductive as envisaged under grounded theoretical approaches (Malhotra, 2007).

**Research Questions**

The intent of this qualitative research study is to explore teachers’ perceptions of school accountability and to establish how such perceptions influence their perceived self-efficacy.

Data collection was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do select teachers in a high school in southern Mississippi describe self-efficacy?
2. How do teachers in the high school under study describe self-efficacy?
3. How do teachers perceive that accountability requirements influence their self-efficacy?
4. How do teachers generate solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements?

**Participants**

I received permission from the target school district to collect data. Only teachers with over five years of teaching experience were selected for this study. I used convenience sampling to recruit the participants for the study. Convenience sampling refers to a nonprobability sampling technique involving drawing of the sample from the part of the study population that is readily available and convenient (Babbie, 2001). The population for the study included all teachers in one school district located in southern Mississippi. The sample was 10 teachers who agreed to participate. I deemed it important to draw all the participants from the same school to ensure that all the factors relating to their working environment, including the emphasis on accountability, the students’ discipline, and the administrative structure of the school were constant. Since the respondents were drawn from the same environment, I was able to accurately analyze the data without having to care for other variations that could have resulted from the
different environment. The participants were assured that this study was solely for educational purposes and privacy was assured for their responses.

For the participants to qualify for this study, they must have been certified in their subject area and have at least five years of teaching experience in the district. This was meant to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided by the respondents, as it was assumed that a respondent new to the district or those who are not adequately qualified in their areas of specialization would not provide accurate and reliable results. The participants were teaching at the suburban high school under study, having served in the school for more than one year. All the participants were highly qualified under the No Child Left behind Act (2001) in the area in which they are currently teaching. These requirements were meant to ensure accuracy and reliability of the data collected, and to ensure that they are transferable.

**Setting**

The school under study was a suburban high school, which opened in 1963 in southern Mississippi. The school was initially a grade 9-12 school, but became a grade 10-12 high school in 2009. At the time of the study, the school had a population of 1,057 students, while the school staff consists of 58 certified teachers, 18 support staff, and four administrators. The student population represents varied ethnic backgrounds, with about 95% percent of the students being on free and reduced lunch. Approximately 28% of the teaching staff comes from the *Teach for America* organization, which specializes in filling teacher vacancies in the district.

Like all other schools in Mississippi, the school is tested in various grades with standardized tests to assess the performance of the students at the state level. Tests play a key role in measuring the level at which a student can solve a problem, and his or her degree of perception and intelligence; through the tests, the degree of knowledge and acumen is quantified
(Palmer, 2008). Through these tests, every school is able to gauge its level of performance according to the state grade-level expectations. The test results for 2011-2013 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Test Results 2009-2011 from Delta High School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Algebra</th>
<th>English 11</th>
<th>Biology 1</th>
<th>U.S History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Average in 2011</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Average in 2012</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Average In 2013</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that the performance of students in the school was well below the state average standard. For instance, in the year 2011, the average obtained from the Algebra tests was 42.9%, while the state average was at 85.4%. Deviation from the state mean score is quite high, indicating that the suburban high school was among the lowest performing schools in Mississippi.

Given that the testing is standardized for the whole state, the difference in performance may be due, in part, to the different learning environments. Though the environment also encompasses the facilities in the different schools, the human environment, including the teachers and the school administration, arguably accounts for the major part of the difference in performance (Pines & Aronson, 2007). It is, therefore, reasonable to equate the performance to
the administrative structure of the school, the teachers’ attitudes and perceptions, and the general school policy and traditions. The relatively low performance of the school made it a viable site for the study, as it would help in the achievement of the study objectives.

Procedure

Three sources of data were used to address the research questions for this study, which included the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Avanzi, L., et al. 2013), an online focus group, and individual interviews. These methods provided me with an in-depth understanding of teacher perspectives regarding how accountability requirements influenced their self-efficacy, the strategies that teachers reported they used to develop solutions to their lack of self-efficacy or times when it was low, and how teachers reported that administrative support, student discipline, and workload influence their self-efficacy as well.

First, I secured approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before proceeding with research (see Appendix A). Upon gaining approval from the target school district (see Appendix L) and IRB permission to collect data from Liberty University, I gained informed consent from participants (see Appendix B). To do this, I sought a brief audience with the teachers at the school to explain to them the purpose of the research study and to request their participation.

I obtained the email addresses from the teachers willing to participate in the study and sent them a link to SurveyMonkey where they were given access to the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999). The surveys were completed and submitted online. I advised the participants not to include their name on the survey to protect confidentiality. I downloaded the completed forms and saved them in a hard disk where they were password-protected. A backup of the data was kept on a CD, which will be safely locked in a filing cabinet at my residence for a
period of five years, after which it will be destroyed. Printed copies will be kept under lock when not in use.

I also requested that a smaller sample of teachers from the school participate in an online focus group conducted through the PBworks website. With their consent expressed through the completion of the participant consent form, I sent the respondents a link to the PBworks website. I posted focus group questions on the site and teachers were able to access and respond at their convenience. The PBworks website provided a convenient platform to interview the respondents and seek clarifications. The respondents did not disclose their identities, as the online focus group was conducted through an asynchronous discussion thread, where the respondents responded to questions and clarifications that I requested. The respondents used pseudonyms in place of their real names to ensure anonymity. The same techniques of assigning the respondents pseudonyms were employed in the online focus group. In subsequent individual interviews, I sought clarification for the responses given by the respondents; hence, more information was gathered. I downloaded the results of the focus group and stored them securely in a password-protected folders for further analysis. In line with Krueger’s (1994) suggestion that a focus group should have six to 10 participants to ensure maximum participation while giving room for diversity of ideas, I intended to involve 10, although any number between six and 10 were considered sufficient. The focus group provided an opportunity to get diverse ideas on the subject of study within a limited time, given that the teachers were able to participate in the discussion, giving me the opportunity to get a wider understanding of their views and perceptions of the topic while leaving room for clarification.

In addition to the focus group, I recruited 10 teachers to participate in individual interviews designed to provide further information related to the research questions. I solicited
participants for the interviews at the same time the email was sent out for the online survey. I interviewed teachers for approximately 30 minutes at a place of their choosing. Interviews were audio recorded, after which I also completed a field journal designed to note any observations and nonverbal actions of the participants.

**Personal Biography**

I have been actively involved in the teaching career for several years. For the last seven years, I have been an administrator at one of the schools neighboring the school under study. Having worked in the area of study for several years, I am well versed with the area of interest and the academic trends of the area. During my tenure in the district, I have worked under numerous administrators, and the sole objective of this research was to establish key findings in relation to the study topic through the lens of interviewees and focus groups.

I am aware that my administrative position in a school in the same district as the school under study may create some perceived sense of coercion (Dugosh, Festinger, Croft, & Marlowe, 2010). As such, I opted to collect most data online to give the respondents as much freedom as possible and to eliminate any slight sense of coercion. The respondents were also assured of optimum anonymity and were requested not to give any personal or identifying details. This was designed to minimize the fear of victimization. I expected that the respondents would answer the questions out of their free will and provide genuine responses. My experience as a teacher, and later as an assistant principal gives me preconceived ideas about the subject under study; however, I made every attempt to bracket such ideas to ensure that the information portrayed was that from the respondents, and not my opinions and perceptions.

The use of online media in the collection of data eliminated the perceived coercion during the data collection. I also ensured accuracy and neutrality in the interpretation of the data by
bracketing my own ideas (Rolls & Relf, 2006). I set aside my past assumptions and perceptions of teacher efficacy and concentrated on collecting and analyzing the data as presented by the respondents.

**Data Collection**

Teachers at the high school were invited to complete the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999), which was uploaded to the SurveyMonkey site (Appendix C). The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999) is a Likert scale survey that has been used and tested to be an effective means of assessing self-efficacy. The survey has 10 questions related to teachers’ perception of being able to successfully teach content, maintain positive relationships with parents, reach difficult students, meet their student’s needs, maintain composure and confidence in teaching even during disruptions, find creative ways to work within constraints of district systems, and carry out innovative projects. The answer choice ranged from (1) being not at all true, to (2) being barley true, (3) being moderately true, and (4) being exactly true of the participant. The survey is located in Appendix C of the manuscript.

SurveyMonkey is a free online survey site used by professionals of all disciplines to conduct, manage, and analyze research. It is easily accessible and can be kept available for a period of time. Once I held the initial meeting with the teachers at the school site, 10 teachers consented to participate in the study. They provided their email addresses and I sent them an invitation to complete the survey. The teachers read an explanation of the study and indicated their informed consent to complete the survey by clicking on a link in the email. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale enabled me to capture various aspects of teaching.

Following administration of the survey, the same 10 teachers participated in an online focus group conducted through PBworks website. Each participant was given a link to the
website where they requested access to the wiki. I sent them permission to participate, where each participant was given a link to the website and was requested to confirm participation. The teachers participated in an interactive discussion or focus group based on five questions. Teachers were asked to share some examples of how accountability requirements at school influenced their self-efficacy. Additionally, they were asked to share strategies that they used to maintain or improve their self-efficacy as it relates to teaching. They were also asked to share some strategies that administrators can use to improve their self-efficacy, and were also asked to share stories about how their self-efficacy was impacted due to accountability requirements. The focus group guide is located in Appendix D of this dissertation. In developing the questions for the focus group, I tried to keep them as open as possible while still ensuring that they fit in the topic under study. This would ensure that the study solicited ideas and information which were not premeditated, but which were helpful in getting a better understanding of the topic under study.

Individual interviews were also conducted with the 10 teachers. The interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to the participant. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, after which I also completed a field journal designed to note any observations and nonverbal actions of the participants. The use of online media in data collection was expected to help eliminate any perceived coercion of the respondents, given that I was an administrator at one of the schools in the district within which the research was conducted. However, I did not hold a position of authority over any of the teachers in the study.

I constructed an interview guide that contained 10 questions. Teachers were asked to describe their understanding of self-efficacy as it pertained to their role as a teacher, and to share their thoughts and feelings about accountability for student achievement. They were asked to
share experiences they have had with accountability for student achievement. Next, they were asked to describe their thoughts pertaining to their ability to successfully teach all relevant subject area content, even to the most difficult students. They were asked to describe their thoughts on whether or not test scores were a fair evaluation of their abilities as a teacher, and how they felt being held accountable for student achievement influenced their self-efficacy and ability to meet the needs of individual students. On the survey teachers completed, one question related to their thoughts on developing creative ways to cope with system constraints and still continue to teach well. In light of preparing for high-stakes tests and accountability requirements, they were asked to describe some creative solutions they have come up with. Finally, teachers were asked to describe how administrative support, student discipline, and workload influenced their self-efficacy. A copy of the interview guide is located in Appendix D of the dissertation. The questions were based on the practical experience of the respondents, which were taken to reflect the actual state of administrative support, student discipline, and workload in the school.

Since I collected many kinds of data, I also recorded notes to capture important information concerning the study. The data captured on the field notes should be accurate, detailed, and extensive to permit the reader to understand the situation described. There were four research questions that guided data collection in this study.
Table 2

Matrix of the Data Sources and Alignment to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do select teachers in a high school in Southern Mississippi describe self-efficacy.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do teachers perceive accountability requirements influence their self-efficacy?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do teachers generate solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do teachers report administrative support, student discipline and workload that are a subset of accountability requirements, influence their ability to do their jobs?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

The three sources of data interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and survey responses were analyzed to draw conclusions from the collected data and consequently develop recommendations for practice and future research. The results from the interviews were properly scrutinized in order to get the pattern of information in them.

The TSES has 10 questions with answer choices range from (1) being not at all true, (2) being barely true, (3) being moderately true, and (4) being exactly true of the participant. Percent and mean scores were calculated for the 10 participants’ responses to the survey. Data analysis of interviews and focus groups was accomplished through a coding method whereby speech is interpreted to meaningful categories to discover patterns in reasoning. The
interview and focus group transcripts were arranged chronologically. I read the transcripts twice in undisturbed periods of time to get a “feel” for what the participant said. Initial coding was carried out by generating numerous categories as the responses were being read. Meanings were drawn from careful reading, reflecting, and disaggregating of the statements made by the respondents (Lewin, Stephens, & Vulliamy, 1990; Seidman, 2006; Silverman, 2004). Initial codes were then clustered by meanings into themes. The last step was to “construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p.122). The analysis of the three sources of data were then be compared and merged, so enabling the verification of their consistency, and hence, accuracy.

The online focus group analysis occurred concurrently with data collection. Therefore, I considered a continuum of data analysis ranging from the mere accumulation of raw data to interpretation of data. Since this analysis did not take place in linear form, one part overlapped with another. The analysis process consisted of the following stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping, and interpretation (Yin, 2009).

**Data Integrity**

It is necessary to uphold the credibility and the integrity of any data collected during a study to ensure that such data are trustworthy. In an attempt to uphold the integrity of the study, I employed various measures to ensure transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research as defined by Creswell (2005).

Credibility, the extent to which the findings accurately describe the reality (Spiers, Olson, Morse, Mayan, & Barrett, 2002), was accomplished in various ways. Participants were recruited
to avoid drawing the attention of unqualified participants. In addition, I sent the participants an email of the links to the survey and the online focus group, so it would not be easy for unqualified participants who would not give credible information to access the sites for the survey and interviews.

To ensure that the questions used during the interview and the focus group discussion were clear and could be well understood by the participants, I conducted a practice interview. The practice interview simulated the interview and was aimed at assessing whether the participants were able to understand the questions as I intended and to identify other challenges that may be present during the study. To limit the bias in the interpretation of the collected data, I compared the data with those obtained in the previous research, and where applicable, allude to the conclusions drawn of such studies in making conclusions for the current study (Domingo & Bolivar, 2006, Spiers et al., 2002). The discussion of the results was guided by the research questions.

**Trustworthiness**

Taking measures to ensure optimal credibility and accuracy is central to any scientific study. Considering that this study relied on interviews, an online focus group, and survey, it was important to identify possible threats to this methodology and take corrective measures before the study. Typically, focus groups are susceptible to inaccurate responses where questions are misunderstood or are not clear to the participants (Creswell, 2005). I used the participant validation approach, whereby the transcripts were presented to the participants to verify their accuracy (Creswell, 2004). This approach was particularly useful where the findings are derived from the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ contributions; undertaking participant
validation ensured that meanings that were ascribed by the participants are the ones that were eventually reflected in the findings.

The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale was developed by Schwarzer, Gerdamarie, Schmitz, and Daytner in 1999. First, the authors identified different job skills that teachers performed: job accomplishment, skill development, social interaction with students, parents and colleagues, and coping with job stress (Schwarzer et al., 1999, para. 1). Next, the authors developed 27 survey questions designed to assess each of these four categories. These 27 items were integrated into a longer survey which was given three different times to approximately 300 teachers in Germany as a part of a study on self-efficacious schools. The goal of the researchers was to identify approximately 10 items which would efficiently measure the four categories. Cronbach’s alpha in the three samples was “found to be between .76, and .82, test-retest reliability resulted in .67 (N = 158), and .76 (N = 193) respectively, for the period of one year. For the period of two years it was found to be .65 (N = 161)” (Schwarzer et al., 1999, para. 4). These findings marked the discriminant validity of the new instrument. Although the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, has a relatively high level of reliability (Schmitz & Schwarzer, 2000), the high support for NTSES among scholars makes it a preferable tool (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Additionally, triangulation was used as a source of data integrity.

**Ethical Issues**

In accordance with the University Human Research Ethics Committee’s rules, I sought the approval from the administration of the school under study to conduct this survey. I also assured the respondents that the results of the study would be made available to all participants upon the completion of the study, as a goodwill gesture to assure the respondents that they would be treated with courtesy and respect. Additionally, all respondents were thoroughly informed
about the study via an email message, and their right to participate or withdraw their participation at any time during the study was also highlighted. I requested the participants to send a reply message confirming their consent to take part in the study.

    Furthermore, I ensured that each participant was accorded a right to confidentiality and anonymity by refraining from mentioning any potentially identifying information about the participants. In all the documentation for the study, the participants were not identified and neither was their station of work, their job description or position. Finally, the responses given by the individual participants were used exclusively for the purposes of the study, and were not available to any other person or entity.

    The respondents were requested not to indicate their names anywhere in the questionnaire, but used pseudonyms. I not only used this as a means of enhancing confidentiality, but it also served to ensure that the responses given were not tailored towards portraying a positive picture of the respondents, but rather reflected the actual situation and perception of the respondent. The collected data is stored in my desktop computer and will be highly protected using strong passwords to prevent unauthorized access. The data will be backed-up in a CD, which will be stored safely in a locked cupboard. The data will be destroyed within 7 years after the completion of the study.

    **Summary**

    This chapter covers the methodology used in the collection and analysis of the data. I reveal the process of data collection, how I ensured credibility and reliability of the data, as well as how the security of the data was ensured. This chapter, therefore, gives a comprehensive coverage of the whole research process, hence making it possible to access the study and the results thereof. Chapter Four provides data obtained during the study from the online survey, the interviews, and the focus group research.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influenced their perceived self-efficacy at Delta High School, located in southern Mississippi. While prior research focused on problems associated with teacher self-efficacy and burnout, few focused on actual solutions generated to help teachers maintain their perceived ability to do their jobs in light of high-stakes testing and accountability requirements (Bandura, 1997; Fink, 2012; Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). Additionally, I explored the strategies that teachers reported they used to develop solutions to their lack of self-efficacy, their perceived administrative support in dealing with the low self-efficacy, and the influence of student’s discipline and workload on their self-efficacy. This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the interviews, focus groups, and survey data I collected. This chapter illustrates the accumulation of results obtained from the focus groups, survey, and also the interviews carried out. This chapter will use the research questions and the data to generate key themes that will be instrumental in the presentation of the findings. The thematic approach is appropriate since the study uses qualitative approaches.

Overview of the Study

Four research questions guided data collection for the study. Research Question 1 focused on how select teachers in a high school in southern Mississippi described self-efficacy. Research Question 2 queried how teachers perceived that accountability requirements influenced their self-efficacy, whereas the third question explored how teachers generated solutions to
improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements. Finally, Research Question 4 investigated how teachers reported administrative support, student discipline, and workload that are a subset of accountability requirements, influenced their ability to do their jobs.

Teachers at the high school were invited to complete the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999) which was uploaded to the SurveyMonkey site (Appendix C). The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999) allowed me to capture various aspects of teaching, given that the different job skills in the teaching profession were taken into account in the development of this tool. An online focus group was conducted through the PBworks website where participants were asked to share some examples of how accountability requirements at school have influenced their self-efficacy, and how they, as well as their administrators, applied strategies to maintain or improve self-efficacy. Finally, I conducted interviews with teachers concerning self-efficacy. I also recorded field notes to capture thoughts and nonverbal communications displayed by participants during interviews.

Participants

The participants included 10 teachers who willingly completed the surveys and participated in the interviews and focus groups. All of the participants were given an opportunity to give their views on the different questions presented in the interviews and focus groups. In order to protect the identity of the teachers, they were assigned pseudonyms. All 10 of the teachers were female. Eight were African American; one was Asian, and one was Caucasian. Years of teaching experience ranged from a low of 5 years to a high of 22 years. Table 3 presents the demographic information of the participants in terms of race, gender, and years of teaching experience.
Table 3

Teacher Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
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<td>female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
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<td>female</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Survey

The first source of data used in this study was the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999), which was administered via SurveyMonkey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C. Ten teachers completed the survey. There are 10 questions on the survey with answers ranging from (1) not at all true, (2) barely true, (3) moderately true, and (4) exactly true. The first question stated: I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students. Six teachers responded exactly true to this statement and four teachers responded moderately true. Question 2 was, I know that I can
maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise. Eight teachers responded moderately true and two answered exactly true. Question 3 was: When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students. Only one teacher answered barely true, while four teachers responded moderately true, and five teachers responded exactly true. Question 4 was, I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students’ needs. One teacher responded barely true, two teachers said moderately true, while seven teachers said exactly true. Question 5 was, Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well. None answered true. Four teachers answered moderately true, and six teachers answered exactly true. Question 6 stated, I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students’ needs even if I am having a bad day. Two teachers answered moderately true, and eight answered exactly true. Question 7 stated, If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students was as follows. Four teachers answered moderately true, while six teachers answered exactly true. Question 8 stated, I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well. Five teachers responded moderately true, one teacher responded barely true, and four teachers responded exactly true. For question 9, I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects, two teachers responded barely true, five teachers answered moderately true, and three teachers responded exactly true. Lastly in question 10, I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues, five teachers responded exactly true, four teachers said moderately true, and only one teacher responded barely true.
In summary, survey results showed that the majority of responses to the questions were “moderately true,” while the least frequent answer was “barely true,” indicating teachers felt positively about their ability to successfully teach, maintain positive relationships with parents, meet the needs of students, maintain composure in light of daily job challenges, and be innovative with regard to acquisition and use of resources. Question 2 on maintaining positive relationships with parents had the highest mean score, whereas question 6 “I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my student's needs even if I am having a bad day” received the lowest mean score. Table 4 below is a representation of the responses from the survey.
### Table 4

**Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Responses and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subjects to even most difficult students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that I can maintain positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I try very hard, I am able to reach even most difficult students</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will be able to become more and more capable of helping to address students’ needs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if I am disrupted from teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my student's needs even if I am having a bad day

   0 0 2 8 3.8

7. If I try hard enough, I am confident that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students

   0 0 4 6 3.6

8. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well

   0 1 5 4 3.3

9. I know I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects

   0 2 5 3 3.1

10. I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues

    0 1 4 5 3.4
Table 5

*Individual Teacher Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q 1</th>
<th>Q 2</th>
<th>Q 3</th>
<th>Q 4</th>
<th>Q 5</th>
<th>Q 6</th>
<th>Q 7</th>
<th>Q 8</th>
<th>Q 9</th>
<th>Q 10</th>
<th>score</th>
<th>final</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

In addition to completing the survey, all 10 teachers participated in individual interviews that lasted approximately 30 minutes each. This section presents the interview questions and the responses of each participant.

**Teacher descriptions of self-efficacy.** The first interview question asked teachers to describe their understanding of self-efficacy as it pertains to their role as a teacher. There were a variety of responses to this question. Some teachers noted that they viewed efficacy as their being viewed as a good and effective teacher, that they have the ability to understand kids, have a positive relationship and work well with others, and are well-rounded. Other comments centered on efficacy pertaining to making ethical decisions, taking pride in what you do, being motivated to do the job, staying in the profession, confidence in their abilities, being available for students, and finally, effectively teaching the curriculum and district objectives to students.

Laura noted, “when you do have self-efficacy it makes you a better teacher. It makes you a better teacher….in certain ways you can understand how other children are feeling.” Dorothy noted that to her, self-efficacy means “making good ethical decisions and working with other people and with my students.” Carol described self-efficacy as,

- taking pride in everything that I do, and when you take pride in what you do then it lets the children know that you are here not just for the money but you’re here for them to give them something to me that’s what it means.

Lisa mentioned that her self-efficacy went up when she felt supported by others: “The more motivated I am the better I become if I have the support of the faculty and staff I tend to do a better job because I gain support from different people different positions.” Anna summed up self-efficacy well when she mentioned that she had been teaching for 20 years. She viewed her
work ethic and self-efficacy as high. She noted her willingness to stay “in this profession; it requires learning, and hard work.”

**Teacher thoughts on school accountability.** The second interview question asked teachers to share their thoughts and feelings about accountability for student achievement. In their responses, teachers overwhelmingly mentioned that accountability is a collective responsibility and should include all stakeholders, the whole school, and the entire district. Laura mentioned,

I think it’s not only the student and the teacher it’s the parent, it’s the administrator, it’s the superintendent, and it’s also the school board, the community, and even the state. Because it’s just too much, the burden is too heavy sometimes for teachers and the students.

Carol reinforced this idea when she stated, “I do feel that everybody should be held accountable for all children not just the teacher classroom that they are in but the whole school and the whole system.” Likewise, Dorothy noted “that is a better way to make sure that all students achieve at the same level.”

Teachers noted that both students and parents should accept responsibility for their learning. Lisa stated, “Not only should teachers be held accountable; students should be held accountable as well because it’s their future at stake not the teacher’s future.” Amy noted, “I feel like we have to get the parents involved more; we are accountable for those students achieving, but it starts at home as well. We have to have parents that want to help the teacher.” One teacher described the process as burdensome, and several mentioned difficulty balancing accountability requirements with learning the new standards, using data to inform instruction,
and also that working with low-level learners was a challenge. Anna captured the importance of accountability when she said that “it all centers on student achievement.”

**Teacher experiences with accountability.** The third question asked about the experiences teachers had with student accountability. Some of the responses were positive, while others were negative. Some teachers noted that their morale was adversely affected when the students did not perform well. Laura noted,

> Well I had negative and I have had some positive experiences with it, basically I gotten received write ups, for when my students didn’t do well on state, on state tests and that, that brought my morale down.

It was clear that all teachers and students should go beyond the call of duty in order to achieve better results. Some of the negative comments noted that changes in standards have made it difficult for teachers. The pressure of teaching a subject based on student graduation is high. Dorothy noted, “Having to teach a subject based solely on student graduation has been one of my main experiences with accountability. It has fluctuated a lot due to the changes in the standards.”

A few of the teachers also found it scary because results are posted. Ruth opined, “In the past I have had state tested classes where my accountability was posted along with all the other teachers the achievement of the students.”

On the other hand, teachers noted that teaching students in a way they can understand is the most effective way of achieving student accountability. In addition, teachers noted that using data to inform teaching is necessary. Another key aspect is differentiation in teachers to meet the needs of students at different levels and abilities. Sarah explained, “I am teaching them [standards] to my students in a way that they can explain the way they are learning and back it up with data.” Sue mentioned about standards when she said, “this point certain standards that must
be met certain uh strands that we have to teach so throughout the year that’s all we deal with you know the data the standards and the teachers.” Anna mentioned,

I don’t have the same type of students, like fast learners. I have the slow ones, so my goal as a teacher is to at least have differentiated instruction that caters to all my types of learners so that I can get the maximum possible results of my student achievement.

**Teacher thoughts on teaching all students.** The fourth question asked the teachers to describe their thoughts on their ability to successfully teach all relevant subject-area content, even to the most difficult students. Teachers mentioned that they have students at different levels and abilities. Laura mentioned, “It’s difficult when you teach in so many different levels of students, and so many students that have different ways of learning; it’s very hard.” Other teachers complained that new accountability measures make pacing a concern. Some noted that there is a need to have support from administrators, teachers and parents. Dorothy added that, “it is going to be a hard thing to do as far as making sure all students are on the same level at the same pace with the new accountability measures.” She also mentioned that, “enough support from administration as well as other teachers and parents that I can get all students to on the right path.” Most teachers noted that differentiation and meeting the needs of the leaners are important. Some students have behavior problems that make innovation difficult. Amy noted, “Uh, sometimes it’s difficult um I think we need more help um as far as like classroom help especially with the kids that uh with behavior problems. “One of the ways teachers teach difficult students is by teaching as if they are being graded every day.” Carol noted that the best way is to differentiate when she said, “Well you, you have to just differentiate with all everything you do…”
Teacher thoughts on test scores as a fair evaluation of student performance. The fifth question focused on the ability of test scores to give a fair evaluation. Teachers’ responses to this question were similar. Most teachers thought test scores were not adequate as sole measures of student progress, while others mentioned the idea of test scores should not determine everything. Some teachers thought it was everyone’s responsibility, and others said test scores put a lot of pressure on the teachers.

Laura said, “I don’t feel they are a fair evaluation even when the students, whether the student does well or not you have to look at what point the student comes to you.” Carol emphasized,

I don’t feel that it’s fair because when you think about test scores and children, being in this area children do not take it seriously so you holding me accountable for what children don’t take serious because it’s nothing pulling them at this point until they make it to graduation then they become serious.

Sue supported this by saying,

I don’t totally go along with that being a fair measure; because a lot of times you have children that are not as motivated that may not take the test as serious, so then it’s not an actual thing of what they know…

Amy added, “I don’t think that’s fair you know a lot of kids come from different backgrounds and different cultures.” Ruth also added that other factors impact student test scores:

I don’t feel student test scores alone are a fair evaluation of my ability because sometimes students will try sometimes uh it may just be a bad day for that child and he may not achieve uh the desired results on test scores he may be sick he may have other personal issues where he cannot focus on the content.
Teacher Sarah responded, “I think that it is important, but I don’t just think that a test score should not determine everything.” Therefore, teachers overwhelmingly felt that students should be assessed based on multiple sources of data and factors rather than just tests.

Teacher thoughts on accountability and self-efficacy. Question 6 was about how teachers perceived that being held accountable for student test scores influenced teacher self-efficacy. The responses indicated that accountability is difficult, but rewarding when the students achieve. Some teachers felt accountability was hard at first, but later influenced their instructional plans and fostered persistence. Some teachers thought it brought them down, while others thought it influenced them to be better teachers. Some teachers were of the opinion that it takes away skills, while others emphasized differentiation. Laura captured many of these thoughts:

Some days it’s up, some days it’s down. On some days, when I’m introducing a new lesson I look at it like it’s a tall wall and I say how am I going to make it to the top of this wall? But I do make it to the top of the wall; I am determined that I am going to get the child to a certain point or as close to where I want him to be. It is a challenge; some days it leaves you physically and emotionally drained. But when the children finally seem to get it, you’re happy for them.

Dorothy stated,

Originally, at first it was kind of hard dealing with accountability; it had my morale really low, as at a lot of places that don’t have the highest test scores. But after I sat down and thought of a new plan and new goals it has increased my morale and my job performance.

Carol added,
It depends. Sometimes it makes me not care because they don’t care, and I just feel as a teacher you know it’s all what you’re not doing and not what the children are doing so sometimes it does bring me down a little bit.

Lisa echoed Carol’s thoughts, “It tends to brings me down. You know when I’m held responsible for what others do, it has a negative effect on me.” In contrast Sue said, it made me a better teacher for real, because when you know that you’re looked at by your scores, it makes you want to do everything you need to do to achieve those high scores. I said I had to go and get some extra professional development and things like that to help me out in the classroom, so overall I look back again, it made me a better teacher… it kept me on point.

Amy raised a concern that accountability has caused teachers to focus on the test and not necessarily the whole child:

Being a teacher…Man it’s kind of hard as far as the accountability. It’s a lot of stuff you need to teach kids as far as life skills instead of a lot of book knowledge too, and a lot of teachers focus on more of the test than focusing on the child.

**Teacher thoughts on accountability and meeting the needs of students.** The seventh interview question asked, *How do you feel being held accountable for student achievement affects your ability to meet the needs of each child in your classroom?* Teachers responded to the question by emphasizing collaboration and working together with all stakeholders. Teachers mentioned that teaching students to achieve their potential is crucial in the accountability process. Ruth mentioned that she, like her colleagues, went above and beyond job requirements to ensure that students learned:
Sometimes I do go over and above what is required in order to meet the needs of all the students in my classroom. I have stayed after school with students. I have even come up here on the weekends to help students. I really want them to achieve, and I want it to reflect positively on the class and the students and myself.

Dorothy responded,

I feel that accountability has kind of broadened the sense of making sure that all students are on the same level. But, it has also hindered some, because not every student will achieve at the level at which state standards may say they need to.

Sue mentioned,

I mean if I’m held accountable often time people just come in and just do a normal routine, but when you know that you are going to be held responsible for this child’s success, it helps you become more prepared for the challenge. So, in a sense again, just like I said it made me a better teacher; it made me go out and do the things that I needed to do to make sure they were at that I got the end results that I wanted.

Amy confirmed the pressure teachers felt when she added, “You have different kids who learn different, so it puts a lot of pressure on the teacher as far as trying to get those kids ready for their test.”

**Solutions teachers use to cope with accountability requirements.** The eighth question was, **On the survey you completed, one question related to your thoughts on developing creative ways to cope with system constraints and still continue to teach well. In light of preparing for high stakes tests and accountability requirements, can you describe some creative solutions you have come up with?** The responses from the teachers revealed involving parents was a good way to foster creativity. Another strategy was the use of educational channels to help learners know
more about the real world applications of the things they learn. Peer tutoring in the classroom was an effective way of encouraging student creativity. Laura explained,

If I know something is coming on maybe the History channel or educational channels, I have the children to look at it. I introduced something in my classroom called student CNN student news. CNN student news is ten minutes of concise news from around the world that tells news in terms that students can understand. We look at that for ten minutes discuss that, and we try to tie it in and most times we can tie it in to a le objective that we have covered or maybe are coming close to cover or being introduced.

Dorothy said,

I think a lot of things involving parents have been a big influence on different ways that I can increase my student achievement in the accountability method as well as outside projects on just basic knowledge things that they should have had coming in is a good way.

Furthermore, Carol mentioned,

I believe in peer tutoring in the classroom. Sometimes teacher has to step back out the way and let the child teach. You may have a child that can reach their peers better than you can, and they know what to do. Just give them that opportunity. When you let the children get involved, it helps to bring up the morale in the class and helps the children to meet their objectives as well.

**Teacher descriptions of innovative projects.** Question 9 asked teachers to describe some of the innovative instructional projects they have been able to develop in light of accountability requirements. Teachers thought they had the ability to carry out creative projects. However, results were mixed with regard to how often the teachers carried out innovative
projects. Amy noted she did no projects. On the other hand, Anna explained how she does her creative projects:

We do posters. Most of my students have internet; they have their cell phones, so we practice online. We use educational math websites like Glencoe and it’s like standardized test practice online. They can click their answers, and that is all in preparation for them taking online test ACT...Some students request...give me some more because they are practicing at home.

In addition, Ruth said,

I have had students in the past to make models of geometric line designs, geometric string designs. I have a set of Popsicle sticks. We have made bridges and put weights on it to see how much weight the bridge can hold. Just different things like that.

Furthermore, Mary described a project her students did in class:

We completed a body system project where the students would have to identify functions; not only identify functions, but draw an organ or write a paragraph about the process that a certain organ goes through to help the body work and function properly. That one of the creative ones because the students have to go and not only do they have to research, but they have to draw; they have to color, and it takes a lot it takes days. But, in the end they learn from it.

**Teacher descriptions of administrators, students, and workload.** Question 10 asked how administrative support, student discipline, and workload influenced self-efficacy. One surprising finding of this question was that teachers mentioned that others depended on their support, rather than the teacher depending on support from administrators, students, and parents. Teachers reported needing help with time from administrators. From the interviews and focus
group, it was clear the teacher viewed self-efficacy as it makes you feel better, is the extent or strength of one’s belief in one’s own ability, a sense of responsibility.

With regard to discipline, one teacher thought that it was good to put herself in the position of the students and realize what is going on outside school. Sue added by saying, I don’t have a whole lot of problems with student discipline, but I do say as far as sometimes with administrative support I feel that as just as we need to get to know our students that administrators get to know the teachers. And when you know your teachers you can sort of because you can’t come you have to have a relationship.

Some teachers felt that the workload is not hard, while others said the administration depended on them. One teacher mentioned that teachers should know their students, and administrators should know their teachers. Mary said, “as far as administrative support, it influences my self-efficacy when the administrative support is there and they are understanding and they are willing to assist me in becoming that effective teacher that I am trying to become.”

**Interview summaries.** A review of transcripts and teacher responses to interview questions yielded many different codes, which were subsequently collapsed into the four categories: (1) Self-efficacy and accountability, (2) feelings and experiences with accountability, (3) accountability and meeting the needs of students, and (4) support from administrators, and students. Overall, teachers noted that self-efficacy defined not only who they were as professionals, but also defined their approach to accountability. Teachers felt that accountability, although at times burdensome and difficult, made them want to be better teachers and help students learn more. Overwhelmingly, teachers felt accountability is a joint effort to be owned by all stakeholders, including students. Teachers repeatedly mentioned the need to differentiate, know students, meet them where they are, and use data to inform instruction. Teachers did not
verbalize that discipline was a major factor in their ability to meet accountability requirements, and reported feeling self-sufficient in the process. Most concerns with regard to administrative support, which were revealed through interviews, centered on the fact that the principal depended on the teacher to do a good job. Teachers did want consistent discipline, help with time management, and necessary resources to do their job. Table 6 presents emergent codes and categories derived from interviews.
Table 6

Emergent Interview Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes Representative of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy and accountability</td>
<td>• Desire to be a better teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand how kids feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make good ethical decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work well with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Take pride in what I do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being there for the kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Having support from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Willingness to stay in the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenging most days.........but rewarding when kids get it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Was hard at first, but sat down and thought up a new plan and goals……..persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brings me down a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Influenced me to be a better teacher……data ………look at scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Takes away from teaching the whole child or life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differentiation is key; look for ways to reach all kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts and feelings/experiences with accountability</td>
<td>Accountability and meeting the needs of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Burdensome, time consuming, hard to balance with new standards, feel pressured, Scary because results are posted</td>
<td>- Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Better way to make sure all students achieve at the same level</td>
<td>- Different levels and types of students; No, you have to look at where the kids were when they came to you. Kids come from different backgrounds and cultures; Meet the child where they are at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaborative effort, everyone’s responsibility</td>
<td>- New accountability measures and standards make pacing a concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When kids don’t do well, my morale is down</td>
<td>- Need support from administrators, teachers and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers and students have to go beyond the call of duty</td>
<td>- Behavior problems makes being innovative difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teach students in a way they can understand</td>
<td>- Come in every day prepared to teach like I am being graded; being held for accountable for a child’s success makes you want to be more prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use data to inform instruction is necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Collaborative effort and responsibility of all stakeholders, including students

• Puts a lot of pressure on teachers

• Test scores should not determine everything; some kids have bad days or are not good test takers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative support, student discipline and workload</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Put yourself in the students place and realize what is going on in their life outside of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time management support from administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Administrator depends on me, sees talent in me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-sufficient; does not seek help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers should know their students and administrators should know their teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workload is not that hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consistent discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Online Focus Groups**

This section is dedicated to the presentation of the responses from the online focus groups. The first focus group question asked the teachers to share some examples of how accountability requirements at school have influenced their self-efficacy.

**Teacher descriptions of accountability and self-efficacy.** Teachers responded positively and mentioned that it strengthens their belief in their ability in teaching. In a similar vein to interview responses, Anna said,
Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one’s belief in one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. I personally feel that whatever goals and tasks I have been given; I complete them to the best of my ability. I like to be reliable and dependable.

Dorothy agreed with Anna:

I agree that self-efficacy is to the extent and strength of self and what you deem is reachable for you. I too find myself completing goals and tasks that I’ve been given to the best of my abilities, sometimes I find myself going beyond what is called for to make sure these things are acceptable if for no one but self. Reliable and dependable should be what each person should want to be described.

Teacher Mary added,

Accountability at school has influenced my effectiveness by causing me to step up a notch in the classroom by assisting with reteaching and remediating those students who have not mastered objectives that will prepare them for state test. Conducting after-school tutoring is another way accountability has influenced my effectiveness to assist student with meeting state test requirements.

Carol supported Mary by saying,

Mary, I really enjoyed your post and I agree that many of the elements in school accountability have increased my effectiveness as well as self-efficacy. The comment you made about staying after school is also one of the ways that I have used that is has increased my self-efficacy. This year I had to increase my workday by staying afterschool to help a student achieve the requirements of graduation. Also having some of my former students to pass the state assessments after they have taken my class is another example of accountability increasing my self-efficacy.
Ruth noted, 

As classroom teachers we are held to a high level of accountability. These levels are achieved, in most cases, because of our professionalism and integrity. I feel a sense of responsibility to my students. Whatever accountability standards have been set, I will work to uphold them. Sometimes this goes beyond academics. Example: I had to constantly contact a parent because of a non-academic problem the student was having. I was not reaching the student in class; therefore, I was non-effective, in his case. My required level of accountability was not reached with this student. It was not until I met with people outside the school environment that I was able to get this student on track. Finally, I was able to reach my goals with this student.

Mary opined, 

Many times students experience things outside of the school which causes them to not be able to focus at school. Most of the time they will talk to a teacher they can trust. When situations at home are ok students can put forth better effort in the classroom. I had a student who was an honor student. He did excellent on all class work, but when his mother got sick and went to the hospital he would leave a school to make money so he could feed his siblings and pay the bills. So therefore, home circumstances affect our students in a great way and causes academic success to become a failure if it goes unnoticed by the teacher.

To add on that, Sue said, 

School accountability has truly made me a better teacher. Teachers have a challenging job of teaching, assisting, motivating, and shaping each child that they encounter. We have the daunting task of meeting every child’s educational need. To ensure that these
needs are met, accountability requirements were put in place. I’ve read several comments that teachers have posted and agree that the majority of us do the best that we can with resources provided. However, accountability has made me a better teacher because I had to leave my comfort zone and provide a higher quality of instruction to my students by integrating various research-based strategies. Many strategies I was using outdated and not effective anymore. I also had to partner with parents to improve the success of my students. It’s not easy at all, but must be done. I had to learn how to use my students’ data to plan my lessons and integrating various technology not just PowerPoints in the classroom. I had to receive more training in effective delivery of instruction, motivating the unmotivated students, and establishing and maintaining a working relationship with parents.

Lisa supported the discussion,

By holding me accountable for the attainment of my students have made me become more aware of the materials I present and making sure the student is getting what is required instead of assuming that they have gotten. I tend to double check now.

Amy added, “As displayed of self-efficacy of being the extent of one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals, I think accountability has been the outlook for me to excel in my duties outlined by the administrator.”

**Strategies used to maintain and improve self-efficacy.** The second question introduced a discussion that allowed teachers to share some strategies used to maintain or improve self-efficacy as it relates to teaching. Rather than focusing on what teachers did to improve their own self-efficacy, this discussion took on a different tone. Teachers discussed strategies they used to help students meet with success in the classroom.
Anna contributed to the question by sharing,

Some strategies I can use is never let the next person stop me from doing what I have to do. When I come to work, I come to help the students by collaborating with the teachers regardless of how I may feel about him or her.

Carol supported Anna’s statement,

I agree with having to keep centered around the fact that our main goals as teachers should be to help students. I also remember this daily to keep striving for the best despite the circumstances. I also love to use peer instruction or peer tutoring as a tool to ensure students are learning the material because if they can explain the topics and help others understand the material they have it. This increases my self-efficacy because I know that I have done an excellent job if my students are in this stage.

Laura agreed by saying, “I agree with Anna, I never let the next person stop me from doing or completing tasks that I have to perform.” Mary gave her opinion by saying,

Some strategies I use to maintain and prove my effectiveness in the classroom is to make sure that I reach the students visually, auditory, and kinesthetically. Reviewing test questions that students miss. Checking for understanding often during instructional time, probing answers to questions on bell ringers from students who are have not struggles and won’t ask questions. Finally, I place students in a paired group with stronger students.

Dorothy supported Mary by noting,

Making sure that you use visual, auditory, and kinesthetically strategies will insure that you are reaching every student. Sometimes as teachers we only tend to use only one or two strategy which will leave some students feeling as if they do not belong. I believe in
pairing students because I found that students learn better from each other and many times students can reach each other better than teachers.

In contrast, Ruth captured the intent of this question. She stated, “Reflection is one strategy I use to improve my self-efficacy. I will reflect on the results produced in the classroom and if they were not acceptable, I reflect on how I can re-evaluate and restructure to improve my self-efficacy.” Lisa said,

I use self-criticism as a strategy to boost my efficacy if I feel that I could have done it better based on the results of assessment of the materials and the levels are low on student understanding. I regroup and revamp the plan and try a different strategy or approach that they may understand.

Sue gave her opinion as follows,

Every year, I reflect on what strategies worked well in my class and those that were not as successful. I have to reflect in order to improve and become more effective at addressing my students’ weaknesses. After the first semester of school, I realized that I needed to improve in the following areas: better communication with parents and students concerning grades, establish and practice consistently routines and rituals for everything we do in class, and I needed to find strategies to help students focus on what is most important in the lesson cycle. At the beginning of the second semester, I set up an online page I also attended workshops that aided me in helping my students identify critical information in the lesson and I learned new ways of chunking information in smaller pieces to cover necessary skills. Overall I am adept in my subject area, but I needed some help with my pedagogical skills. I made PD360 an online professional development site my best friend. It supports best practices and Common Core. I also
created an account with Remind 101 that allowed me text message my students and parents about assignment without using my own number and it is an easy way to communicate with parents who do not have time to communicate with me. Now I no longer struggle in the areas mentioned above.

Amy added, “To improve self-efficacy as it relates to teaching, I am always dedicated to my task that is why I commit myself to being at work, every day for the students to succeed.”

Sarah said,

I try to give my students fun and exciting ways to help my students learn an objective related to real life situations. One strategy I use is to have students relate other subject matters along with objectives in class such as: reading The Great Gatsby and having students watch the movie and relate it to U.S. History with the Roaring 20’s.

Teacher descriptions of administrative support. The third question asked about some strategies that administrators could use to improve their self-efficacy. Anna said, “The administrator can be more open to listening to suggestions made by the staff. I think if the administrator worked with the staff then the staff would work together more.” To add to that, Sue said,

I totally agree with you. Administrators should establish a rapport with their teachers just as teacher do with their students. Administrators should know the strengths and weaknesses of their teachers, either through observation, communication, or work experience in the area being taught. We should be allowed to teach in the area most comfortable, until we are provided the proper training in the areas they would like for us to teach. If a teacher feels competent and well prepared for a class, then surely the morale of the teacher would be strengthened. I believe that high self-efficacy among
teacher will bring about higher achievement rate among students. Therefore administrators should strive to ensure that teachers feel appreciated and supported. Strong and caring principals produces strong and caring teachers.

Mary supported,

Administrators can be more supportive during after school and Saturday school remediation by assisting teachers with resources needed to make it successful such as supplies, breakfast for students, or after school snacks. I feel that those programs need support to increase the student Attendance especially if a school is in school improvement.

Carol noted,

Administrators can assist with improving teacher self-efficacy in several ways. The administrators can add more support and training. As far as support administrators can ensure that all materials are provided or available for the teachers to complete task as well as implementing appreciation clubs for teachers and students. Teachers are humans and need to be recognized and validated for the things they do well. Administrators can also help in training teachers or approve for professional development in areas that are needed.

Dorothy opined,

Administrators can make sure that staff knows that they are there to support them and not knock them down. Motivations, make sure that the training that the staff need is known throughout the district and not kept in house, and believe in their teachers. Some teachers just need to know that with the help of their administrator they can and will get better in due time.
Laura added, “Administrators should make sure that each staff is making a contribution to the students and school’s success.” Ruth supported,

Administrators can make sure professional development sessions are geared toward subject specific areas in the common core curriculum. None of the PD sessions I have attended at school have been informative. I will be held accountable (M-STAR) for CCSS with no proper training. Everything I have learned has been through my own research.

Lisa contributed,

The administration can be more proactive an understanding threat we are working with a group that has now concept of valuing education and that trying to force the students pulls on how you plan to elevate you efficacy because you may have to revert to low levels to grasp the level the child is on.

Amy supported, “Some administrators can be more open to communicate professionally and have an open door policy to everyone entering the school to ensure all communication gaps are being met in a reasonable manner.” Teacher Sarah concluded the discussion by saying, “I think that the administrators have offered me support with my teaching and also my students.”

**Teacher descriptions of accountability pressures.** The fourth question asked how accountability requirements influenced teachers’ self-efficacy. The teachers had various ideas and contributions towards the discussion. Anna said,

Being someone a person can count on is big to me especially in the workplace. On a daily basis, I try do what is expected of me so in the long run, the administrator can see that I am a hard worker and dependable.
Mary contributed to the discussion by mentioning, “Accountability requirements cause me to focus and be very cautious with my classroom time. I focus more on teaching to the test. I use data more to guide me during remediation and during instructional time.” Carol noted,

Using data to drive instruction is the key to increasing success in accountability requirements. However, sometimes I feel indifferent about only teaching my students what they need to know to pass the test instead of what they should know to succeed holistically. Accountability requirements overall increase my self-efficacy, because I increase my goals and in turn, this increases levels of achievement.

Dorothy supported the discussion by saying,

Accountability requirements influence my self-efficacy because I hate for people to think that I cannot do a task or that I’m not good enough to do a task. I take moving children from one level to the next level serious because I like to see an end result that is positive and for my students to feel good about themselves.

Ruth added, “It keeps me on my toes and keeps me searching for new and innovative ways to help my students achieve. I want each year to be better than the previous one.”

**Teacher accounts of accountability and self-efficacy.** The last question opened a discussion that allowed teachers to share a story about how their self-efficacy was impacted due to accountability requirements. Teachers had the following stories to share. Carol shared,

I feel that my self-efficacy has been impacted in a positive way in the long run. Initially with the changes in accountability I was questioning if I could actually achieve the standards even if I still had the passion to try. I had to reevaluate my goals and aspirations and came to the realization that I can achieve any goal and increase student achievement no matter the standards. In fact the higher the standards the more effective I
will become if I just restructured my time and work harder. Also I know that I will require more training in order to master the standards.

Ruth added,

We give district assessments after every grading period. When the results for the assessments came back, my scores were terrible. I had to take an inward look at myself and devise a plan to get my students where they need to be.

Lisa shared,

My self-efficacy has been impacted by the fact that I have a high rate of failures due to the fact that I receive a high rate of special needs students and their level of reading and understanding tends to be below level and getting them to grasp the work is a hit to my heart that I can't get a better level out of them. This has me constantly reworking my plans and methods to try to get at least 1 to a passing level.

Sarah gave her anecdote as follows,

I feel that as a teacher my self-efficacy is important and accountability is also important. However, a teacher can only do so much to help a student. A student has to want to succeed in order for them to be successful. So I feel that there needs to be more of a partnership with students, parents, community and teachers.

Laura added, “While teaching a lesson or objective I try to make mental notes on how I can improve my instruction for future lessons.” Lastly, Mary shared,

I also feel that parents need to be more involved and in agreement with the teacher when it comes to academics but祈祷bullets: I break and release myself from all curses of pride and rebellion in the name of Jesus. #Prayer. Education is not as important as it should be in many homes today. You have parents who are fine with their children being
dropouts and who neglect the responsibility of investing in their child’s education. They have become comfortable with failure decisions made by their child. They neglect to make their children study, complete homework assignments, and complete projects. They fail to conference with teachers until it is too late.

Focus Group Summary

Teachers were given the opportunity to share their perspectives regarding accountability in more detail in focus groups. Overall, teachers tended to define self-efficacy as they did in interviews. These descriptors centered on professional attributes associated with teaching such as being dependable, reliable, and doing their job to the best of their ability. Teachers noted that accountability had increased their effectiveness and desire to improve their instruction in efforts to improve student outcomes. When questioned about strategies used to overcome barriers to accountability, teachers took an instructional approach and discussed classroom strategies they used to reteach and meet the needs of students to include things such as relevant instruction, group projects and peer teaching. Teachers also noted some personal strategies they used to provide solutions to accountability pressures. These included planning, persistence, self-reflection, communication with parents, dedication, and prayer. Teachers noted that they desired support from administrators in terms of recognition of efforts, professional development, and resources needed to do their jobs. Table 7 presents emergent codes and categories derived from online focus group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes Representative of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy and accountability</td>
<td>• Extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete goals and tasks to the best of my ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reliable and dependable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Going beyond what is called for to make sure these things are acceptable if for no one but self.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Influenced my effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Causing me to step up a notch in the classroom by assisting with reteaching and remediating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professionalism and integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sometimes goes beyond academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts and feelings/experiences with</td>
<td>• Cautious with class time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accountability</td>
<td>• Use data to inform instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability and meeting the needs of</td>
<td>• Use research-based strategies,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>• Partner with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Many times students experience things outside of the school which causes them to not be able to focus at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Administrative support, student discipline and workload | • Acknowledge teacher efforts  
• Give teachers the resources they need to do their job  
• Administrator counts on me.  
• Get to know teachers and build relationships  
• Proper training for differentiation |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Instructional strategies to overcome barriers         | • Use research-based strategies, outdated strategies  
• Heightened awareness of student results;  
• Peer instruction  
• persist,  
• meet the needs of students,  
• paired learning,  
• learning styles,  
• communicate with parents,  
• class web page,  
• peer teaching,  
• check for understanding,  
• consistency in classroom routines and management,  
• group projects  
• relate to real life circumstances |
| Self/Personal strategies to overcome barriers          | • self-reflection,  
• plan, plans or strategies to solve,  
• persistence, restructure and tackle it again.  
• training, |
Survey results indicated that teachers possessed self-confidence in light of controlling their own behaviors and in their teaching capabilities. The highest rated items on the survey were aligned to these descriptors and had mean scores between 3.6 and 3.8 on a scale of 4. These included:

- I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my student’s needs even if I am having a bad day.
- I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subjects to even most difficult students.
- I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will be able to become more and more capable of helping to address students’ needs.
- Even if I am disrupted from teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well.
- If I try hard enough, I am confident that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my student.

Teachers were confident, but less so regarding forces they did not control, such as skeptical colleagues, dealing with difficult students, motivating students, working with parents, ...
and dealing with system constraints. Teachers rated items related to these descriptors with mean scores between 3.1 and 3.4. These items were:

- I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues.
- When I try very hard, I am able to reach even most difficult students.
- I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well.
- I know that I can maintain positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.
- I know I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects.

Teachers supported these patterns in interviews and focus group responses. Overall, teachers noted that self-efficacy defined not only who they were as professionals, but also defined their approach to accountability. These descriptors centered on professional attributes associated with teaching such as being dependable, reliable, and doing their job to the best of their ability. Teachers felt that accountability, although at times burdensome and difficult, made them want to be better teachers and help students learn more. Teachers noted that accountability had increased their effectiveness and desire to improve their instruction in efforts to improve student outcomes.

Overwhelmingly, teachers felt accountability is a joint effort to be owned by all stakeholders, including students. Teachers repeatedly mentioned the need to differentiate, know students, meet them where they are at and use data to inform instruction. Teachers noted that they desired support from administrators in terms of recognition of efforts, professional development, and resources needed to do their jobs. Most concerns with regard to administrative support, revealed through interviews, centered on the fact that the principal depended on the
teacher to do a good job. Teachers did want consistent discipline, help with time management, and necessary resources to do their job.

When questioned about strategies used to overcome barriers to accountability, teachers took an instructional approach and discussed classroom strategies they used to reteach and meet the needs of students to include things such as relevant instruction, group projects, and peer teaching. Teachers also noted some personal strategies they used to provide solutions to accountability pressures. These included planning, persistence, self-reflection, communication with parents, dedication, and prayer. These results led me to develop the following six themes:

1. Teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence. Teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in situations and circumstances they can control.

2. Accountability is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

3. Knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements.

4. Knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements.

5. Personal and professional solutions can be applied to help teachers overcome barriers to accountability.

6. Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. Accountability makes them want to be better teachers.
Themes

From the interviews and focus groups, the following themes become clear. The themes are also in tandem with the research questions. These themes are supported by excerpts of the interview transcripts as well as interpretation of the findings in general. Table 8 includes themes and descriptors of those themes.
Table 8

**Phrases that Support Indication of Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Supporting Words and Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence. Teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in situations and circumstances they can control. | • Self-efficacy it makes you a better teacher  
• Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability  
• Self-efficacy means my responsibility as a teacher |
| 2. Accountability is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholder roles and responsibilities. | • Accountability at school  
• accountability is good  
• we are accountable for those students achieving |
| 3. Knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements. | • Teacher efficacy is good  
• Collaborating with the teachers  
• Keep striving for the best despite the circumstances  
• Creative ways to cope with system constraints |
| 4. Knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements. | • Administrative support is number one  
• Administrative support influences self-efficacy  
• Administrators can add more support and training. |
| 5. Personal and professional solutions can be applied to help teachers overcome barriers to accountability. | • Self-reflection  
• Planning  
• Replanning  
• Reteaching  
• Professional development  
• Spirituality |
6. Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. Accountability makes them want to be better teachers.

- Go above and beyond
- Think outside the box
- Makes me want to be a better teacher.

These themes are the guideline for the analysis and interpretation of the data. In the coming sections, the focus will be to establish the connection between the themes and the various responses that were obtained in the interviews and focus groups. Later the survey results will be interpreted within the context of these themes. However, before the interpretation, there will be a brief recap of the procedure of carrying out the research.

**Theme 1.** Teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence. Teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in situations and circumstances they could control. Laura noted,

Well, I feel like when you do have self-efficacy it makes you a better teacher. It makes you a better teacher. In and maybe in certain ways you can understand how other children are feeling. When you, if you have a positive, or you have a you know, if, if, your self-efficacy is well rounded.

Carol added,

I just feel like as a teacher for myself I take pride in everything that I do and when you take pride in what you do then it let the children know that you are here not just for the money but you’re here for them to give them something to me that’s what it means.

To Sue, self-efficacy was akin to “confidence. I guess it is your values or your principles that you have in the classroom your belief about achievement about your abilities with things like
that.” Ruth noted, “To me self-efficacy means my responsibility as a teacher. My responsibility and obligations to do my duty and how effective I am in doing so.”

Mary stated,

I think that self-efficacy is a teacher’s role or my role to meet our requirements when teaching curriculum and making sure that the students are successful um at the curriculum and objectives that are being taught in the classroom.

Anna reiterated the definition of self-efficacy presented in much of the literature:

Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one’s belief in one’s own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. I personally feel that whatever goals and tasks I have been given, I complete them to the best of my ability. I like to be reliable and dependable.

Likewise, Dorothy presented a similar definition and perspective:

I agree that self-efficacy is to the extent and strength of self and what you deem is reachable for you. I too find myself completing goals and tasks that I’ve been given to the best of my abilities, sometimes I find myself going beyond what is called for to make sure these things are acceptable if for no one but self. Reliable and dependable should be what each person should want to be described as.

**Theme 2.** Accountability is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholder roles and responsibilities. The teachers who took part in the interviews had almost the same notion about accountability in schools; however, there are some who thought that accountability was not applicable in all situations. For instance, one teacher said that when dealing with special needs students, it is not appropriate to strictly use accountability as a measure for teacher effectiveness. All teachers felt that accountability was a responsibility shared among stakeholders. The following excerpts support this theme. Mary stated:
I think that accountability is good for some, but for some students I think that it’s not good. For example, for your special needs kids I do not think that accountability should apply to them based on their performance level or grade level. For instance, in reading a lot of special needs kids are very low at reading, and when it comes to state assessments, I feel that it should not apply to them. Because a lot of them who are low functioning that will not achieve what goals should be set for regular students as far as passing state test. Then, on the other hand you have some regular kids you know who are falling in that category as well, but mainly I feel that it is not. I don’t think it’s good for special needs kids.

Ruth stated,

I am held accountable for student achievement. I take on that responsibility with a lot of pride. But sometimes, I have to look at the student and other things that surround the student to make sure that they feel a sense of responsibility for their own achievement.

Amy shared this sentiment when she stated, “we have to get the parents involved more; we are accountable for those students achieving, but it starts at home as well. We have to have parents that want to help the teacher.” Likewise, Sue stated, “I think it’s a great thing accountability for student achievement. I mean because it holds everyone in responsible; the teacher and the student so it just makes everybody do what they are supposed to do.” Sarah gave her anecdote as follows,

I feel that as a teacher my self-efficacy is important and accountability is also important. However, a teacher can only do so much to help a student. A student has to want to succeed in order for them to be successful. So I feel that there needs to be more of a partnership with students, parents, community and teachers.
Finally, Lisa noted, “Not only should teachers be held accountable, students should be held accountable as well, because it’s their future at stake, not the teacher’s future.” From the sampled responses above, it is clear that the teachers see the overall benefit of the teacher accountability. However, there are a number of teachers who wish that more effort would be put into making everyone responsible and not only focus on teachers for success, but also administrators and students.

**Theme 3.** Knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements. Ruth supported this theme when she stated,

> Sometimes I group my students. I will let students who really understand help other students. I have occasionally let students teach the class where they will focus the other students and will really focus on that one particular student. I have a game online game where I let the students play in a group against another person. We sometimes even go outside and do things uh as it relates to measurements and distances and stuff like that to help them achieve.

Anna noted:

> In my classroom, my kids are used to the routine; you know the bell ringer. Actually, I know this. After I model an example, then we do the guided practice and then they do the independent practice usually before we take a quiz. My kids are used to do the group work cooperative learning where I have a set of questions prepared for them, and I would let them collaborate on finding their answers.

Mary opined,

> Many times students experience things outside of the school which causes them to not be able to focus at school. Most of the time they will talk to a teacher they can trust. When
situations at home are ok students can put forth better effort in the classroom. I had a student who was an honor student. He did excellent on all class work, but when his mother got sick and went to the hospital he would leave a school to make money so he could feed his siblings and pay the bills. So therefore, home circumstances affect our students in a great way and causes academic success to become a failure if it goes unnoticed by the teacher.

Theme 4. Knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements. From the selected excerpts, one of the main solutions that came out was the importance of cooperation between the administrators and the teachers. This is one of the ways to solve the problems that may arise while teachers try to maintain high efficacy while keeping their work accountable. Sue captured the theme best when she said with regard to administrative support,

I feel that as just as we need to get to know our students, that administrators get to know the teachers. When you know your teachers, you have to have a relationship. You have to have a good rapport…once everybody sort of gets on a level playing field, it just increases success overall in the classroom and the entire building. You know the administrator is going to support you and back you. It makes you a happier and more confident teacher.

Dorothy mentioned that,

Time management is definitely a big thing to making sure that you are on accountability but all of those things are very good influences, major influences on how you feel at the end of the day as a teacher. Either you think you had a good day or you thing you had a
bad day and if you had a bad day it’s better to go back think of what you can do better to make the next day more successful.

**Theme 5.** Personal and professional solutions can be applied to help teachers overcome barriers to accountability. Teachers have various methods that they use to maintain high efficacy while they contend with the challenges that arise from the pressures of accountability. The results of the interview show some of the ways in which teachers employ to remain highly efficient through accountability in their profession. The excerpts below represent the responses from the interviews. Responses to this theme included both instructional solutions for the classroom and personal solutions for teachers.

With regard to instruction, Carol noted,

I believe in peer tutoring in the classroom and sometimes you can the teacher has to step back out the way and let the child, let you know you may have a child that can reach their peers better than you can and they know what to do any you know just give them that opportunity and when you let the children get involved that’s sometimes it helps to bring up the morale in the class and help the children to meet their objectives as well.

Sarah mentioned that she tried to keep instruction relevant and interesting.

I try to give my students fun and exciting ways to help my students learn an objective related to real life situations. One strategy I use is to have students relate other subject matters along with objectives in class such as: reading The Great Gatsby and having students watch the movie and relate it to U.S. History with the Roaring 20’s.

Dorothy mentioned the importance of recruiting parents to help with school work:
I think involving parents has been a big influence on different ways that I can increase my student achievement in the accountability method as well as outside projects on just basic knowledge things that they should have had coming in is a good way.

Mary gave her opinion by saying,

Some strategies I use to maintain and prove my effectiveness in the classroom is to make sure that I reach the students visually, auditory, and kinesthetically. Reviewing test questions that students miss. Checking for understanding often during instructional time, probing answers to questions on bell ringers from students who are have not struggles and won’t ask questions. Finally, I place students in a paired group with stronger students.

Other responses to this theme centered on personal strategies that teachers used as solutions to overcome pressures related to accountability. Lisa said,

I use self-criticism as a strategy to boost my efficacy if I feel that I could have done it better based on the results of assessment of the materials and the levels are low on student understanding. I regroup and revamp the plan and try a different strategy or approach that they may understand.

Sue gave the opinion as follows,

Every year, I reflect on what strategies worked well in my class and those that were not as successful. I have to reflect in order to improve and become more effective at addressing my students’ weaknesses. After the first semester of school, I realized that I needed to improve in the following areas: better communication with parents and students concerning grades, establish and practice consistently routines and rituals for everything we do in class, and I needed to find strategies to help students focus on what is
most important in the lesson cycle. At the beginning of the second semester, I set up an online page I also attended workshops that aided me in helping my students identify critical information in the lesson and I learned new ways of chunking information in smaller pieces to cover necessary skills. Overall I am adept in my subject area, but I needed some help with my pedagogical skills. I made PD360 an online professional development site my best friend. It supports best practices and Common Core. I also created an account with Remind 101 that allowed me text message my students and parents about assignment without using my own number and it is an easy way to communicate with parents who do not have time to communicate with me. Now I no longer struggle in the areas mentioned above.

Amy added, “To improve self-efficacy as it relates to teaching, I am always dedicated to my task that is why I commit myself to being at work, every day for the students to succeed.”

Theme 6. Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. Accountability makes them want to be better teachers. Anna stated, “I personally feel that whatever goals and tasks I have been given, I complete them to the best of my ability. I like to be reliable and dependable.” Dorothy, viewed accountability as good pressure as well: “I too find myself completing goals and tasks that I’ve been given to the best of my abilities, sometimes I find myself going beyond what is called for to make sure.”

Sue said,

School accountability has truly made me a better teacher. Teachers have a challenging job of teaching, assisting, motivating, and shaping each child that they encounter. We have the daunting task of meeting every child’s educational need. To ensure that these needs are met, accountability requirements were put in place. However, accountability
have made me a better teacher because I had to leave my comfort zone and provide a higher quality of instruction to my students by integrating various research based strategies.

**Summary**

In summary, the findings of this study provide a wealth of knowledge into the existing literature where self-efficacy was considered to be one single process rather than being considered as a whole integrative process that encompasses other activities such as teamwork/group work, accountability, and curriculum design.

Teacher accountability is an integral part of instruction. It is evident that the existence of teacher accountability helps to ensure that students get the best services from teachers. It was evident that teachers use innovative and effective ways to curb the various challenges that emanate from teacher accountability. I found out from the previous chapter that teachers generate solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements. In addition, the teachers also shared their own ways of maintaining their self-efficacy while keeping up with the demand of teacher accountability.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore high school teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influenced perceived self-efficacy in southern Mississippi. In exploring this topic, I found out that teachers in this study were truly compassionate and understanding of their students. I also observed that teacher accountability is an integral part of instruction. As the results indicated, the existence of teacher accountability helps to ensure that students get the best services from teachers. I inferred that teachers believed that all their students could learn and achieve high performance in spite of the students’ backgrounds. It was also apparent that teachers used innovative and effective ways to curb the various challenges that emanate from teacher accountability. Efficacious teachers made the lessons interesting and the use of teaching and learning aids was an effective way to cater to all student needs. It was apparent that teachers used different strategies to ensure the lessons were efficacious. For example, one of the teachers uses movies to make the history lesson more exciting to the learners. In this chapter, the summary, discussion, and implications of the study will be presented.

Summary of Findings

This study employed the use of themes to come up with the main foci of the data. Various excerpts from the interviews and focus groups then supported the themes. The simplistic approach allowed me to present the findings as they were collected in the interviews and online focus groups. Overall, six themes were derived from the data.

Teachers of the Mississippi school in the case study had a clear understanding of the meaning and importance of the term self-efficacy which led to Theme 1: Teacher self-efficacy
encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence. Teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in situations and circumstances they can control. Additionally, teachers perceived that accountability and self-efficacy are directly related and that it is a shared responsibility, which represents Theme 2: *Accountability is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholder roles and responsibilities*. The responses from the interviews and focus group showed that accountability is indispensable in ensuring that teachers are focused on student performance. Some of the teachers felt that other stakeholders such as parents and the school administration should also be held accountable in order to fully benefit the students.

Furthermore, there are numerous methods that teachers use to ensure they are meeting accountability requirements. A top priority for teachers in this study was manifested in Theme 3, *Knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements*. Teachers felt that differentiated instruction, knowledge of learning styles and how to implement these were key aspects of their success with students.

Participants felt administrators and the teachers should be in constant communication and collaboration. All the teachers agreed that it is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that they have proper channels of communication in order to ensure accountability in both sides (teachers and administration). Theme 4, *Knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements*, was derived from these findings. The proper communication allows the teachers to effectively monitor the students’ discipline and fairly distribute the workload among teachers.

A fifth theme revealed in the study was that teachers applied personal and professional solutions to overcome barriers to accountability. The results for this theme were rather surprising in that teachers first applied professional solutions, meaning how to present innovative
instruction, to overcome accountability. Secondly, they focused on personal solutions such as planning, communication, and reflection to deal with pressures of accountability. Lastly, teachers in the study with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. Accountability made them want to be better teachers, as noted in Theme 6: *Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light.*

**Discussion of Findings**

**Theoretical Findings**

**Social cognitive theory.** Bandura’s social cognitive theory (SCT) formed the conceptual framework of this study. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is based on learning through various mechanisms such as observation, experience, and reciprocal determinism, which include the interaction between individuals, the environment, and their behaviors. Self-efficacy can be further explained as a set of beliefs that a person possesses in terms of his or her abilities at any given time. In total, these determine how individuals feel, think, and behave (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura’s self-efficacy theory provided insights in explaining findings on the level of teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. Teachers, in general, exhibited high levels of self-efficacy on the survey, and hence, did not feel that accountability requirements were out of their reach. While they were burdensome and time-consuming, teachers felt that accountability had improved their work. As Sue aptly stated, “School accountability has truly made me a better teacher. However, accountability has made me a better teacher because I had to leave my comfort zone and provide a higher quality of instruction to my students by integrating various research based strategies.”
Maslow’s theory of motivation and hierarchy of needs. Maslow’s theory of motivation and hierarchy of needs is widely credited for offering an apt theoretical framework for explaining mechanisms of human motivation (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow (1943), the needs are hierarchically arranged in order of importance and urgency, with the most urgent and important ones being lower in the hierarchy. People pursue higher-level needs after their lower level needs are satisfied. Thus, in seeking to understand the dynamics of the level of teacher’s self-efficacy in this study, I sought to examine the extent to which schools meet teachers’ lower needs, such as physiological needs or safety needs such as their health or job security. Teachers in the study were functioning at higher levels of Maslow’s hierarchy, so their lower level needs were met. Evidence was noted of this in that teachers did not really rely on the principal for needs other than to give them the resources they should have to perform their jobs. While principal support was nice, teachers also felt their administrator needed them. The study showed that it is important for administrator to address the needs of the teacher as it relates to accountability requirements. The teachers needed for their administrators to be supportive of them in terms of recognition of efforts, professional development, and resources needed to do their jobs. The findings revealed through interviews centered on the fact that the principal depended on the teacher to do a good job. Teachers wanted consistent discipline, help with management, and necessary resources to do their job. Teachers also had a need for open communication.

Self-determination theory. Self-determination theory (SDT) puts forward the view that individuals have an intrinsic sense of motivation or volition, which propels them to pursue opportunities and combat challenges they encounter, subject to presence of some psychosocial needs called nutriments (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 2009). The SDT is a critical theory in the
study of teacher self-efficacy and school accountability. In the context of a school environment, teachers’ perceptions on the school’s accountability tremendously affect their self-efficacy. For instance, teachers who perceive that the school is sufficiently accountable for the outcomes of the education process have better chances of having more determination as opposed to those who perceive otherwise. Theme 1 states that teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence. Teachers had higher levels of self-efficacy in situations and circumstance they can control. Some of the teachers use self-criticism, confidence based on their belief, and taking responsibility.

**Self-efficacy.** According to Bentley and Rempel (1980), self-efficacy is the expert awareness and interest displayed by individuals in the direction of accomplishing collective and personal objectives in the workplaces. Fink (2012) described efficacy as a person’s or a team’s collective spirit projected outwardly by self-confidence, readiness to carry out allocated tasks, cheeriness, and restraint. From the interviews and focus group, it was clear the teachers viewed self-efficacy as it makes you feel better, is the extent or strength of one's belief in one’s own ability, and a sense of responsibility.

**Limitations of the Study**

This research was limited to the case study of the Mississippi school. This fact limits the number of respondents to a small group of teachers who were willing to participate in the study. This limitation, however, does not significantly affect the credibility of the study. Another limitation of this study is based on the assumption that all the respondents answered the interviews and surveys honestly and openly. The honesty also applies to the discussions in the online focus groups. The limitations stipulated above make it difficult for the research to come up with generalized statements about the perceptions of teachers in a larger scale. Due to the fact
that the teachers in this study had high self-efficacy scores on the survey, there is a potential limitation as it may have provided a rather biased or different take on the interview and focus group questions.

**Implications of Study**

The implication of this study lies in the interpretation of the findings and their impact. Results of the study showed 100% of the teachers who took part in the research had positive attitude towards teacher accountability. Nonetheless, there is a strong feeling that parents and administrators should also be held accountable for the welfare of the students. Another implication of this study is that teachers have devised innovative and effective ways to ensure that all learners receive the best instruction. Teachers have also been creative in tackling the challenges that were brought about by reforms that advocated for teacher accountability. The findings of the study are discussed in further detail, by themes, in this section.

**Theme 1**

**Teacher self-efficacy encompasses both personal and professional self-confidence.**

The findings of the research showed that teachers in the case study had a clear and deep understanding of the concept of self-efficacy. According to Washington and Watson (1976), self-efficacy includes the attitude of a person towards his or her duties or job anchored on his or her perception about him or herself at the workplace and the extent of viewing the workplace as satisfying his or her expectations and needs. This understanding of self-efficacy was reinforced in the interview responses. The aspects of Washington and Watson (1976) that are present in the interviews relate to the attitude towards duties. From the interviews, Dorothy stated: “Self-efficacy as a teacher would be having good ethical decisions and great morale as far as working
with other people and with my students.” In addition, Sarah stated that “self-efficacy is something that I always have to keep in check especially with my students.”

Overall, teachers in this study noted that self-efficacy defined not only who they were as professionals, but also defined their approach to accountability. Phrases from interviews and focus groups centered on professional attributes associated with teaching such as being dependable, reliable, and doing their job to the best of their ability. Teachers felt that accountability, although at times burdensome and difficult, made them want to be better teachers and help students learn more. Teachers noted that accountability had increased their effectiveness and desire to improve their instruction in efforts to improve student outcomes. These results aligned with those of John and Paul (2009) who discovered that teachers with high levels of efficacy were least affected by the occupational stresses, which allowed them to provide quality work that resulted in improved performance.

The results of this study were not in alignment with those of Mulholland (2012) who conducted a study on the levels of efficacy within teaching populations. Mulholland indicated that many instructors were markedly demoralized, overworked, and burdened with unrealistic prospects and facing continuous criticisms. In fact, 42% percent of the participating teachers indicated their levels of efficacy as exceedingly low or just low, 59% percent indicated a decline in the levels in the preceding 2 years, and 27% percent described the levels as high (Mulholland, 2012). Teachers generally hold a negative perception of accountability, with some viewing it as a hindrance to their service delivery (Clotfelter et al., 2004; McNeil, 2000).

McNeil (2000) explained that accountability is increasingly a source of stress for many teachers, making even some of the teachers opt out of the profession. The increased pressure resulting from accountability requirements contributes significantly to burnout. In a study
conducted by Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009) a large percentage of teachers reported having too many accountability-related tasks to complete within the available time. Teachers in this study felt pressures from accountability, but that they were not overwhelming. Dorothy mentioned that,

> Time management is definitely a big thing to making sure that you are on accountability but all of those things are very good influences, major influences on how you feel at the end of the day as a teacher. Either you think you had a good day or you think you had a bad day and if you had a bad day it’s better to go back think of what you can do better to make the next day more successful.

**Theme 2**

**Accountability is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholder roles and responsibilities.** Teachers felt accountability is a joint effort to be owned by all stakeholders, including students. Teachers repeatedly mentioned the need to differentiate, know students, meet them where they are at and use data to inform instruction. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found that teacher self-efficacy was highly dependent on relationships with parents, and also related to the supervisory support that teachers received from school administrators. Teachers who felt cognitive and emotional support from principals also had higher levels of efficacy. Thus, school context and leadership impacts self-efficacy. In this study, Amy said, “I feel like we have to get the parents involved more. We are accountable for those students achieving, but it starts at home as well. We have to have an uh parents that wants to help the teachers.” Dorothy stated, “I think a lot of things involving parents have been a big influence on different ways that I can increase my student achievement in accountability method.” Teachers in this
study felt that administrative support and help from the parents was instrumental in helping meet accountability requirements.

**Theme 3**

**Knowing students and how to address their individual needs is important for teachers in meeting accountability requirements.** Teachers in this study consistently mentioned that the need to know and understand student-learning styles, levels of mastery, and personal situations were important in efforts to meet accountability requirements. Berryhill et al. (2007) noted that accountability created time pressure on teachers, as they strive to put most of their efforts into completing instruction and preparing students to pass exams so as to meet the accountability requirements. Often this pressure leads to change of teaching style adapted to preparing students to pass exams. However, in this study, while teachers did feel that accountability requirements did somewhat constrain their teaching, the teachers still noted that meeting the needs of students were important. Teachers used research-based strategies, partnering with parents and colleagues, and innovative projects to get to know students and meet their learning needs.

**Theme 4**

**Knowing teachers and how to address their individual needs is important for administrators in meeting accountability requirements.** Teachers noted that they desired support from administrators in terms of recognition of efforts, professional development, and resources needed to do their jobs. Most concerns with regard to administrative support, revealed through interviews, centered on the fact that the principal depended on the teacher to do a good job. Teachers did want consistent discipline, help with time management, and necessary resources to do their job. Administrators should give serious consideration to empowering
teachers (Nguni et al., 2006; Rousmaniere, 2007), allowing them to partake in the formulation of policies, decisions, and practices, while at the same time appreciating their professionalism. In this way, the administrators can help enhance teacher self-efficacy (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Nguni et al., 2006; Rousmaniere, 2007; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989). Teachers in this study echoed these findings noting they desired to have their efforts acknowledged and that the administrators depended on them. Carol stated that,

Knowing that people depend on me it kind of makes me uh do a little bit better because when the administrator depends on me that shows me that they see enough in me to but that burden on me and when children depend on me to be here you know it makes me just do that much more.

Anna said, “I think if the administrators worked with the staff then the staff would work together more.” Teacher Sue says, “Administrators should know the strengths and weakness of their teachers, either through observation, communication, or work experience in the area being taught.”

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) found that teacher self-efficacy was highly dependent on relationships with parents, and also related to the supervisory support that teachers received from school administrators. Teachers who felt cognitive and emotional support from principals also had higher levels of efficacy. Thus, school context and leadership impacts self-efficacy. In this study, Amy said, “I feel like we have to get the parents involved more. We are accountable for those students achieving, but it starts at home as well. We have to have an uh parents that wants to help the teachers.” Dorothy stated, “I think a lot of things involving parents have been a big influence on different ways that I can increase my student achievement in accountability method.”
In terms of student discipline, the teachers took on some of the responsibility. The welfare of the learners is a task for both teachers and administration. When teachers have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they become more responsible in their work and more goal-oriented (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Moreover, they become more cautious to student performance and discipline. Some teachers with low self-efficacy are not bothered with the student level of discipline and do not care about their actions (Hallinan & Danaher, 1994). For the purposes of this study, while one teacher stated that she wanted discipline to be consistent, discipline was a not a factor of concern for teachers in this study, other than the fact that they wanted backing from administrators. None mentioned a concern about their ability to maintain discipline in their individual classrooms.

Theme 5

**Personal and professional solutions can be applied to help teachers overcome barriers to accountability.** The other aspect that emanates from the findings is how teachers generated solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements. The teachers responded to this question in very innovative ways. When questioned about strategies used to overcome barriers to accountability, teachers took an instructional approach and discussed classroom strategies they used to reteach and meet the needs of students to include things such as relevant instruction, group projects, and peer teaching. Teachers also noted some personal strategies they used to provide solutions to accountability pressures. These included planning, persistence, self-reflection, communication with parents, dedication, and prayer. The teachers agreed with each other on several aspects and also shared ways of maintaining their self-efficacy while keeping up with the demand of teacher
accountability. For instance, in the focus group, Sue had the following way to improve self-efficacy in relation to her teaching:

Every year, I reflect on what strategies worked well in my class and those that were not as successful. I have to reflect in order to improve and become more effective at addressing my students’ weaknesses. After the first semester of school, I realized that I needed to improve in the following areas: better communication with parents and students concerning grades, establish and practice consistently routines and rituals for everything we do in class, and I needed to find strategies to help students focus on what is most important in the lesson cycle. At the beginning of the second semester, I set up an online page I also attended workshops that aided me in helping my students identify critical information in the lesson and I learned new ways of chunking information in smaller pieces to cover necessary skills. Overall I am adept in my subject area, but I needed some help with my pedagogical skills. I made PD360 an online professional development site my best friend. It supports best practices and common core. I also created an account with Remind 101 that allowed me text message my students and parents about assignment without using my own number and it is an easy way to communicate with parents who do not have time to communicate with me. Now I no longer struggle in the areas mentioned above.

There are other methods that teacher use to enable them to help students achieve their potential as stipulated in the focus groups and interviews. Some of the noteworthy suggestions have been presented in the findings Chapter Four.
Theme 6

Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy viewed accountability requirements in a positive light. Accountability makes them want to be better teachers. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) found that verbal persuasion and mastery experiences related to a teacher’s satisfaction with his or her past professional performance. Mastery experiences, or those in which teachers had positive outcomes related to improving student performance, had the strongest influence on teacher efficacy. Factors such as context (such as urban teaching environments as compared to suburban or rural contexts) and interpersonal support were found to have substantial influence on teacher efficacy for novice teachers, but insignificant effect among the experienced teachers. Factors such as demographics (like race and gender) were found to have insignificant effect on teacher efficacy.

Ross and Gray (2006) conducted a study which showed that the factors of principal leadership, the school’s socioeconomic status, and a teacher’s prior experiences related to student achievement directly impacted their self-efficacy. Specifically, when teachers had prior positive experiences with raising student performance levels, then their self-efficacy in subsequent change efforts was higher. Therefore, in a like manner teachers in this study had positive experiences with accountability, and so may have been better prepared to implement new programs in efforts to improve student learning. Kaniuka (2012) conducted a case study to explore how teachers’ self-efficacy evolved as they implemented a reading intervention program. The main finding emerging from the study was that mastery experiences, or positive implementations on the job do enhance teacher perceived ability to embrace reform and initiate change.
In sum, the findings of this study will have an impact on three groups of individuals: teachers, school administrators, and teacher training centers. Teachers will be impacted by this study because the study highlights innovative and effective ways to ensure that all learners receive the best instruction in the course of their learning process and that show how these teachers personally generated solutions to cope with accountability. The study may also benefit teachers because it encourages them to be creative in tackling the challenges that they would encounter, brought about by reforms that advocate teacher accountability.

School administrators may also be impacted as the study highlights the perception of teachers in relation to being accountable, and how the accountability would translate to self-efficacy. For instance, from the research findings it is apparent that; teachers’ perceptions on accountability have drastically changed, since most of the participants/respondents who were sampled for the sake of this study had shown positive attitudes towards promoting accountability on part of the teachers. The reason behind the change in teachers’ perception towards accountability and self-efficacy emanates from the benefits accrued from teachers being held accountable. Therefore, the school administrators will be in a position to introduce some activities into the teaching and learning process to encourage teachers to have some levels of accountability and responsibility for the sake of promoting an effective and fruitful learning process. This finding was in alignment with the results of a study conducted by John and Paul (2009) on teacher self-efficacy and occupational stress. The scholars discovered that teachers with high levels of efficacy were least affected by the occupational stress, which allowed them to provide quality work that resulted in improved performance. Therefore, administrators can use this information to help improve teacher self-efficacy in a number of ways.
Conversely, teacher training centers will be impacted by this study because they will be enlightened on the various factors that will help them in the training of teachers to become more accountable, translating to improving self-efficacy in students and schools alike, knowledge that cannot be replicated in the classroom setting such as real situation applications. In addition, a pool of knowledge will be created for other researchers who would be qualifying from these training centers that would be interested in conducting similar studies on this research topic.

**Recommendation for Future Research**

The study should be expanded to a bigger population to include nationwide research on the same issues that affect teachers. A larger-scale qualitative case study would give rich data about the perceptions of teachers towards accountability and how it affects self-efficacy. This would solve one of the limitations of this research study. In future, it may be necessary to gain insights from teachers of different federal states and backgrounds in order to come up with a more objective conclusion about teacher accountability. This study should be replicated using teachers with low self-efficacy, but with a purposive sample of teachers who scored low on the survey. Another needed study relative to this topic would be to see if the suggested solutions brought up by this group of teachers was similar to those solutions teachers in other schools might report through qualitative interviews. A better view of the aspects of administration and how it can be used to boost teacher efficacy while maintaining high self-efficacy among teachers would be imperative. Such a study might unearth some interesting indicators about how teachers perceive the administration and teacher accountability in a general sense in order to advise further action by stakeholders.
Summary

As teacher self-efficacy changes, so does their thinking about students, their profession, and their capacity to embrace change and make decisions (Ball & Cohen 1996; Ross & Gray, 2006; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). By extension, empowerment helps improve student performance, as noted by Curt and Patrick (2006) who observed that the performance of the students was greatly improved if their teachers were empowered and encouraged to believe in themselves when conducting any learning activities. The goal of this study was to attain solutions to teachers’ understanding of accountability and how it influences their perceived self-efficacy. The findings provided themes that can aid teachers with their self-efficacy. The participating teachers revealed that working rigidly will help them overcome obstacles with school accountability, which affects student achievement.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL OF STUDY

April 10, 2014

Yolonda Bankston
IRB Approval 1840.041014: Solution-Oriented Teacher Understanding of School Accountability and How it Influences Perceived Self-Efficacy

Dear Yolonda,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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APPENDIX B: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

Consent Form

Solution-Oriented Teacher Understanding Of School Accountability and How It Influences Perceived Self-Efficacy: A Case Study

Yolonda Bankston
Liberty University
Education Department

You are invited to be in a research study of teachers’ perceptions of school accountability and how it influences their self-efficacy. You were selected as a possible participant because you have at least four years of teaching experience in the Greenville Public School District and at least one year at Greenville-Weston High School. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Yolonda Bankston in the Education Department at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to see how select teachers in a high school in Southern Mississippi describe self-efficacy and how their perceived accountability requirements influence their self-efficacy. The study seeks to find how teachers generate solutions to improve or maintain their self-efficacy in light of pressures associated with accountability requirements and how teachers
report administrative support, student discipline, and workload that are subsets of accountability requirements and influence their ability to do their jobs.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an online focus group through PB Works. Participants will use pseudonyms when posting a question or comment. The online focus group should last no longer than 60 minutes.

2. Complete a survey on Survey Monkey using their pseudonym. The survey should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

3. Participate in a face-to-face interview in a location that is most comfortable for the participant. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription. The interview should not last longer than 60 minutes.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risk in this study is minimal. The risks are no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits for participation in this study.

**Compensation:**

You will not be compensated.
**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The following measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality:

- Each participant will receive a pseudonym.
- The participants’ names will not be linked to the school or district.
- Research data will be saved on a jump drive. The information that is uploaded to the jump drive will be safely secured in a locked cabinet. All information will be erased after three years.
- After transcribing the audio recording, all interviews will be erased from the recording device.
- All paper that is printed will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years and then shredded.
- The researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality and privacy of the online focus group. The researcher will ask the participants to reference only their pseudonym and keep the discussion information confidential during the discussion.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Greenville Public School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. In the event that a participant withdraws from the study all recorded information will be deleted from the recorder and all electronic responses will be deleted.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Yolonda Bankston. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at (omitted). The researcher’s advisor name is Dr. Cristie McClendon, and she may be contacted at (omitted).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.
I agree to being audio recorded for accurate data collection.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________

Signature of Investigator: ___________________ Date: ______________

IRB Code Numbers:

1840.041014

IRB Expiration Date: April 2015
APPENDIX C: TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Response format

(1) Not at all true, (2) barely true, (3) moderately true, (4) exactly true

1. I am convinced that I am able to successfully teach all relevant subject content to even the most difficult students.

2. I know that I can maintain a positive relationship with parents even when tensions arise.

3. When I try really hard, I am able to reach even the most difficult students.

4. I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of helping to address my students’ needs.

5. Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I am confident that I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well.

6. I am confident in my ability to be responsive to my students’ needs even if I am having a bad day.

7. If I try hard enough, I know that I can exert a positive influence on both the personal and academic development of my students.

8. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems) and continue to teach well.

9. I know that I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects.

10. I know that I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues.
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Researchers will present a research-based definition of self-efficacy.

1. Can you describe your understanding of self-efficacy as it pertains to your role as a teacher?

2. What are your thoughts and feelings about accountability for student achievement?

3. What experiences have you had with accountability for student achievement?

4. Given high stakes accountability requirements, can you describe your thoughts on your ability to successfully teach all relevant subject content? To even the most difficult students?

5. To what extent do you feel student test scores are a fair evaluation of your abilities as a teacher?

6. How does being held accountable for student test scores influence your self-efficacy?

7. How do you feel being held accountable for student achievement affects your ability to meet the needs of each child in your classroom?

8. On the survey you completed, one question related to your thoughts on developing creative ways to cope with system constraints and still continue to teach well. In light of preparing for high stakes tests and accountability requirements, can you describe some creative solutions you have come up with?

9. Another question on the survey you completed discussed your ability to carry out innovative projects. Can you describe some of the innovative instructional projects you have been able to develop in light of accountability requirements?

10. How do administrative support, student discipline, and workload influence your self-efficacy?
APPENDIX E: ONLINE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Share some examples of how accountability requirements at school have influenced your self-efficacy.

2. Share some strategies that you use to maintain or improve your self-efficacy as it relates to teaching.

3. What are some strategies that administrators can use to improve your self-efficacy?

4. How do accountability requirements influence your self-efficacy?

5. Can you share a story about how your self-efficacy was impacted due to accountability requirements?
APPENDIX F: FLYER LETTER

Dear Teachers,

Greetings, I am a student at Liberty University working on my doctoral dissertation. I am seeking teachers who have a minimum of 4 years in the Greenville Public School District and at least one year at the Greenville-Weston High School to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore high school teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influences perceived self-efficacy in Southern Mississippi.

I am extending an invitation for all teachers that meet the above requirement to come out on May 1, 2014 at 4:30 in the library for an informative session. I look forward to meeting with each of you. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel free to contact me at

Sincerely,

Yolonda Bankston Ed.S
APPENDIX G: FLYER

Attention Attention
Attention

Do you have more than four years of experience of teaching in the Greenville Public School District? Do you have at least one year of teaching experience at Greenville-Weston High School.

Would you like to express your opinions and remain anonymous? Come out on May 1, 2014 @ 4:30 in the Greenville-Weston Library for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to recruit teachers for my research study who want to explore teacher understanding of school accountability and how it influences perceived self-efficacy in Southern Mississippi.

Feel free to contact: Yolonda Bankston student of Liberty University at
APPENDIX H: SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPATION

Script for Participation

Good Evening my name is Yolonda Bankston, I am currently a student at Liberty University obtaining my doctorate in education, where I am conducting a study of teacher understandings of school accountability and how they influence self-efficacy. I am conducting this research to see the impact teacher self-efficacy has on student achievement. I am seeking the first 15 participants that are:

- Certified in their subject area and have at least 4 years of teaching experience in the district
- Have been teaching at the Greenville-Weston High School under study, having served in the school for more than one year
- Are highly qualified under the No Child Left Behind Act in the area in which they are currently teaching.

All information will be kept confidential. I assure you that no information will be revealed concerning your confidentiality. Each of you will receive a code name through email for identity purposes. Does anyone have any questions or concerns concerning the research procedure or confidentiality?

I am asking that each of you participate in an online focus group, which should not last longer than 60 minutes; an interview, which should not last longer than 60 minutes; and a survey, which will be online, that should not take longer than 30 minutes. Are there any questions concerning your participation?

The paper that I am passing out is the consent form for participation in the research study. Once you have read and understood the consent form, please sign it and turn it face down on the table and I will collect them. Each of you will receive an index card for you to write your name and email address on. I will contact you by email with your pseudonym name.

Are there any questions or concerns that I have not addressed.
APPENDIX I: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL FOR APPROVAL

September 2, 2013

Dear Mr. Willie Goins,

I am a student at Liberty University, working on my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a research study on teacher self-efficacy. With your permission, I would like to conduct a case study with your teachers. My data collection will include teacher survey, online focus group, and an interview. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel free to contact me by any of the information listed below.

Sincerely,

Yolonda Bankston, Ed.S
October 15, 2012

Dear Mr. Melvin Brown,

I am a student at Liberty University, working on my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a research study on teacher self-efficacy. With your permission, I would like to conduct a case study with your teachers. My data collection will include teacher survey, online focus groups, and an interview. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel free to contact me by any of the information listed below.

Sincerely,

Yolonda Bankston, Ed.S
Greenville-Weston High School

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM
Mr. Melvin Brown, Principal
Connie Bowman, Assistant Principal  *  Xavier Hodo, Assistant Principal  *  Martha Jackson, Assistant Principal

September 13, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Yolonda Bankston has permission to conduct her study at Greenville Weston High School. I understand that the information collected will be kept confidential. I also understand that the information will only be used for research.

Sincerely,

Melvin D. Brown, Principal
Greenville Weston High School

Committed to Excellence for All!
September 12, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

Yolonda Bankston has permission to conduct her study at Delta High School. I understand that the information collected will be kept confidential. I also understand that the information will only be used for research.

Sincerely,

/ Willie L. Goins, Jr.
October 15, 2012

Dear Dr. Leeson Taylor,

I am a student at Liberty University, working on my doctoral dissertation. I am conducting a research study on teacher self-efficacy. With your permission, I would like to conduct a case study with the 9th grade academy campus. My data collection will include teacher survey, online focus group and an interview. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel free to contact me by any of the information listed below.

Sincerely

Yolonda Bankston
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
October 24, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby authorize Yolonda Bankston to conduct her research at Delta High School which is the pseudonym she will be using for her research study. I understand that the information that she obtains is for research purposes only. All identifying information of the participants will be kept strictly confidential.

Sincerely,

Leeson M. Taylor II, Ed. D.
Superintendent