

THE PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS CONCERNING SELF-EFFICACY WHILE  
WORKING IN AN INVOLUNTARY ENROLLMENT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

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 case study was to investigate the perceptions of 10 educators pertaining to their self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The participants were secondary educators from an urban school district in the midwestern United States who served in varying capacities. The theory guiding this study was Bandura's self-efficacy theory. This research investigated the impact of working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school on the self-efficacy of educators, based on Bandura's four main sources of self-efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and psychological states). The research question revolves around the theory of self-efficacy influencing the educators within Bandura's four main sources of self-efficacy. The research investigated how educator efficacy influences the educator's job satisfaction, emotional health, and relationships within the workplace. The three data collection methods used for this research (individual interviews, a focus group, and a short-answer questionnaire) add robust real-life data from the participants. Data analysis occurred through a triangulation process consisting of analyzing the recorded data for consistent themes and patterns. Triangulation and member checks provided validity of the data analysis. Findings were drawing from data representing the views on self-efficacy for educators working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The study supports the belief that there is a direct correlation between the sense of self-efficacy among educators working within an involuntary alternative school environment and Bandura's four main sources of self-efficacy and suggestions to support educators in areas such as professional development and social/emotional resources are offered, as well as peer suggestions as avenues to sustain higher levels of educator efficacy within an alternative school setting.

*Keywords:* alternative school, educator perceptions, self-efficacy, educator efficacy

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### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my Three Reasons—Trinity, Serenity, and Jesse Cleaves III. The sacrifices of time and energy that were required to complete this task often caused me to miss events and moments with my children, yet they did not complain. Often when they knew I was doing homework, they would stay clear of me so that I could focus. I appreciate their patience and understanding during this process. It is because of them I remained determined to finish this degree. I refused to let my labor be in vain by not reaching the finish line. I needed to be an example to my children of perseverance. I want them to always be proud of their mother.

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*“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”* (Matthew 19:26 NIV)

First, I give all honor and glory to God, whose continuous mercy and grace sustain me daily. It is because of him that I have been able to complete this daunting yet fulfilling journey. I also acknowledge those individuals who traveled this road with me and continue to support my endeavors. At times, these individuals believed in me more than I did myself, and for that, I am forever grateful.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Central Question (CQ)

Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES)

Principal Self-Efficacy Scale (PSES)

Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Sub-Question (SQ)

Teacher Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior (TEHSM)

Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

When educators feel accomplished in their job performance, they aspire to pursue higher goals not only for themselves but also for the students as well (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). When an educator feels that he/she cannot meet the expectations due to low self-efficacy in one or more of Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states, the educator may succumb to being less successful in the school community. An educator's level of self-efficacy affects how they interact with students (Colomeischi, Colomeischi, & Clipa, 2014). The multifaceted circumstances concerning students attending involuntary enrollment alternative schools' educators face challenges in the school setting that may not be typical of the traditional school setting (Perzigian, Afacan, Justin, & Wilkerson, 2017). There is limited attention into the preservice educator preparation focused on urban classroom settings and how certain strategies are beneficial to urban school environments (Howard & Milner, 2014).

Chapter One consists of a discussion of the background as it relates to educator self-efficacy. The situation to self explains my motivation leading me to this phenomenon. A description on the problem leads into the purpose of the qualitative collective case study. The explanation of the significance of this form of research and the research questions guiding the research make up the chapter content a well.

### **Background**

The current study provides research concerning how educators perceive their self-efficacy while working with diverse students that must attend an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The research is scarce concerning teacher and principal self-efficacy

collectively (Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi, & Kouhsari, 2018; Howard & Milner, 2014). This study adds to the current body of literature in hopes of encouraging educators to create opportunities for professional development, emotional support, and collaborative learning for educators working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting.

## **Historical**

During the 1800s the Massachusetts Reform School Act paved the way for behavioral alternative schools by combining the efforts of academics with the juvenile justice system in hopes of educating all students (Vinovskis, 2015). History records Horace Mann as a pillar to the foundation of public education (Schneider, 2016; Vinovskis, 2015). Mann initiated several movements including the first state-level Board of Education which eventually led to the forming of K–12 public schools nationwide (Schneider, 2016). Through his Common School movement, Mann was responsible for bridging the educational gaps between homeschooling, tutoring, semipublic schools, and apprenticeships (Hall, 2017). The emergence of states intervening into the foundation of public school created a democratized pattern of educational systems (Ansell & Lindvall, 2013). With the development of regulations and standards during the 18th and 19th centuries, the guidelines for educators developed (Ansell & Lindvall, 2013). Normal Schools educated teachers until the early 20th century. The historic common school system instituted a primary standard for public schools. With the emergence of common schools came the need for highly qualified educators (Labaree, 2008). This led to the inclusion of teacher education courses in universities (Labaree, 2008).

Several notable lawsuits helped to establish areas of public school education. One of the most prominent cases in American history was *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which upheld the racial segregation of public facilities including schools under the “separate but equal” doctrine.



The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 provided the necessary funding for vocational education. Manufacturing companies saw the need for skilled training needed federal funding. The monumental Brown v. Board of Education (1954) ruling in which the Supreme Court unanimously agreed to abolished segregated schools (Kizer, 2017).

The establishment of the original US Department of Education took place in 1867. The primary reason for the department was gathering information on public school practices nationwide to help with the growth of effective public schools systems (Department of Education, 2017). To prepare students academically to excel internationally and ensure equal access to all educational entities is the prominent mission of the department. Throughout the history of public education, the department underwent several changes in structure and purpose. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was superseded by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Both laws represented the urgency to ensure equal education to all students attending public K–12 schools. With the signing of The Department of Education Organization Act into law in 1979, structured guidelines allow the department to function with specificity. Under the newly established law, the agency now serves to:

- Ensure equal access to education.
- Support both public and private educational institutions.
- Promote involvement in educational endeavors to stakeholders.
- Improve federal education programs by increasing accountability of state and local governing factions.
- Promote quality educational research useful to the evaluation, support, and growth of national education (Department of Education, 2017).

Although there are federal guidelines establishing the foundation for public schools, it is the responsibility of the individual states and local districts to adhere to those federal policies (Department of Education, 2017). The challenges of the public-school education system include a plethora of issues such as teacher attrition, lack of funding, achievement gaps, and classroom overcrowding (Garcia & Weiss, 2019a). Often, educators are not adequately prepared both mentally and academically to meet the needs of students who pose different challenges (Fedynich & Garza, 2016). Making sure that children have skilled professional educators is an important component in improving the quality of education children receive (Marshall & Scott, 2015).

Moreover, making sure that educators are academically, socially, and emotionally able to meet the needs of students is a factor that more recent studies address (Colomeischi et al., 2014). In order for the necessary changes to occur in how the government along with state and local leaders creates the resources needed for educator efficacy, there has to be an understanding as to why it is vital to the fabric of public education. Even as the needs and challenges of students continue to become more diverse, educators need services that grow them in the profession academically while sustaining a healthy self-efficacy level (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007).

## **Social**

A social context relevant to this research is the insecurity that exists in recruiting and maintaining certified, quality educators. For several reasons, the lack of sufficient educators threatens not only the local school district but also the nation overall (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b; Morrison, 2012). The negative effects of educators leaving the profession create a crisis and a need for comprehensive and effective policy solutions (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

Educators leaving the profession cite the main reason being emotional distress, poor wages, and safety factors as catalysts prompting the exodus. Garcia and Weiss (2019a) reported that educators leave the profession at about a 30% higher rate than other professions. Considering the vital role that educators provide in instruction and student achievement, the attrition rates are detrimental to the success of the nation's students, with no plausible solution in sight.

Addressing the educator retention problem and its impact on the school environment must be a priority of education. With research reporting that educator attrition significantly impacts the stability and success of the quality of education students receive, local and national level governing bodies need strategies in place to not only invite college students into education but to maintain those veteran educators as well (Garcia & Weiss, 2019a; Morrison, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Research exists that attempts to identify issues that cause educators to leave the profession before retirement. Mentoring, retention bonuses, reducing teacher workload, emotional support, and several other facets are areas in which researchers have explored as methods of reducing educator attrition while addressing the social ramifications. Overall, due to the mental stress, emotional exhaustion, lack of job satisfaction, and safety concerns of educators, leaving the profession before retiring is becoming more frequent, thereby leaving school districts understaffed and students underserved (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b; Morrison, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Springer, Swain, & Rodriguez, 2016). More directly, educators reported that the emotional exhaustion from job expectations and student behavior management is a direct indicator of lowered educator efficacy (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b). When this happens, it negatively affects the learning environment as well as the student-teacher relationship. An educator becoming overwhelmed with emotional exhaustion, mental stress, and/or job

dissatisfaction makes implementing effective classroom practices difficult (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b; Morrison, 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Springer et al., 2016). Addressing the issues that lead to emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and mental stressors is imperative to the social context of educator efficacy.

### **Theoretical**

Bandura (1997) introduced teacher efficacy as the perception of how well a teacher feels he/she is performing. How educators view their performance either encourages or discourages how they engage in job tasks. Human actions are a product of influences from personal situations (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, an educator's self-efficacy matures over time spent in the school community. Different environments and circumstances in the school impact teacher self-efficacy along with internal motivators (Bandura, 1997). If an educator feels inadequate, it becomes difficult to meet the needs of students. When an educator feels adequate, job tasks are not as daunting (Derrington & Angelle, 2013). Bandura (1997) expanded his theory on self-efficacy to include what he labeled the four sources of self-efficacy – mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological states. These four sources are important to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of educators working in both the traditional and nontraditional school community.

### **Situation to Self**

Being an educator for over 24 years has allowed me to see the shifts in educational trends in both traditional and non-traditional settings. The one constant factor is the plight of educator efficacy. I have heard both teachers and principals over the years express a lack of morale or feeling ill-prepared to meet the needs of students. Many of my colleagues within the alternative school community feel overworked, stressed, and at times, unsafe. Since working closely with

the alternative school community, I have experienced those same sentiments, echoed with more poignancy. The level of educator efficacy from my standpoint seems to be in question as the expectations from parents, communities, and districts exert pressure on the educators.

In the Midwestern urban district participating in this study, educators can transfer to schools of their choice when there are open positions. Educators can also be overstaffed from another school in the district. The “over-staffed” educator either takes the position at the involuntary enrollment alternative school or risks maintaining employment with the district. Adding to this fact is that no special training or professional developments are available to educators who transfer to the involuntary enrollment alternative school population. Briefing the educators on the logistical and behavioral policies of the school is generally given within the first days of employment. Mentally preparing and adjusting to the involuntary enrollment alternative school environment is necessary in order to meet the needs of the students as well as maintaining job satisfaction.

My motivation for pursuing this study is to describe the collective and individual lived experiences of educators within the involuntary enrollment school community. Educators working in this type of learning environment face different challenges from educators in a traditional school setting (Marsh, 2018; Schwab, Johnson, Ansley, Houchins, & Varjas, 2016). In the participating alternative school, the student population is 95% African American males who are considered economically and socially at-risk students. Many students attending involuntary enrollment schools tend to lack motivation, cause behavior issues, and are at-risk socioeconomically (De La Ossa, 2005; Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015), all of which may affect an educator’s self-efficacy in regard to the four main sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Derrington & Angelle, 2013).

When I thought back on the discussions and indirect observations that working within this specialized environment afforded me, I began to formulate a connection between Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy to the educators in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. For example, educators in this setting express a sense of low efficacy related to their mastery experiences, particularly as it relates to job satisfaction due to feeling unsupported by district administration. The educators shared several stories and examples of successes and challenges, which is an example of vicarious experiences, the second main source of self-efficacy. Educators in this work environment feel isolated from traditional public-school educators due to the expectations and work environment. Those feelings fall into the category of social persuasion, the third main source of self-efficacy. Finally, when educators express how they feel stressed or anxious related to work situations, the fourth main source of self-efficacy (physiological /emotional states) is indicated. This qualitative study considers the relationship between the phenomena, self-efficacy and its context pertaining to the participants (Yin, 2015). The relationship between how the educators perceive self-efficacy as it relates to the work environment and expectations is a direct link between educator self-efficacy and Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997; Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Marshall & Scott, 2015). Factors such as leadership effectiveness, psychological fulfillment, and mental wellness are all important to educator self-efficacy (Han & Yin, 2016). This study will reflect on the detailed experiences of the participants in an emic perspective of understanding (Yin, 2015). My interest in these educators stems from the curiosity on how these educators develop and/or maintain a positive sense of self-efficacy within this challenging school environment. Educator efficacy is important in all facets of student learning yet especially vital to those educators working within an environment that may be pose behavioral challenges (Carley-Rizzuto, 2017).

## **Epistemology**

In an attempt to understand the valued perceptions and thoughts of educators, a philosophical postmodern constructivist epistemological framework guides the research in order to gain insight into educator self-efficacy within this particular work environment. This paradigm contends that using the educator's own observations and experiences, educators are able to make sense of the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From the postmodernism perspective, the researcher seeks out both the positive and negative attributes of educator efficacy from multiple sources both intrinsically and extrinsically. Therefore, I have examined the research problem collectively through the perspectives of educators living the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The epistemological assumption supports my use of participant information as evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## **Ontology**

Ontological assumption involves embracing different realities of the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, for this research, my ontological assumption is that although the educators work within the same setting and educate the same student population, their individual experiences are different. In addition, educators have different levels of self-efficacy as it relates to their job performance (Zee & Koomen, 2016). I believe this specific group of educators value their own individual belief on educator efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The individual experiences of the teachers and principals in correlation with the phenomenon are what make up the rich details of the research. By looking at multiple contributors to educator self-efficacy while working within the specific school community, the efficacy of this particular group of educators emerged from the study. Not often are teachers and principals given the opportunity to collectively share their thoughts on

self-efficacy. This exchange of information attempts to bridge the gap. Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined the exchange of information between the participants as a vital part of qualitative research.

### **Axiology**

My axiological assumption driving this research is based on my values (Creswell & Poth, 2018), including the following thoughts. First, educators need to feel respected by colleagues and district leaders. When respect is felt and visible from the administration, educators are intrinsically motivated to dedicate more to the job (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019). Next, educator efficacy can change depending on the support educators receive from community and district leaders. Educators often internalize the behaviors and attitudes of district leaders towards the profession. When supported, educators have a more positive outlook, whereas when there is a lack of support, educator efficacy may suffer negatively (Sovde et al., 2019). All educators deserve to be safe in the work environment. The rise in educator assaults and the lack of concern and/or support many educators feel directly impacts the morale and job satisfaction of the educator (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016). Educators are the foundation of public education. How educators feel about their importance in the school setting should be an issue of concern for not only district officials but acting school principals (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015).

### **Problem Statement**

The expectation of both teachers and principals as educators is to meet the unique needs of students regardless of any barriers that may exist. Involuntary enrollment alternative school educators face more responsibility from the national to local level to meet the needs of the students (Berg & Cornell, 2016). Self-efficacy is important for understanding educator motivation, behavior of educators, retention of educators, and attrition rates (Aldridge & Fraser,



2016). There is a rich literature base concerning teacher efficacy (Donohoo, 2018; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Miller, Ramirez, & Murdock, 2017; Pajares, 1996; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2007; Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014).

There exists a gap in research focusing on the phenomenon of educator efficacy relating specifically to educators in the nontraditional school setting (Prettyman & Sass, 2018; Sehgal, Nambudiri, & Mishra, 2017). This study provides a platform for educators to collectively express perceptions concerning the phenomenon of educator self-efficacy as it relates to job satisfaction, meeting the needs of students, building relationships, and effectiveness on the job while working in an involuntary enrollment school is needed (Klusmann, Richter, & Ludtke, 2016). Addressing this problem through valid research creates an avenue of communication for teachers, administrators, and district level decision makers to best address the needs and successes of educators within the involuntary enrollment alternative school community.

There is a need for research that specifically delves into the understanding of educator efficacy within the specialized student population of involuntary enrollment alternative school communities. Involuntary enrollment alternative schools serve the specific needs of a diverse student population. It is imperative that those schools employ educators that develop and maintain a positive sense of educator efficacy (Foley & Pang, 2006; Xia, Izumi, & Gao, 2015). Students who attend an involuntary enrollment alternative school must receive the same quality of education as their peers. Districts must have systems in place for those students that prohibit lower quality experiences within the school community (Wilkerson, Afacan, Perzigian, Justin, & Lequia, 2016).

### **Purpose Statement**

Yin (2015) defined a case study as a phenomenon within a real-life context where the context and boundaries are vital to the collection of data. Merriam (1998) claimed that the primary interest of the researcher is to gather a clear meaning or knowledge formed by participants. How educators perceive their self-efficacy while working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school is the primary interest of this study. Since this research focuses on gaining an in-depth analysis of the bounded system in regard to one specific type of educator self-efficacy phenomenon, this path is the most valid. The purpose of this qualitative single-case study is to gain an understanding of the self-efficacy beliefs of educators working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school within the context of Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional state.

The definition of educator efficacy, the phenomenon of this research, is an educator's belief in his/her ability to perform specific job requirements within a secondary school setting. The definition derives from prior research defining self-efficacy as it relates to general human being interactions as well as teachers and principals concerning job constructs (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2018; Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The theory guiding this research is Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is one's belief in the capabilities to organize and complete a task. Self-efficacy is the belief that individuals hold pertaining to their capability or competencies as it relates to specific settings. This theory supports the importance of educator self-efficacy affecting job performance, motivation, and success within a school community (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Xia et al., 2015).

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this qualitative single case study is to delve into the perceptions of educators regarding their self-efficacy while working with a specific student population in the alternative school community (Cornell & Huang, 2016). For this study, educator efficacy serves as an asset to discussing its importance in relation to job satisfaction, effectiveness, educator morale and relationships with students attending alternative schools (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Moreover, the findings of this research study add to the complex and holistic understanding of educator efficacy by providing data from real-life experiences of educators working within the involuntary enrollment alternative school population, thereby giving insight to multiple audiences in the educational community. This research contributes to a body of knowledge on educator efficacy research that lacks diverse research concerning alternative school educators (Xia et al., 2015). Because self-efficacy beliefs once developed can be difficult to modify (Bandura, 1997), it is imperative that research seeks to understand the needs of educators. Such information can provide insight into how districts can best equip educators working within specialized populations of students. The information also may provide insight into how educators develop their self-efficacy beliefs and how they delineate and impact various aspects of educators in their work environment (Berg & Smith, 2018). The significance of this study is to provide relevant data from the educator's perspective that add to existing literature devoted to educator self-efficacy. This study also provides pertinent information on the impact of educator self-efficacy concerning job satisfaction, job performance, relationships, and educator attrition rates by examining the lived experiences of 10 educators regarding their self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The participants are secondary educators from an urban school district located in the midwestern

United States. This further understanding of educator efficacy supports and promotes the need for positive school reform in the involuntary enrollment alternative school settings (De La Ossa, 2005). Few studies delve into the relationship of alternative school educators concerning their perceptions of efficaciousness (Xia et al., 2015).

### **Empirical**

The results of this research are beneficial to teacher education programs. Findings delineated characteristics of these educators that may better prepare prospective teachers who will work specifically in this school community. Finally, this research illuminates a better understanding of educators who work with these populations of students and promotes further research and recognition of this population. With the high attrition rate of educators leaving the profession, it behooves researchers to continue working to provide data encouraging districts to seek strategies to retain educators, especially educators working with this specific population of students (Kerr & Brown, 2016).

### **Theoretical**

Qualitative research from an educator's perspective on efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school is scarce. There is a dearth of research concerning educator self-efficacy from a qualitative standpoint linking educator professional perceptions to efficacy (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Studies linking educator efficacy to job satisfaction have an established quantification measurement revealing the correlation between efficaciousness and teacher performance (Klassen et al., 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Bandura's (1977) research established the definitions as well as the groundwork for measuring self-efficacy from which several measuring scales make the data collection possible. However, there is a lack of

qualitative research that captures the essence and real-life experience of educators working with a specialized student population.

### **Practical**

The involuntary enrollment alternative school educator faces challenges with meeting the needs of a specific and diverse population (Washor & Majkowski, 2014). By definition, students attending this form of alternative school attend school by either the school district or the judicial system placement (Slaten, Irby, Tate, & Rivera, 2015). Due to the challenging behaviors and academic demands, the learning environment may become stressful for an educator as well as affect the educator's self-efficacy (Kerr & Brown, 2016). This study is important to teachers, administrators, district leaders, and support staff because it provides insight from professionals living the experience of working within a specialized student population. The current research provides information on how school leadership, relationships, school culture, and job satisfaction are relevant to an educator's self-efficacy (Simon & Johnson, 2015). By using a single qualitative case study approach, this study provides real life experiences and perceptions of those working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school community. Also, using interviews and focus groups give the study a relatable component to educators rather than looking at quantitative numerical results only.

### **Research Questions**

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended using open-ended, non-directional questions to elicit authentic answers from participants. This allows educators to expand upon their individual perceptions of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. One central question (CQ) with four sub-questions (SQ) are the basis for this study. Each question explores how educators perceive self-efficacy as it relates to Bandura's (1997)

four sources of self-efficacy. I was curious to learn how the unique struggles of working with students who were mandated to attend the school affected the educator's self-efficacy in relation to Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy—mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional states (Akhtar, 2008).

**CQ:** What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?

**SQ1:** How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment alternative school?

**SQ2:** How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator's ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?

**SQ3:** How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?

**SQ4:** How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested using an overarching central question that encompasses all the attributes of the phenomenon. The central question in this study focuses on the perceptions of educators working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The first sub-question ties Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy research concerning teacher job satisfaction to the educators for this study. Job satisfaction for educators contributes to growth in instructional implementations and the academic success of students as well as their overall sense of positive self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Oude Groote Beverborg, Slegers, Endedijk, & Van Veen, 2015). The second sub-question attempts to connect educator self-efficacy to mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997). Educators who feel successful in meeting the needs of students

bolster their self-efficacy through this mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). There is a connection between self-efficacy and an educator's ability to be an effective leader (Derrington & Angelle, 2013). The third sub-question attempts to establish a connection with educator self-efficacy and social persuasion as well as vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). Social persuasion implies that when educators receive feedback from students, colleagues, parents, administrators, there is an effect on the teacher's self-efficacy either positively or negatively (Ruble, Usher, & McGrew, 2011). Also, through vicarious experiences, when educators share common practices, are focused on student success, work as a team, and support the vision of the school community, educators feel more equipped to manage the work tasks (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). The fourth sub-question connects educator self-efficacy to Bandura's (1997) affective state by looking at how stress affects an educator's self-efficacy. When educators succumb to work stress, they may have a lower sense of self-efficacy as opposed to educators who are in a more peaceful state of mind (Ruble et al., 2011). Bandura's (1997) research expounded on the importance of an affective state of mind being vital to educators remaining mentally strong.

### **Definitions**

The most cited relevant terms to the research help provide context and understanding of the study. Relevant literature from which the terms are drawn supports the purpose of the research.

1. *Self-efficacy* – An individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977).

2. *Teaching efficacy* – The extent to which a teacher believes that student motivation and learning are the responsibility of the classroom teacher (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).
3. *Principal efficacy* – The assessment of his or her capabilities to lead and organize a school community to produce the desired outcome (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).
4. *Collective efficacy* – a group's shared belief in its joint ability to organize and execute plans required to complete a task (Bandura, 1997).
5. *Alternative school* – School setting for learning outside of the traditional classroom environment (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2017).
6. *Perception* – The thoughts, views, and understandings that occur through experiences and shaped by perceptual images and interpretations that shape a person's worldview (Benson, 2017).

### **Summary**

Chapter One introduces the foundational pieces of the study. The chapter consists of the historical, theoretical, and social background of the research, problem statement, situation to self, and the guiding research questions. Chapter One also introduces the reader to the purpose of the qualitative case study: to investigate the lived experiences of 10 educators pertaining to their perceptions on self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The motivation for completing the study as well as the significance of the study includes my connection as the researcher to the study. Chapter One provides the key elements to substantiate the following chapters of the research.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Chapter Two provides a deeper understanding of the theoretical framework guiding the study. The related literature centers on five key factors that the researcher deemed relevant to the specificity of this study: defining alternative schools, teacher efficacy, principal efficacy, collective efficacy, and Teacher Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior (TEHSM). Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and his later work on the four main sources self-efficacy are also examined. Chapter Two attempts to identify the gaps in literature denoted by the saturation of quantitative research rather than qualitative research. In this chapter, more information on educator efficacy as it relates to Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy is presented.

Chapter Two expounds on Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional states) as factors in an educator's viewpoint on his/her perceptions of working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The relevant literature adds merit to the plethora of contributions regarding educator efficacy such as job satisfaction, mental and emotional health, safety, and job performance. This literature review also connects existing research to the central research question in reference to Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy regarding the perceptions of educators' self-efficacy beliefs. The information reviewed provides the basis to make connections between the data analysis, interpretation, and the recommendations for future research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories serve as a means to connect phenomenon to human behaviors, thoughts, events and/or structures. Theories substantiate the causes and timing of the phenomenon (Sutton &

Staw, 1995). Self-efficacy is an element of Bandura's (1993) social cognitive theory (SCT). The SCT describes an individual's innate desire to interact with others as a component to the human learning process (Bandura, 1993). Through social interactions, humans subconsciously develop self-efficacy through their worldviews as well as their experiences and self-perceptions (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief about his/her ability to perform at a personal or professional level (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy affects an individual's persistence, achievement, effort, and choices (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995).

The roots of self-efficacy begin during childhood and matriculate into adulthood from social as well as environmental influences (Bandura, 1997). Subconsciously, the way a person evaluates his/her potential is a catalyst for intrinsic motivation. The perceptions of self-efficacy that develop in the psyche are a continual process that affects self-regulation of behavior (Bandura, 2001). An individual's perception on self-efficacy determines how the individual approaches and completes job tasks (Glazer, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). The belief in one's ability to reach a goal has a direct correlation to behavior, motivation, and a person's sense of self-worth (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is the catalyst driving humans to apply efforts in tasks. Without self-efficacy, motives for completing tasks or taking on a challenging endeavor would be futile (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is a foundational theory that researchers use to analyze self-efficacy across occupations. There is a high correlation between student performance and educator efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Specifically focusing on education in this research, the theory's proven validity comes from its use in a plethora of studies focusing on the efficacy of educators in the capacity of student success (Bruggink, Goei, & Koot, 2016; Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015; Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016). Self-

efficacy is a dominant factor in job performance and satisfaction (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2002). Self-efficacy is the driving force that motivates educators to promote academic growth amongst their students (Quin, 2017; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

An individual's self-efficacy beliefs are context-specific and performance-based (Zimmerman, 2000). Motivation is also a major factor in the growth or complacency of an individual's self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2000). The effects of self-efficacy are evident in various professions including education (Bandura, 1997). Educator efficacy associates the educators' motivation to attempt tasks most commonly seen within the learning environment. Similar to personal efficacy, educator efficacy contributes to an "individual teachers' beliefs in their own abilities to plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014, p. 612). When educators experience past failures in meeting performance goals, efficacy levels tend to decline (Bandura, 1993). Low levels of self-efficacy correlate directly with individual anxiety, development of avoidance tactics, or refusal to engage in specific instructional activities (Bandura, 1993). As research continues to examine the vicarious nature of educator efficacy, noteworthy associations between low teacher efficacy and low student efficacy suggests that educator efficacy is a contributing factor to the student achievement gap (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Lev, Tatar, & Koslowsky, 2018). Consequently, declining levels of student efficacy and low levels of teacher efficacy contribute to low levels of student performance and low high school graduation rates (Klassen & Tze, 2014; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2007; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Gaining an understanding into how educators perceive their self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school provides information for any stakeholders in the

alternative school population. Students attending an involuntary enrollment alternative school are considered part of the at-risk population of students (De La Ossa, 2005). Educators with a lower sense of self-efficacy put in less effort with students who may be challenging (Bruggink et al., 2016; Corkett, Hatt, & Benevides, 2011). Educators who have a high sense of self-efficacy are more motivated to meet the needs of students (Bandura, 1997; Marshall & Scott, 2015). The need to study how educators feel about their own individual roles as facilitators of knowledge is important for not only enhancing student learning but also helping educators stay motivated to remain in the profession (Cornell & Huang, 2016).

Overall, self-efficacy theory describes the active role people play in making decisions based on memories and experiences that are motivating (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Pajares, 2004). When educators attempts a new skill, the amount of thought and effort used to complete the task comes from their perceived level of control over their environment and ability to make choices, both of which are related to individual self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997, 2006). The more confident a person is in the ability to accomplish a goal, the more effort and a high sense of self-efficacy emerges, whereas when a lower sense of self-efficacy guides the person's decision making, the individual may find him/herself stagnate in life goals and decision making (Bandura, 2006). With time and practice, individual levels of self-efficacy stabilize, and the person's self-efficacy beliefs become resistant to change (Bandura, 1997). For educators, research notes the preservice time of self-efficacy where educators learn through work environment, job performance, and other major factors (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Self-efficacy is a motivational construct for educators. Self-efficacy influences the educator's efforts and perseverance, which directly affect job performance. The pattern of behavior influencing self-

efficacy thereby creating new self-efficacy beliefs is a continuous cycle that either promotes success or demonstrates failure (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

The four main sources of self-efficacy—mastery experience, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional affect—are the result of Bandura's (1977, 1997) research. These four main sources are the caveat to how an educator's efficacy takes shape (Bandura, 1997). Researchers support the importance of these four main sources contributing to the overall self-efficacy of educators (Akhtar, 2008; Pajares, 1996, 2002; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, Schunk, & DiBenedetto, 2017). For example, Phan and Locke's (2015) findings from a qualitative study similar to this study corroborate the assumption that the four main sources of efficacy influence educators' sense of self-efficacy. In this study, researchers examined the relationship between the four sources of self-efficacy and an educator's ability to integrate information from professional development into technology-based learning. From the results, the research suggested that districts create a holistic system of learning to support educators becoming successful in the four main sources of self-efficacy (Barton & Dexter, 2020; Phan & Locke, 2015).

Self-efficacy beliefs are a part of the cognitive effect that human beings experience through perceived capabilities (Bandura, 1977, 1991, 1997). Human behavior is purposive and thereby regulated by the need to fulfill cognitive goals. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the higher the goals setting and belief in achievability (Bandura, 1977, 1991, 1997). Self-efficacy is vital to the self-regulation of thoughts and emotions (Bandura, 1977, 1991). The end result of a set cognitive goal motivates people to work with a purpose as achieving to receive the incentives (Bandura, 1991). Self-efficacy overall guides and then solidifies the basis of beliefs in what a person feels is attainable.

One main causal effect of attrition is educator confidence in the ability to meet the needs of students. Educator's level of self-efficacy varies depending on the level of student engagement both in the classroom and throughout the school environment. Educators more specifically display higher levels of efficacy when low-performing students increased their engagement level or develop better behavioral stamina. On the other hand, educators reported feeling guilty and less effective when higher-ability students' level of effort decreased or students lost interest in the subject matter (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Wang & Hall, 2018). Several credible researchers support Bandura's theory that educator efficacy is a culmination of the four main sources working together cohesively with the mastery experience being the most influential (Pajares, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Yough, 2019). Efficacy develops through the emergence of the four domains, emergence demonstrated through the capabilities of an individual (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).

Bandura (1997) posited that mastery experiences are the most influential source of self-efficacy beliefs. When educators attempt and discover ways to increase student success, learn new attainable skills, or perfect a skill, their sense of self-efficacy increases. Mastery experiences generally stem from an individual's previous accomplishments. Mastery experiences are the most significant of the four sources of self-efficacy; however, they pose a problem for educators with a low sense of self-efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000). As the educator learns techniques that demonstrate growth, he/she becomes more confident. Through persistence, failure, feedback, and support the educator gains resilience and the capability to persevere (Bandura, 1997). An educator's perception of his/her past performances provides momentum to continue raising their efficacy beliefs in the future. However, when an educator experiences low confidence due to repeated failures, the level of efficacy through mastery

experiences gradually decreases (Wang, Tan, Tan, & Lim, 2017). Empirical evidence increasingly suggests that leadership which motivates, supports, and sustains the professional learning of teachers has an indirect effect on both student learning and school improvement. The research adds to a growing body of research that affirms a positive relationship between principal leadership and teacher professional learning and emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy in shaping educator practice (Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

Previous empirical research involving educators' self-efficacy through preservice trainings and professional development opportunities indicates a need for both tools to enhance individual teacher self-efficacy. Mastery experience is the most powerful avenue to job performance and satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Yough, 2019). The motivational construct of self-efficacy drives an educator's levels of persistence when faced with challenges as well as the job performance overall (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). The more equipped educators feel about their ability to be successful in completing assigned task, the greater the level of attainable mastery (Tschannen-Moran & Master, 2009; Yough, 2019). When individuals feel successful in their job performance, their belief in their personal self-efficacy increases (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences enhance self-efficacy when educators feel confident in their ability to achieve the goal and/or tackle a work-related challenge with confidence (Bandura, 1997; Yough, 2019). Teachers' sense of efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in her or his ability to produce student engagement and learning outcomes even when facing the most difficult or challenging circumstances (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In empirical studies, teachers' sense of efficacy is a catalyst for a number of positive teacher attributes including commitment to the profession, job satisfaction, increased

student learning, positive self-efficacy, and emotional well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Yough, 2019).

The second source of self-efficacy is vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). This source involves individuals gaining knowledge through observations. Vicarious experiences involve a modeled behavior that demonstrates a certain level of success (Bandura, 1977, 1997). From those observations, individuals see someone else performing a task that he/she feels competent in attempting. Modeling a behavior that is similar to the observer and being successful creates a sense of positive self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997). When educators observe colleagues being successful with handling challenges and/or implementing effective strategies, the educator becomes more confident in his or her own ability to be successful (Bandura, 1997; Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Vicarious experiences provide educators with an opportunity to assess adequacies through the comparison with colleagues within similar situations (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). When educators believe they possess comparable qualities such as background, experiences, or training to their colleagues, their self-efficacy increases through mimicking the success of others (Wang et al., 2017). Vicarious experiences can take place in a variety of forms such as role modeling, effective actual modeling, and self-modeling (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, sources for educators to have vicarious experiences include but are not limited to peer conversations, peer observations, professional developments, and/or media influences (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

The third main source of self-efficacy beliefs according to Bandura (1997) is social persuasion. When a credible source provides encouragement that reinforces a behavior, the likelihood of gaining a more positive sense of self-efficacy increases (Bandura, 1977, 1997).



Social persuasion, however, cannot exist as an individual's sole source of self-efficacy. When that occurs, an accurate assessment of the individual's areas that need growth decreases and may cause the person to have a false sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997). With social persuasion exists the opportunity to provide constructive criticism that motivates the individual to persist at the task (Bandura, 1998). For example, educators who are in a positive school setting receive constructive feedback from administration, have motivating conversations with colleagues, and/or build positive relationships with students show increases in educator's self-efficacy (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). However, educators who work with low-achieving students, receive little to no constructive feedback from administration, and/or do not have positive relationships with colleagues experience many negative effects on their educator self-efficacy concerning the educator's feelings of professional competence (Wang, et al., 2017). Social persuasion contributes to boosting an educator's confidence, leading him/her to try new strategies to increase job satisfaction and/or job performance (Bandura, 1997). Social persuasion is only effective if the educator finds the persuader trustworthy and credible (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Feedback from colleagues, administrators, and/or student engagement are all sources of social persuasion.

The final main source of self-efficacy beliefs is physiological and emotional states. Bandura (1997) indicated an individual's emotional state is significant to behavior. Physiological cues such as sorrow, anger, and excitement contribute to an individual's sense of competency (Bandura, 1997). Individuals use body cues and body language as a determining factor for behaviors (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). When individuals engage in stressful situations, the likelihood of them participating again decreases. Negative experiences of educators are catalysts for distressing situations, which lead to a decrease in self-efficacy

(Pajares, 1996). The emotional state directs an individual's ability to assess experiences.

Educators who develop a strong sense of efficacy experience less stress on the job and feel better prepared to meet the job demands (Bandura, 1997). When educators experience positive emotions in the workplace, there is a sense of self-assurance and confidence in successful job performance (Wang, et al., 2017). When there are high levels of stress and/or anxiety, the educator may be overcome with feelings of self-doubt, thereby generating more stress and creating a vicious cycle of ineptitude (Bandura, 1997). There are varying levels of the impact caused by physiological and emotional stimulation affecting educator efficacy in both traditional and nontraditional educator settings (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003; Wang et al., 2017).

Overall, self-efficacy beliefs are how individuals choose challenges to embark upon, the level of perseverance to devote to a task, and developing strategies to cope with obstacles and failures (Bandura, 2001). Qualitative research conducted by Wang et al. (2017) sought to discover criterion impacting educator efficacy. Using a mixed method approach with nine educators, the study identified seven themes impacting educator efficacy. The results concluded that Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy in addition to knowledge about students, rapport with students, and previous work experience all affect an educator's level of efficacy (Wang et al., 2017). Principal instructional leadership has a direct as well as indirect influence on the climate in the school building. Principal leadership and self-efficacy permeate through both small and large decisions due to the decision-making ability of the leader (Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

### **Related Literature**

Educators within the involuntary alternative school community service students who for various reasons no longer attend traditional school (Cornell & Huang, 2016). Educators in this

type of school community must acquire a certain level of tenacity when working with disadvantaged youth (Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015; Te Riele et al., 2017). Being an educator is an act of affective labor that creates a social learning environment (Gallager, 2002; Kostogriz, 2012). Those feelings of affective labor from educators produce a sense of trust, respect, excitement, and satisfaction, all of which correlate with the intellectual effects of knowledge, meanings, and understanding amongst students (Kostogriz, 2012, p. 402). Given the freedom of creative lesson structuring while engaging in educational practices, educators who work within the involuntary alternative school setting are able to fulfill the mastery experience component of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; McGregor & Mill, 2012).

It is imperative that teachers and principals work as a cohesive team in order to ensure that students are receiving the best education possible while attending the involuntary enrollment alternative school (Horton & Martin, 2013; Loannidou-Koutselini & Patsalidou, 2015). Under the guidance of the school's mission statement, those educators must align their values, identify their strengths, and have a solid plan of action in place (Deal & Peterson, 2010). When public school principals implement teambuilding strategies, that effort promotes unification between teachers and principals. This collective effort not only strengthens the relationship of the educators, it also enhances the culture and climate of the school. Principals and teachers must embrace the concept of strategically working together to meet the needs of students on a daily basis (Polega, Amorim, Roque do Carmo, & Baker, 2019). Addressing the leadership styles of principals and the job dissatisfaction barriers that cause principals and educators to not work together is necessary in order to create a positive working environment for both principals and educators (Moye, Henkin, & Egley, 2005; Polega et al., 2019). The relationship between teachers and principals should be based on mutual respect and trust (Moye et al., 2005).

Through the lens of efficacy, when educators feel a sense of purpose-driven teamwork with the administration in the building, those educators personify empowerment and exhibit high levels of job satisfaction (Moye et al., 2005).

Quality of work is the coexistence and compatibility of employees and the overall working environment (American Federation of Teachers, 2017; Lev et al., 2018; Sisson, 2019). The quality of work also includes the perceived and realistic stressors, satisfaction levels, and relationships within the work setting (Lev et al., 2018). Quality of work involves an ongoing effort of groups to learn how to function better as a unit to achieve maximum benefits as well as recognize areas that need improvement (American Federation of Teachers, 2017; Lev et al., 2018; Sisson, 2019). When evaluating the quality of work life for secondary educators, the efficaciousness of educators changes with the level of satisfaction and personal fulfillment achieved. The ability to reach goals and maintain a healthy work level stress affects the educator's quality of work. This also impacts educator attrition and retention within certain secondary school settings (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Berg & Cornell, 2016; Lev et al., 2018). Lack of emotional support and the surmounting levels of job-related emotional stress are two significant factors causing educators to leave the profession (Lev et al., 2018). The quality of an educator's work life correlates with the shared responsibilities of the organization as well as the educator. The safety of the working environment, the management style, and personal experiences of the educator are all key components to an educator's quality of work life. Furthermore, when educators feel respected by superiors, their desire to succeed grows extrinsically (American Federation of Teachers, 2017; Ishak et al., 2018). Nearly 58% of educators admitted to having poor mental health related to the expectations of their job according to the Educator Quality of Work Life Survey (American Federation of Teachers, 2017). That

statistic indicates an increase from a similar study conducted two years prior by the American Federation of Teachers (2017). The results of this study support the need for research investigating Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy related to educators. Each of the resulting indicators correlates with a facet of the Bandura's (1993) mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional/affective state. Additionally, research supports the stance that the quality of work life is vital to education as it motivates educators to succeed in the school community (Baroutsis, 2017). Work satisfaction, faculty support, feeling a sense of effectiveness, and job performance are all a part of educator self-efficacy in some facet (Akhtar, 2008; Bandura, 1997; Colomeischi et al., 2014; Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). When there is a high quality of work, educators are better at organization, performance, and effectiveness (Ishak et al., 2018). Educators working with an involuntary enrollment alternative school often face more difficult challenges than their colleagues working within a traditional school setting. The students come with varying academic, behavioral, and social levels which add to the educational dynamic (Billingsley, Fall, & Williams, 2006; Prettyman & Sass, 2018).

Understanding the self-efficacy of educators that work in an involuntary enrollment alternative school meets the needs of both students and the educators within that work community (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2017). Bandura's (1993) four main sources of self-efficacy theorized that teacher self-efficacy influences their behaviors and views towards students (Miller et al., 2017). Teachers with specific behavior intervention training struggle to successfully implement strategies due to lack of time and/or feelings of inadequacy (Long, Sanetti, Lark, & Connolly, 2018). Teachers that are confident in their job performance set a tone for conducive learning as well as effective classroom management (Zee & Koomen,

2016). When principals have a great sense of self-efficacy, they are able to motivate teachers and staff towards a more successful learning community both academically and socially (Hallinger et al., 2018). Principal self-efficacy is important to the overall school community due to the job being one of leadership (Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, & Ma, 2012). Therefore, the need for administrators to possess a high self-efficacy is important to the school community (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). With collective efficacy, teachers and principals create an environment conducive to maximizing student achievement (Bandura, 1993, 1997). When the shared beliefs of the educators are productive and strategic, the collective beliefs create a foundation that not only benefits the students academically but also motivates the educators' four main sources of self-efficacy.

### **Alternative School Defined**

Since its inception, alternative schools serve as the means for students to receive a public-school education by meeting the unique needs and circumstances of students (Koetke, 1999; Raywid, 1998). Due to the broad umbrella definition of alternative schools, schools such as credit recovery, charter schools, and advance studies schools also fit the criteria. Raywid (1998) provided the three historical categories of alternative schools.

- Magnet or schools that offer specialized educational approaches. Students generally must apply for acceptance into this alternative setting.
- Credit recovery or schools that provide needed academic support for students who struggle with staying on the graduation track. Attending this type of alternative school requires students to apply or guidance counselor recommendation.

- Behavioral or disciplinary school. These schools service students who have behavioral needs or exhibit other emotional needs that have interfered with learning (Kerr & Brown, 2016). Attending this type of alternative school is involuntary.

Later research by Hefner-Packer (1990), who studied varying models of alternative school, led to four categories of public alternative schools:

- Alternative Classroom: A self-contained classroom that provides differentiated programs for students within a traditional school setting.
- School-within-a-School: A specialized education program within a traditional school setting that allows students to work independently and at their own pace.
- Continuation School: A school outside of the traditional school with different curriculum and policies.
- Magnet School: A school that offers a specified curriculum in one or more subject areas. Students generally apply based on interest for this alternative school type.

The broad design of alternative schools encompasses several structures due to the specific requirements set by public school districts to meet the needs of students attending a nontraditional school setting (Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015; Free, 2014; Raywid, 1998).

Alternative schools do not fit into the traditional K–12 format (Aron, 2006). Given the guidelines and population of school districts, the type of alternative school available to students can vary.

Descriptors of an alternative public school include:

- Providing a nontraditional educational program for students;
- Addressing the needs of at-risk students;
- Addressing the needs of student(s) experiencing adversities within traditional school;

- Service students who require specialized education for a variety of reasons (Cornell & Huang, 2016).

The criteria of the alternative school should be to meet the needs of the students in a differentiated manner socially, academically, and emotionally (Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). Vanderhaar, Petrosko, and Munoz (2014) explained how alternative schools are for students whose behavior is challenging or consistent with breaking zero tolerance policies. Students who are considered at-risk for social-emotional or academic struggles are better served in an alternative setting (Menendez, 2007). School districts offer alternative school as the last opportunity for education for students who have lost the privilege of attending traditional schools (Berg & Cornell, 2016; Bird & Bassin, 2015; Wilkerson et al., 2016). Alternative schools isolate the students who are disruptive and violence-prone as a means of protection for both staff and students (Glass, 1995).

Students who continuously exhibit behavioral challenges in the traditional school, juvenile delinquents, and/or students caught possessing drugs or weapons on school grounds are also a significant part of the involuntary enrollment population (Skiba et al., 2014). A student's length of enrollment at an involuntary alternative school varies depending on the reason for placement and the conditional terms guidelines (Kennedy, Acosta, & Soutullo, 2019; Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke, 2009). Individual school entities determine the features of the alternative school programs they govern. Therefore, the program's target population and key characteristics may vary but still adhere to the basic definition of an alternative school (Kennedy-Lewis, Whitaker, & Soutullo, 2016; Porowski, O'Conner, & Luo, 2014).

The state in which the study took place operates four types of alternative school programs:

1. District-operated programs in a classroom or wing within a regular school (on-site).



2. District-operated programs in a separate facility and range in program type such as gifted/talented, disciplinary/behavior, teen pregnancy, virtual/digital, specialized programming for immigrant and refugee students, etc.
3. Programs for State Agency Children in various types of facilities such as juvenile detention centers, treatment facilities, residential group homes, etc.
4. A combination school from Types 2 and 3 ([State] Department of Education, 2018).

This state's department of education describes the alternative education programs as the means to meet the needs of students that cannot be accomplished in a traditional school setting. The state's involuntary enrollment alternative school's mission is to improve behaviors as well as academic performance of students. The involuntary enrollment alternative school in this research is a Type 2 school specifically for students with behavioral and/or behavior circumstances.

The most appropriate definition for the involuntary enrollment alternative school participating in this study combines the descriptions from Raywid (1994) and Raywid (1998) who described alternative schools as public institutions that offer specialized learning opportunities for students who are disruptive, need academic remediation, or social rehabilitation. These schools are often the last opportunity for education for the students. Although the design of the behavioral alternative schools is to assist students in obtaining academic success while being in an environment less distractive to learning, some researchers believe the schools to be inferior due to unprepared educators and subpar curriculums (Fedders, 2018). When students enroll in an involuntary alternative school, the expectation is for the student(s) to attend temporarily depending upon the reason and conditional terms of the attendance (Kennedy et al., 2019).

## Teacher Efficacy

The first years of an educator's career are powerful influences in the development of teacher self-efficacy (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). The construct of teacher efficacy is a conglomeration of Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory and Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Teacher efficacy is the most influential construct representing a teachers' belief in their competence level (Pajares, 1996). Guskey and Passaro (1994) defined teacher efficacy as the teacher's belief in his or her ability to influence student learning even when educating unmotivated or difficult students.

Teacher efficacy is a variable, accounting for individual differences in teaching effectiveness and structure (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy (1998) defined teacher efficacy as how a teacher views their capability to complete required tasks successfully. According to Goddard et al. (2000), reciprocal causation is a multi-directional model, by which our actions and/or behaviors function within a triage of environmental influences, our behavior, and internal personal influences such as cognitive, affective, and biological developments. Self-efficacy aides in determining how much effort, persistence, and resilience goes into a specific undertaking. The higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience (Bandura, 1986, 1997). For teachers, the higher the efficacy, the greater the effort in job performance, student relationships, and classroom management.

Teacher efficacy is a triadic reciprocal of interplay between behaviors, environment, and personal factors (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Bandura also explored that nature of teacher efficacy being a cross-task rather than a simple formula (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Bandura developed a 30-item

measuring tool with seven subscales: efficacy to influence decision-making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school climate, the purpose being to measure teacher efficacy across curriculum and job tasks (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Most literature surrounding teacher efficacy associates it with student performance, academic achievements, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The research is limited connecting teacher efficacy to their perceptions while working within a specialized school setting.

Several teacher efficacy studies relate the construct to student achievement and motivation as well as teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2004; Pajares, 1996; Shaughnessy, 2004; Schunk, 1995; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). A teacher's sense of efficacy increases by mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997; Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). Teacher efficacy is a pivotal factor in distinguishing the novice struggling teacher from those who teach with confidence and effectiveness (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). McCarty (2013) expounded on the differences in teacher efficacy between traditional and non-traditional teachers. Teachers have different perceptions of self-efficacy depending upon classroom experience, salary, social support, principal leadership styles, classroom management efficiency, and student population (McCarty, 2013; Minghui, Xiaomeng, & Potmėšilc, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) denoted strong evidence of six domains specific to teacher efficacy: Classroom instruction, ability to differentiate instruction, ability to motivate students,

classroom management, relationship with colleagues, and being able to manage work stress. Research also indicates that teacher self-efficacy concerning the ability to manage disruptive students connects with decreased confidence, job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion and high attrition rates (Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010). Bandura's (1977) definition of self-efficacy conceptualized how educators believe in their ability to be successful in the classroom, achieve personal educational goals, motivate others, and maintain a certain level of job satisfaction (Scherer, Jansen, Nilsen, Areepattamannil, & Marsh, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). Higher teacher efficacy is beneficial to intrinsic as well as extrinsic growth (Guskey, 1989).

The primary thought on teacher efficacy is that when a teacher possesses a high level of efficacy, the teacher then has the potential to be more successful in the classroom, build stronger relationships with colleagues and students, and is able to persevere challenging situations while maintaining a healthy state of mind (Bandura, 1997; Poulou, Reddy, & Dudek, 2019; Schunk, 1995). Research links teacher efficacy to student learning, student achievement, and student motivation (Goddard et al., 2004), yet there is a gap in the literature concerning teacher efficacy specific to those teachers working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The importance of teacher efficacy should encompass teacher achievements, motivation, and successes that feature the teacher's competence within the classroom (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996).

Teachers who doubt their ability to manage students who consistently misbehave may blame themselves or the students for having low self-efficacy (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013). The existence of lowered self-efficacy due to low classroom productivity increases work stress and emotional exhaustion, which thereby impacts

an educator's physiological state of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Reinke et al., 2013; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Bandura (1997) explained how educators with low self-efficacy beliefs may view their work environment as unsafe and might overexaggerate situations based on their coping deficiencies (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Consequently, there is a negative correlation between educator's efficacy with job satisfaction, emotional health, and job performance (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Reinke et al., 2013), all of which are factors in educator efficacy based on Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy.

The Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES) is an adaption of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The NTSES includes 24 items with four items in each of the six subscales, which are as follows: (a) instruction, (b) adapting education to individual students' needs, (c) motivating students, (d) maintaining discipline, (e) working with colleagues and parents, and (f) coping with challenging situations (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The responses for each item are based on a 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not certain at all) to 7 (absolutely certain). The survey also includes items in six subscales which encapsulate a teachers' work ethic individually as well as collectively with colleagues. The development of the NTSES came from research desiring to develop a teacher self-efficacy scale to collect data on the six dimensions in correlation to teacher efficacy and role expectations in Norway.

The study provides a clear analysis of teacher efficacy being a multidimensional construct and not a single dimensional construct relying solely on one facet of teacher self-efficacy beliefs. The study also revealed a strong correlation with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Bandura's (1997) research explained how mastery experiences and expectations impact teacher self-efficacy beliefs. When the teacher becomes overwhelmed and stressed, the individual teacher may exhibit heightened emotional exhaustion, identity crisis, self-doubt,

and/or depersonalization (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The development of the NTSES and the results the research provided underscore the importance of research focused on the teacher self-efficacy of those working within involuntary enrollment alternative schools. Initially, self-efficacy derives from mastery experiences and then expands to vicarious experiences, social interactions, and physiological/ emotional state (Bandura, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teacher self-efficacy beliefs can be either negative or positive (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Lev et al. (2018) discussed teacher efficacy and its impact in the traditional learning environment. This research seeks to understand how educators perceive their self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The construct teacher self-efficacy correlates with job satisfaction, student success, classroom management, and job preparedness (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

### **Principal Self-Efficacy**

The principal in a school community is the bonding force that leads the school through effective practices (Pak, 2015). Principal efficacy is the leader's assessment of his or her ability to lead a structured work environment that produces the specified vision of the school community (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2015). Principal self-efficacy by definition is a set of beliefs that guides a principal's ability to enact policies and procedures that are positive attributes to the growth of the school culture (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Principal self-efficacy is an important catalyst for a leader's actions and behaviors that affects both faculty and students. Additionally, research proposed that principals gain depth within their self-efficacy and learn strategies to improve and influence both teacher and collective teacher efficacy through the four main sources of self-efficacy development: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences,

socially persuasive experiences, and affective states (Bandura, 1997; Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Researchers Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) developed the Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES). This instrument follows Bandura's (1977) format for self-efficacy scale construction. The primary factors of the instrument (instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and moral leadership) are the scale factors that may suggest areas in which principals develop or increase their level of self-efficacy. The results suggested that principals with a higher sense of efficacy are able to enhance the sense of efficacy amongst teachers which may ultimately lead to a stronger professional relationship as well as promote job satisfaction for both educators (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Leadership involves being an influencer in the relationship with teachers and staff who are integral to the flow of the school (Jackson & Marriott, 2012). There must be a certain level of respect and common goals in order for the relationship to be productive. Principal efficacy involves the leaders understanding how the balance of power is a direct result of the leadership style (Jackson & Marriott, 2012). Data collected from public school teachers and principals in the 2003–2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) found that principal satisfaction comes from three main items: school performance, relationships with teachers, and school demographics factors such as local enrollment and school type (Jackson & Marriott, 2012).

The research work of McCollum and Kajs (2009) established a theoretical approach to school leader self-efficacy. Based on the work of Bandura (1986), school administrators exhibit self-efficacy through several areas of measured competence. The researchers developed the School Administrator Efficacy Scale (SAES) to measure administrator levels of self-efficacy. According to their research, there are eight factors relevant to principal efficacy:

- instructional leadership and staff development
- school climate development
- community collaboration
- data-based decision making aligned with legal and ethical principles
- resource and facility management
- use of community resources
- communication in a diverse environment
- development of a school vision

From this study of 312 principals measuring their goal orientations based off mastery and performance, McCollum and Kajs' (2009) findings indicated a clear link between goals orientations and efficacy. Principals who approach goals with confidence and make an effort to achieve the set goals have higher levels of efficacy, whereas failure to set goals and lack of motivation leads to a decrease in principal efficacy (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011, 2012; McCollum & Kajs, 2009).

Self-efficacy is essential to a principal's ability to be an effective leader. The higher the efficaciousness, the more able he/she is to face changes in expectations while being persistent in overcoming adversity (Bandura, 1997; Versland, 2013). A principal's self-efficacy has an effect on the faculty and staff's level of job satisfaction and commitment (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Versland, 2013). Principal self-efficacy also enhances the school's collective efficacy and the faculty's ability to innovate and create higher levels of learning throughout the school community (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Goddard, 2001). A principal's self-efficacy beliefs stem from personal accomplishments (mastery experiences) learning from others (social persuasion) and through experience. The leader's self-efficacy may either increase or decrease based on



environmental factors such as social conditions of the school, mentoring or assistance provided during novice leadership years, and the criteria for being selected to be principal (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Research on principal self-efficacy emerged from a desire for information on best practices to prepare principals to be effective leaders and also gaining an understanding in how Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy influence principal leadership styles (Versland, 2013). The research results highlight several key factors connecting principal leadership styles to the four main sources of self-efficacy.

With the demanding expectations of leadership, as principals experience the pressure, their collaborative relationships devolve and their ability to set achievable goals decreases (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011, 2012; Versland, 2013). When this happens, principals may begin to manage the school with a top-down approach rather than reaching out to support staff for assistance. The increase in anxiety and feelings of inadequacy often lead to a decrease in the principal's belief in his/her ability to be an effective leader. The inability to manage physiological stressors is attributed to feelings of ineffectiveness (Bandura, 1997; Versland, 2013). School administrators are responsible for all facets of the school's management. The expectations of stakeholders such as parents, media, governing bodies, faculty, and students are also a part of the job demands (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). Having the physiological ability to cope with both the internal and external pressures of the job falls into the realm of Bandura's (1997) physiological self-efficacy source (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011, 2012).

With the job change from teacher to principal, there is a change in relationship status. The research reported a decrease in principal efficacy due to the challenge of forming new relationships with leaders (Versland, 2013). Principals who were peers take on the leadership role as administrators, which may lead to tension with teachers and other staff members. The

lack of vicarious learning causes new principals to feel isolated (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Versland, 2013). The novice years of administration are formative and challenging for those who do not learn coping strategies to successfully transition into the leadership position. When given role models, mentors, and opportunities for collaborative learning with other principals, self-efficacy flourishes (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Versland, 2013). Having opportunities to develop relationship skills, gaining acceptance, and being able to make a positive impact in their schools increases levels of principal self-efficacy (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Versland, 2013). When given the opportunities to connect with teachers, students, staff, and community members, administrators develop the social skills needed to increase self-efficacy as well as promote excellence within the school community (Versland, 2013).

Principals during their novice years in leadership rely on their experiences as teachers to substantiate their self-efficacy (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012). In order for principals to experience growth, the three key elements of time, effort, and both negative and positive experiences must take place. Principal efficacy involves learning how to communicate with faculty, staff, students, parents, district leaders, community members, etc. Therefore, the opportunities for growth or loss in efficacy matriculate from a plethora of sources (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Versland, 2013). Principal efficacy beliefs influence the level of effort the leader is willing to put into the job duties as well as the varying levels of persistence when faced with failure or challenges (Bandura, 1977; Jacob et al., 2015). This is relevant to principals working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school as research indicates that those leaders with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to stay at the school. Research supports that those leaders with a high sense of self-efficacy remain in high poverty and/or challenging school settings (Jacob et al., 2015).

There is a positive correlation between principal efficacy and effective leadership (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011, 2012). Furthermore, research also suggests that principal leadership is connected to teacher attitude, behavior, and building morale (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Versland, 2013). Findings previous research reinforce the importance of principals modeling the core values and expectations of the school community. Self-efficacy beliefs determine whether a principal possesses the skills to encourage teachers as well as foster learning (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Gareis & Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Hallinger et al., 2018). Research confirms the positive correlation between self-efficacy and the behavioral practices of school principals (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Self-efficacy shapes how an administrator enacts and reacts to the job requirements, thereby shaping their leadership capabilities (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Principal self-efficacy connects with leadership strengths and weaknesses as well as influencing teacher attitudes and behaviors and student achievement (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Versland, 2013).

### **Collective Efficacy**

Bandura (1986) explained that the strength of groups and organizations exists within their sense of collective efficacy. The entity must possess the confidence and/or belief in its ability to solve challenges that it faces (Hallinger et al., 2018). Collective teacher efficacy (CTE), also a Bandura (1993, 1997) theory, is rooted in self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as the shared belief of the group in its joined capabilities to organize and facilitate actions required to achieve a certain level of completion. The four main sources of self-efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional/affective states) influence a group's collective efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Goddard, 2001; Jacob et al., 2015).

The collective ideals or concepts of a group allows the beliefs to be organized in a collective manner rather than an individual execution. The positive outcome of that is the increased probability of student success.

Goddard et al. (2000) supported this theory within their research by demonstrating how collective teacher efficacy is vital in explaining the achievements of students. Using a large urban district similar to this study's setting, the researchers showed the importance of cultivating a positive sense of collective educator efficacy for not only students but educators as well. When positive collective efficacy is present, the culture of the school improves, which inadvertently affects student achievements. The research found collective educator efficacy through testing to have strong reliability and validity (Goddard et. al., 2000). Collective efficacy is a metacognitive process that requires educators to work together and evaluate the competence of the group (Jacob et al., 2015). When leaders work together on the collective focused goal of student success, that is when schools see the most growth in student learning (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Collective efficacy is the perception of group attributes exemplifying the capabilities of a staff or school (Klassen et al., 2010). The collective efficacy theory does not boost an educator's ego but rather is a tool to strengthen the group dynamic for growth within the cohort.

Understanding an educator's need for a strong support system to promote job preparedness can strengthen this research (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Furthermore, there is limited research that measures the educator's job perception and collective efficacy as it relates to an educator's perception of his/her thoughts regarding colleagues (Klassen et al., 2010). Prior studies found that principals strengthen the CTE by communicating the school's goals and vision, setting attainable goals, clarifying data reported to the district, and expressing the importance of teacher

self-efficacy in direct correlation with student learning (Goddard et al., 2000; Hallinger et al., 2018).

Collective efficacy perceptions grow from an educator's four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et al., 2004). The more engaged in the decision-making process teachers feel, the more included teachers feel in the collective efficacy of the school community (Bandura, 1997). There is a clear relationship between collective efficacy and educator efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Derrington & Angelle, 2013). Individual teacher self-efficacy is a part of the multidimensional construct of CTE but does not translate into an overall need (Bandura, 1997). There is a possibility of highly efficacious teachers isolating themselves from the school community, thereby not being participatory in the CTE values of the school community (Versland & Erickson, 2017).

The challenges of educators are diverse and subject to the scrutiny of public accountability. For those educators within an involuntary enrollment alternative school, the responsibility of educating the students best operates with shared responsibility for the student outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et. al., 2000). Collective teacher efficacy poses challenges within itself due to the caliber of teachers participating. However, if built correctly CTE is not only beneficial to the individual teachers but the overall school community (Goddard et al., 2000). Collective teacher efficacy mainly impacts the social perceptions efficacy beliefs of teachers (Bandura, 1997). The opportunity for efficacy to grow within the collective body of teachers is indicative of the reciprocal causality factor (Bandura, 1997), meaning that through planning, organizing, and implementing strategies that prove beneficial to the collective body, the overall efficacy of the group strengthens. When reciprocity happens, student achievement

improves, which systematically improves teacher efficacy (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy are an essential component of CTE (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The success a teacher attains sets the foundation for his/her level of self-efficacy. The teacher's belief in the administration as well as colleagues' ability to work as a team impacts the teacher's social persuasion source of self-efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). The level to which a teacher's mastery experiences influence growth also vary based upon school environment. CTE is foundational in the joint endeavors of teachers who plan, observe, evaluate, and execute behavioral and/or academic strategies together (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). CTE serves as a gauge for team goal achievements and the efforts of meeting those goals collectively (Goddard et al., 2004). Expectations create an environment that encourages teachers to pursue during discouraging moments within the school environment.

This pattern of thinking according to Bandura's (1997) vicarious experiences source of self-efficacy allows for teachers to learn from colleagues while mastering his/her own teaching abilities when faced with troubling situations. Furthermore, literature expounds on the impact CTE has in framing the individual self-efficacy of teachers (Bandura, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The more organized and strategic the planning of the collective efforts of teachers, the more motivated teachers will be to succeed in the classroom thereby impacting job satisfaction (mastery experiences) as well as student achievements. However, there exists the possibility of setting high expectations through collective organization leading to a decrease in a teacher's individual self-efficacy. By working with more efficacious colleagues and witnessing their successes, some educators may feel intimidated by the expectation, thereby leading to a lowered sense of Bandura's (1997) social persuasion source of self-efficacy.

The limited availability of studies exploring the relationship between perceived collective efficacy and individual self-efficacy substantiates the need for more research into the correlation of the impact both units have on the school culture overall. Several studies explored the importance of understanding teacher self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and the connection both have to student achievement, job satisfaction, and the overall school culture (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). There is limited research addressing the educators' thoughts concerning their performance capabilities as it relates to meeting the needs of students who are at-risk, juvenile delinquents, and/or those who are emotionally challenging (Bruggink et al., 2016). Therefore, it remains primarily unknown whether teachers feel capable of meeting the needs of students attending involuntary enrollment alternative high schools.

### **Teachers' Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior**

The four main sources of teacher efficacy influence how teachers manage their classroom, regulate choices, emotions, actions, and behaviors when dealing with challenging students (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Teachers' Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior (TEHSM) is a domain-specific teacher efficacy tool by definition that expounds on how teachers believe in their capabilities and expertise to manage their classroom and handle disruptive behaviors of students (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). Classroom mismanagement is a major source of low educator efficacy and a significant cause of decreased instruction time (Lopes, Silva, Oliveira, Sass, & Martin, 2017). The alternative school setting serves a variety of students who present different and often multiple academic, behavioral, and mental health challenges (Carver, Lewis, & Tice, 2010). TEHSM research impacts how a teacher perceives certain negative behaviors and correlates to the high attrition rates as well as the physiological

state of mind of teachers (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). The relevance of TEHSM is evident in research concerning student behavior affecting teachers' perceptions about their work capabilities (Richard & Gaudreault, 2016).

Research that investigated the perception of teacher self-efficacy and classroom management concluded that educators who understand the causes of specific student behaviors are more likely to be more successful in redirecting and reducing misbehaviors of students (Lopes et al., 2017). The results showed teachers who perceive themselves as an authoritative leader in the classroom tend to manage classroom behaviors effectively. Furthermore, the study concluded that both teacher self-efficacy and classroom behaviors are linked to classroom management styles (Lopes et al., 2017).

Student misbehaviors are predecessors to an educator's emotional exhaustion level (Langari & Parvin, 2017). Educators' views on student behaviors are a direct link to feelings of emotional exhaustion, which indirectly leads to greater attrition and/or feelings of job dissatisfaction (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Classroom instruction and cultures operate more efficiently when teachers are less frustrated and student behaviors are less disruptive to the learning environment. Positive student behavior has a direct correlation with educator efficacy (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2013). The implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) provides support for educators in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting by equipping educators with effective student behavior management tools (Hinton & Buchanan, 2015). PBIS is a behavior plan that discourages negative behaviors from occurring by the use of clearly defined consistent expectations (McDaniel, Jolivet, & Ennis, 2014). When correctly implemented, PBIS data in previous research shows alternative school setting developing positive school cultures and a decrease in educator job dissatisfaction



(McDaniel et al., 2014). The primary goal of PBIS is creating an environment within the school that allows educators a format enabling students to be successful. When implemented correctly within an alternative school, there is a reduction in disruptions in classroom learning, disruptive social interactions within general student areas (i.e., lunchrooms, bathrooms, hallways), and educator relationships with students (Simonsen, Britton, & Young, 2010). The involuntary enrollment alternative school setting used in this research does have an active PBIS plan as part of the school's behavioral strategy plan.

A growing body of evidence supports the successful implementation of PBIS into both traditional and alternative school settings. The perceptions educators have of the effectiveness of PBIS in both traditional and alternative school settings provides evidence supporting the fatigue and lowering of educator efficacy when students are constantly misbehaving and/or disrupting learning. The need for systems such as PBIS helps to decrease the feelings of exhaustion of both teachers and administrators, which leads to a more productive school environment. The results of the research also emphasize the need for educators to work collectively to ensure the success of the PBIS system to maximize the efficiency of the system. When implemented correctly, PBIS significantly reduces disruptive behavior incidents, discipline referrals, overall out-of-school suspension rates, along with improving the culture and climate of the school setting. Both staff and students reported in the studies feeling a more positive sense of safety and security (McDaniel et al., 2014; Reinke et al., 2013; Scheuermann & Nelson, 2019).

School cultural factors such as school location, class size, socioeconomic status, student ethnicity, and school type or level are predictive of educator efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). These cultural factors along with work environment characteristics and supportive relationships with colleagues affect how educators view their ability to meet the needs

of students while maintaining a certain level of positive professionalism (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). Literature using the TEHSM efficacy scale draws valid connections to Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy. The researchers used various participants from all levels of K–12 education to demonstrate how student behavior and educator efficacy are directly linked through student misbehaviors. The implementation of PBIS into alternative school settings provides additional resources for creating and maintain a school environment that is conducive to learning and educator efficacy. The more effective educators feel intrinsically, the more productive the school learning environment becomes both academically and socially (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

Three themes relate to the development of TEHSM: professional preparation, personal learning process, and resources (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). Previous findings suggest that educators determine their efficacy beliefs concerning classroom management from varying levels of intrinsic efficacy beliefs (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). Bandura (1997) emphasized the belief that self-efficacy influences derived from effort, time, and educator persistence when facing adversity. Individuals with high self-efficacy, particularly educators, are more resilient in overcoming stressful situations and are less likely to become emotionally or physically drained (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014), whereas educators with a lower sense of efficacy become stressed and eventually disengage in challenging situations quickly (Bandura, 1997). Through experience and time spent within the school setting, educators with low self-efficacy develop negative feelings due to their perceptions of being inadequate and/or unable to adapt to the demands of the job. Educator efficacy beliefs are powerful indicators of effort, choices in management style thereby effecting behavioral results (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). The TEHSM concept proves useful in understanding how educators are

successful in overcoming challenging situations and remaining consistent with managing student behaviors.

Educators need systematic support such as PBIS and support from administration and colleagues to develop the emotional and informational foundation necessary for developing a stronger TEHSM belief (McDaniel et al., 2014). Findings from research also suggest that lack of knowledge, feelings of success with classroom management, and limited opportunities for growth as a professional are barriers for educators and contribute to lower TEHSM beliefs (Simonsen et al., 2010; Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). Such findings are concerning for educators because according to Bandura (1997) mastery experiences are the most robust form of enhancing educator efficacy. When the misbehavior of students becomes overwhelming or places the educators in an unsafe work environment, the negative results disseminate within all four of Bandura's main sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

### **Summary**

Chapter Two examined the relevant literature surrounding the phenomenon of self-efficacy with an emphasis on the four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional states. This chapter also reviewed existing literature from both qualitative and quantitative research. The current study extends research to include the perception of educators regarding their self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. The literature supports the ideals that educator efficacy impacts classroom dynamics, educator job performance, job satisfaction, as well as a student's academic success (Donohoo, 2018; Lev et al., 2018). This study adds to the current body of literature to encourage educators to create opportunities for

professional development, emotional support, and collaborative learning amongst educators working outside of the traditional school setting (Lev et al., 2018).

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to gain understanding on the perceptions of educator self-efficacy through the context of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. The study investigated the lived experiences of 10 educators pertaining to their perceptions on Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. A qualitative case study approach was appropriate for this research because a case study research design is a holistic in-depth investigation of a specific, relevant phenomenon (Farquhar, 2012). Through this approach, this research contributes insight into perceptions of educators concerning educator self-efficacy while working in a specialized environment.

Chapter Three provides a description of the qualitative methodology. In this chapter, the research design, research questions, site, and participant data set the basis for how and where the research took place. Chapter Three also provides the procedures, researcher's role, the data collection, and the analysis processes. The ending portion of the chapter reiterates the study's trustworthiness, credibility, and ethical considerations concerning issues that could arise while conducting the research so that future researchers will be able to replicate the study as close as possible to further add to the literature base concerning the study's purpose.

### **Design**

Qualitative case study research is an empirical inquiry of case(s) that address the "how" or "why" questions regarding the phenomenon (Yin, 2015). It is an empirical investigation into a unique situation and addresses a problem pertaining to the situation (Hartley, 2004). This qualitative case study utilized a single case study design to investigate the perceptions of

educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Unlike a quantitative study, qualitative inquiry involves gaining understanding of real-contemporary life situations and then applying the findings to the chosen problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). As a human instrument, I observed the educators within their natural work environments, which allowed the collection of authentic holistic data. In addition, qualitative research draws from multiple sources of real-life contextual data (Creswell & Poth; 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Yin, 2018). This study utilized interviews, focus groups, and short-answer questionnaires to collect data. By using these data to interpret educator's perceptions of their own efficacy as it has developed or changed in any manner of the course of their tenure at the alternative school, I gained more insight into how efficacy can change for educators in specialized learning environments. The emerging themes and data allowed me to adjust the collected data as needed throughout the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The use of a single case study was the most appropriate research design because it focuses on the complex phenomenon of educator efficacy as it applies to one specific sector of public-school educators. I chose to do a qualitative single case study to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon concerning the perceptions of educators related to educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school because it allowed me to gather data in a naturalistic setting and not rely on statistical variances for results. I wanted to learn through the real-life experiences of educators (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2015). For this study, the participants were a group of educators (teachers who serve in various educational roles) from the selected involuntary enrollment alternative school. The participants had the opportunity to share their perceptions by participating in data collection methods guided by specific research questions. Due to the small sample number for this research, I was able to

delve deeper in the analysis of the phenomenon. The specificity of the participants allowed for the individualized responses, which led to emerging themes (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2018).

Two significant components of case study research are the defining of the case and the bounding credentials of the case (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015, 2018). Bounding the case according to Yin (2018) is clarifying the specific parameters of the case. Boundaries such as time, setting, and situation need to be clearly identified and explained in case study research as the research relates to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). Qualitative case study research is intensive and holistic and explores real-life contemporary bounded systems through details over a specific amount of time (Merriam, 2009). The research involved data from multiple sources of information leading to reportable case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of this case study was to gain understating of the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working within the involuntary alternative school setting. Within a small case study such as this research, the phenomena that existed within a bounded context needs substantiating detailing analysis, interpreting, and rich data (Huberman & Miles, 1994). For this research, the experiences and perceptions of the participants were bound to the specific school culture of the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Additionally, the research questions aligned with the experiences and perceptions that occurred based on the educator's work hours. This single case study met the criteria of a bounded system based on the specified group of educators, phenomenon, and the specific site chosen for the study (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Yin, 2018).

Case studies provide an understanding of a complex social phenomenon by allowing the researcher to obtain meaningful and holistic data about real-life occurrences (Sutton & Austin,

2015; Yin, 2018). This study through the specific research questions evaluated the data collected from the participants in their natural working environment. This aided in developing thick descriptions of their individual as well as shared experiences as this unique collective body of educators (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The rich descriptive details of experiences obtained from the participants' data provided an understanding of educator efficacy for future research. It also provided information for district administrators seeking to find data to support professional development initiatives.

The interpretivist paradigm elicits experiences and perceptions of the participants rather than statistics for research data (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm attempts to discover information pertaining to the phenomenon through the participant's unique experiences (Myers, 2009). The underlying goal of interpretivism is to study the social constructs of the participants' lived experiences through shared meanings and behaviors (Myers, 2009). This happens through the use of observations in which the researcher collects information about a phenomenon and then interprets the meaning of the information seeking to find similar patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Myers, 2009). For this study, the goal was evaluating data from the experiences and perceptions of the selected educator participants concerning the study's research question and purpose. All data collection methods used in this research relied on the experience and voices of the educator participants within the parameters of interpretivism. Aligned with the four main sources of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997), this study sought to learn how this unique population of educators perceived their self-efficacy by discussing their lived experiences. For this bounded single case study, the purpose, participants, and setting provided the necessary foundation for this research to acquire the rich descriptive data necessary for a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018).



The rationale for the use of the qualitative single case study design and open-ended research questions was that it allowed the researcher to obtain authentic answers from the participants in hopes of creating data to support the themes of the research (Creswell & Poth; Yin, 2018). Having strong data in a qualitative case study from various sources strengthens the validity of research (Yin, 2018). Having certified educators as the participants supported the results of the data containing a variety of perceptions on educator efficacy in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. Qualitative data was collected where participants spend the necessary amount of time performing a task such as a classroom, cafeteria, or common area (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The data for this research came from educator interactions within the classroom, hallways, and other common areas within the school building.

### **Research Questions**

**CQ:** What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?

**SQ1:** How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment alternative school?

**SQ2:** How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator's ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?

**SQ3:** How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?

**SQ4:** How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?

### Setting

The setting is a primary component for the researcher to gather information from the participants in the research (Stake, 1995). This study focused on a specific sampling of secondary educators in the Avery District Schools, a pseudonym for a school district located in the midwestern United States. The selected site for the study, Metropolitan High School, averages an enrollment between 100–150 students annually. The minority enrollment is 81% of the student body with the majority being African American males at 66%. The White population is 12.3% followed by Hispanics at 3.9% ([State] School Report Card, 2018). The average daily attendance at the participating school according to reported school data is 54%. The district website also provides data on school safety. According to the school report card, the percentage of behavior events in the previous school year was 73%.

According to the Public School Review (2018), the school district is one of the 50 largest school systems in the United States serving close to 700,000 students. Overall, there are 168 alternative schools with this selected Midwest area servicing close to 9,000 students. Minority student enrollment statewide is 37%, which is more than the U.S. average of 23% according to the Public School Review of 2018–2019. Avery District Schools is also the most diverse district with a minority population of 53% enrolled students attending. At the time of this research, the district ranked amongst the top 40 largest districts in the nation. The school district serves over 100,000 students. There are over 100 total K–12 schools in the district with 21 of those being identifying as a state-defined alternative school. The district employs well over 3000 educators of which 85% hold a master's degree.

The participating school site employs 33 certified teachers. Ten are male and the remaining 23 are females. Of the 33 teachers, three are African American. The remaining

faculty consists of one guidance counselor, six instructional aides, one academic coach, two mental health counselors, one principal, three assistant principals, and five security guards. The participating school is one of the only two alternative schools in the district that operates at the involuntary enrollment status according to the definition and guidelines of the selected state school.

The student population consists of students with in-school assault charges, murder, robbery, possession of firearm charges, students returning from state-designated boot camp, transient students, emotionally challenged violent students, and students who have exhausted suspension numbers at traditional school. The rationale behind choosing this specific site originates from the school's mission statement which indicates the school's purpose of educating all students within a caring and supportive environment. This school is focused on preparing the students to be resilient and competent individuals beyond their school career. To support the mission statement and to ensure that it is ethically sound, this research is designed to understand how educator perceptions of their efficacy and job satisfaction while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school may affect or negate creating the supportive environment students need in order to become resilient and competent leaders (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

### **Participants**

Participant selection entailed identifying those from whom collecting data could best answer the research questions (Poole, 2016). The participants who are most familiar with the subject area are the best choice to support the phenomenon being researched (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 1990; Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). The goal of this research was gathering the perceptions of the involuntary enrollment alternative school educators concerning educator efficacy as it pertained to Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy. Therefore, the

participants came from educators working within the involuntary enrollment alternative school sector. Using the convenience sampling method allowed for the accessibility to the participants for the study in their natural environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007).

When choosing participants, it is imperative to solicit those who will yield the most relevant and impactful information for the development of knowledge concerning the research (Patton, 2015). Using purposive, criterion, and convenience sampling methods are ideal in the selection of the participants. Purposive sampling is a key component of qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This form of participant sampling increases the consistency and richness of participant data for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposive sampling is characterized by the incorporation of specific criteria met by the participants in the moment of selection (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). Purposive sampling allows for comparison between participants who all share in the common denominator phenomenon, which in this study is educator efficacy while being employed at the involuntary enrollment alternative school (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 1990). Criterion sampling is the realm of participants all experiencing the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since all of the participants were currently working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting, criterion sampling provided the opportunity to select educators who meet the criteria of the study. Furthermore, criterion-based sampling increases the quality assurance because all participants had experienced the phenomenon firsthand (Patton, 1990).

With a sample pool size of 33, 10 educators agreed to participate in the study. The study participants included the following:

- Three male regular education certified educators
- Three female regular education certified educators

- Two female special education certified educators
- Two female school counselors

The selection criteria that the participants were required to meet were necessary to ensure that the details provided were relevant to specific educators needed for this research.

Participants were selected based on the following:

- Currently employed by the selected district
- At least one year of tenure completed at an alternative school.
- Held a state-certified board of education licensure in his or her respective job title.

Choosing the participants for the study was done through an online recruitment letter via school email. The recruitment letter was sent to the educators via school email to all faculty in the building. The hope of the researcher was to get perspectives from a diverse population of educators. Gathering perspectives concerning educator efficacy from a varying pool of experience, age, gender, race, and worldviews added to the rich details and knowledge of the study concerning the research. Participants in the focus group were the same participants from the individual interviews. All participants were invited to take part in the focus group discussion.

### **Procedures**

To complete this study, I followed the required guidelines to get necessary approvals for this qualitative case study. An application to conduct the study was submitted to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once I received the permission needed from the IRB (Appendix A) as well as the participating school district (Appendix F), I began the data collection process.

The next step involved soliciting the educators who met the study requirements to

participate. A formal recruitment invitation and consent letter were emailed to each potential participant individually (Appendix B). The participant consent form explained the purpose of the research, discussed confidentiality of both the research site and participants, and described how I would secure and then dispose of all participant documents (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2015). The consent form also covered the voluntary status of participating and how the study would not affect the participant's work environment, district, or Liberty University. Participants were advised to return the consent letter via my personal email. Due to COVID-19, live data collection was prohibited by the participating school district. Once I secured the required number of participants, I began the data collection process.

Once the consent forms were collected, participants were emailed the specific short version self-efficacy scale pertaining to their job title. Google forms provided password protection, ensuring that results were secure. The use of the survey was to gauge the educator's self-efficacy prior to participation in the study (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Having educators initially complete the self-efficacy surveys provided a baseline for the educators' views on self-efficacy prior to conducting the research. The TSES was created following Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). The TSES questions were scored on a 4-point Likert scale with statements written in first person making the answers personal. The "can" and "able" statements measure the educator's competency related to areas of job success and/or motivations. Once again, using this survey is a means of gathering initial perceptions for researcher notes and discussion with participants. The results from this quantitative data collection method established a contextual basis for the educator efficacy prior to participating in the study. The participants completed the appropriate questionnaire concerning self-efficacy. Using the Google Forms allowed the researcher to keep track of

participant answers in a secured platform. This information is not included in the data collection process.

The interview questions, focus group questions, and short-answer questionnaire were written with a focus on obtaining insight that would lead to answering each of the research questions. All questions were peer reviewed by an educator from a different district who holds an educational doctorate in leadership. I also had a school mental health counselor review the questions to further evaluate the content of the interview and focus group questions. A pilot interview with an administrator working with the same demographic also helped ensure the interview and focus questions were detailed enough to elicit rich discussions from participants. The pilot interview aided in reviewing interview questions and provided the opportunity to practice interviewing techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The semi-structured interviews provided a realistic opportunity to collect data in a manner that is nonthreatening while being effective (Yin, 2015). Individual emails asked participants to provide an available time within a two-week period. From the available time responses, I decided on the dates and times available to conduct video interviews for data collection. The use of video interviewing proved to be an effective way of collecting data from participants. I was able to conduct interviews with participants outside of the work schedule while recording uninterrupted. It also allowed the research data collection to take place within a specific timeline and within the natural setting of the participants. I scheduled interviews during the participants' given availability. The interviews lasted between 15–30 minutes depending on how in-depth the participants responded to the questions. The use of an iPad to record the interview insured the data was accurate and valid. The participant had a copy of the questions to guide them during the interview. See Appendix C for the individual open-ended interview

questions. The results were saved on the iPad as well as downloaded to a secured thumb drive.

The next step was securing available dates for the focus group with participants. As mentioned earlier, due to COVID-19 the focus group was conducted using Microsoft Teams video conferencing. Participants were given the scheduled day and time for the focus group. A reminder was sent a week, then a day prior to the focus group. The participants and I met for approximately 60 minutes to discuss and answer the focus group questions. The iPad served as the recording device to ensure accuracy and validity. Once again, pseudonyms were used when transcribing information. See Appendix D for focus group questions.

The short-answer questionnaire provided contextual evidence to the information provided from participants (Gall et al., 2007). From the short-answer questionnaire, the educators had the opportunity to express their thoughts on student/teacher relationships, professionalism, and emotional/ mental health. This information from the participants provided substance of real-life experiences as well as relevance to interviews and focus group data. See Appendix E for the short-answer questionnaire used in this study. Educators received the questionnaires via email from the researcher. Using the personal email of the researcher ensured that the participants' information would not be subject to the school district's email open-records policy. Participants were asked to complete the questions thoroughly and to return to the researcher within a week's timeframe. If any clarity or additional information was needed, participants had the option to call or email the researcher.

Once I collected data from the interviews, focus group discussions, and short-answer questionnaire, transcription followed. The goal of the data analysis was to identify themes from the rich data collected. Coding for similar themes help connect the data procedures (Moustakas, 1994). From that, I then worked towards grouping the information to successfully find



supporting examples of educator perceptions of efficacy working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. Once the data were collected, I thanked the participants and reminded them that the results were available during a specific period for their viewing and feedback. This is an important part of accountability and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Part of the data analysis process involved transcribing the interviews and focus group discussions. Transcribing the data with coding and triangulation provided the authentic conversations between the researcher and the participants.

### **The Researcher's Role**

As the “human instrument” in this case study, it is imperative that I address my relationship to the participants, research setting, and any biases or assumption that bring to the study that may influence how I view the data. I was curious to learn the perspectives of other educators regarding their own educator efficacy while working in such a unique and often challenging environment. The nature of a single case study is useful for small group settings (Yin, 2018). I am one of four of the minority teachers employed at the participating school. I have been employed there for over seven years with over 24 years of being a classroom teacher overall. Currently I am one of the English and reading teachers in the building. Although my daily interaction is primarily with the students in the classroom, I am also responsible for attending faculty meetings, professional development meetings, as well as summer institutes with colleagues in the building. The culture of this setting is unique from other schools within the district. I do not work directly with any of the participants on a daily basis.

Social constructivism is building knowledge through ideals and social interactions (Patton, 2015). The school environment and the interactions that I have with other individuals are valuable yet may also show bias depending upon my interpretation and experiences relating

to the subject matter. I bring the ontological assumption that educator self-efficacy is not being viewed as an important component of education. From my perspective, educators working within this specialized school community often receive the least amount of academic and social support from the district, which impacts job satisfaction. I was curious to learn how work stress affects the educators' efficacy and emotional stress levels.

Knowing these contributing factors of my biases and assumptions, I used triangulation as a means to keep my biases and assumptions out of the research (Yin, 2015). I had participants review the results for accuracy and truth. I substantiated the literature and purpose of research with three data sources: interviews, focus group, and a short-answer questionnaire; I also reviewed my findings with peers outside of my research setting (Patton, 2015), all of which ensured that my biases and assumptions were not a part of the study findings. In addition to collecting the data, I used the teacher survey to gain prior knowledge of the educator's efficacy level. I also used field notes to add to the richness of the data context. All throughout the data collection stage, I reviewed data and identified emerging themes from the data sources.

### **Data Collection**

Yin (2018) identified six methods of collecting qualitative data: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts. Case study research generally requires a minimum of three methods of data collection. This research study used interviews, focus groups, and a short-answer questionnaire as the three data sources to gather rich, authentic data from the participants. The short-answer questionnaire and interviews targeted specific open-ended responses that focused on the research questions. The focus group provided insightful thoughts from a collective body of participants. The short-answer

questionnaire also provided contextual evidence that supported the research questions (Gall et al., 2007).

Qualitative research draws from multiple sources of data such as interviews, focus groups, documents, and/or direct observations to understand the situation or issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). By utilizing interviews, a focus group, and a written questionnaire, the researcher gathered data pertaining to the phenomenon of educator efficacy. Triangulation of the three data collection methods was used for validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using these data to interpret educators' perceptions of their own efficacy as it developed or changed over the course of their tenure at the alternative school, I was able to gain more insight into how efficacy can change for educators in specialized learning environments. The qualitative research approach provides the opportunity to observe educators at a more personal level. I will see body language, facial expressions, and be able to hear voice fluctuations and tones, all of which are ways humans express thoughts. These interactions between the participants and me will generate useful authentic data. Thanh and Thanh (2015) explained how interpretivists view the world through more than just one person's scope to gather a worldview on a subject. This study explores the perceptions of educators on self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The educator's efficacy contributes to how he/she meets the job expectations (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Bandura, 1997). This study will not quantify self-efficacy; rather, it will describe how the educators perceive through their lived experiences self-efficacy using qualitative data collection methods of semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and a written questionnaire. Information rich collective case studies offer the opportunity to gain information concerning a phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

### **Short-Answer Questionnaire**

The use of short-answer questionnaires provided an avenue for participants to express in detail their perceptions on how working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school impacts educator efficacy. The open-ended questions were designed to answer the central question as well as the sub-questions of the research. The data collected from the questionnaires connects the participant's experiences to the four sources of self-efficacy. The data described how the participants feel about their experiences (Gall et al., 2007). The short-answer questionnaires were sent via my personal email to the participants. The semi-structured face-to-face interviews followed the questionnaires. The questions elicited participant reflections on their views on educator efficacy. The questions were open-ended and flexible, allowing participants to answer without the pressure of having to produce a correct response (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The short-answer questionnaire was also used to support the information collected from the interviews and focus group (Gall et al., 2007). For this portion of the research, participant answers were confidential. Merriam (1998) expounded on the need for researchers to vary their perspectives during data collections. Looking for key words that trigger recalling later for emerging themes and similar experiences is important to effectively collect data from the questionnaires.

#### **Short-Answer Questionnaire Questions:**

1. What is your perception of how self-efficacy influences your remaining at an involuntary alternative school? (For example, if you feel that you do have an impact on the student learning and that you feel confident in the classroom, does that keep you working at the school?)
2. What personality traits do you feel add to your positive or negative self-efficacy?

3. What factors influence your professional self-efficacy? (Outside circumstances, administrative support, teaching experience, colleague relationships, etc.)
4. When you get home from school, what do you do to decompress and relieve your mind from the stressors of the day? Do you feel that this helps you to feel efficacious in the classroom?
5. Do you think that administration helps, or do they worsen your self-efficacy levels? Why? How?

Questions 1–5 of the short-answer questionnaire all connect to the central research question by exploring different situations and/or thoughts related to educator efficacy and Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy. Question 1 aligns with SQ1 in an attempt to provide feedback on the participants' level of job satisfaction. Question 1 connects to mastery experience self-efficacy source (Bandura, 1997). Questions 1 and 3 align with SQ2. Both questions attempt to relate educator efficacy to student experiences which connects to two of Bandura's (1997) main sources of self-efficacy: mastery and vicarious experiences. Questions 3 and 5 align with SQ3 in an attempt to relate educator efficacy to relationships with administration, peers, and other outside factors. Both questions relate to one of Bandura's (1997) main sources of self-efficacy: social persuasion. Questions 2 and 4 align with SQ4 in an attempt to connect the educator's personality traits and coping mechanisms with one of Bandura's (1997) main sources of self-efficacy: physiological/emotional state.

## **Interviews**

A pilot interview with one of the assistant principals within the study setting took place immediately after gaining IRB approval. The pilot interview served as a means to assess the research questions for accuracy and capability in effectively describing the real-life experiences

of the possible educator participants. The pilot interview also helped the researcher gauge the efficiency of the questions. The pilot interview was a method for the researcher to use to assess interviewing skills as well as to measure the quality of the interview questions.

Once the pilot interview concluded with no changes to questions needed per the pilot interview outcome, the researcher then conducted one face-to-face semi-structured interview with each of the 10 participants individually. Interviews were conducted via video conference with educators at the scheduled time between the researchers and the educator. Interviews are one of the most effective data collection sources for case study research (Yin, 2015).

Interviewing is necessary in order to gain the most descriptive feelings, behaviors, and worldviews that cannot be observed otherwise (Merriam, 1998). The interviews were the main method in gathering the information concerning educator perceptions of self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The questions explored the personal, social, behavioral, as well as environmental aspects of perceived educator self-efficacy. The questions also supported the purpose of the study by assessing the educator's individual perceptions as it relates to the phenomenon of educator efficacy. The information obtained was electronically recorded and transcribed in order to accurately analyze the comments, answers, and questions in each interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Video recordings were done on an iPad and then transcribed. This ensured the interviewee's individual approach to answering the questions was fully captured (Stake, 1995). It is important to note that to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms protect the participant's identity.

#### **Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions:**

1. Please state your name, length of time as an educator, and the grade level and job role.
2. Please explain your educational philosophy and what shaped your views as an educator.

3. Please describe how your teacher preparation program and/or prior training prepared you for your job expectations.
4. How long have you worked in the alternative school setting?
5. What is your experience working within a traditional school setting? What differences, if any, do you see between traditional and alternative schools?
6. How do you feel about the training received in regard to handling behavior issues in this school setting?
7. How confident are you in performing your job description?
8. How do other educators' feelings about the workplace affect your personal feelings of self-efficacy?
9. How do the district requirements affect your self-efficacy? Please provide example scenarios.
10. How do you feel professional developments are useful in creating positive self-efficacy?
11. How does an educator's stress level affect their self-efficacy?
12. What factors outside of personality add to or take away from you feeling efficacious at work? (For example, personal work ethic, your education, relationship with administration, colleague relationships at the job, etc.)
13. What other information or thoughts concerning your perception of self-efficacy while working in this unique school community can you share to help educators working within a similar environment?

Questions 1–5 were useful in gaining insight into the educator's background and experience (Yin, 2015). Questions 1–5 also served as a foundation to the educator's worldviews (Patton, 2015). These questions were relatively straightforward and non-threatening and ideally

served to help develop rapport between the participant and researcher (Patton, 2015). Questions 6–7 explored the availability of training and resources. The availability of resources is a key component to the success of the educator (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005). Questions 6–7 were both written to connect the participant’s responses to Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy source, mastery experiences. Questions 8–9 invited the participants to take another person’s perspective, which is often helpful in gaining new insights (Patton, 2015). Both were non-threatening questions, which allowed the participants to talk more in-depth about the perceptions of self-efficacy amongst educators working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. Questions 8–9 connected the participant’s responses to Bandura’s (1997) main sources of self-efficacy, vicarious experiences and social persuasions. Question 10 asked the participant to consider the connection between efficacy and professional developments. Educators that see professional development as a learning experience appreciate the professional development opportunities and use the experience to add to their professional skills, thereby increasing self-efficacy (Bray-Clark, & Bates, 2003). Question 10 connected the participant’s responses to Bandura’s (1997) main source of self-efficacy, mastery experiences. Question 11 connected the participant’s responses to Bandura’s (1997) main source of self-efficacy, psychological and emotional state. Questions 12–13 were closing reflections on educators’ perceptions and self-efficacy questions that were reflective in nature and allowed for the researcher to ask follow-up questions (Burton, Brown, & Johnson, 2013).

Questions 2, 5, and 6 lined up with SQ1. All three questions attempted to describe educator job satisfaction through varying situations relating to educator efficacy. Questions 2, 3, 5, and 10 aligned with SQ2. These questions described the impact of educator efficacy through varying means such as professional development, student rapport, and prior training before



working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Questions 8 and 9 aligned with SQ3. Both questions discussed educator efficacy as it relates to district and peer level support. Questions 11 and 12 both aligned with SQ4. Both questions evaluated the educator's thoughts on the emotional wellness of educators as it relates to work related stress. Questions 11 and 12 attempted to connect the participants to colleagues working in a similar public-school work setting.

### **Focus Group**

The use of a focus group enabled the researcher to interact with a specific group of participants in a group setting (Patton, 2015). A focus group is a homogeneous group of people who reflect on the interviewer's questions (Patton, 2015). The focus group met at the designated time and answered the open-ended prompts. The group's task was to openly discuss each question as the questions/statement related to the research question and problem statement of the research. For this study, the focus group consisted of educators who make-up the homogenous educators for this research site. The focus group took place a week after the individual interviews were completed. Scheduling the video recorded focus group after regular school working hours allowed the participants time to interact with each other outside of the school building. The focus group lasted approximately 60 minutes with 10 minutes devoted to each question. I encouraged participants to speak honestly and thoughtfully, thereby allowing the conversation to produce deep, insightful responses (Patton, 2015). Focus groups are advantageous because they allow authentic interactions amongst participants. The use of open-ended questions allowed the conversation to flow and created the needed rich emerging themes. This process yielded rich information in a timely manner (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of a focus group also encourages those who may be hesitant to be forthcoming within the individual

interviews to speak boldly amongst the supportive focus group (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Recording and transcribing the session with my iPad aided in establishing trustworthiness and accountability.

**Focus Group Open-ended Questions:**

1. Please share with the group a little about yourself and your current position in the school.
2. How does an educator's efficacy impact the work environment? Think about a teacher's classroom management, a security guard's rapport with students, an administrator's relationship with staff, etc.
3. How do you define educator efficacy?
4. Please share one of your most challenging moments as an educator in this setting. How did this moment impact your educator efficacy?
5. Please share one of your most rewarding moments as an educator in this setting. How did this moment impact your educator efficacy?
6. How does educator efficacy affect relationships with students?
7. To what extent do district expectations and/or guidelines directly affect educator efficacy?
8. What suggestions do you have for possible preservice or professional development resources to devote to educator efficacy for those working within this school setting?

Question 1 established rapport with educators (Patton, 2015). Questions 2, 3, and 6 allowed the educators to discuss their views on educator efficacy and its impact on their job performance. Questions 2, 3, and 6 connected the participant's response to Bandura's (1997) main self-efficacy source, mastery experiences. Questions 2, 3, and 6 (aligned with SQ1, SQ2, and SQ3) attempted to understand how educator efficacy influences how educators connect to

students and colleagues as well as job satisfaction. Questions 4 and 5 offered participants a safe place to share challenges and successes they face as educators in the involuntary enrollment alternative school. Questions 4 and 5 connected the participant's response to Bandura's (1997) main source of self-efficacy, social persuasion. Questions 4 and 5 also aligned with SQ3 and SQ4 as they attempted to have participants explain how challenges affect self-efficacy. Question 7 allowed me to connect participant response to Bandura's (1997) main sources of efficacy, mastery experiences and social persuasions. Question 7 also aligned with SQ3 and SQ4 as it attempted to connect the participant's feedback concerning educator efficacy to the district's expectations of those working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting and possible work related stressors. Question 8 connected the participant's response to Bandura's (1997) main sources of self-efficacy, social persuasion and vicarious experience, by allowing educators the opportunity to offer suggestions for increasing self-efficacy for educators working within similar demographics. Question 8 aligned with SQ3 in an attempt to provide feedback for colleagues concerning their self-efficacy in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting.

The focus group data supported the research study questions by using the collective educator discussion to create responses that aligned with the research questions. This focus group also provided the opportunity for a structured discussion between the educators from several different job descriptions. Although the educators are certified educators, the educator criteria and specifications vary amongst the regular, dual, special education, and resource teachers. Having the educator discuss educator efficacy collectively gave the educators the opportunity to communicate with peers outside of the normal department meeting environment. Commonalities in addressing the research question emerged within the collective group of

educators. Table 1 shows the alignment between the research questions and the questions asked during the interview, focus group, and short-answer questionnaire.

Table 1

*Alignment of Research Questions to Data Collection Methods*

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Focus Group Questions	Short-Answer Questions
CQ: What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?	2–13	2–8	1–5
SQ1: How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment alternative school?	2,5,6	2,4,5	1
SQ2: How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator's ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?	2,3,5,10	2,3,6	1,3
SQ3: How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?	8,9	2,3,4,6,7,8	3,5
SQ4: How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?	11,12	5,7	2,4

An additional tool that is helpful in qualitative research is descriptive reflective field notes (Gall et al., 2007). The use of a journal as well as the iPad to record observations aids in keeping the data organized by specific time, place, and occurrence. The collection of reflective

field notes took place during the semi-structured individual interviews and focus group session. I made notations delineating facial expressions, body language, and any other pertinent information I noticed during the individual interviews and focus group. The notes identified participants by pseudonyms only. The notes contained reflective thoughts and information about events pertaining to the research question. The goal was to obtain enough information to add to explanation of the collected data. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) referred to field notes as a widely recommended means of documenting contextual information in qualitative research. Field notes for this study were useful in recording details concerning the research problem while supporting the theoretical construct social cognitive theory. Tacit knowledge is the implicit, contextual understanding that often appears through nonverbal communication such as silences, inflection, and nuances (Nolen & Talbert, 2011). Participants' actions as well as their spoken and unspoken words communicated and were contributors to the data. Tacit knowledge uncovers meaning and provides context to the overall themes of the research (Nolen & Talbert, 2011).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research occurs through collecting rich data in the form of a short-answer questionnaire, individual interviews, a focus group (Yin, 2015). From these three qualitative avenues, triangulation of the data occurred. Data analysis is vital to a case study and provides a protocol for collecting the data (Yin, 2015). I was searching for data relevant to the phenomenon of educator's self-efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. My hope was to discover relevant themes that could add to the discussion and literature concerning educator self-efficacy in specialized school communities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ability to cross analyze data results in rich, authentic data (Ridder, 2017). Within an intrinsic case study, the curiosity of the researcher was the guiding force of data analysis (Ridder,

2017). Data analysis allowed the researcher to continuously reevaluate data in an attempt to establish themes and patterns that aligned with the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Thorough analysis of the data connected the reviewed literature to the specifics of the study. The analysis provided the patterns and themes needed to solidify the research question inquiry.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is necessary to confirm the ethical validity of the research processes (Yin, 2018). The use of triangulation produced clarification of the data collected as well as a method of cross-referencing the information to formulate the emerging themes. An appropriate means of explaining the qualitative case study information is using visuals and transcribing data from the triangulated collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation uses at least three methods of data collection to ensure the accuracy and explanation of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). The individual interviews, focus group, and short-answer questionnaire were the three data collection methods used to collect the data. By triangulating the information from all three sources, the researcher was able to explain how the data connects to the study research questions and purpose.

### **Coding**

By using individual interviews, a focus group, and the short-answer questionnaire, I was able to analyze the collected data for descriptive robust information that supported the research questions. Using codes with the categories helped me stay organized and delineated what information was supportive to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coding categorizes the data with labels and codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once I identified the codes, the identification of patterns and themes occurred (Yin, 2018). Using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis

software such as Atlas.ti can be beneficial in coding information into categories and identifying themes (Yin, 2018). However, I reviewed, examined, and coded the interviews, focus group, and written questionnaires manually. I also used the researcher notes to corroborate the transcribed data as well. As I reviewed the data collected several times, I used the similar words, themes, and expressions of the participants to construct answers to research central and sub-questions.

Breaking the data into separate participants, themes, and statements helped with analyzing data for contextual accuracy without being repetitive (Moustakas, 1994). By doing so, those statements from the participants created the understanding of the participants as well as added relevance to the lived experiences pertaining to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Using this method, analyzing the individual interviews and the focus group information created a list of words that I color-coded and grouped according to commonalities. Eventually from the reading, viewing, and reviewing the data numerous times and coding the data, the major themes emerged. The patterns that emerged from transcribing and analyzing the data led to the discovery of similarities amongst the responses (Stake, 1995). Synthesizing the data highlighted the true meaning while answering the research questions. Once all the data were transcribed, analyzed, and categorized, it was time for the process of tabulating the themes and patterns to support the purpose of the research. The flow of the analysis was “naturalistic” as a means of helping educators gain helpful information from research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Member Checks**

After organizing data from the short-answer questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group, I labeled data according to the most prevalent themes. Bracketing the data served to cluster meanings by significance (Moustakas, 1994). Organizing the data in this manner aided in keeping data accurate as well as writing the descriptions of the perceptions of the participants.

Before creating themes and analyzing the data, participants had the opportunity to verify their comments from the interview and focus group. Participants had the opportunity to make notes and suggest changes at that time as well. Member checking allowed the researcher to confirm the information from participants to make sure that I recorded and transcribed information accurately (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, having peers evaluate the data also kept my bias and any discrepancies out of the interpretation of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure trustworthiness of this research study, multiple data collection sources were used including interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group. Through corroborating evidence from multiple data sources, triangulation was achieved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility, reliability, generalizability, and objectivity establishes trustworthiness. Utilizing triangulation, member checks and peer reviews established trustworthiness within this research. The use of multiple data collection methods in case study research is a major strength of validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2015).

### **Credibility**

Creswell and Poth (2018) encouraged the use of member checks to maintain credibility and validation in the research. Member checks allowed both parties to check for understanding and validity of the information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The use of peer reviews served as another checks and balances of the study's credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Both member checks and peer evaluations helped secure trustworthiness of the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Reflexivity also ensured the researcher was accountable to the standards of articulating the shared experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checks for this study provided a means to clarify and make changes if necessary and to



make sure the data was authentic (Yin, 2015). The participants received transcripts of their interview statements to check them for completeness and accuracy. Triangulation was important because it safeguarded the researcher from adding biases and/or not using multiple sources of data to support the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation of the data established credibility, which therefore led to the researcher being able to identify themes through the perceptions of the participants. The use of triangulation strengthened the research data (Yin, 2018).

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined dependability as a confirmation of the research study's external validity. Dependability was important to trustworthiness because it established the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. This confirmed the accuracy of the findings and ensured the findings were supported by the data collected (Patton, 2015). With a case study, Stake (1995) noted the importance of participants in the research process. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that participants examine the drafts of the researcher's work. The use of rich descriptive details pertaining to the phenomenon established its dependability. Furthermore, the audit trail created a path to review the accuracy of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the detailed researcher notes added to the information and supported the themes developed within the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, conformability assured that researcher biases and options were kept out of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By removing my perspectives and ideals regarding the research, I kept the focus on the problem rather than my personal beliefs. I used member checks to verify interpretations of the data collected through the individual interviews and the focus group. Dependability and

confirmability were confirmed through the triangulation data along with the robust details I added from the researcher notes through the three data collection procedures.

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the ability to generalize results by suggesting further research, implicating future results, and presenting similar situations from case study to case study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). The qualitative case study approach investigated the holistic natural real-life occurrence of a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2018). In regard to the study being bounded, the study provided data and rich details about a specific group of educators, a specific location, and within a specific time frame (Merriam, 2009). Transferability may be applied to other schools in similar settings with similar demographics. The thick descriptions that resulted from multiple sources of data collection contributed to the transferability of this qualitative case study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

With all research comes the responsibility to conduct the study ethically. The researcher first was obligated to abide by the guidelines set forth by the university with human subjects, gathering data, and formulating conclusions with minimal bias (Yin, 2018). Data collection was IRB-approved before any collections took place. The use of member checks, pilot interview, and peer evaluation were attempts to reduce the researcher biases.

Gaining and maintaining the trust of the participants was key to the completion the study. To ensure that participants trusted the researcher with their lived experiences and perceptions, reflexivity was used. The researcher provided participants with her educational background, the purpose and intent of the research, as well as the contact information for any questions the participants may have wanted answered. Participants also knew their participation was voluntary

and that they could withdraw at any time without recourse. For the research, pseudonyms protected participants as well as the school district. It was important for all parties involved to feel secure in knowing that participating would not cause repercussions from the district nor on the job site or job loss. To maintain credibility for the study, all data collected were kept in a securely locked file cabinet within a locked closet that only the researcher had keys to open. The information obtained through Google Classroom utilized a password and a code for which only the investigator had access to ensure the security of the data.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three provided a detailed explanation of the methods used to gather information for this study from the 10 participants. The chapter provided information concerning the researcher, participants, setting, and the guiding paradigm of the study. The responses to the data collection methods (individual interviews, a focus group, and questionnaire) provided the needed information for the data analysis. The use of researcher field notes and the initial educator efficacy scale aided in providing robustness and context to the formal data collected. Through the data analysis, conclusions which support the phenomenon of educator efficacy emerged.

The collected triangulated data provided authentic descriptions of the perceptions of the educators concerning self-efficacy while working in an involuntary alternative school setting. My prior knowledge as a certified teacher, professional learning community lead, and interventionist provided previous knowledge of the phenomenon of educator efficacy. In view of the trustworthiness, the procedures described in this chapter addressed confidentiality as well as methods to ensure the findings were ethical and valid (Yin, 2015, 2018).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to gain an understanding of the self-efficacy beliefs of educators working at an involuntary enrollment alternative school within the context of Bandura's (1997) four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional state. In this chapter I present the results of the data analysis that developed from the questionnaires, individual interviews, and the focus group. This study examined the perceptions of 10 participants who were current employees within the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. In this chapter, I provided brief descriptions of each educator participant. This chapter is also where I described the theme development process utilized for this research. I also provide detailed descriptors from the participants which show the alignment of the themes that surface through the process of the case study design. The results of the data collection are also provided in this chapter. The following research questions guided the study:

**CQ:** What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?

**SQ1:** How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment alternative school?

**SQ2:** How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator's ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?

**SQ3:** How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?

**SQ4:** How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?

### **Participants**

This study examined educator perceptions regarding educator efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. All the educators have at least one year of experience at an involuntary enrollment alternative school working within their respective educator roles. The educators ranged in experience from two years to over 30 years' experience with the highest level of education obtained being a doctorate degree. All but three of the participants had experience working in a traditional school setting prior to working within the alternative school setting. All of the participants were eager to participate and were curious as to the results of the study. All 10 of the participants contributed to each of the data collection methods. Table 2 displays a demographic breakdown of the participants for the study. The table supplies their pseudonyms, years of being an educator, level of education, and years of being an educator at an alternative school. Each participant answered questions during their individual interview to provide information regarding their educator experience and tenure.

Table 2

*Description of Participants*

Participant	Years as an Educator	Level of Education	Years working in Alternative School
Tim	25	Master	10
Georgia	4	Master	4
Randy	20	Master	4
Carolyn	8	Master	6
Cassandra	2	Bachelor	2
Patrick	15	Master	15
Robinette	30	Doctorate	10
Amelia	7	Bachelor	7
Leandra	21	Master	2
Erica	15	Master	15

**Tim**

Tim is a Caucasian business and technology educator. He spent the first 15 years teaching in the traditional school setting. The last 10 years of his career have been with the alternative school program in the district. Tim strongly believes in the importance of supporting educators as they seek to find best practice ways to meet the needs of students. Tim also expressed a deep concern for those educators who feel overwhelmed by the current demands of the district. Tim described his educational philosophy as follows:

I believe that all students want to learn and be taught. I think that we have to first build relationships with students and find out what motivates them to take a class. I think that

what has shaped that has been time. I can recall writing a philosophy when I was in school and it was just words. After being in the classroom that has been what has shaped my thoughts and drive in education to this day.

### **Georgia**

Georgia is a Caucasian math educator. She started in the district as an instructional assistant while earning her bachelor's degree in education. Being an educator is a second career for Georgia. Her first career was in the sales and marketing field. She brings her skills from corporate America into her classroom daily in hopes of making mathematics relatable to the students from a real-world point of view. Georgia also expressed several times how her time in therapy and her faith in Christ keep her centered as an educator. Georgia described her educational philosophy as follows:

All students are capable of excelling. Educators should treat students as peers more than students. By doing so it helps students grow intellectually while learning the responsibility of being an adult.

### **Randy**

Randy is an African American math educator. He is the sponsor of the male mentor program Men of Quality in the school. Randy has over 20 years of experience with the last four being in the alternative school setting. Randy has a deep passion for the students and works hard to develop relationships with them. Randy also believes in the importance of building relationships with colleagues to help establish a positive environment. As the only African American certified male teacher in the building, he also sees his role as an opportunity to offer extra support to the male students of color. Randy brings to the building a community-conscious mind frame. He is a strong supporter of educators' being culturally responsible when educating

within the marginalized student population. Randy described his educational philosophy as follows:

We all learn when we see the value in learning. When a student sees the value in learning, they will engage more. Educators have to seek to make it meaningful to students' everyday life.

### **Carolyn**

Carolyn is an African American special education resource teacher. Her career began as an instructional assistant seven years ago which led to her obtaining her master's degree in education. Being an educator is Carolyn's second career. Before becoming an educator, she worked in the business management field with several major corporations. Carolyn also served as a sponsor of the male mentor program as well as a technology leader in the school. Carolyn strongly believes in supporting educators in ways that promote mental health and positive relationships amongst colleagues. Carolyn described her educational philosophy as follows: "Every child has the capability to reach their full potential with the appropriate amount of support."

### **Cassandra**

Cassandra is an African American third-year special education educator. Being an educator is a second career for Cassandra. She brings experience from the corporate world that enables her to provide students with a broader aspect of learning. Cassandra's involvement in the community also serves as a means to get students involved in activities outside of school that provide students with positive outlets and job opportunities. She has experience working within two different alternative schools in the district that have very different procedures and policies. Cassandra is a strong advocate for educators remaining relevant and being willing to learn.



Cassandra's educational philosophy come from working in a different career for several years and being a leader in several community service initiatives. Cassandra described her educational philosophy as follows:

Both student and teacher need to be continually learning and receptive to learning from each other. Be a lifelong learner. It is never too late to learn skills or sharpen skills.

Personal experience knowing more and having the ability to access information gives you more opportunity. Be in the room of learning. Students need to understand the importance of being there to make a name for themselves through education and knowledge.

### **Patrick**

Patrick is a Caucasian 14-year veteran educator. He has worked in two different school districts with both traditional and alternative school settings. He began his tenure in the traditional middle school setting before transitioning to the high school setting. Patrick enjoys the opportunity to learn and grow as an educator. His educational philosophy is as follows:

Adults are not always right. Students must be allowed to have a voice. Staff members must be open minded and not control centered. Educators have to take a single interest in each student no matter how challenging. No one is above the other although we are the adults in the building. We all should work as a team. Working together as stakeholders as a school and the district in the best interest of the students is important. Relationships are important to move the needle of success.

### **Robinette**

Robinette is a Caucasian veteran educator with more than 30 years' experience. Her current role is a resource educator. Having experience in both the traditional and alternative

school setting allows Robinette to see the vast differences and similarities concerning educator efficacy. Robinette expressed how although the methods of educating students continues to evolve with technology, the basic needs of students remains the same. Being a veteran educator has given her more confidence each year as she still professes to learning new skills each year on the job. Robinette described her educational philosophy as follows: “If you teach them, they, they will learn. Background should never be an excuse. Education is the key to strengthen successes in life!”

### **Amelia**

Amelia is a Caucasian seventh-year science teacher. She spent one semester in the traditional school setting before moving into the alternative school setting. Amelia is currently involved with helping seniors create and present their graduation-required senior backpack defense. Amelia’s growth as an educator stems from the opportunity to work with students who are completely different from her “bubble.” This has allowed her to become more empathetic and eager to build relationships with students. Amelia expressed how her faith is the foundation of all things. She believes in daily praying for the success of her students as well as her coworkers. Amelia described her educational philosophy as follows: “Be patient, lovingly instruct, and gently encourage students with learning. An educator and a student are lives invested in one another.” Her father gave her that quote as she began her career, and she uses it as the foundation of teaching. She says that quote is her daily anchor.

### **Leandra**

Leandra is an African American 21-year veteran educator. Throughout her tenure she has held the roles of early childhood educator, elementary teacher, career planner, and most recently mental health counselor. Throughout her various roles in education, Leandra continues to see

how education is evolving to meet the needs of all students. Leandra is also a Christian minister with several years of leadership within her church. She stated how often she wants to offer prayer to students and/or staff because of a situation. Her faith in God keeps her grounded and focuses on her bigger mission as a Christian in the school setting. Her educational philosophy is as follows:

Be a systemic thinker as an educator. View everything within a student not just their academic capabilities. Try to get an understanding of the student's background to gain knowledge from the student's perspective. See the whole child!

### **Erica**

Erica is a Caucasian 15-year special education educator. Her entire tenure has been with the alternative school program. Erica strongly believes in a child-centered environment for student learning. Erica stressed the importance of educators taking care of themselves outside of the classroom so that they can be the best version of themselves inside of the classroom. Erica's educational philosophy stems more from personal experience rather than her educational preparation program. Erica stated,

Teachers did not challenge me growing up. I needed a teacher engaged in my learning. Educators that are involved and differentiate learning it impacts student success in the classroom. Teachers who take the time to develop relationships with students while teaching the lesson can make a difference in how a child views education.

Educator efficacy is significantly related to an educator's motivation, enthusiasm, classroom commitments, self-efficacy, and commitment to performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Before collecting the research data, educators completed the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This information provided a

baseline concerning the participant's views on self-efficacy before contributing to the study. Overall, the participant's perception on educator-efficacy stemmed from believing that educator efficacy is most impacted by classroom performance and their ability or inability with engaging students who are challenging academically and/or emotionally in the school setting. The thoughts of the participants support empirical evidence positively correlating educator efficacy with job satisfaction and educator emotional and mental wellness (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

### **Results**

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to gain an understanding of the educator efficacy beliefs of educators working at an involuntary enrollment alternative school within the context of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. A short-answer questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group were the methods of data collection for this study. The results of the data collected through the questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group are described below. Ten educators within the involuntary alternative school setting participated in the study. All 10 participants were invited to take part in each data collection method and all chose to volunteer their time and information. I used Stakes' (1995) and Yin's (2015) methods of holistic analysis of themes to focus on key issues. The case study approach was geared towards identifying common issues and themes that transcended the three data collection methods. Data from the short-answer questionnaires were collected via email from each participant. The individual interviews were held via video conference. The focus group also took place via video conference. All three methods of data collection supported the themes and codes discovered in connection to the research questions. Stake (1995) suggested using categorical aggregation and direct interpretation to determine patterns and consistencies within data collected. I first analyzed each participant's data individually from each data method and

then with other participants collectively. This allowed me to search for patterns and consistencies amongst the participants' responses.

### **Theme Development**

The three data methods of choice were short-answer questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group. The section below supplies a description of the collection methods and analyzation used to compile the codes and themes in relevance to the research questions. Throughout the data collection process, it was imperative that I kept my personal feelings and biases out of the process as to avoid influencing the data collected from participants. By using reflective notes, I was able to monitor my own experiences and remove them from the experiences of the participants. When conducting the individual interviews and the focus group, I was mindful to not comment or give my thoughts on any of the questions or as participants answered the questions. As I conducted the individual interviews and focus group, I typed reflective notes of my thoughts as I listened for key words that kept emerging throughout the conversations. This process helped me identify and collect phases that led to the emerging themes that developed throughout the research. It also helped me stay focused on the responses of the participants and not include any personal biases. These direct responses of the participants were organized according to the research questions and sub-questions.

**Short-answer questionnaires.** The first method of data collection was in the form of short-answer questionnaires. Each participant received the questionnaire, which contained five open-ended questions, via email. Participants were asked to email their responses back to my personal email to ensure that their answers were not filtered through the school district's open access email system. The anticipated time for completing the questions was no longer than 30 minutes. However, depending on the amount of details the participants provided in their

individual response, the completion time varied. The questionnaire format was open-ended, and participants were able to respond freely without judgement about their perceptions.

**Individual interviews.** Individual interviews were conducted via video conferencing using Microsoft Teams. The recorded interviews lasted from 15–20 minutes depending on the participants' responses. The participants were given a copy of the 13 interview questions prior to their individual interviews. This was done to give the educator time to think about his/her response before the interview. Several participants shared with me that having the questions before the interview was helpful and did allow time for response development. Participants were very receptive to the interviews. All were engaged and seemed to share their perceptions freely without fear of being misunderstood. Participants were offered to member check the interview. None chose to do so at that time; however, all expressed interest in seeing the results from the data.

**Focus group.** The third data collection method was a focus group. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the focus group took place via video conference using Microsoft Teams. The recorded session lasted approximately one hour. All 10 educators participated in the focus group. Unlike the individual interview questions, participants were not given the eight focus group questions prior to the group meeting. The participants were engaged in the conversation and seemed genuinely concerned with the issues presented throughout the conversation. Participants were respectful of each other and allowed one another to express their views on educator efficacy.

**Codes.** Data collected from the short-answer questionnaires, which was based on the research questions, set the foundation for the data collection. Coding was done by identifying key words and phrases to gain a more complete understanding of this specific research purpose.

Next, from reading the questionnaire responses several times, I noted and highlighted repeated words and phrases from the participants' direct responses, which became the code words and phrases for the remaining data collection methods. I found it best to develop the codebook while reviewing the first method of data collection for two reasons: One, it was the secure place to note the code words and phrases as I analyzed the data. Two, the codebook also was used to organize the code words and phrases discovered throughout the remaining collection process and analysis. I used direct interpretation of individual responses and aggregation to develop the results of the participant information (Stake, 1995). A total of 14 codes were discovered and recorded from the written questionnaire responses. After establishing the code words from the participants' questionnaire responses, I moved on to the notation and highlighting of the codewords in the individual interviews and the focus group transcripts. The final step in the code development was counting the recurrence of the code words and phrases from each data collection method. This step insured that similar ideas and statements established the patterns and consistency needed. I manually counted each time I recorded the code words and phrases in the codebook. I calculated the total number of each code for the specific data collection method. Table 3 provides a list of codes and the frequency of occurrences across the three data collection methods.

Table 3

*Codes and Frequency from Each Data Collection Method*

Codes	Questionnaire	Interview	Focus Group	Total
1. Experience in classroom	4	5	10	19
2. Classroom expectations	7	2	5	14
3. Relationships with students	21	27	10	58
4. Administration support	16	22	12	50
5. Overall educator experience	3	10	7	20
6. Relationships with colleagues	8	9	9	26
7. Personal beliefs	6	7	12	25
8. Life experiences	10	12	10	32
9. Religious beliefs	7	8	7	22
10. Exercise	5	2	3	10
11. Educator influence	3	3	4	12
12. Trust	10	14	18	42
13. Perseverance	3	9	10	23
14. Family	8	9	10	27

All data gathered from the participants was transcribed, read, and reviewed several times to eliminate repetition or overlapping of codes. Participants were offered the opportunity to read not only their questionnaire responses but their individual interview and focus group transcripts. This was done insure the participants felt comfortable with their contribution to the research and allowed the opportunity to revise if necessary.



**Themes.** Theme development began by using the coded words from the written questionnaire as a basis to categorize information collected from the individual interviews and the focus group. I used the highlighted codebook to keep myself organized as I worked through the process of discovering the themes. The written questionnaire questions, individual questions, and the focus group questions all were based on the theoretical framework that guided the study. I searched for specific themes that supported the research questions and would bring further richness and authenticity to the study.

The first step was to reread each of the questionnaire responses. For each question, I highlighted exact words and phrases on the responses that were repeated in the participant's answers. Next, I recorded those words and phrases in a notebook. Those repeated words and phrases are the code words which formulated the codebook. The third step was to reread and review the individual interviews and focus group transcripts to identify commonalities within the words and phrases of the participants that were similar or exact to the code words created from the written questionnaires. In the next step, I recorded when I heard and read the repeated code words and phrases from the individual interviews and focus group in the codebook according to the data collection method. Then I manually counted each time I noted the code word and calculated the total number according to each data collection method. From the color-coded codebook, I repeated the manual counting process with the statements as well. Using Table 1, which displays how each data collection method aligns with the central question and sub-questions, I then examined the codewords and statements by the context of the central question and sub-questions numerically. From those comparisons and analyzing, the themes emerged.

The four themes (job satisfaction, relationship with students and colleagues, beliefs, and emotional health) all correlated with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The short-answer

questionnaire, interview questions, and focus group questions were all based on the theoretical framework that guided the research. Being that this current research focused on a specific population of educators, I correlated the themes with this specific study population (Stake, 1995). Table 4 provides a list of themes developed from the codes and the frequency of the codes from the three data sources collectively.

Table 4

*Themes Based on Codes*

Themes	Codes	Frequency from All Data Sources
Job Satisfaction	trust administration administrative support relationships with students relationships with colleagues perseverance	199
Emotional Health	family exercise life experiences	89
Beliefs	religious beliefs personal beliefs	17
Classroom Practices	overall educator experience experience in the classroom classroom expectations	53

The next section provides a detailed summary of how the themes connect to the specific codes based on the direct statements and textual evidence of the participant responses.

***Job satisfaction.*** Job satisfaction was the most prevalent of themes noted. The participants discussed several factors that impact their perceptions of educator efficacy within the school setting. This theme describes how educators value the need to trust administration in

order to feel a sense of job satisfaction.

*Trusting administration.* Amelia said that her ability to trust the administration helps her to feel safe with sharing her ideas. She noted,

Having an administration that I trust influences my feelings. I like to process my feelings and thoughts out loud. I need my support team to give me space for that. There have been times when I did not have people that I trusted, and I felt very isolated and unsure of myself. When I trust my admins and team, my mind is at ease and I know that it is okay to make mistakes. My students generally come into my classroom not trusting me as their teacher. They come in expecting the worse. Trust is everything to them and I get why, considering their lives outside of school are often full of trauma.

Georgia expressed how trusting the administration to have her best interest at heart as an individual and an educator is a part of job satisfaction. She stated,

Administrators are the head of the school. If I cannot trust them to have my best interest at heart, who can I trust? We know how the district has no clue as to what goes on in our school. I have to know that my principal trusts my ability to teach and will back my decisions. There have been times when I did not trust the principals and I hated coming to work then. There has to be a level of mutual trust between principals and teachers.

Otherwise, we crumble as a staff.

Several other participants echoed similar sentiments. Patrick said, “Administrators need to work to build trust with the staff. It’s not about necessarily making the teachers happy but more so showing that admins trust teachers decision making process in the classroom.” Robinette also agreed: “Administrators are the thermostat of trust in the school. It is their job to monitor the temperature of the building.” Carolyn agreed with Robinette and Patrick. She feels that trust is

the key to educators creating a foundation of positivity in the school. Cassandra noted, “When there is a lack of trust amongst educators, it’s hard to want to be in a building feeling like your boss doesn’t trust you.” Randy added, “I do not trust the district to make the best decisions for our students. It’s frustrating to see students here that I know should have been released.”

Tim summarized the perceptions of job satisfaction of educators within this specialized population by stating,

We work in an environment that must be built on trust. From the district trusting us to do what is best for the students to the students just trusting us period. Without it, coming to work daily would just feel like an extra hurdle to face along with the many other challenges we have every day with the students. Every day is different and knowing that I work in a place where I can trust my colleagues not to sabotage me makes my day go a little better.

Tim believes in the need for unity amongst all the adults in the building. The main component to unity is maintaining a certain level of trust. For Erica, trusting the administration is a process. She explained how trusting administrations makes it easier for the faculty to work together as a unit: “When you trust your leaders, you trust the process even more. If you do not trust the administrators, it just adds pressure to the process.”

*Administrative support.* Being supported by administration is a factor that educators believe strongly impacts job satisfaction. For Cassandra, administrator support shows up best when the leaders are present and aware of what is going on in her classroom on a regular basis. Georgia believes that administrative support is most important for novice teachers who may feel uncertain in the classroom. She noted,

I came from the corporate world so there were certain aspects of education I had to learn

quickly or else I would of sank to the bottomless pit of lost teachers. Without the support of my principal during those times, I know I would have left the profession within the first year. Administrators who listen and discuss solutions to my concerns establish a system of support and encouragement which builds up my resolve.

Similarly, Tim agreed with Georgia that administrative support influences his educator efficacy. For Tim, knowing that administrators are in touch with the other educators in the building is a reason to love the job. He believes that when administrators show genuine interest and concern and ask what teachers need or desire, the teacher gains not only confidence but respect for the administration. Carolyn and Randy spoke along the same lines concerning administrative support. Carolyn said that administrators set the tone throughout the school in several areas and their leadership style impacts the environment. The more positive the leadership, the easier it is to function at work.

For Amelia, educator efficacy is affected by administrative support in the feedback administrators supply. She said, “I really enjoy observations and walk through evaluations because I like feedback.” Robinette and Patrick agreed with Amelia. They both feel that administrator support is the main chain link in determining not just teachers’ but all the stakeholders’ job satisfaction. Erica discussed how an educator’s perception of administrator support can go positively or negatively. She shared,

I think it depends on who you lean on to help build your confidence in the job you are doing. Not all people jive with one another and if you are leaning on someone you do not mesh with it can worsen your self-efficacy. If you are one that needs to feel appreciated for the job you do, and you do not feel you receive that from the administration then it can worsen self-efficacy. However, on the flip side an administrator can be a big builder

of self-efficacy if they have similar values and vision on the work we do every day. It also depends on where other people are in their own efficacy. A change in leadership can mean a change in the level of support you get. Educators have to find a way to feel confident in the movement. The trickle-down affect matters so much in education.

Administration have to make the people in the building feel like their voice matters.

Both Patrick and Randy agreed with Erica on administration needing to be supportive of staff in several areas. Patrick noted, “When staff do not feel supported, I encourage them to ask for clarity.” Randy also feels that administrators best show their support of educators by being willing to have those hard conversations that promote cultural responsibility:

We already have a shortage of teachers in this country especially minority teachers. Our administration and the district need to improve on offering discussions that mandate diverse curricula and professional development to support educators. It is a shame that we do not feel supported by our own district when it comes to diversity. It is time to have those conversations about the needs of not just teachers but minority teachers in specific who do not feel supported by the curriculum we have now in the school. How can I be fully satisfied with my job knowing my people are being systematically oppressed in these textbooks?

Robinette connected the thoughts of the participants with her response. She said,

The most effective teachers feel supported by their admins. The level of efficacy in any of any given school is highly correlated with the degree of interest of the parents, support of the administration, and most importantly the classroom teacher. For this reason, I conclude that any teacher or administrator who feels passionately about the process, no matter their instructional style will be effective. When an administrator is supportive and

listens to you without criticism, your job satisfaction is bound to increase. This alone can be the difference in whether a person leaves or stays in education and especially in this type of school setting.

*Relationships with students.* “How can an educator find any joy in the job without having positive relationships with students?” Georgia asked that rhetorical question during her individual interview. For Georgia and Amelia, the job satisfaction comes from knowing they are making a difference in student’s lives, knowing that the students who attend the involuntary enrollment alternative school face a different set of challenges than those attending traditional schools. Carolyn said, “Working in an alternative school has been the greatest professional gift I have ever received. The relationships I have been able to develop with students are invaluable and will forever be cherished.” For Leandra, Cassandra, and Tom, building relationships with students is an integral part of the job. Robinette on the other hand expressed a heartfelt personal reason she has for finding satisfaction in positive relationships with students. She shared with me during her interview that her mother was illiterate:

The students at an alternative school and I have similar backgrounds. We all dealt with circumstances beyond our control as children because of the adults in our lives. My mother was unable to read and my families’ expectations for me were to graduate from high school. I believe my greatest asset is a love and the ability to persuade individuals that they too can go further by shaping their own dreams. The relationships I build with students keep me motivated and I try to be there for them when they are having a bad morning. I can always find a conversations connection that will bring myself and the student together. The kids know that I care.

For Randy, who was the only African American educator in a predominately minority-

populated school, the importance of building and maintaining student relationships held a different perspective. He said,

I have an impact on my students. That is what keeps me here. I feel that our students need me more than any other school. It makes me feel good to be needed so it serves a dual purpose. Black males and others need to see Black teachers who have their best interest. Not all Black teachers fit that category but those who do make lasting positive impacts as the reverse is unfortunately also true. Alternative schools offer flexibility that other schools do not especially when it comes to being able to personalize the learning experience while building relationships with students.

Erica echoed Randy's sentiments as to student relationships providing lifelong job satisfaction. During her interview, she said,

This is my 15th year at this school and my heart has always remained with this program. I believe my ability to make connections and build relationships with both students and parents has helped me feel like I am making a small difference in their lives. I may not always get to see the end result of the success of our kids, but I know I am planting seeds to help them grow as an adult. The motivation to stay in a program such as this for me is the kids staying in touch once they have moved on from our program. Nothing makes me prouder than to hear about how they have been and reminding me of advice I have passed on that they took to heart. Again, I will never truly know the total impact I have made on each kid but knowing I have made a difference at all keeps me here.

Overall, from the focus group discussion, the educators all agreed that having positive relationships with students plays a role in their job satisfaction. Patrick, Randy, and Georgia were quite vocal about the importance of establishing those relationships over time and not



expecting from students what educators are not willing to give: “When there is a lack of trust, the students suffer the most not the adults,” exclaimed Randy. Georgia said,

We want students to respect us, but do we always respect them? Just because we are the adults, we are not always right. Take the time to get to know the students. I promise you, your days will go better. Somedays I go off script and just talk to my students. They are humans and have feelings. I think we as educators get so caught up in the rigmarole that we forget these students are sometimes going home to disasters. We may be the only friendly face they see. So, why not take the time to learn about them? There have been times when my most difficult student completely had a change of attitude in my class after we just simply had a conversation about anything BUT math!

The topic of the negative relationships with students was discussed primarily in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 preventing educators from physically being inside the school hindered their ability to develop those sacred relationships. Erica said, “Not being able to build relationships with students this school year thus far due to COVID-19 is hard. It will be difficult but not impossible once we get back in the building.” Amelia and Cassandra echoed that sentiment expressing how difficult it is keeping in contact with students. Amelia said, “It makes me feel like I am not doing a very good job as an educator. It is very challenging getting students where they need to be academically over the screen. I feel disconnected from my students.”

Patrick and Erica agreed that working in this environment is not for everyone and that building relationships with students often deters behavior issues. Both concurred that if you as an educator do not have compassion and empathy for these students, you are in the wrong type of setting and your days will be more miserable than fulfilling. Patrick added, “I will always do

what is best for the students first and foremost. Why? Because the students often do not have advocates for them in their corners and they deserve to be heard.” Amelia said, “The students can see right through a phony and know if you as an adult care about them.” Cassandra agreed by saying, “Yea, you can’t fake concern or care with these kids. They will read you like the book you’re trying to teach from.”

*Relationships with colleagues.* “Relationships with colleagues is not nearly as important to educators as it is with developing and maintaining relationships with students,” according to Patrick. He said,

My first job is to support the students. I am not at work to make friends. I treat everyone with respect and leave work at work. I come in each day looking to help our students out and try to remember that many had it a lot worse than I did growing up. Educators in this building have to be built for this type of environment. I try my best to treat everyone with respect. Even when we disagree on stuff concerning the students, I do not take it personal and I hope they do not either. We are here to change the kid’s lives.

Likewise, Leandra and Robinette both agreed with Patrick. They expressed that their relationships with colleagues is not a determining factor in how the workday goes. Robinette noted that she has worked with many educators over her 30 plus tenure. She responded, “I can get along with just about anybody.” Erica has a different view on relationships with colleagues. She believes that having colleagues that you know you can depend on in a time of crisis is important. She shared that having a support team is very important to her work happiness:

Working in this building can be hard some days. There have been times when I have gone a colleague and said, “Hey, can I just sit in here for a moment?” I needed that time

away from whatever was going on at that time. I value the people who have become more than just people I work with here. It helps my days not seem so hard sometimes knowing that I can share a moment with.

Both Tim and Amelia value the connections they make with colleagues. Tim expressed how he enjoys coming to work and interacting with everyone. He also expressed how difficult it is not seeing the educators in the building. Although he does his best to build relationships with others in the building, he understands that differences in personalities and philosophies can hinder building those relationships. He said, “Not everyone is for everybody and that’s okay too.” For Amelia, those collegial relationships offer opportunities for support and solace. She explained,

I have a core group of colleagues that I know I can go to when I need advice, comfort, or just a moment to breathe! I trust my support team, especially on the hard days. Their energy often helps me have a more positive outlook on a situation, a student, somebody at work, or just whatever. I know those colleagues will not judge me or make me feel like my opinion doesn’t count. As a new teacher a few years back, I really needed that extra support.

As a second-year educator, Cassandra relies on her relationships with colleagues regularly for several reasons. She explained,

I came into education with an idea of what a day would be like. Little did I know about what a day would be like. The lessons can change in a minute. The copy machine can break. A student may cuss me out! Who knows what can happen in a day, shoot in a class change in this building! I need people around me to help me stay level through the daily pop-ups. Colleagues that I trust to tell me what I am doing right and where I can

improve. I need a snack buddy too. The teacher's lounge is for everybody. I need to be able to go into a colleague's room and just talk sometimes. I am glad to be back in this building. I feel like the people here really do like each other. Trust me, I have seen the dark side of working in a toxic environment.

Relationships with colleagues for Randy mean having a place of support in the face of racial oppression. Over his tenure working with colleagues that he knew to be racist often times was discouraging. Randy's said,

Colleague relationships and administrative support really help because I have had many colleagues and admins at other schools who have been extremely racist and attempted to stifle my journey or efforts to raise my people. There are still racist people where I am now, but the principal is supportive of diversity and growth. I really do appreciate that about him. I do not let the negative people stand in my way though. I am here for a purpose bigger than them.

For Georgia, relationships with colleagues have a minimal effect on her efficacy. She said,

What other people think of me matters very little. If they did, I would have probably quit. Doom and gloom, I do not pay attention to at all. I do like having a relationship with certain educators because it does make the day go a little smoother sometimes. Having somebody to bounce ideas off too has helped me a lot when I felt lost. But honestly, I am there for the students not adults. Their thoughts do not affect me. I am going to do what is best for students.

*Perseverance.* The topic of perseverance was primarily discussed during the focus group. Participants described how working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school environment can become overwhelming due to the behavioral and academic challenges unique to the student

population. For these educators, perseverance is being able to reach the students even when the student may not want to be reached. The participants excitedly shared how not giving up on the students and seeing students succeed gives the job purpose beyond academics. Also, for the participants, the satisfaction comes from knowing the “Why” educators give their best to the students. The educators shared what drives them daily when coming to work in this specialized school setting. Patrick provided his belief:

I believe you must have a tremendous amount of empathy to work effectively within any school, especially the alternative schools of the world. Working in the alternative world means you have chosen to work with the students that so many others have given up on. While the most challenging, it is the most rewarding. These students need us to be more than educators every day and that often times goes unreciprocated. You must be okay with that. You have to know that nothing they say or do is personal. We have kids that go home to nothing. No food, no parent, and some no home. It is up to us to push our feelings aside, dig deep inside, and nurture that student.

Robinette and Leandra shared that perseverance is choosing to show up and find ways to make your day better. Randy shared how he comes to work with the mindset of reaching students beyond the classroom expectations: “I come in here knowing that these students especially the male students need to see my face. They need to know they can get out of these streets.” Tim, Amelia, and Cassandra talked about how having their determination to succeed in the classroom is more about changing the narrative of how people outside the alternative school setting see the students. Tim said, “They want us to fail. We have to show folks that we care about our kids no matter what baggage they bring to school.” Erica added, “Let the students know you care! Show up for the job mentally every day.” Georgia added, “You have to know for yourself that you are

giving your all. The challenges of the building will make you doubt really quick.” The consensus of the participants is that without a personal determination to succeed in this particular school setting, an educator will be unfulfilled.

***Emotional health.*** Emotional health is important to educators according to the participants in the study. Several expressed how the demands of the job do impact their emotional health. Participants described the factors that help the emotional health of the educators while working in this specific type of educational setting. When educators are emotionally healthy, they perform better in the workplace. The participants also shared methods they use to manage individual emotional health.

***Family and life experiences.*** It was clear from both the individual interviews and the focus group discussion how vital family and life experiences are to an educator’s emotional health. Robinette finds joy in sharing time with her husband, cooking, cleaning her home, and most of all having an attitude of gratitude. For Patrick, he shared how remaining calm no matter the situation keeps his emotional health intact. He said, “With the way I grew up, nothing is going to shock me. My experiences have allowed me to stay calm in pressure situations and the awkward moments.” Leandra echoed that same sentiment:

At a very early age in my parent’s household I was taught to remain calm and pray first. Always having obstacles and being able to overcome the difficult and challenging situations has given me a great appreciation and confidence to help any student to achieve and be successful in any setting or role that I am afforded to work in.

Randy, Erica, and Cassandra find work-balance with listening to music, calming apps, and the occasional spirit drink. Most importantly for the participants is having a strong support system outside of the workplace. For Tim, spending time away at the lake is a rejuvenating experience.

One of the most heartfelt testaments to the importance of emotional health was shared during an individual interview with Georgia. She shared with me how her emotional and mental health is a constant journey to wellness. Emotional health for her is key to maintaining a sense of purpose and passion in the classroom. She explained,

My own tragic personal experiences with alcoholism, domestic violence, and loss keep me grounded. I am in therapy and plan to keep going for a while. It helps me stay healthy in my mind. I think every educator should go to therapy to be honest. I use my life experiences as a way to connect to the kids. We are all human and they deserve to be treated as such. Sure, they made mistakes, but don't we all? This job takes a lot of mental stamina. I have overcome a lot and want to be an example of overcoming crap for my students. Oh, I am also a narcoleptic, so I sleep a bunch of my stress away! But seriously, life has taught me to just keep going no matter what. Life isn't always fair, but we only get one.

*Exercise.* Five of the participants mentioned physical activity as a means of maintaining their emotional and mental health. For Erica, she enjoys exercising and pushing through difficult workouts that challenge her both physically and mentally. Tim enjoys long distance running whereas Randy finds pleasure in hiking. Amelia enjoys yoga and staying active with her children. Patrick lives on a farm so tending to the animals and land keeps him physically active. All five mentioned how keeping their physical health clears their mind and helps them stay emotionally healthy. All five participants talked about how being consistent with exercising is important. Erica said, "Exercising for me releases the happy hormones and I enjoy that especially after a grueling day."

*Personal and religious beliefs.* Four participants shared during both their individual interviews and the focus group their views on personal and religious beliefs. Participants shared how their own personal and religious beliefs are an integral part of their efficacy. Participants also shared how having a firm foundation in their religion is a part of their core value system. Participants noted that having personal experiences to draw from helps them connect to students. For these participants, personal and religious beliefs are tools used to not only build relationships with students but also as a source of moral guidance. The participants also shared that their empathy and compassion for the students comes primarily from their own personal and/or religious beliefs.

*Religious beliefs.* Several participants shared how their spiritual beliefs are important to their overall scope of life. For Amelia, her spiritual beliefs are what keep her grounded in her purpose as an educator. Amelia shared that she keeps her Christianity as the focal point in her life. She does her best to practice Christlike traits when interacting with students and colleagues. For her, how she applies her faith affects her family life as well as work motivation. Georgia shared, “I have a heart for helping people who genuinely need help. I am a Christian and believe God wants us to use our strengths and talents to help others. I read my Bible daily and pray for everybody in the building.” For Carolyn, praying and reading help her to decompress from her daily stressors: “When I don’t have these things in regular rotation then I am worthless in all aspects of life.” Leandra added that she too reads her Bible as well as other helpful literature to get wisdom and understanding. She also placed emphasis on fervently praying. Leandra also shared that as a minister, she must always be mindful of her moral and ethical compass. Being the mental health educator privies her to traumas and challenges that often leave her soul troubled. Leandra described those moments as “daily reminders” of how to be a true servant of



God in the face of adversity. For several participants, the moral teachings of Christianity provide them with a sense of servitude and compassion for the students. Also, their religious beliefs provide strength when facing the challenges of working within this unique school environment.

*Personal beliefs.* Several participants during their individual interviews expressed how important it is to have a system of beliefs that helps educators manage the daily responsibilities of the job. For Patrick, that means leaving personal stuff at home where it belongs. For Erica, her personal belief in coming to work every day with a mindset for success is helpful especially when facing a challenge. Georgia said, “I know what I am doing is making a difference in some students. Even if it were just one, it would be enough.” Leandra explained,

Having an awareness of and being able to recognize characteristics, prejudices, and bias of myself that could bring imbalance to helping students who carry all kinds of luggage is important for my wellness. I try not bringing work home with me if I can help it. Throughout the day I take mini breathes, and I also try to laugh because that’s good for my soul.

When discussing how his personal beliefs affect his educator efficacy, Randy shared,

My positive self-efficacy comes from a strong sense of commitment to free my people from racist tactics. The systemic structures in our society have been built to permanently keep Black and Brown people in inferior social, economic, and political statuses. I understand that what I teach and what I am supposed to teach do not always agree but I choose what is best for my students despite the limitations of racist standards set by people who don’t have the best interest for Black and Brown communities. My negative self-efficacy relates to the frustration I have with the school system. I know that it will destroy more students than I will save. That carries into the classroom for students who

do not see how they are being set up for failure and some who really don't care. The oppression weighs on me daily.

***Classroom practices.*** The participants' years in education range from a two-year novice educator to a 30-year veteran educator. When discussing how experiences within the classroom impact educator efficacy, the participants placed the most emphasis on experience or the lack of experience along with establishing both academic and character-building expectations in the classroom.

***Overall educator experience.*** Participants in this study spoke vividly about relying on their previous experiences in education as factors influencing their efficacy. For Erica, who spent time working in another alternative school program, those experiences with those students and coworkers instilled a confidence that she expressed may waiver but never dies. Erica said, "Experience taught me that patience and better understanding of relationships is what can change an educator's heart." For Leandra, having experiences in various educator roles prepared her for the challenges and rewards of working within her current position. Her background experiences built her ability to adapt to different situations at a moment's notice. This is a skill she expressed is necessary when working with students who tend to "change on a moment's notice." Patrick added, "When I taught in the traditional school, it was pretty much the same as alternative school. Kids are kids no matter what. You've got to know how to not take it personal." For Robinette having over 30 years' experience as an educator means being willing to learn:

I have seen many initiatives come and go throughout the years. The one thing stays constant is children needs good teachers. For this reason, I conclude that any teacher or administrator who feels passionately about the process, no matter their instructional style—will be effective! I believe what is best for each teacher, in each classroom, and

for each student population is (a) what the individual teacher feels most comfortable with and most effective with; (b) what instructional leaders (administrators) inspire their constituents to accomplish; (c) what is most appropriate methodology for the majority of the student population served.

Tim shared,

I think that my schooling gave me a toolbox of things of not to do's as an educator. Education is ever changing. You can use experience as a teacher, but you have to be willing to learn and trust me, this environment will teach you real quick!

Cassandra discussed how her community experiences help strengthen her role in the building.

She shared,

Being involved in the community has helped me a lot in the alternative school environment. I use my experiences as community leader to encourage the students to do things to build their character. So much of what they see and do involves tearing up their very own community and that is heartbreaking. I use my time with them to educate on the need for change. I am an advocate of becoming a registered voter. With this day and climate, these young people need to know their voices count. So many of them feel defeated. I see it all the time. It breaks my heart.

Georgia shared a moment of educator efficacy that she said keeps her humble. She said,

Although I have not been an educator very long, I think that some experiences just stick with you no matter what. For me, it is the reality my students face daily. It is the same moment over and over really. I had a student who was smart, articulate, and a natural leader. He prioritized destructive behavior and poor decision-making habits regardless of what I communicated. This specific student who displayed intelligence, kindness,

gentleness, and a good nature was killed and I can remember pulling him aside in the hall and telling him to forget what others do or say and just look out for his own future before he ended up a news story, too. Unfortunately, he became a news story. I felt the pain of his death for so many reasons. I felt defeated as an educator.

From the individual interviews, written questionnaires, and the focus group, participants agreed that the overall experiences of educators can either negatively or positively impact educator efficacy.

*Experience in the classroom.* Participants agreed that working within the involuntary enrollment alternative school comes with its own unique challenges. The students are held to the same academic standards as those students attending a traditional school setting. Participants shared how life in the classroom is more than academics. Amelia said,

Before I can even begin to teach a lesson, I have to start building relationships with students. I get more out of kids when it comes to work when I have a relationship with them. Of course, we are not going to be the best of friends. My students know that my husband is a police officer. Once he was on a call and it just so happened to be at the student's house. The student and I talked about the situation in depth. That one conversation changed his whole attitude towards me and the class. He actually started doing work!

Cassandra shared how she feels about her life inside the classroom. She voiced,

I feel like what I do in the classroom makes a difference every day. Sometimes I feel like I help students take big steps forward, other times it may be small. Of course, there are always students you feel are so far gone that you cannot reach them. But I honestly feel if a student is showing up to school, I have the ability to be a positive influence.

Patrick, Tommy, and Randy all agreed with Cassandra's sentiments. "When there is a lack of structure, the students suffer the most not the adults," exclaimed Randy. Carolyn shared during the focus group,

Working in room 307 was the highlight of my professional career due to my amazing co-teaching relationship. It was not just the high-quality instruction that took place. We changed lives in there! We took the time to learn from our students about life. We laughed with them and at times cried. Those are the experiences you never forget. Those moments give you energy to keep fighting for these babies.

Randy said, "These kids most days come in defeated. In my classroom, they know I am there to give them support beyond the book." The views on his classroom experience changed for Tim once he entered the alternative school setting. He explained,

I have worked in traditional and the Catholic settings as well. The biggest thing that I see in the alternative setting is the needs both academically and socially are far greater. The curriculum is still the same but harder to "manage" per say because these students need more than that. I think that alternative setting is far more rewarding as an educator. I think in the traditional setting the students just keep coming and teachers keep moving through the curriculum. In the alternative setting, educators get to move the students and make a bigger difference.

For both Georgia and Cassandra, coming into education as a second career was a total mind shift. Georgia shared,

I came into the classroom with a salesperson mentality. My students are my clients. It is my job to sell them on the product. Sounds good, right? I quickly learned that is not how it works in a classroom. I had to figure out how to reach students without losing my

mind in the process! If they don't see a reason to do the work, it will not get done. This school has taught me how to connect with students. Coteaching with Randy guided me in more effective ways to reach students who are not White. My little White lady, Catholic school upbringing, and lack of street knowledge all seemed to work against me at times. Randy gave me books to read and coached me through ways to gain the respect and trust of my students. His mentoring gave me confidence in my practice and ability to teach. I had to find ways to reach them where they were. So, treating them like clients doesn't work especially since most aren't interested in what I am trying to sell.

Erica agreed that classroom experiences go beyond the classroom textbooks and can weigh heavily on an educator. She said, "I wear my heart on my sleeve. I am an empath to a fault. I just want them all to be great!"

*Classroom expectations.* During the focus group, the participants discussed how their individual classroom expectations are more about character building and not about rules to govern the setting. Interestingly, the discussion was more about the participants' personal expectations that they have for themselves. I asked each participant to share one personal expectation that is not academically related. Leandra shared that she does her best to communicate effectively what she wants or needs from students. For Erica, her personal expectation involves being flexible and fair. Both Georgia and Amelia expressed how learning how to read the behaviors of students and being okay with making mistakes guide their practice. Tim said, "Treat every day like a new beginning with the more challenging students." While Randy promoted offering encouragement daily as an expectation, Patrick chimed into the conversation with saying, "Do not take stuff personally from these students or adults for that matter." Robinette, Carolyn, and Cassandra are all proponents of learning to grow in the midst

of the adventure and adversities that come with working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting.

### **Research Question Responses**

This next section provides thorough answers to the research question. In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions on educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school, a central question and four sub-questions were used. Regular education, special education, and mental health educators participated in the short-answer questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group. To preserve the integrity and accuracy of the data collected, all responses to the questionnaires were emailed to my personal email. Also, the individual interviews and focus group were video recorded.

**CQ.** *What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?* In my study, the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting was described by participants as tasks and experiences that affect educators' job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues and students, and their emotional health. The perceptions of those tasks and experiences fall into one or more of the four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and/or physiological/emotional state. When asked during the focus group to define educator efficacy as it relates to the four main sources, the participant answers corroborated each other's thoughts. Georgia explained,

Educator efficacy is one's ability to lead, engage, instruct, organize, manage, and encourage students in their comprehension of a specific subject matter through

relationship building, personal interest, understanding, patience, respect, compassion, empathy, and sincere concern for their personal and professional well-being.

Tim defined educator efficacy as “the confidence to know what you are doing and the ability to understand your body and mind. The ability to continue to learn in many areas and not be conceited that you know it all.” Other participants agreed that educator efficacy is the belief that an educator in whatever role has the ability to be effective.

The first main source of self-efficacy, mastery experiences, involves educators feeling confident in their ability to complete their jobs with a measure of success. Knowing how to work through challenges with confidence and resilience is an attribute of mastery experiences. Job satisfaction for these participants hinges on trusting the administration, having the support of the administration, developing and maintaining relationships with students and colleagues, and developing perseverance. Participants shared that trusting the administration plays a major role in how they feel about working in the school setting. It is imperative to the participants that the leadership be willing to support the school’s initiatives even in the face of push back from district leaders. Knowing that the administration has the best interest of not only the students but the educators as well matters significantly to the participants’ level of satisfaction.

Likewise, developing and maintaining relationships with colleagues and students increases an educator’s sense of satisfaction. Factors mentioned by participants during the individual interviews and focus group were matter such as making the school setting inclusive of life matters and not just academics. The students are perceptive of an educator’s energy and know whether the attention is genuine. The relationships that educators develop with students also helps create a level of trust in the classroom according the participants in the study. Being



able to create the relationships with students can be challenging and does take time. However, the participants shared that having those relationships is crucial to their success as an educator.

Concerning relationships with colleagues, participants explained their individual level of needing to have those as a part of their mastery experience with educator efficacy. Erica, Amelia, Tim, Randy, and Carolyn agreed that having colleagues who are supportive, trustworthy, and provide a safe place during the workday increased their job satisfaction. Those moments of bonding contributed to their mastery experiences by increasing their level of confidence, value, and often a feeling of being understood by someone who shares the same work environment. Participants Patrick, Georgia, and Leandra do not feel as strongly about relationships with colleagues being a main factor in their job satisfaction. Having those relationships do not affect their level of mastery experiences to the point of impacting their level of job satisfaction. Patrick believes that he is there to serve the students first, and his relationships with students matters more than those with colleagues.

Perseverance is a subject that the participants agreed is a vital part of job satisfaction. Working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting comes with challenges and expectations that, without determination, participants shared can make the job unfulfilling. Participants explained that perseverance includes understanding the need to keep moving forward. Randy shared in his individual interview how systemic racism impacts his job satisfaction and how both direct and indirect racism motivate him to stay within the school setting. He sees those mastery experiences as opportunities to grow professionally while instilling character building traits in students. Perseverance in mastery experiences for Amelia, Cassandra, and Georgia was displayed in their dedication to seeing students complete a task. All three participants shared how students in this environment come to school with baggage they

often cannot relate to in their everyday lives. The educator must work diligently to make those necessary connections to help the students be successful. Those moments of breakthroughs bring a sense of job satisfaction that often encourages participants to stay within the profession.

The second main source of self-efficacy is vicarious experiences. Participants discussed how having those collaborative moments with colleagues that contribute to the educator's growth as an educator increase self-efficacy. The participants shared several experiences in the individual interviews and the focus group that contribute to the educator efficacy. Those experiences are interwoven between two themes of the research, job satisfaction and classroom practices. Robinette shared how greeting the students in the morning makes her feel like she is contributing to their day while building up trust with the students. For Erica, Amelia, and Cassandra, having colleagues with whom they can share ideas for classroom instruction creates a sense of unity. Classroom practices such as experiences with students and other educators contributed to the participants' vicarious experiences. Amelia shared specifically how her classroom experience of working one-on-one with a student who was struggling to complete his senior project was fulfilling. The student doubted his ability to meet the district guidelines. For Amelia, seeing him through that project and the amount of pride he felt knowing he was able to get the work completed made her feel humbled and proud to be an educator at the same time. Carolyn shared that her overall experiences with educators that allow her to become more effective at her job are rewarding. She shared how working with other special education teachers on projects not only strengthens her knowledge base but helps her not to feel so overwhelmed. For Georgia, learning how to reach students beyond the textbook contributes heavily to her vicarious experiences. She shared how her outlook on being an educator has evolved primarily because of those off-scripted moments she has with students in class.

The third main source of self-efficacy, social persuasion, encourages educators to work collectively with credible sources in order to promote growth as an individual educator or a unit. Participant responses during the focus group centered on educators' perceptions of the social climate in the building that impact job satisfaction and classroom practices. Both Georgia and Carolyn shared how their coteaching experiences benefited their educator efficacy. Both participants shared how working with a veteran teacher modeled best practices for both the students and educator. Without those experiences, the participants shared their educator efficacy level would have been different. Randy echoed Georgia's sentiments. He shared that working with Georgia and being able to mentor her is a highlight of his career. Tim, Randy, and Georgia all believe that professional development need to be educator-centered and not just used as a checklist for the district. Participants shared that having collaborative initiatives not only increases the unity in the building but also allows for educators to learn from each other. Social persuasion contributes to the overall educator experience by allowing educators to interact with each other outside of the standard classroom. For Patrick and Robinette, the interactions with colleagues and students outside of the classroom are just as important as what goes on in the classroom. Erica added that building relationships with students and colleagues can happen anywhere in the school building. She said, "A simple greeting can spark a conversation that leads to a mutual respect with a student."

The fourth main source of self-efficacy is physiological/emotional state, which involves an individual's emotional state, often affecting his/her behavior. Those feelings contribute to an educator's perception of his/her efficacy. Having feelings of worth, anger, frustration, sorrow, happiness, etc., affect an educator's emotional health. Participants shared how their religious beliefs, personal beliefs, family, exercise, and life experiences all contributed to their emotional

wellness. Patrick shared that when he leaves work physically, he uses his 40-minute drive home to leave work mentally. During that time, his thinking shifts to his family duties for the day. Amelia, Carolyn, Leandra, and Georgia expressed that the foundation of their mental health is their faith in God. Taking time to pray, meditate, and read encouraging literature contributes heavily to their emotional health. For Tim, Erica, and Randy, being physically active outside is an important stress reliever. Erica shared how challenging her body to complete an activity takes her mind off the challenges of the workday. Several participants shared throughout the data collection process how their own personal beliefs and life experiences contribute to their emotional health. Randy explained how his life experiences and his personal beliefs as a Black man are a part of his emotional health. Being able to encourage young Black males is a part of his higher purpose. When he sees a young man make positive changes, it encourages Randy to keep pushing for changes in the building that promote cultural competency.

**SQ1.** *How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment involuntary enrollment alternative school?* Participants discussed how trust, administrative support, relationships with colleagues and students, along with perseverance affect their level of job satisfaction. According to participants, the administration sets the tone for the building. Robinette said, “Administrators are the thermostat in the building.” Participants shared how administrators who are trustworthy, open to new ideas, supportive, and willing to listen are the administrators that motivate educators to stay in education. On the other hand, administrators who show a lack of concern for faculty members cause dissatisfaction, according to Georgia. She said,

Those who listen and discuss solutions to my concerns establish a sense of support and encouragement that build up my resolve, so that I am free to teach math. I do not like a

bunch of talk. Like, where are the solutions? Where is the support? I want to be free to come to work and teach. I want to know I can depend on my leaders. Others, that communicate a sense of irritation and lack of concern for my issues, just make me want to shut down. Administrators who just walk around the building not even taking the time to understand that hey, I just had a fight in my room and need a moment to gather my thoughts are the most insensitive of leaders I have come across.

Administrators play a role in educators' remaining in the alternative school setting according to Erica. She shared that her entire career has been spent working with at-risk youth. "My heart is with this program and I need to know that my administration supports my decisions." Many of the participants agree that trusting the administration and feeling supported by the leaders does impact an educator's efficacy.

Having relationships with students is another vital attribute to educator's job satisfaction. Amelia said,

I feel like what I do in the classroom makes a difference every day. Sometimes I feel like I help students take big steps forward, other times it may be small. Of course, there are always students you feel are so far gone that you can't reach them. But I honestly feel if a student is showing up to school, I have the ability to be a positive influence. Knowing I am making changes whether big or small in their lives makes me happy.

Tim added,

Building relationships is so vital and part of what our motto is. The students need someone to believe in our building. I know this for certain the students can see right through a teacher. They know when it's real and when it's fake. Do teachers ever wonder why that certain students will work harder for one teacher compared to another?

Does the student know that you believe in them and that you care? Why is it that when you are having a bad day, the students seem to be able leave you alone without you saying anything to them. They see your efficacy.

For Randy and Robinette, job satisfaction is determined by having a level of passion for the job. Randy noted having the confidence to know that he is giving his best to students every day brings him a sense of job satisfaction. “I have a purpose in the building that goes beyond academics,” Randy shared. Robinette explained that having a passion for the job makes you want to work for change. That passion will help an educator find job satisfaction in the smallest things.

Patrick, Cassandra, Leandra, and Carolyn all see job satisfaction as mainly an internal motivator. Participants explained the importance of having confidence in one’s ability to teach the students is key to job satisfaction. Leandra added to the discussion the importance of knowing one’s capacity to execute his or her job. Whether it be through experience or training, educators needs a toolbox of skills in order to feel their most confident performing their job. Overall, the participants described the main factors of job satisfaction as administration support along with trusting the administration while establishing relationships with students and coworkers.

**SQ2.** *How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator’s ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?* Participants shared thoughts concerning connecting with a student and the impact it has. These narratives, told primarily during the individual interviews, outline how the educator must have a certain level of efficacy in order to reach students academically and/or socially. Tim believes in what he describes as “Why” moments being a deterrent in educator efficacy. He explained,

I know that this is going to sound corny and such, but it is those “Why” moments. When you have a conversation with a student, and you know that they are hearing you. The day that you get a card/email/phone call from a parent, student, staff that just says “Thanks.” When staff get excited about some program and want to do it for the good of the school. I see that the “Why” is affirming self-efficacy.

Participants agreed with Georgia when she exclaimed disappointment in educators not being included in the decision-making process of issues concerning student success. Several participants explained how educators in the classroom know how best to connect with students on a deeper level. In order to truly connect with students and feel a sense of pride in education, participants shared that being a part of the decision-making process matters. Georgia said,

Sometimes what’s best for a student is not to be in a classroom at a particular moment. A teacher who has taken the time to connect with the student will know that quicker than any administrator who just sees the defiant behavior. When will educators doing the groundwork get to decide what’s best for our students?

Patrick, Tim, and Randy shared similar moments of connecting with students and how it impacted their educated efficacy. Tim said,

I believe that all students want to learn and be taught. I think that we must first build relationships with students and find out what motivates them to take a class. I think that is what has shaped my growth with students has been time. I can recall writing a philosophy paper when I was in school and it was just words on the paper. I had no experience to draw from at that time. After being in the classroom and allowing myself to learn from students as they hopefully learned from me, that is what has shaped my thoughts and drive in education to this day.

During the focus group, Randy, Carolyn, and Amelia discussed how being confident in one's self as an educator helps connect with students. Randy said, "Confidence affects everything! The students know if you are confident in yourself, content, and how you feel about them. The energy of the educator impacts the classroom." Amelia added, "Yes, it is pretty hard to fake anything with students. The energy of the educator is felt by the students." Participants agreed that educators are natural motivators and internalize energy. Carolyn said,

When educators receive positive energy from students, they want to give more. Once you see you have an inch, the teacher wants a mile. When the energy is negative, hopefully it makes teacher want to work harder to connect with a student.

Participants also explained how educators that understand how to differentiate instructions while engaging students in the process have a better chance at connecting students to the lessons.

Georgia said,

No one strategy works for every student. The need to differentiate needs to be redefined. Different students have different needs. Students excel in different environments. One policy does not fit all. When you know your content area and you're confident, you find ways to make learning enjoyable. When student see me having a good time, it helps to get students involved and engaged. Students see your genuine self. When I started teaching, I was nervous and because of that, students lacked confidence in me. Once I got the confidence, I realized how to assert in a positive but stern way to gain respect.

For these participants, educator efficacy determines how an educator is able to connect with students. Determining factors are having confidence, self-motivation, and the desire to grow as an educator.



**SQ3.** *How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?* Participants shared varying points of view on this subject. For Cassandra, the feedback educators give is a tool of growth. She said, “I like getting feedback from my leaders. I use it to help me grow as a teacher.”

Leandra shared that coworkers who tend to be more negative in nature can bring down the morale in the school. She said,

Educators like that are a drag. Some people lack confidence and complain too much.

Even still, I try to make the best of it and encourage people to be their best self and be self-sufficient. Yes, lean on others when you need to but develop your own level of confidence. This environment is not for the meek and timid educator.

Robinette explained,

Other educators in the workplace and their beliefs in the ability of the school as a whole are predictors of the successes of our student population and their ability to succeed. My personal feelings of self-efficacy increase with the success of the teachers and our students. The district protocol builds my confidence and self-efficacy as I gain more confidence dealing with both parents and students. As I feel more control from the training provided, my self-efficacy increases.

For Randy, Tim, Amelia, and Carolyn, feedback from colleagues has a great deal of influence on their efficacy. Rand explained,

It has an effect. No matter how strong you are someone else attitude can either take away or add to your attitude about your job. In that sense of bringing your positive thoughts on your spirit. We are all social creatures so their words will have an effect no matter what. But it is up to me what to do with that feedback as far as internalizing. I am either going

to shake it off or absorb it to refocus on how being the best educator I know how to be for my students. Because at the end of the day, I am here for the student feedback not adults.

Participants noted during the focus group how the demands of the district along with the feedback the school receives is often discouraging and unrealistic. Overwhelmingly the participants agreed that the district procedures and protocol often unfairly compared the students attending the involuntary alternative school. When those moments occurred, participants expressed feelings of frustration and disappointment. Carolyn said,

I find it interesting the expectations from the district are not paced out like they expect our stuff to be with students. We have had more training deadlines this year than I care to remember. All of this stuff is supposed to be done as if we are in the actual building. More grace for schools especially alternatives schools that have more challenges than traditional schools for the execution of task and expectations is needed. It can overwhelm the educator and consume your thoughts on what you should focus on in that moment. That takes away from being the best educator you can be for your students.

Georgia said,

The feedback we get from the district is unrealistic. The attendance and the percentage and the expectations are unrealistic for schools period. Making us feel like we are not doing our jobs. We are supposed to build relationships and teach the students. I cannot build relationships if I do not take the time to talk to them about stuff other than math. I expect the same level of capability as any kid learning math. Just because they are in alternative school does not mean they cannot learn. However, they have a lot of outside forces that hinder learning. The district has no idea what we face daily. It makes me feel like I cannot get ahead. I do not get to enjoy students like I want to do.

Tim agreed, saying,

We have more on us than regular schools. The expectations are harder to reach at times.

Is it a checkbox or implementation that the district wants? It is more difficult for us. The feedback effect is different for every educator. The district needs to throw the blanket out. Allow educators to tweak the system to meet expectations.

**SQ4.** *How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?* Participants expressed how stress directly and indirectly impacts educator efficacy. Robinette said, “An educator’s stress level, not feeling effective, and out of control situations will decrease their level of self-efficacy to the point of leaving the field of education.” Leandra shared, “Stress goes to the brain and how you feel overall. It can affect each person differently. How an educator proceeds in meeting student needs is directly impacted by work stress.” Tim added,

If someone is stressed all the time it will affect the learning that is going on in the classroom. Teachers will become ineffective and could lead to long term harm to the teacher’s health. The teacher needs to learn to look for signs and learn ways to overcome this level. I truly believe that sometimes teachers become numb to stress and do not deal with it properly.

Erica agreed with other participants in the focus group and added this:

Stress impacts a lot more than the classroom. Educators are givers and caretakers all day long. You cannot just leave it at work. The stories of students stick with you. All of the factors of student life go with you and then you go home and deal with life. The level of stress can make you question if you are making a difference. It is harder because we want to take care of others by nature. Sometimes we forget to take care of ourselves.

Participants Randy, Patrick, and Carolyn noted that educators who are stressed are less effective in the building. The amount of stress an educator has impacts his or her individual level of educator efficacy. The higher the stress, the lower the efficacy of the educator according to Randy. Patrick agreed, explaining that an educator can be confident, but the stress level changes one's attitude from positive to negative. "It is hard for students to learn from someone who is constantly negative," he explained. Amelia brought into the focus group comments she also made during her individual interview. She said,

Stress manifest physically. It takes a toll on your physical body which connects back to your mental. Chronic stress disturbs the mindset and disposition. It will come back around to feelings of ineffectiveness if not managed correctly. This pandemic has definitely increased my stress level and lowered my feelings of efficacy. I personally feel a lack of purpose. Trying to make connections over a computer and phone is stressful for me. My neck hurts and back hurt constantly from sitting at this computer all day. The stress and sitting at computer just add to the stressors of the job.

Participants also shared how having healthy outlets to reduce stress is important for educators. Participants believe that the amount of negative stress an educator internalizes without having a healthy outlet correlates with job dissatisfaction, unsuccessful attempts to establish relationships with students, as well as the educator's inability to feel successful at completing the requirements of the job.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four presented the results from the data collection and analysis. The chapter opened with an overview of the chapter sections. The study involved 10 educators who worked within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Following the overview, a detailed

description of each participant was provided, accompanied by Table 2 outlining the participants years as an educator, level of education, and years working in the current school setting. Data collection included a short-answer questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group. Each data collection method was explained and accompanied by Table 3 which supplied a visual representation of the 14 codes discovered during the data collection. After the codes were organized and described in detail, four themes emerged: job satisfaction, emotional health, beliefs, and classroom practices. Table 4 provided the themes, correlating codes, and the frequency counts of each code. Direct quotations and noted experiences of the participants were used to describe the themes and the subsequent codes. Chapter Four also included answers to the research central question and four sub-questions. Participant responses and direct quotations were used to validate the responses to the research questions. Lastly, a summary was provided.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to describe the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Chapter Five begins with a summary of the research question findings which are based on participant responses. Following, I discuss the relationship of my research findings to the empirical and theoretical literature on educator efficacy as it relates to the four main sources of self-efficacy found in Chapter Two. Throughout this investigation, I address how the research supports and adds to the previous body of research concerning educator efficacy within specialized student populations. The implications of the study findings along with recommendations for educators may lead to an increased understanding of the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working withing involuntary enrollment alternative school settings. Delimitations and limitations of the study are explained in regard to the case study design and the participant selection. Recommendations are made based on the limitations and delimitations which should encourage future researchers to expand on the results of the study. Suggestions for future research are provided along with a summary of the chapter.

### **Summary of Findings**

This section delivers a summary of the findings related to my research questions. One central question and four sub-questions based on theory that guided the study and current research were used to gain understanding from the views of participants pertaining to the perceptions of educators concerning the educator efficacy of those working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. The central question asked, “What are the perceptions of educators pertaining to the four main sources of self-efficacy while working within an

involuntary enrollment alternative school setting?” Participants in the study shared how varying factors determine their perceptions of educator efficacy in relation to their mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional states. SQ1 asked, “How do educators describe their job satisfaction within an involuntary enrollment involuntary enrollment alternative school?” Participants described the importance of trusting administration, having positive relationships with students, and perseverance as attributes of job satisfaction. Participants believe that it is imperative for educators to work together in order to create a harmonious work environment. SQ2 asked, “How do educators describe self-efficacy as it applies to an educator’s ability to connect to students academically and/or socially?” Participants overwhelmingly agreed that connecting to students impacts each of the main sources of educator efficacy in some manner. SQ3 asked, “How do educators describe the effect of feedback from principals, administrations, or other colleagues concerning their sense of self-efficacy?” Participants discussed how, although the feedback educators receive from principals and other leaders is important, the feedback should only be used as a learning tool. The feedback should not be a measure of success or defeat. Educator efficacy according to the participants is a balance of self-confidence and the ability to grow as an educator. SQ4 asked, “How do educators describe the connection between work stress and educator self-efficacy?” Participants felt that work stress directly impacts educator efficacy. Participants shared that working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting has behavioral and academic challenges that are unique to the student population. It is important for educators to set healthy boundaries and develop healthy habits to reduce stress. Participants suggested physical exercise, therapy, and maintaining a sense of balance in the workplace.

## **Discussion**

This section discusses the findings of the study in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature which were introduced in Chapter Two. A comparison is provided which explains how my study corroborates and adds to previous research. The study also contributes to the understanding of the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school environment. The results of this study address the gap in literature by examining the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school environment. Empirical discussions are based on the research themes of job satisfaction, emotional health, beliefs, and classroom practices. Theoretical discussion includes Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory as efficacy connects to the four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional state (Bandura, 1997).

### **Empirical Literature**

The results of the study are in line with relevant findings in existing research on the perceptions of educators pertaining to educator efficacy while working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. A thorough review of the study led to my discovering of similarities between information I learned from the literature and the participants' answers to the research questions in this study. Past research primarily focused on educator efficacy holistically in education rather than specifically focusing on involuntary enrollment alternative school educators. Few past studies delved into the relationship of alternative school educators concerning their perceptions of efficaciousness (Xia et al., 2015). This study adds to the current research by providing professionals who are currently working within the involuntary enrollment alternative school environment an opportunity to voice their views concerning educator efficacy.



This research contributes to a body of knowledge on educator efficacy research that lacks diverse research concerning alternative school educators (Xia et al., 2015). While there is a plethora of past research about educator efficacy as it relates to job satisfaction as well as the high attrition rates in education, there is a lack of research investigating strategies districts can use to retain educators, specifically those working within specialized population of students (Kerr & Brown, 2016). The discussion related to the empirical literature includes defining alternative schools, teacher efficacy, principal efficacy, collective efficacy, and Teacher Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior (TEHSM).

**Alternative schools defined.** An involuntary enrollment alternative school is a public institution that offers specialized learning opportunities for students who are disruptive, need academic remediation, or social rehabilitation (Raywid, 1998). Participants in my study understood that their work environment was unique in the district. The students that were sent to the involuntary enrollment alternative school enrolled as a last opportunity for education due to losing the privilege of attending traditional schools (Berg & Cornell, 2016; Bird & Bassin, 2015; Wilkerson et al., 2016). Participants noted that the students they service generally do not want to attend school. Tim said, “There is extra pressure on educators to engage students in the learning process simply because of the students we have here.” Randy added, “These kids are here for a behavior issue not an academic issue. Sometimes the behaviors interfere with the learning.” Understanding the educator efficacy of those withing an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting meets the needs of both students and the educators (Mason-Williams & Gagnon, 2017). Georgia and Erica both believe that providing meaningful professional development sessions that equip educators with tools to be successful in the work environment can help increase feelings of efficacy. Leaders with a high sense of self-efficacy remain in high poverty

and/or challenging school settings (Jacob et al., 2015). None of the participants reported having feelings of low self-efficacy when working with students in this alternative school setting. By building relationships with students, participants shared how educator efficacy increases.

Amelia said, “Those moments when I build relationships with students who came in with a wall built up, always make me feel good as an educator.” Georgia shared, “Knowing that I can connect with students and make a difference in their lives encourages me to stay in the profession.” Tim and Patrick both agreed that the students attending the school can be challenging but still need to know that the adults in the building are not “just another enemy.”

**Teacher self-efficacy.** Researchers indicated the direct correlation of teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, job preparedness, student success, and classroom practices (Holzberger et al., 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Participants in this study noted that a part of their educator efficacy is related to feeling successful. Erica shared, “When I know that I have helped a student reach a goal they thought impossible, it brings me great satisfaction.” Georgia shared in both her individual interview and in the focus group how coteaching with Randy equipped her with classroom practices that increased her educator efficacy. She said, “His mentoring gave me the tools I needed to be more effective in reaching African American boys. I needed that because I felt like I was failing them at one point.”

Being an educator is an act of affective labor that creates a social learning environment (Gallager, 2002; Kostogriz, 2012). Affective labor from educators produces a sense of trust, respect, excitement, and satisfaction, which are all a part of self-efficacy (Kostogriz, 2012, p. 402). Participants in this study shared the correlation between teacher efficacy and working in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting as challenging but rewarding. Robinette said, “We have programs in place to help the students succeed academically.” Leandra added,

“The mental health initiatives that are now available for the students is crucial. The students come with a lot of baggage to unpack daily.” Georgia said,

I value when a student trusts me with their life events. They are reaching out and it is my job to help them. The relationships with the students in our building take time and patience to create but are worth it.

Participants noted that confidence is a major component of teacher self-efficacy. Findings have shown that teachers who are confident in their job performance set a tone of learning as well as effective classroom management (Zee & Koomen, 2016). For Cassandra, the confidence comes from being prepared daily and having a support system of peers. Amelia agreed: “I have a support system that I can trust. I can go to them when I need guidance or just to let off steam.” Previous literature noted that faculty support contributes to work satisfaction and performance which impacts self-efficacy (Akhtar, 2008; Bandura, 1997; Colomeischi et al., 2014; Jacob et al., 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

The literature suggests that work stress may lead to a lower teacher self-efficacy (Ruble et al., 2011). Participants shared that the challenges and demands of working within the unique school setting do bring about a certain level of stress. Erica said, “You cannot just leave it at the door when the day ends. Those days when I feel like I was unsuccessful at reaching a student or just feel overwhelmed, I think my efficacy lowers in those moments.” Amelia explained, “Work stress affects not only your mind but your body. I literally have been mentally exhausted and that is not good for me or my students.” Findings have shown that lowered self-efficacy due to low classroom productivity increases work stress and emotional exhaustion, which thereby impacts an educator’s physiological state of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Reinke et al., 2013; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Participants shared how the expectations

from leaders at the district level often causes stress. Participants shared that being expected by the stakeholders to meet the state expectations at the same level of competency as students attending traditional schools is unrealistic. Randy explained,

We need updated technology skills as educators to meet the needs of our students. How can the district expect for us to meet their expectations and we do not feel like we have been trained adequately? It is very stressful knowing that other schools are looking down on us when really, we are not being given all the tools we need to function at our best level.

The results in this study support the idea that confidence, relationships with students, and effective classroom practices strengthen a teacher's level of self-efficacy. My research speaks to the increasing need for administrative support, strong district support, and relationships with students as major contributors to the efficacy of teachers in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting.

There is limited research addressing educators' thoughts concerning their performance capabilities as it relates to meeting the needs of students who are at-risk, juvenile delinquents, and/or emotionally challenging (Bruggink et al., 2016). Therefore, it remains primarily unknown whether teachers feel capable of meeting the needs of students attending involuntary enrollment alternative high schools. I found that educators who work within an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting need to have a high level of trust in the leadership, time to build and nurture relationships with students, relationships with colleagues, and perseverance in order for educators to feel effective.

**Principal efficacy.** Principals with a high sense of efficacy enhance the educator efficacy of the educators, which in turn leads to stronger professional relationships (Tschannen-

Moran & Gareis, 2004). Amelia said, “I appreciate having relationships with the administration in the building. I feel for the most part that I can trust them with my cares and concerns.”

Patrick said, “Ultimately, I am here for the students. However, I appreciate the relationships that I develop with educators in the building. We are all working towards the same goal which is student success.” Robinette shared,

Being an administrator is not an easy task. There will be good days and bad days.

Everyone will not be pleased with your choices. However, administrators must be firm and fair in order to gain the respect of the educators in the building.

A principal’s self-efficacy affects the educator’s level of job satisfaction and commitment (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Versland, 2013). Participants shared how the support of administrators and being able to trust their decision-making choices showed how much the leader values the teachers and staff in the building. Participants also agreed that when leaders in the building are confident in their own ability to lead the building, it can be seen and heard by students and staff. Erica shared, “Knowing that leadership is capable of guiding our building into success matters a great deal. Leadership styles do vary, but it is important to have a leader that is visible and active in the school setting.” Participants shared several times throughout their individual interviews and the focus groups the importance of having an administration that is able to connect with teachers, staff members, and students. Robinette said, “Administrators are the thermostat of the building. How he/she projects efficacy is felt in the building.” Research supports the participant statements. Versland (2013) noted that when administrators built relationships with teachers, staff, students, and community members, it not only increases the leader’s sense of efficacy but promotes unity in the school community. Previous research also

suggested that principal leadership styles connect to an educator's attitude, behaviors, and morale (Federici & Skaalvik, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Versland, 2013).

Participants expressed that having leadership that shows pride in the workplace motivates them to strive harder at breaking through the challenges in the school community. Randy said, "Having leaders that listen and believe in me definitely affects my efficacy and dedication to the job. Having leadership that encourages me to think outside the box to reach the students always matters most in those moments when I feel like I have failed a student." Previous research implored that principals with a great sense of efficacy are able to motivate educators towards a more successful learning community both academically and socially (Hallinger et al., 2018). The literature provided information on how school leadership, relationships, school culture, and job satisfaction are relevant to an educator's self-efficacy (Simon & Johnson, 2015). My research further demonstrates the need for principals working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school to possess a strong sense of self-efficacy as a means of effectively leading the school community.

**Collective efficacy.** Within school communities all educators must work together to build a healthy professional relationship that models progress. The relationships should be built on mutual respect and trust (Moye et al., 2005). Participants in this study shared that working together as a unit is imperative for success and safety in the school. Participants discussed the different social and behavioral challenges in the building, supporting the past research which denotes collective efficacy as a major influence on student achievement both academically and socially (Hattie, 2015). Furthermore, when educators work together as a team, they feel empowered and exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction (Moye et al., 2005). Participants expressed feeling a sense of pride when working with colleagues including administrators on

projects that connected students to community events. Donohoo (2018) found that when educators share common goals and work together to achieve the goals, it impacts student growth. The results of this research showed that participants in this study agree with this belief and understand the impact their unity has on the overall morale of the school community. Educators in this study revealed they understand the importance of building a relationship with administrators and teachers.

**Teacher Efficacy in Handling Student Misbehavior (TEHSM).** The behavior challenges of an involuntary enrollment alternative school lead to educator emotional exhaustion (Langari & Parvin, 2017). Participants in this study shared the importance of emotional wellness. Erica said, “You just cannot leave it all at the door at the end of the day.” Several other participants shared how the structure of the school helps them to feel safe; however, the stress of dealing with the misbehaviors and lack of respect from students is exhausting. Prior research noted the link between educator exhaustion due to student behaviors to higher attrition and/or job dissatisfaction (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). The views from the participants in this study corroborated with the previous research on the impact of student misbehaviors on educator efficacy.

### **Theoretical Literature**

Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory is the foundational theory of my research. There is a high correlation between educator efficacy with job satisfaction, job performance, and student achievement (Bandura, 1997). During the individual interviews and focus group sessions, participants shared various scenarios that impacted their educator efficacy. The theory also suggested that educator beliefs are performance-based and context-specific (Zimmerman, 2000).

**Job satisfaction.** For the participants in this study those experiences were said to come from job satisfaction, successful classroom practices, and building relationships with students. Motivations is also a major factor in educator efficacy as reported by Zimmerman (2000). All 10 of the participants for the study agreed that motivation is key to their job satisfaction and remaining in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting.

**Job performance.** Educator efficacy attributes to the individual educator's belief in his/her own ability to perform the required job assignment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014, p. 612). Participants noted an immense sense of pride when they were able to make connections with students academically and/or socially. Feelings of being devalued by administration or past failures in meeting performance goals cause a decline in efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Several participants shared situations in which their educator efficacy was low due to not feeling prepared in the classroom and/or feeling undervalued by district leaders.

Bandura's (1977, 1997) four main sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional state) are the catalysts to how an educator's efficacy takes shape. Research supports the importance of these four main sources contributing to the overall self-efficacy of educators (Akhtar, 2008; Pajares, 1996, 2002; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman et al., 2017).

**Mastery experiences.** These experiences happen when an educator feels accomplished when seeing positive results from a job performance. For example, Randy shared how being the facilitator of the Men of Quality mentorship program allows him to give guidance to the students while teaching them life skills. For Randy, this could be described as a mastery experience. Those mentoring sessions not only give the students necessary life skills, the sessions also are intrinsic motivators for Randy. Erica and Amelia both shared how connecting with students



through completing graduation requirement activities brings them a sense of positive efficacy. Mastery experiences provide encouragement and motivation.

**Vicarious experiences.** These experiences come from educators learning from other educators that share the same challenges and/or successes. Those experiences in seeing a colleague be successful or overcome a similar situation can increase educator efficacy. Georgia and Carolyn both shared how coteaching allowed them the opportunity to learn from a veteran educator while being novice educators. From those experiences, both educators noted their appreciation of the experiences because it helped strengthen their resolve to teach independently.

**Social persuasion.** For educators, social persuasion takes place when educators encourage one another to face the challenging moments that come with the job. Those views must come from educators that are trustworthy and speak from experience in similar work environments. Social persuasion for the participants in this study come from shared experiences from team meetings and collaborations. Participants meet at least two times a month in their Performance Learning Community (PLC). Those meetings are a safe place for educators to share successes, concerns, and questions for the collective body. From those meetings, educators share ideas and lesson plans as well. Sharing successful strategies not only benefits the students but also builds a sense of comradery amongst the educators (Donohoo, 2018).

**Physiological/emotional states.** Researchers have found that educators succumbing to work stress have a lower sense of self-efficacy as opposed to educators who are in a more peaceful state of mind (Ruble et al., 2011). The educators' emotions are attached to their belief in their ability to execute job expectations. The emotions can range from happy, sad, frustrated, excited, overwhelmed, etc. Overall, the participants shared the importance of having a wellness plan. Participants agreed that at times the emotional exhaustion can go unnoticed until the

educator is at a breaking point. Participants cited general work stress, unrealistic expectations from the district level, and a lack of administrative support as issues that affected their emotional state. Having a supportive team of colleagues helped several participants support a healthy emotional state. Several participants shared that physical activities boosted their emotional wellness.

My research supports the belief that educator efficacy is an important factor in job satisfaction, emotional health, and classroom practices. Participants from my study want administrators to be engaged in the decision-making process when it comes to developing professional trainings. Participants believe that some of the challenges they face are unique to their school environment and having trainings that provide real problem-solving solutions is necessary. Participants also desire more technology training for educators. The participants expressed how being more technology savvy would increase educator confidence, especially since most of the district requirements are now computer based. Another recommendation of the participants was for wellness sessions to be made available to educators who may need a stress break during the day. “The misbehaviors of students may become so problematic to where a teacher may feel the need to go to a safe place, I think we should have that,” said Amelia. From the results of my study along with the previous research, it is suggested that districts create a holistic system of learning to support educators becoming successful in the four main sources of self-efficacy (Barton & Dexter, 2020; Phan & Locke, 2015).

### **Implications**

The section discusses the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this study based on data received from the 10 participants of the study in regards to the perceptions of

educators on educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Recommendations are provided for district leaders, administrators, and educators.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory provided the framework for this research. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his/her capacity to meet the job requirements and has a direct impact of job satisfaction, classroom practices, and emotional health. Self-efficacy affects one's level of confidence, motivation, and behaviors (Bandura, 1997). For educators, belief in their ability to create relationships with students that cultivate student achievement both academically and socially relate to educator efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Participants in this study said that their efficacy is determined by their ability to carry out their assigned tasks. Participants also shared their belief that self-confidence, job satisfaction, classroom practices, and emotional health are a part of their individual educator efficacy. Participants also shared the importance of creating and nurturing positive relationships with students as a part of their educator efficacy. Seeing students be successful both academically and socially is also a part of educator efficacy according to the participants.

Based on the review of the literature and the results of this study, there are two implications:

1. Educators need confidence in their ability to meet job requirements as it relates to job satisfaction and classroom practices. Experiences such as connecting with students through classroom experiences, mentoring, creating classrooms that are safe and conducive to learning for students, and/or problem-solving situations increase educator efficacy. Participants also shared the importance of coteaching experiences and having a support system of educators to learn from as methods of increasing their educator

efficacy. According participants, feeling like they are capable of performing their job includes being able to learn from mentors, receiving useful feedback from colleagues and administration, and professional developments that are helpful in increasing educator work practices.

I recommend that educators work towards developing resilience and confidence in their work by using available resources by the district that are specifically geared towards their subject matter. For example, if an educator struggles with needing confidence in their ability to connect with students, Georgia sought help from an educator who had the knowledge on best practices for connecting with students. The educator also provided Georgia with information on district trainings and resources that would increase her confidence in her job performance as it relates to best practices for classroom connections. Also, the district develops professional trainings and sessions that include technology for educators, behavior mediation, and wellness education for educators, all of which are methods according to participants to increase educator efficacy.

2. Student success is important to an educator's level of efficacy. Participants shared that when students improve academically and/or socially, it increases educator efficacy. For Amelia and Erica, moments such as helping a struggling student understand the material or successfully complete a task boosted their levels of efficacy. Randy mentioned how his work as a mentor with Men of Quality gives him a sense of pride in his work with the young men in the group. Robinette shared how seeing a student go from having no hope in being successful to achieving success is one of the main reasons she has stayed in education for over 30 years.

Based on these results, I recommend that educators keep a journal of student successes that impact their level of efficacy. By having a collection of those important moments in their career, an educator can draw strength or encouragement when needed. I also recommend that the building administration create a public space where student successes can be shared with educators as well as students. By sharing appropriate successes, the school community could be impacted in a positive manner while building confidence in both the educator and student.

### **Empirical Implications**

There were few qualitative studies that provided literature on the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. This section addresses the empirical implications based on the related literature provided in Chapter Two. Empirical implications are provided for teacher responsibility, teacher efficacy, principal efficacy, and collective efficacy.

**Teacher responsibility.** Students attending the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting are there for a behavioral infraction that revoked their right to attend a traditional school setting for a specific amount of time (Kennedy et al., 2019). Since the state in which the study took place does not expel students for any cause, the involuntary enrollment alternative school is a last option for student to earn an education in the public school. Students must meet certain behavior and academic goals set by the district school placement services and the specific alternative school the student attends (Berg & Cornell, 2016; Bird & Bassin, 2015; Wilkerson et al., 2016). The reasons why students are sent to the involuntary enrollment alternative school are not always shared with the teacher. Principals and counselors are privy to the information that comes from the district student placement services. The results of the study indicate that in spite

of the student's reasons for attending the school, an educator is responsible for providing academic services and maintaining an environment conducive to safety and learning. There are two indications from my study.

1. Relationships with students impact the culture of the school. The trust between educators and students is vital to the success of students in the school. Participants noted that students know when educators are genuinely concerned about their well-being. Having those relationships with marginalized students creates a school community that is positive and productive. Participants shared examples of how students were motivated to be productive once a relationship was established with the educator.

Therefore, my recommendation for educators working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school is that professional development courses be created to train educators in cultural responsibility and understanding implicit bias. Such information can help educators build relationships with students.

2. Students are still expected to achieve academically. Participants noted that although it can be overwhelming, students are still held to the same district expectations as those students attending traditional schools. Therefore, educators must be diligent in making sure students have the necessary resources to succeed. At times, students need additional resources depending upon their individual academic and/or social needs. Participants shared how although it is challenging getting students to engage in learning, the standards will not be lowered. Recognizing that students bring outside traumas to school with them, educators must have the necessary resources to empower students to be motivated to succeed in the school setting.

My recommendation is that educators obtain specific training that informs educators on how to recognize trauma in students, specifically in the alternative school setting. By providing such trainings, educators will feel more capable of understanding certain trauma-induced behavior patterns of students both academically and socially within the school community.

**Teacher efficacy.** Teacher efficacy is the belief a teacher has in his/her ability to influence student learning even when educating the student is challenging (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Teacher efficacy is the most powerful construct in how motivated, engaged, and successful teachers are throughout their careers (Pajares, 1996). Literature has shown that teachers who have a high sense of self-efficacy are more successful in the classroom, build stronger relationships with colleagues and students, and are able to persevere in challenging situations while maintaining a healthy state of mind (Bandura, 1997; Poulou, Reddy, & Dudek, 2019; Schunk, 1995). The literature also denoted how teachers' perceived self-efficacy concerning their ability to manage disruptive students connects with decreased confidence, job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and high attrition rates (Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

In my study, participants shared that self-confidence, strong relationships with students, respectful relationships with administration, and perseverance all attribute to their self-efficacy. Participants mentioned the lack of district avenues to build collegial relationships with educators in the district who shared similar experiences. Participants shared the importance of having trusted colleagues to rely on within the school building. Those colleagues provide both professional and emotional support that affects an educator's confidence and motivation. The implication from my study is as follows:

1. Educators benefit from having a support system of trusted colleagues in the building that will help the educator grown professionally. Several participants noted how having a

support system at work affects their level of efficacy. Participants shared that having a colleague who understands the challenges of working with this unique population helps them when they are struggling with a student or situation. Also, participants noted that having colleagues to provide insight into effective lesson planning, best practice classroom management practices, and overall educator practices increases job satisfaction.

Therefore, my recommendation is that administration creates opportunities for classroom teachers to communicate experiences and expertise with one another on a regular basis. By providing avenues for educators to have opportunities to build relationships with colleagues, teacher efficacy may increase according to the participants. Administrations should also allow opportunities for teachers to decompress when situations occur in the classroom that impact the safety and/or mental well-being of a teacher.

**Principal efficacy.** The literature has shown that principal efficacy is an important factor in the overall educator efficacy in the work environment. The need for administrators to possess a high self-efficacy is important the school community (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). According to my results, educators believe that principals set the climate of the work environment. When principals create an environment that promotes trust amongst educators, safety, and open communication, educators then felt a more positive sense of efficacy. The educator's belief in the administration to work as a team impacts an educator's efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). The two implications from my study are as follows:

1. Principals should possess a high level of efficacy in order to be an effective leader.

Participants shared how the leadership style of a principal is crucial to the foundation of the building. Participants expressed that principals who are firm and consistent are the



most effective type of leadership. Trust in leadership involves having confidence in the leader's decision making ability.

It is my recommendation that principals attend leadership training that promotes professional growth and strategies in knowing how to effectively lead an involuntary enrollment alternative school community.

2. Having leadership that listens to educators' ideas as well as concerns is important to professional relationships. Gaining an understanding of the need to have supportive, skilled, and consistent leadership in the alternative school setting could possibly lead to an increased understanding of the impact principal efficacy has on job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, and the emotional wellness of educators.

My recommendation is for principals to attend specific leadership training that focuses on building successful professional relationships with faculty and staff.

**Collective efficacy.** Teachers and principals work together to help students achieve academic goals (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Past literature has shown that collective efficacy is a team effort of all educators in the school community. The more involved in the decision-making process teachers were, the more teachers felt included in the structuring of the school community (Bandura, 1997). The implication according to my results is as follows:

1. Administrators and teachers must work together to create a positive school culture.

When educators work together to help students reach both the behavior and academic goals of students, educator efficacy increased in the involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. Several participants noted the importance of working with administration to create a culture of success for students. Phil said, "Administrators must keep the needs of the students first while making sure the faculty needs are met as well." Leandra noted,

“Teamwork is essential to any school but especially this one. Students know when a school leaders and teachers disagree.”

My recommendation is for both teachers and administration to create and attend trainings together that promote unity in the building.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of my study provide insight into the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The participants shared their own real-life experiences as educators in hopes of motivating educators, increasing job satisfaction, and lowering attrition rates. The participants discussed what they perceived as factors influencing educator efficacy: job satisfaction, classroom practices, and the emotional health of educators working within this unique school community. The implications from the results are as follows:

- Having a trusting and a respectful relationship with administrators is a key part of job satisfaction.
- Educators must be emotionally healthy in order to best serve students. There is a need for mental health protocol within the school building for educators.
- Educators must be prepared for the behavioral and academic challenges of the unique school setting.

Below are the recommendations for educators, building administration, and district administration.

**Educators.** Three recommendations for educators are provided in this study.

1. It is recommended that educators who choose to work in the involuntary enrollment alternative school without prior experience receive mandatory

professional development discussing how to recognize trauma in students, effective classroom management, and how to build relationships with students. Professional development courses should be led by administrators and educators currently working within the unique school setting. Those educators who facilitate the professional development should develop the profession development format with the guidance of school administration.

2. It is recommended that educators attend professional trainings developed by the district and in-school level that will increase knowledge in those specific areas.
3. Educators are also encouraged to utilize the mental health services provided by the district health insurance if applicable. Those services allow educators to connect with a therapist and/or other professionals that can help educators work through emotions coming from work-related stress and/or work trauma.

**Building administration.** There are four recommendations for building administration.

1. It is recommended that administrators work diligently to establish professional relationships with educators. When educators feel valued and appreciated by the leadership, the likelihood of their leaving decreases. For this to happen, administrators should address issues that create job dissatisfaction with educators in the building. One method suggested was having an anonymous box placed in a safe space for educators to write their concerns without fear of being embarrassed or demeaned for their concerns.
2. For novice educators, building administrators should create a buddy pairing with a more experienced educator. This form of mentorship may create a safe person for the novice educator to rely on for lesson planning, classroom management ideas,

and emotional support. This mentoring was suggested as a method of promoting educator efficacy growth.

3. It is also recommended that building administration create professional development courses that are useful to the educators. Participants suggested professional development that increases educator knowledge in technology, student trauma, and best classroom management practice for the school community. Professional development geared towards the individuality of the school is believed to be more valuable than those often offered districtwide.
4. It is also recommended that building administration provide educators with emotional wellness support when there is a behavioral issue within the classroom or any area in which the educator is directly involved. Participants shared that when a student has a violent outburst such as fighting or attacking the educator, administration needs to offer a place where the educator can decompress and calm down if necessary. Participants shared how difficult it can be to jump back into their job role after a major disruption.

**District Administration.** There are three recommendations for district administration.

1. It is recommended that the district create a division specifically devoted to the alternative schools in the district. Currently schools are divided into regions with a governing assistant superintendent. The participants expressed that having a region designated specifically for the alternative schools in the district would provide a more effective way for those voices to be heard. The uniqueness of students attending alternative schools can be a case by case scenario when addressing academic or behavioral needs. Having a district level administrator

overseeing alternative schools only was described by participants as a possible “game changer” for not only the students but educators as well. The participants felt that this connection would increase job satisfaction, classroom practices, and affect the emotional wealth of educators.

2. It is also recommended that the district provide more technology training for educators for all software and programs educators are required to use. With the expectations of educators to provide data predominately through technology, having trainings that keep educators current with the changes from the district is necessary. Giving educators the tools necessary to be successful in their job roles increases not only trust in the administration but also job satisfaction.
3. District administration should allow educators to participate in the exit process of students. Participants cited that educators work hard to develop relationships with students. Educators know from working with the student the academic and behavioral growth beyond written data. Allowing educators to participate in the exit process may increase student motivation concerning behavior and academics within the school setting. Allowing educators to participate could also increase educator efficacy because the educators would feel included in the process.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The two delimitations of the study were participation and the COVID-19 pandemic. The study setting was one involuntary enrollment alternative school. Of the 33 possible participants from the sample size, only 10 participants agreed to participate. Including more alternative schools in the school district or state with a similar student population would have provided a

larger sample group along with more data. Those two factors could have made a difference in the findings of the study.

The COVID-19 pandemic displaced educators from being in the physical building during the time of the study. The individual interviews and focus group were both video recorded. Participation may have been higher if the educators were able to meet for individual interviews and the focus group at the actual school building during the educator's planning periods and/or designated professional learning community afterschool meetings. Managing online instruction was the focus of the educators. Participants were limited to the time they could volunteer for the study due to the online school schedule and personal life commitments. Participation may have been higher if educators were operating within the normal protocol that existed prior to the COVID-19 quarantine.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research would be to expand the research to include other types of alternative schools. This study involved one specific school in an urban school district. The urban district contained several different types of involuntary alternative schools as defined by the state in which it was located. A larger number of participants would provide more in-depth and real-life experiences from educators on the phenomenon of educator efficacy in nontraditional school settings.

I also recommend for future research a quantitative study of the perceptions of educators working within an involuntary enrollment alternative school. The daily challenges and operations of this type of school community are different from that of a traditional school setting. A quantitative study would help districts create policies and procedures that are more specific to the needs of educators working within the unique school setting.

My last recommendation is for additional case studies to be used to investigate the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school. As I reviewed literature for this study, I found it challenging to find research specifically geared towards this population of educators. Further case studies could provide research of other educators who share similar challenges as well as successes. More research provides the opportunity for their voices to be heard.

### **Summary**

This qualitative case study investigated the perceptions of educators concerning educator efficacy while working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school setting. The theory that guided the study was Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory in relationship to the four main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological/emotional states. The use of the case study design allowed for educators working within this unique student population an opportunity to express their perceptions and share their experiences. The three data collection methods (short-answer questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group) were used to answer the central question and the four sub-questions.

Chapter Five presented a summary of findings related to my research questions and explained the relationship between the study results and the theoretical and empirical literature found in Chapter Two. Theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study were also provided. The delimitations and limitations of the study were identified, along with recommendations for educators, building administration, and district administration. Lastly, I provided suggestions for future research.

Based on the implications of my study, I feel that the perceptions of educators working in an involuntary enrollment alternative school are affected by three main entities: job satisfaction, relationships with students, and emotional wellness. When building and district leaders initiate practices and policies that are geared towards those three areas, educators feel valued and experience higher levels of efficacy. Educators in this study believe that the work they do with the students in the building does make a difference in the lives of students both academically and socially. The decrease in educator efficacy primarily happens according to the participants when educators feel ignored by leadership, stressed out due to behavioral challenges from students, and/or unsuccessful due to unrealistic district expectations. Educators in the study confirmed Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. When people feel that they are capable of achieving or exceeding an expectation, their sense of confidence, self-worth, and commitment to the task increases. For these participants, educator efficacy is an integral part of their professionalism.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

#### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 23, 2020

Shaundeira Bradford  
James Swezey

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-140 THE PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS CONCERNING SELF-EFFICACY WHILE WORKING IN AN INVOLUNTARY ENROLLMENT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL.

Dear Shaundeira Bradford, James Swezey:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:  
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
Research Ethics Office

## **Appendix B: Consent Form**

**Title of the Project:** The Perceptions of Educators Concerning Self-efficacy While Working in an Involuntary Enrollment Alternative School.

**Principal Investigator:** Shaundeidra Bradford, Ed.S, Liberty University

**Co-investigator:** Dr. James Swezey, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must currently be an educator with at least one year of service at an alternative school. You also must have your professional credentials according to [REDACTED] educator mandates.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### **What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of educators currently working in an alternative school concerning their perceptions on educator self-efficacy. The research seeks to gather perceptions to see how educators working in this specialized student population perceive their own self-efficacy as it pertains to performing daily job tasks.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. Complete a 30-minute questionnaire.
2. Answer interview questions that will be emailed through google classroom. The estimated time to complete the questions is 40 minutes. If we cannot meet face-to-face, we will schedule a video conference at your convenience.
3. Meet with a focus group, which should last approximately 90 minutes. The group will be conducted during a selected afterschool Tuesday meeting time or video conference.
4. Participants will complete member checks to confirm the accuracy of their data.

\*Both the interviews and focus group will be video recorded\*

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

The expected benefit associated with your participation is the gained information about the experiences of fellow educators in an alternative school in the school district.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter when going about your everyday activities.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports 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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the primary researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from focus group data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Shaundendra Bradford. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. James Swezey, at [jaswezey@liberty.edu](mailto:jaswezey@liberty.edu).

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researchers will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record/video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Participant Name

---

Signature & Date

### **Appendix C: Interview Questions**

1. Please state your name, length of time as an educator and the grade level and job role.
2. Please explain your educational philosophy and what shaped your views as an educator.
3. Please describe how your teacher preparation program and/or prior training prepared you for your job expectations.
4. How long have you worked in the alternative school setting?
5. Have you ever worked in a traditional school setting? If so, what differences, if any, do you see between traditional and alternative schools?
6. How do you feel about the training received in regard to handling behavior issues in this school setting?
7. How confident are you in performing your job description?
8. How do other educators' feelings about the workplace affect your personal feelings of self-efficacy?
9. How do the district requirements affect the self-efficacy of educators? Please provide example scenarios.
10. How do you feel professional developments are useful in creating positive self-efficacy?
11. How does an educator's stress level affect their self-efficacy?
12. What factors outside of personality add to or take away from you feeling efficacious at work? (For example, personal work ethic, your education, relationship with administration, colleague relationships at the job, etc.)

13. What other information or thoughts concerning your perception of self-efficacy while working in this unique school community can you share to help educators working within a similar environment?

### **Appendix D: Focus Group Session**

1. Please share with the group a little about yourself and your current position in the school.
2. How does an educator's efficacy impact the work environment? Think about a teacher's classroom management, a security guard's rapport with students, an administrator's relationship with staff, etc.
3. How do you define educator efficacy?
4. Please share one of your most challenging moments as an educator in this setting. How did this moment impact your educator efficacy?
5. Please share one of your most rewarding moments as an educator in this setting. How did this moment impact your educator efficacy?
6. How does educator efficacy affect relationships with students?
7. To what extent do district expectations and/or guidelines directly affect educator efficacy?
8. What suggestions do you have for possible preservice or professional development resources to devote to educator efficacy for those working within this school setting?



### **Appendix E: Short-Answer Questionnaire**

Instructions: Please write your opinion(s) and experiences to the following questions. Please feel free to write as much as you would like. Please also remember that answers are confidential.

Please use this personal email [REDACTED] when returning the questionnaire. This questionnaire will not be filtered by the school system and using my personal email provides confidentiality between the participant and the researcher.

1. What is your perception of how self-efficacy influences your remaining at an involuntary alternative school? (For example, if you feel that you do have an impact on the student learning and that you feel confident in the classroom, does that keep you working at the school?)
2. What personality traits do you feel add to your positive or negative self-efficacy?
3. What factors influence your professional self-efficacy? (Outside circumstances, administrative support, teaching experience, colleague relationships, etc.)
4. When you get home from school, what do you do to decompress and relieve your mind from the stressors of the day? Do you feel that this helps you to feel efficacious in the classroom?
5. Do you think that administration helps, or do they worsen your self-efficacy levels? Why? How?

**Appendix F: District Approval Letter**

[REDACTED TO PROTECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF SCHOOL DISTRICT]