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Exploring Principals' Perceptions About Efficacy in Arizona Urban Schools Designated for the School Improvement Process

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Exploring Principals' Perceptions about Efficacy in Arizona Urban Schools Designated for the

School Improvement Process

by

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Abstract

Studies have determined a positive relationship exists between the self-efficacy of students and academic achievement, and teacher efficacy and student achievement. For over a decade schools have been publicly targeted for school improvement in a process with implications for efficacy. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine if principals' perceptions about efficacy impacted their practices leading school improvement. Principals' responses to two research questions led this study:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Emerging themes were efficacy and morale, data-driven processes, framework for school improvement, efficacious leadership and variances among faculty. Significant findings revealed the negative school label had no impact on the efficacious perceptions of principals, but was interpreted as a form of "public branding" that indefinitely stigmatized schools. The principals were able to develop efficacious school cultures among extreme ranges of teacher expertise by strategically creating balanced professional interactions that promoted professional growth and efficacy.

Recommendations for research include professional development that promotes efficacious practices and strategies to mitigate negative impacts. Recommendations for

policy include consideration of efficacious leadership qualities for underperforming schools and broader criteria for school performance labels. Recommendations for practice include efficacious criteria for school improvement leaders and earlier interventions at the emergence of underperformance indicators.

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Dedication

       This dissertation is dedicated to all of my angels, here and beyond. It is dedicated to my family and friends for their love and patience, for always believing when I doubted myself. My gratitude goes especially to my husband, Denver Patterson, our sons, Jacob Patterson and Conor Patterson, and their beautiful families. This dissertation is also dedicated to the sweet spirit of my daughter, Katie Patterson, lifting me daily with loving signs of her presence.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

Introduction

Self-efficacy is the self-perception that a person has about his or her ability to learn, perform, or acquire a particular task. Goddard (2003) revealed a strong positive relationship between efficacy and student achievement. A number of studies have corroborated the relationship between positive self-efficacy and student achievement (Bandura, 1997; Carroll, 2011; Purzer, 2011). Bandura's framework for social cognitive theory identified teachers as the primary role models for student learning. Learning is the process for replicating what students see in their role models (teachers), reinforced through interactive experiences (1976). It is clear from previous research studies that there is a relationship between efficacy and academic achievement that is consistent across age groups, gender, ethnicity, learning environment, and socioeconomic status (Bandura, 1997; Carroll, 2011; Purzer, 2011).

Research has shown a positive relationship between self-efficacy among teachers and administrators and their level of determination to obtain the goals and objectives that are included in the school improvement process (Carroll, 2011). Educators who have higher levels of self-efficacy also demonstrated a higher level of persistency to overcome the barriers or challenges they encountered during the school improvement process. In addition, studies have demonstrated that schools with concentrated populations of teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy created a higher level of collective efficacy for their school, which led to higher levels of academic achievement for the

entire school community (Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Özgen & Bīndak, 2011; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000).

A school identified for the school improvement process would have demonstrated a history of underperformance in student achievement data for 3 or more years. Based upon previous research studies, poor student achievement data would also indicate lower levels of teacher self-efficacy (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). The public designation as an underperforming school may further lower the level of teacher efficacy. Hence, a lower level of teacher self-efficacy could then be reflected as a result of the underperforming designation. Similar to the Pygmalion Effect of George Bernard Shaw, in which he proposed that individuals behave in a manner expected of them for specific situations, the underperforming label would shift teaching and learning behaviors to mimic the negative connotations associated with the interpretation of the underperforming label (Dwyer, 2011).

An additional concern is the possible misconception among the school community that an underperforming label is a direct measure of the student achievement for the labeled school. The label may, in fact, be the result of other metrics that the public does not necessarily associate with an underperforming label. The metrics may include situations such as: a) the school testing less than 95% of their students enrolled since the start of school, b) a lack of yearly progress for a smaller student subgroup within the student population, c) a disproportionate number of dual-language students without adequate proficiency skills for English as policy makers deem appropriate for their learning, d) a smaller subgroup of exceptional education students who do not have the intellectual capacity to demonstrate mastery grade level proficiency on annual

assessments, or e) enabling behaviors that have negatively impacted academic achievement.

Parents or guardians who lack the ability or will to respond to the issues and behaviors that negatively impact academic achievement also enable their underperforming students. Issues and behaviors, particularly at the middle and high school grades, that interfere with or prevent school engagement include guardianship of younger siblings and family members, parenting their own children, homelessness, and displacement. These factors all negatively impact attendance and foster disciplinary actions that promote negative academic outcomes.

The issues that could have a potentially negative impact upon school labels occur in disproportionately higher levels at schools located in urban settings and geographic areas affected by at-risk factors that include higher rates of poverty, homelessness, crime, absenteeism, dropout, teenage pregnancy, and lowered parental engagement. The improvement process is often imposed upon schools that serve students who come from less advantaged surroundings based upon nonschool factors outside the environmental control system of the school (Downey, 2008). Declining property values within the school's boundaries can further perpetuate the cycle of underperformance due to public perceptions about the quality of education at the school. Depleted property values that result from an underperformance label could fortify a disproportionately skewed student enrollment from lowered socioeconomic backgrounds.

The surrounding communities of underperforming schools must also interpret and navigate the negative connotations associated with the underperforming school label. Expansive opportunities for school choice and the negative perceptions within the

surrounding community could impact the level of neighborhood support that an underperforming school receives as it initiates and mediates the processes of school improvement. Schools that may already have lowered levels of self-efficacy may experience additional declines in efficacy, which hinder the successful implementation of school improvement and reinforce negative public perceptions.

Teachers' efficacy is closely aligned to their perceptions about overcoming the challenges and daily stress they encounter during their performance of everyday duties in the classroom (Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Shambaugh, 2008). Teacher responsibilities have become even more diversified as they facilitate individual student success within a range of learning expectations. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1976) identified past experiences as one of the factors that contributes to and reinforces efficacy. Efficacious teachers build new successes upon past classroom experiences that were successful. Higher teacher efficacy would assist in teachers' abilities to overcome additional challenges, responsibilities, and the unique issues that they may encounter while working in an underperforming school. Teachers who do not have a high level of self-efficacy may not be able to meet the additional demands and stress that they could face while working in such a school environment. As a result, the success of the school improvement efforts could be further challenged.

Underperforming schools have traditionally had higher rates of turnover in instructional staff than other schools in their communities and districts. Schools perceived to be underperforming endure challenges to attract and maintain a teaching faculty that becomes integrated into their community while developing the professional expertise needed to support the academic achievement of their students (Organization,

2013). Union agreements and school board policies that target the least senior employees predominantly target the newest teachers at the lowest performing schools. The lack of connectedness to the school community hinders the development of self-efficacy required for teachers to become the instructional leaders in their respective classrooms. Practices of cutting teaching staff based upon seniority disproportionately affects underperforming schools, degrades the collective efficacy of the schools, and secondarily, leads to a negative impact upon academic achievement.

Most research for self-efficacy has been focused upon the positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. Studies have shown a positive relationship between students with higher levels of self-efficacy and higher levels of academic achievement (Bandura, 1997; Carroll, 2011; Purzer, 2011). Studies have also shown a positive relationship between teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy for their students' ability to succeed and higher levels of academic achievement that their students realize. Bandura corroborated the relationship when his study identified a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student achievement (1997). Further studies have identified the triangulated effect between higher levels of self-efficacy for teachers, higher levels of self-efficacy for students, and higher levels of academic achievement (Purzer, 2011).

Evidence is not as prevalent regarding the possible implications of a negative relationship between self-efficacy and student achievement during the school improvement process. Since the onset of NCLB, schools have been identified as underperforming with labels that the public perceives to be unfavorable. State agencies have the autonomy to design their state's labeling system using a variety of terms of

implied underperforming status that includes "underachieving" or "failing". The school labels themselves along with the public scrutiny, diverse methodologies of communicating to the public, subjective use of data sources, and the policymakers' resulting political repercussions, individually and collectively, have had the potential to impact the self-efficacy of the members in the affected school communities. Teachers in the affected schools have had to work within the confines and perceptions that come with the unacceptable labels for underperformance regardless of their professional capabilities, past performance, or the outlying factors that may have contributed to the situation beyond the control systems of the school environment. The challenges that school leadership encounters during the school improvement process have been further strained from the impact of the underperformance label as they addressed the climate, culture, and efficacy of the school community. Similar challenges are being anticipated with comparable processes continuing under ESSA, enacted during the 2017-18 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore if the principals' perceptions about efficacy played a role in their decision-making processes during the school improvement process in urban Arizona schools. The study explored whether their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community influenced the decisions of principals regarding professional development and intervention strategies during the school improvement process. The study further explored if efficacious perceptions of principals varied among faculty members depending upon other factors like teacher tenure, working as a professional educator, or number of years working at the school site.

This study also investigated whether the variations elicited modified strategies and processes during the school improvement process. The secondary purpose of this research study was to enhance the existing literature and knowledge base regarding efficacy as it relates to the school improvement process. The framework for this research study considered the role of efficacy in the decision-making processes and implementation strategies of principals as they led the school improvement process.

The study looked at specific considerations for efficacy to explore its impact upon the principals' strategic selection and use of support systems distinctive to their site's school improvement process. The teachers, parents, and students may have already had their respective levels of self-efficacy lowered during the onset of their school's designation as an underperforming school and its subsequently being targeted for the school improvement process. The public designation of the school with an underperforming label targeted for the school improvement process may have depleted the self-efficacies of the school community even further.

The self-perceptions within the school community regarding their underperforming label may have brought on negative connotations that could further impede the implementation process and sustainability of progress for school improvement. Fluctuations in the levels of teacher self-efficacy may change over time during the course of the school improvement process. Successful completion of the school improvement process would require the school to have demonstrated proficiency using the metrics for gauging academic success. Metrics included data for student achievement as measured using the assessment criteria that the respective policy-makers identified. Research has shown that an increase in the academic achievement data for

students should be related to an increase in the levels of teacher self-efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Brigman, Villares, & Webb, 2011; Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012; Nasiriyan, Azar, Noruzy, & Dalvand, 2011). Principals who lead the school improvement process need to be cognizant and knowledgeable about efficacy and its impact upon academic achievement.

Efficacious behaviors and attitudes are not directly addressed or acknowledged in the school improvement process. Research studies regarding efficacy and the school improvement process have only just emerged. The application of previous research studies regarding efficacy was not referenced in the broader context of the school improvement process under NCLB or *Race to the Top*. States have the option under ESSA to include an additional school quality indicator that evaluates school performance and accountability. Other optional indicators applied to all students and subgroups included postsecondary readiness, student engagement, or school climate. Although efficacy may be embedded into an indicator like school climate, ESSA did not address it directly (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, 2018).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Conceptual Framework

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was the primary conceptual framework that formed the basis for this qualitative study (1997). Bandura defined self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capacity to succeed. According to Bandura, a student who has a higher level of self-efficacy would be more successful than a peer they perceive as their equal who has a lower level of self-efficacy. Students continuously conduct cognitive appraisals of their learning experiences that include observations, feedback, and personal beliefs to determine whether their performance is a product within their level of capability and/or control system.

Bandura's research focused upon the triangulated reciprocating influences between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors that influence learning and performance outcomes. Students develop more personal efficacious behaviors if they have previously succeeded with positive encouragement to work through challenges and mistakes. Instructional feedback that guides student learning by explicitly identifying both correct and incorrect learning behaviors will boost effectual outcomes. Multiple opportunities in the learning environment to observe peers perceived as equals while they persevere to succeed through similar challenges will enhance self-efficacy. A triangulated impact from the personal, behavioral, and environmental factors will have the greatest influence on self-efficacy.

A secondary conceptual framework for this research study has been Carol Dweck's theory about mindset (2006). Dweck's research identified how an individual's capacity to achieve can influence perceptions about their ability to succeed. A fixed

mindset places limitations upon an individual's ability to achieve outside the perceived boundaries for their capabilities. A growth mindset attitudinally defies achievement boundaries through academic resiliency. Attitudinal differences for learning between fixed mindsets and growth mindsets reinforced the amount of effort learners were willing to put forth when faced with academic challenges. Preconceived limitations for fixed mindsets resulted in learning up to a certain level of ability. Growth mindsets did not recognize limitations and persevered through challenging situations with determination to overcome difficulties. The study determined if school administrators identified an alignment between achievement data and the effectual attitudes of the teachers over the course of the school improvement process.

Study Design and Methodology

Leading the school improvement process requires the ability of school administration to assess or gauge every aspect of the school community efficaciously. Understanding the self-efficacy of the teachers, students, and parents would facilitate the core decision-making processes that would lead to transformational change. Administrative decisions regarding organization, professional development, allocation of resources, and capacity building for sustainable school improvement would be contingent upon the maximization of professional growth and student achievement. Lowered levels of self-efficacy could undermine or suppress the administrative efforts to initiate transformational change expediently that would lead to sustainable school improvement.

School leadership will continually seek out sufficient resources, exemplary professional growth models, and mastery instructional coaching that supports the differentiated needs of the faculty throughout the school improvement process. Support

systems aligned to the identified deficits of the school community are critical to address the issues successfully that resulted in the underperforming status of the school. Lowered levels of self-efficacy and collective efficacy could hinder the successful implementation of professional practices and behaviors that enhance overall performance. Creating and nurturing the momentum for designing a positive trajectory of improvement would depend upon effectual school communities interdependently enhancing academic achievement. Sustaining long-term improvement necessitates a cohesive and efficacious school community.

Data regarding school efficacy are not a direct measure of public school systems. Limited information about school climate and culture included in school quality surveys varies from school to school, district to district, and state to state depending upon the system that commissioned the survey. Consequently, a quantifiable and correlational database was not available regarding school efficacy. As a result, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate method to conduct the research study.

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured process and guided through open-ended questions that initiated discussions to probe the perceptions of the interviewees. Patton indicated that interview questions could be organized into six different categories related to the intended focus of the interviewer (2002). According to Patton, experience and behavior can provide insight about specific actions and behaviors of the interviewee. This qualitative research study explored whether the principals' perceptions about efficacy played a role in their decision-making processes (actions and behaviors) during the school improvement process in urban Arizona schools. The study

explored the phenomenological impact on the efficacious perceptions of turnaround principals while they led the school improvement process (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The process of publicly labeling school quality and designating schools for the school improvement process had implications for the methodology of the research study. Turnaround principals lead schools publicly deemed inadequate from their underperformance label and school improvement designation. This study used a semi-structured interview methodology to ease principals' apprehension and encourage participation through a more personable discussion about their schools. Conducting semi-structured interviews provided principals an opportunity to reflect uninhibitedly upon their professional ideologies and experiences during their work in school improvement. Qualitative data were collected and analyzed.

The study explored how the decision-making processes for school improvement may have been related to the effectual perceptions of principals in urban Arizona schools. Purposeful sampling was the technique used to poll the unique population of principals who led the school improvement process and were targeted to participate in the study. The study sought principals who were distributed among the three school levels. Targeted principals who had led, or were leading, some segment of the contemporary school improvement process were interviewed to determine if their efficacious beliefs and perceptions had implications for their leadership and decision-making processes. A total of 83 public schools that were not charter schools were identified as potential participants for the research study from the Arizona Department of Education's website. Of those, 38 schools were solicited to participate based upon urbanization, student demographics, and progression in the school improvement process. Ten of 11 respondent

principals of K-8 schools were interviewed. One responding high school was excluded in the study due to the limitations of using a single school at the high school level.

A triangulated analysis of coded field notes and transcriptions was completed regarding professional development, strategic interventions, and interpretative variations about efficacy among faculty. The coded data was assessed to identify themes and patterns congruent to the questions that guided the framework of the study. Data analysis was completed to determine if the principals' perceptions about efficacy played a role in their decision-making processes during the school improvement process in urban Arizona schools.

Significance of the Study

Understanding a possible relationship between teacher efficacy and the school improvement process may be key to initiating the school improvement process. The relationship may account for some aspect of the statistical variations in academic achievement sometimes observed after the 1st year of the school improvement process. Anticipating the consequential relationship beforehand and putting appropriate interventions into place may help underperforming schools begin the process of moving forward at a quicker pace. A possible relationship between teacher efficacy and the school improvement process may also have implications that would require further study about the entire labeling process and how it is publicly communicated to the communities at large. The school improvement process is arduous enough without adding unanticipated or unintentional obstacles that create deeper issues to overcome.

Rotter's theory for locus of control identified what is perceived to be the control system responsible for what happens to someone (1975). Locus of control can be applied

to an individual or an entire system for both positive and negative outcomes. A school community with a higher internal locus of control would attribute success to internal factors such as good teachers, motivated students, or highly involved parents. Similarly, failures would be attributed to internal factors such as the failure to implement a new curriculum fully or the failure to inform parents about new school policies. A school community with a higher external locus of control would attribute successes and failures to outside factors. External factors could be the educational level of parents, socioeconomic status of students, or the failure of the district office to reach out and involve the school in the decision-making processes. Teachers with a higher internal locus of control would be expected to have a higher level of self-efficacy and reflect an attitude that internal factors affect their ability to achieve the objective or goal for learning (Wise, 1999).

Interventions for schools deemed underperforming included enhanced opportunities for schoolwide professional development with minimal regard for the level of expertise or proficiencies of the individual teacher. Studies have shown that teacher efficacy influences the attitude and willingness to implement new instructional practices (Guskey, 1988). The study provided a deeper understanding for allocating resources and establishing benchmarks and criteria that guide school leadership. Incorporating support systems and resources that help to overcome undetected obstacles and unintended challenges would facilitate a more efficient and manageable implementation process for school improvement.

The study would be significant for school and district leadership who direct the school improvement process in understanding the significance and role of self-efficacy

for achieving a successful outcome. Policy makers and decision makers would have a deeper understanding when they allocated resources and established benchmarks and criteria to guide school leadership. Incorporating support systems and resources to help overcome undetected obstacles and unintended challenges would facilitate a more efficient and manageable implementation process for school improvement.

Understanding the unintentional negativity and divisiveness that the performance labeling of public schools creates could provide insight about possible strategies to circumvent community backlash and scrutiny. Results from this study could support the inclusion of systemic practices that deflect uninformed misinterpretations. Dissemination of public information could be framed to include specific support systems and the deployment of immediate resources. A strategically preemptive plan that informs the public could diminish the potential for adverse perceptions, negativity, and a fixed mentality regarding the capacity of the schools.

Results from this study provided principals who lead the school improvement process a stronger perceptiveness regarding efficacious support systems that promote and enhance successful outcomes among the school community. A more cognizant approach that is sensitive to the levels of efficacy among the range of community members and groups might ensure a more productive implementation process and sustainability of the momentum that promotes academic improvement. A broader understanding about unrecognized contributions from the school improvement processes might enable school principals to bypass additional challenges and systematically promote improvements to past practices that may have historically impeded academic achievement at the school.

Limitations of the Study

1. Each of the schools might be in a different year of school improvement; however, the schools are nonetheless different in student populations, leadership, interventions, and staffing. It would require an extended longitudinal study beyond the timeframe targeted for this study to determine if these variables might contribute to the outcome of the study.

2. Targeted schools that share similar demographics may have access to dissimilar resources and support systems. Schools with resources that additional funding sources, grants, and district level resources enhance could vary across districts. Variances could result in unintended discrepancies between demographically similar schools.

3. Principals of the targeted schools during the school improvement process may have transitioned into a different position, retired, and/or no longer be accessible for the purposes of the research study.

4. Specific information or recollections regarding teacher placement at the schools may not be available. Teacher choice regarding their placement at the school could have had an impact upon their self-efficacy, the efficacy of their students, and/or the collective efficacy for the school improvement process.

5. Entities that require implementation of school improvement strategies and processes, and that are located outside the control system or decision-making processes of the principals who lead the school improvement process, will be a limitation of the study.

6. The researcher's biases from work experience in school improvement limit the study.

7. The principals' responses potentially limit the objectivity of the study.

Delimitations of the Study

The study will be limited to urban schools identified for the school improvement process in the state of Arizona. Interviews of principals at various levels of school improvement were a delimiting factor as the demographics and progressions for the process could not be quantified for the purposes of the study. Their professional expertise, educational background, personal attributes, and exposure to the school improvement processes framed the delimitations of the individual perceptions of principals. The researcher recognized the delimiting influence of the use of semi-structured interviews with the school principals.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the definitions of terms are as follows:

Academic Achievement: the extent that learning has been achieved as the established criteria measure it.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): the measurement of academic growth achieved from 1 year to the next year.

Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (AzCCRS): Arizona's K-12 instructional standards.

Arizona Comprehensive ESSA Plan: Arizona's plan approved in 2017 under the *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS): Arizona's standards-based assessment for student achievement aligned to the *Arizona Academic Content Standards* administered between 2000 and 2014, data basis for rating school performance under NCLB.

Arizona's Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching (AzMERIT): Arizona's assessment for student achievement to measure AzCCRS for English language arts and math, initiated in 2015, data basis for rating school performance under ESSA.

Collective Efficacy: the efficacy of the community (school) in overcoming obstacles to succeed with a given task.

Collective Helplessness: sense of powerlessness that the community (school) shares due to intrusion of outside forces that direct the work of the community.

Collective Programming: continued reinforcement of specific interpretations.

Culture: the collective programming that differentiates the unique characteristics of one group from another group.

Efficacy: the capacity to achieve a specific goal or skill.

English Language Development (ELD): academic program to develop English skills for English Language Learner students with limited English proficiency.

English Language Learners (ELL): students with limited English proficiency who may be enrolled in an English Language Development (ELD) program.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): first authorized in 1965 with funding for primary and secondary education to close achievement gaps and provide equal access for all students, including exceptional students.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): 2015 reauthorization of ESEA that succeeded NCLB with state flexibility to design own accountability systems.

Failing School: a school determined to be performing at the low to average rate for benchmarks of school proficiency and requiring turnaround interventions.

Fixed Mindset: the belief that intelligence is genetically fixed and cannot be enhanced or grown.

Free and Reduced Meal (FRM): free or reduced meal program for low-income students based upon federal poverty guidelines for family income.

Grad Rate: high school graduation rate.

Growth Mindset: belief that intelligence is not fixed and can be enhanced through determined and resilient learning behaviors.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): students at basic or developing levels of English proficiency.

Local Educational Agency (LEA): most local level of governing for a district, typically a school district, for public schools.

Locus of Control: perception an individual has about the source of the forces that control the outcomes they experience.

Mindset: beliefs about oneself regarding basic qualities including intelligence, talents, and personality.

Minority: nonLatino, white, or Caucasian race and ethnicity.

Mobility Rate: annual rate for student mobility or transition for reasons other than promotion.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): 1991 reauthorization of ESEA that expanded federal role in education through reform that included requirement for states to adopt standards-based system of accountability for basic skills. The system included annual assessments, requirements for teacher qualifications, and school report cards.

Race to the Top: U.S. Department of Education program under President Obama's administration that offered states financial incentives to develop college and career readiness standards and assessments, build data systems to measure and inform instruction, recruit and sustain teachers and principals, and turn around the lowest achieving schools.

School Administration: all administrators designated and accountable for a school.

Self-efficacy: the belief that people have about their ability to learn or to achieve a skill.

Senior Faculty Members: faculty members with the longest length of employment or assignment at an individual school.

Sense of efficacy: collective efficacy or self-efficacy.

SIP: school improvement process.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT): Bandura's theoretical framework for learning through an integrated observational context of social, cognitive, and behavioral factors.

Socio Economic Status (SES): socioeconomic status.

State Educational Agency (SEA): state level of governance.

Tenure: permanent status granted to faculty members who have successfully completed a designated probationary period with their district.

Underachieving: achievement level below that expected based upon what the person is capable of achieving.

Underperforming: performing at a rate below that of everyone else.

Vulnerable Student: students susceptible to underachievement due to learning deficits within and outside of the control systems for the learning environment.

Summary

Metacognitive efficacious processes may not be specifically required for the school improvement process, but purposeful practices for their enhancement might ensure a timelier and more streamlined outcome of success. Research has demonstrated a positive relationship between the self-efficacy of teachers and the self-efficacy of their students (Bandura, 1997; Carroll, 2011; Purzer, 2011). Increased student achievement is the result of positive, efficacious relationships. Research has also demonstrated a positive relationship between the collective efficacy of a school community and student achievement (Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Özgen & Bīndak, 2011; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). It is important for the school administration that leads the school improvement process to support the development of efficacious behaviors that will sustain a positive trajectory for student achievement.

Public labeling of schools and their placement into the school improvement process could impact the levels of efficacy throughout the school community. A stronger understanding about unintended consequences from the labeling process could yield more informative practices about the framework for publicly sharing the data outcomes that result in a school's label. Current policies that inadvertently result in negative public perceptions further challenge the school administration that leads the school improvement process. Understanding the full impact of policies upon the school improvement process

provides the school administration a broader perspective with which to lead the journey

successfully.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The primary theoretical framework that is the basis for this research study is social cognitive theory. Chapter 2 provides an outline of social cognitive theory and describes its impact on the teaching and learning process. This chapter also describes a lesser exploration of mindset to provide insight about the potential impact of preconceived limitations on the capacity to achieve. Successfully navigating the school improvement process requires a school community that is confident in their competencies to achieve and their abilities to overcome challenges. The demonstrative use of highly efficacious behaviors helps a school realize academic achievement.

Social cognitive theory explains the impact of social behaviors and social interactions upon academic efficacy. Academic efficacy contributes to the formation of undefined boundaries that the school community perceives about their ability to succeed. Independent and collective boundaries establish perceived limitations for success that the individual or community holds. Bandura identified four sources for efficacy: mastery experience, level of physiological and emotional arousal, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion (1993). Chapter 2 will explore the effects of the sources on the instructional process and their impact on student learning.

Chapter 2 reviews significant literary contributions about the impact of efficacy upon student achievement. The review includes research studies that explored the effects of efficacy on teaching and learning along with their implications for underperforming schools and schools designated for the school improvement process. The chapter

explores the influences of efficacy that may relate to the school improvement process and reviews the public process for labeling school performance that may target a school for the school improvement process. The review excluded research studies prior to Bandura's research on self-efficacy. The remainder of the chapter provides a literary review about aspects of efficacy that could potentially undermine or disrupt the school improvement process and examines literary contributions about the methodology that the research study used.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research study is Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura identified self-efficacy as the driving force that pushes people to accomplish more than they originally thought possible about their capacity to achieve (Bandura, 1993). Social cognitive theory states that people who have higher levels of self-efficacy tend to perceive themselves as being capable of successfully completing tasks that they interpret to be challenging. Bandura determined that people with higher levels of self-efficacy are more resilient, persistent, and determined to reach successful outcomes.

Self-efficacy is defined as a type of social cognition about student's beliefs regarding their personal ability to succeed with new learning. It refers to the perception all people have about their own capabilities to learn, organize, and use new skills (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 2002). Bandura's social cognitive theory identified social interactions in the learning environment as one of the most influential factors that impacts student learning. According to Bandura, the interconnected and merging processes for cognition, motivation, and affection act as stimuli for the interactions. Academic efficacy

refers to the perceptions students and teachers have about their respective capacity to succeed, as well as the capacity of those with whom they interact. Teachers who have a higher level of self-efficacy also have an enhanced ability to motivate and engage their students in the learning processes (Hoy & Hoy, 2009).

Studies have centered on the effects of self-efficacy for many population subgroups. Other studies have focused on subgroups based on gender, specific core content areas, teacher quality, various configurations of teacher teams, ethnicity, self-perception, socioeconomic status, and grade level or age of students (Caprara, Vecchione, Gerbino, & Barbaranelli, 2011; Feldman, Kim, & Elliott, 2011; Gencosman & Dogru, 2012; Ash, 2006; Bolshakova, Johnson, & Czerniak, 2011; Ozgen & Bindak, 2011). These studies revealed a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement across all demographics. The impact of the relationship was stronger for some subgroups; however, the relationship still existed within all subgroups (Benevides, Corkett, & Jatt, 2011; Wilmore, 2011).

Research has identified a positive correlation between self-efficacy and various learning styles, instructional practices, sources, and educational needs. It is clear that self-efficacy impacts student achievement. Studies have identified a positive relationship between enhanced academic achievement and learning environments that nurture the development of self-efficacy (Brigman, Villares, & Webb, 2011; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012; Nasiriyan, Azar, Noruzy, & Deland, 2011). Research has also shown that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy make transference of newly learned instructional practices from their professional development to improve the teaching and learning processes in their respective classrooms. An

increased use of successful professional practices may be translated into increased student achievement (Penny, 2007).

Researchers have found the positive relationships between self-efficacy and academic achievement in both heterogeneous student populations and homogenous student populations specific to identified subgroupings (Brigman et al., 2011; Caprara et al., 2011; Feldman et al., 2011; Gencosman & Dogru, 2012). Students identified with a higher level of self-efficacy generally have more positive academic outcomes than peers who have a lower level of self-efficacy (Phan, 2012).

There is a similar relationship for self-efficacy among classroom teachers. Students of teachers identified with higher levels of self-efficacy also have more positive academic outcomes (Bandura, 1993; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). The classroom culture for teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy nurtures a stronger sense of self-efficacy for their student learners. Teacher behaviors and attitudes guide the perceptions and beliefs of their students. These behaviors subsequently have a positive impact upon the academic achievement of their students (Bandura 2013; Brigman et al., 2011).

The positive effect of a teacher's efficacy upon the learning environment is evident regardless of the source. Teachers who develop and nurture a higher sense of self-efficacy among their students create an enhanced climate and culture for student learning in their classrooms (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Regardless of whether teachers subconsciously demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy or conscientiously alter and modify their behaviors, both behaviors have demonstrated the positive effects of the relationship between efficacy and learning. Modifications to the learning environments can be purposeful and specific to a program of study or vary with subtle shifts in

classroom practices (Purzer, 2011). A higher sense of self-efficacy translates into higher

levels of persistency and motivation among learners. Efficacious beliefs are centered

upon people's perceptions about their ability to succeed with a specific task. Beliefs

about self-concept lack specificity and create a more comprehensive picture of

individuals' interpretations about their ability to succeed. Self-concept is centered in

many self-beliefs, including self-efficacy (Hoy & Hoy, 2009).

Studies have identified a positive relationship between the organizational and

attitudinal practices of instructional teams and the self-efficacy of their students. Teacher

teams with similar self-perceptions, student perceptions, and levels of self-efficacy have

shown a positive correlation to the self-efficacy and academic achievement of their

students (Dweck, 2006; Moolenaar et al., 2012; Oakley & Krug, 1994). Research has

shown that the effect of this form of "collective motivation" for teacher teams is to

motivate and challenge the students with whom they work to strive for higher levels of

achievement.

Professional development opportunities that enhance a teacher's instructional

practices and strategies ultimately increase their efficacy. Efficacy increases from

increased professional knowledge and proficiency. Strategic investment in the

professional growth of teachers to enhance their self-efficacy can have a positive impact

upon the academic climate and culture for their students (Caprara et al., 2011; Yip, 2012;

Siegle & McCoach, 2007). The positive implications of improved teacher competencies

for self-efficacy are schoolwide.

Researchers have studied the triangulated relationship between teachers, students,

and achievement at various levels. It is clear that a positive correlation exists between the

three variables (Phan, 2012; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Increased teacher efficacy leads to increased student efficacy. Increased student efficacy leads to increased academic achievement. Professional development that includes strategic opportunities to conceptualize student learning without the limitations of preconceived boundaries can be personalized to challenge and redefine current practices (Purzer, 2011; Yildirim, 2012; Feldman et al., 2011). Opportunities for reflective engagement and collegial interactions facilitate the challenges to overcome preconceived ideals.

The relationship between lower levels of self-efficacy and academic achievement can have a long-term impact for an extended period of time. Students with lower levels of self-efficacy during the junior high years have been shown to matriculate into their high school years with even lower levels of self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2011). Increasing a student's self-efficacy about academic achievement earlier in their educational career would increase their overall capacity to achieve higher outcomes for academic achievement (Wilmore, 2011). This increase in capacity has been strongly supported for math, reading, and writing (Benevides et al., 2011; Nasiriyan et al., 2011; Ozgen & Bindak, 2011; Siegle & McCoach, 2007).

Enhanced levels of efficacy would be a strategic intervention for principals who lead the school improvement process. Instructional practices of teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy are representative of commonly found practices identified in classrooms whose students have demonstrated higher levels of achievement. Common practices include enhanced planning and organization, increased openness and willingness to try new methodologies, persistency and resiliency when faced with

challenges, being less critical of students who make errors, and making fewer exceptional education referrals for challenging students (Protheroe, 2008).

The realization of instructional capacity for individual teachers can be enhanced further when they replicate their professional learning experiences in their respective classrooms. Successful replication of new learning and the modification of current practices could facilitate the teachers' efforts in guiding the classroom processes for enhanced student learning. Collegial observations help to develop efficacious teachers as they are interpreted as equals during successful mastery instruction, collegial collaboration and interactions, and the successful implementation of instructional modifications or strategies as the result of specific feedback from school leadership (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). Professional development and discussions between teachers and principals in the school improvement process could be replicated in the classroom. Classroom replication would reinforce successful classroom practices between teachers and students during instructional interactions. Demonstrating observable behaviors expected of teachers during student learning in the classroom reinforces the school community's cohesive approach for school improvement (Protheroe, 2008; Brinson & Steiner, 2007).

The implications for lower levels of self-efficacy on student achievement can result in a range of negative outcomes. The results vary from subtle components of underachievement to blatant failure across all assessed areas. Lower self-efficacy hinders the professional culture of a school environment and incapacitates student learning (Purzer, 2011). Providing teachers an opportunity to realize their capacity as instructional leaders in their respective classrooms gives students the opening to redefine

their own perceptions about their limitations as student learners. Realizing a limitless potential yields higher levels of achievement beyond preset benchmarks (Nasiriyan et al., 2011). Interventions to address teachers' needs for self-efficacy as they work in schools that implement the school improvement process would facilitate the initiation of the process.

Achievement tests have become a fundamental component for accountability of public educational systems. A broader objective to increase the academic achievement of all students has driven the large-scale reliance on achievement tests. Students with the challenges of specific learning disabilities, however, may enter the assessment processes with lowered levels of test-related self-efficacy than students who do not have a learning disability. Learning-disabled students with testing deficiencies are faced with a continual reinforcement of their disability, which may result in further challenges for demonstrating learning proficiencies (Feldman et al., 2011).

The positive correlation between self-efficacy and test performance indicates the possibility for accommodations that address test-related self-efficacy. Strategically appropriate accommodations for students with learning disabilities could increase their motivation and engagement in the assessment processes. Efficacious test-related accommodations would enhance equitable access and alleviate and minimize the effects of the learning disability. Accommodations could lessen the effects of the disability that are not an intentional measurement of the assessment outcome. Studies have found that reasonably appropriate accommodations have a positive impact upon test-related self-efficacy and motivation (Feldman et al., 2011).

Student placement into exceptional education programs is higher for minority and lower socioeconomic subgroups. Deficient outcomes for the student assessments could disproportionately affect the students in the two subgroups (Carter & Welner, 2013; Feldman et al., 2011). Accommodations become even more critical for the schools that serve larger enrollments of exceptional education students, which are commonly found in underperforming schools that get targeted for the school improvement process (Carter & Welner, 2013). The school administration could initiate school improvement, mindful of the potentially lowered levels of test-related self-efficacy among the school community. A heightened awareness about the impact of test-related self-efficacy for student achievement might be beneficial for principals as they commence the school improvement process. Emphasizing specific strategies and interventions that initiate attitudinal shifts about the testing process could facilitate transferences to the entire teaching and learning paradigm (Oakley & Krug, 1994). The principals' derived emphasis towards the exceptional education student population of their school could lead to an improvement in instructional practices schoolwide (Feldman et al., 2011; Oakley & Krug, 1994).

Student self-efficacy enhances academic achievement with increased academic motivation and the strategic application of learning strategies when the students face academically challenging situations. Efficacious students are less inclined to perceive academically challenging situations as threatening, and they are more motivated to persevere as they rely on their use of learning strategies to overcome obstacles and challenges (Yusuf 2011). Self-efficacy is a predictor of student motivation to achieve, particularly for situations that the students perceive as academically challenging. When

compared to inefficacious students of equal ability, efficacious students persevere longer and are more persistent learners, enhanced conceptual problem solvers, and better self-monitors of time. Unlike the broader paradigm of motivation, perceptions about self-efficacy are more precise and aligned to the task at hand (Zimmerman, 2000).

Developing and nurturing efficacy among the school community would augment the success of the school improvement process. Teacher instructional practices would rely upon research-proven methodologies to facilitate the transformation of student learning into a more self-directed, self-regulated, and self-monitored learning process. Shifting responsibility from teacher to student for successful learning would build sustainable capacity. Efficacious student learners would continue to evolve from the increased opportunities for mastery they would experience during the learning process (Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovack, 2002). Creating a continuum of learning would enhance the long-term learning capacity for the academic success of the students and support the school improvement process.

Collective efficacy is the overarching perception of a group about their collective ability to overcome a specific challenge or task (Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Research has demonstrated that the collective efficacy of a classroom or school can impact the overall academic achievement of students; the performance of a classroom and/or school could reflect the respectively higher or lower level of collective efficacy that serves the student population (Özgen & Bīndak, 2011; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Culture can be derived from cultural programming. Cultural programming occurs when the perceived uniqueness or attributes that differentiate an individual or group are reinforced (Lewis, 2006; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Schools could hypothetically experience

the same type of cultural conditioning based upon the unique circumstances of the school's under-performance label. The negative perceptions and interpretations associated with the label could promote negative collective programming and, consequently, lead to a decreased level in the school's collective efficacy in regard to its capacity to succeed with the school improvement process.

Structurally, the majority of the organizational frameworks for school improvement require large turnovers of school staffing in addition to the designation of a new principal to lead the process. Ideally, the reorganization would result in the acquisition of replacement teachers whose individual levels of self-efficacy were higher for turning around student achievement. The resulting reorganization, however, could unintentionally create or reinforce a collective sense of helplessness and lowered collective efficacy among the school community. Collective helplessness results when a group modifies or redirects their behavior due to the perceived imposition of pressure from an outside source. Individually, the group members may have a higher sense of efficacy; however, they may perceive a loss of control over their behavior as a collective group due to a sense of helplessness they derive from the organizational framework of the school improvement process (Bandura, 1997). Amassing a teaching staff whose levels of self-efficacy are independently high would not necessarily translate into a higher level of collective efficacy for their group and/or school.

Previous research studies have demonstrated that collective efficacy is not the sum of individual self-efficacies. Collective efficacy is a group property dependent upon the group's perception about their ability as a community to persevere and overcome challenges (Bandura, 1997, 2000). Overcoming the challenges associated with a school's

designation for school improvement could be hindered if, collectively, the individuals lacked the conviction, motivation, and resiliency to overcome the issues that resulted in the designation. Group dynamics, social interactions, and shared beliefs regarding their capacity to overcome challenges to achieve a shared goal or task define the framework for collective efficacy. Individual self-directedness among group members can enhance the collective directedness of the group when the membership shares similar values and goals. Efficacious individuals and groups will seek out resources and mobilize efforts to overcome barriers that impede successful attainment of shared goals (Bandura, 1993, 1997).

Professional development targeted for deficiencies in student learning outcomes that placed the school into the improvement process could enhance collective efficacy by a) emphasizing the development of new instructional knowledge and skills, b) creating opportunities for professional collaboration to share ideas and experiences, c) providing interpretative results of current methodologies with actionable feedback to improve practices, and d) giving opportunities for decision-making processes. Professional development that identifies successful outcomes, aligns results to commonly shared norms and defined expectations, and gives a tempered presentation of successful benchmarks would be most effective for addressing school improvement deficiencies. School leadership's recognition of progress would boost the collective efficacy through increased confidence of teachers regarding their instructional competencies that would be balanced to avoid a sense of complacency or overconfidence (Brinson & Steiner, 2007).

A secondary theoretical framework that provides insight about unintended challenges for leaders of the school improvement process is mindset. Mindset addresses

the impact that beliefs or paradigms have upon an individual's perceptions about their ability to succeed (Dweck, 2006; Oakley & Krug, 1994). Mindset is a personality trait that could affect the sense of efficacy among a school community, particularly one that grapples with the school improvement process. Previous studies have indicated that rigidly defined boundaries limit a fixed mindset. The predetermined boundaries represent distinct limitations in the capacity to achieve. A belief that ability is a predetermined function of intelligence or some other construct of capability establishes the limitations to the boundaries of a fixed mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that the intellectual capacity to achieve cannot be increased regardless of work ethic, determination, or level of perseverance to work through a task (Dweck, 2006).

Growth mindset is a belief that hard work and a determination to overcome challenging situations can enhance the capacity to achieve. Contrary to fixed mindset, in which intellectual capacity cannot exceed a predetermined value, the intellectual capacity of growth mindset is undefined and dependent upon a person's effort and willingness to persevere when faced with challenge (Dweck, 2006; Oakley & Krug, 1994). A growth mindset, including the application of effort and the persistency to overcome when confronted with demanding learning situations, cultivates learning behaviors that facilitate academic success. Fixed mindset interprets effort to be indicative of a lowered level of ability. Growth mindset correlates the application of effort to the level of achievement. The more effort exerted to achieve, the higher the outcome will be for achievement (Dweck, 2006).

A conceptualized perception among the school community with regard to mindset could limit the school improvement process. A fixed mindset could impede the process

for increasing a school community's sense of efficacy to overcome the indicators for underperformance. A fixed mindset could further challenge school administrators who lead the school improvement process and inhibit strategies to increase and maintain higher levels of self-efficacy regardless of the applied effort or determination that the school community puts forth.

Student self-efficacy and personality traits predict academic achievement in junior high and become even more predictive as a student matriculates through high school. Personality traits are broad and unconditionally functional behaviors that corroborate the academic potential of a student. Self-efficacy is the structural framework for knowledge that enables the student to reflect upon and learn from a range of instructional experiences. Studies have found that self-efficacy has a mediating effect between the personality traits and specific performance tasks (Caprara et al., 2011). The mediating effect sustains the triangulated progressions for cognition, affection, and motivation. Collectively, the mediated personality traits lead to successful outcomes for academic achievement.

Self-efficacy reinforces the personality traits associated with higher aspirations for academic achievement that can persevere and resonate over time. A decreased level of academic achievement at the end of junior high school was found to contribute significantly to a decreased level of academic self-efficacy. Efficacious beliefs had a higher impact upon academic achievement in high school than in junior high school. The potential and consequential lifetime effect upon a student's academic career reinforces the need to ensure that higher levels of self-efficacy are developed and nurtured as early as possible and sustained throughout the entire educational career. A deficiency in

personality traits associated with academic achievement could further complicate the school improvement process when addressing self-efficacy (Caprara et al., 2011). The inclusion of resources and strategic interventions to address self-efficacy might require assets for the enhancement of personality traits associated with academic achievement.

The ability to persevere and continue to put forth effort to work harder when academically challenged depends on the self-efficacy of learners and the collective efficacy of the school community. The successful application of newly gained knowledge outside the context of the learning processes and the creation of more confident learners require school administration to lead the development of specific strategies for the enhancement of self-efficacy. Purposeful professional development for mathematics teachers that enhanced their ability to facilitate learning by capitalizing on some of the most influential instructional practices produced students who were better equipped to persevere when challenged during the teaching and learning process (Siegle & McCoach, 2007). Practices that connected student learning to positive past performances and contributed to increased confidence levels regarding academic achievement included increased opportunities for vicarious experiences through peer observations, teachers' persuasive verbal affirmations regarding the positive capabilities of their students, and a heightened awareness of psychological cues that indicated stress.

Students who established specific performance goals and gauged their progression towards successfully completing the goals were able to receive incremental affirmation of their success. Newly gained success towards the performance goal resulted in incremental increases in the levels of self-efficacy for the students. Teachers facilitated student understanding regarding the relationship between effort and ability. Students

developed higher levels of self-efficacy and achievement when teachers provided explicit feedback regarding their ability instead of their effort. Yildirim's research explicitly identified the mediating effect between teacher feedback, anxiety, and self-efficacy for math achievement for low SES students, low self-efficacy, and high levels of anxiety (2012). Effort used to explain failure and ability used to explain success guided a student appreciation for personal aptitude (Dweck, 2006; Oakley & Krug, 1994). Opportunities for students to observe similarly perceived peers performing learning tasks reinforced a stronger self-concept regarding their own ability to replicate the same tasks successfully. Increased confidence of students led to an increase in their self-efficacy. Students who were taught to recognize psychological and physiological cues for stress were better equipped to apply appropriate interventions independently to help lessen its impact upon their self-efficacy (Siegle et al., 2011; Yildirim, 2012).

Studies have recognized cooperative learning as one of the successful instructional methodologies that increase the perceived levels of self-efficacy among teachers and students, bolster academic achievement, and lower test anxiety. By strategically increasing the implementation of cooperative learning opportunities, student anxiety that results from shared preconceived ideologies and aptitudes about learning science will decrease among teachers and students (Gencosman & Doğru, 2012). The instructional culture for science and technology revealed that teachers and students shared a perception that a certain aptitude for science facilitated academic achievement in lower leveled classrooms. A shared perception indicated that teachers and students believed that science was a discipline for which people are either more or less inclined to succeed. Lowered levels of self-efficacy resulted in students who interpreted challenging

tasks to be much more difficult than what they were actually gauged to be; by contrast, higher levels of self-efficacy resulted in students who felt more confident and less anxious in regard to the task. Teacher-planned cooperative learning activities relieved students' levels of anxiety and increased opportunities for heightened engagement in emotional and cognitive learning processes. Students expanded their experiences through peer feedback, discussing ideas, transferring knowledge, and remembering new content. Ultimately, participating students were able to gain an increased level of academic achievement and a decrease in their perceptions of low self-efficacy.

Social Cognitive Theory explains the role that self-efficacy plays in the value students place upon the learning task and the amount of motivation they are willing to exert to master the task. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy place a higher value on their learning and are willing to exert more effort towards the mastery of their learning. Inversely, students with lower levels of self-efficacy place a lower value upon their learning than efficacious students and limit the amount of effort they are willing to exert towards their mastery of the learning (Nasiriyan et al., 2011).

Expectations for achievement, the value attributed to the learning task, and self-efficacy are interconnected elements that shape student motivation. Students with lower levels of self-efficacy have a higher tendency for task avoidance, higher possibility for task abandonment, and lower levels of academic achievement. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy have a lower tendency for task avoidance, lower possibility for task abandonment, and higher levels of achievement. As a result, self-efficacy indirectly influences students' overall persistency to complete the learning task and their willingness to apply or suppress effort (Bandura, 1993; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Higher levels

of self-efficacy in students result in higher effort, increased persistence, and a higher level of achievement.

Building and sustaining teacher efficacy is a vital component of the school improvement process. Strategies to maximize teacher efficacy include various models of coaching and mentoring. The most effective strategy for building teacher efficacy is to increase their opportunities for collegial observations of modeling the newly learned strategy, followed by the implementation and mastery of the new strategy in the observer's classroom. The amount of time a coach spent in a classroom was another contributing factor. Desensitization to the coach's presence and the relinquishing of power are potential consequences from too much time in the observer's classroom (Shidler, 2008). The quality of interaction between the coach and observant teacher is important and requires a strategic plan of support. School administration that leads the school improvement process needs to work with instructional coaches to ensure that achievement goals are aligned to teacher goals for professional growth. Building and sustaining teacher efficacy requires a differentiated support system for the individual needs of faculty members. Increased teacher efficacy will ultimately lead to the increased collective efficacy of the school and increased self-efficacy of students. Increased efficacy will eventually result in an increased level of student academic achievement.

Self-efficacy beliefs are not static and can be improved or changed over time. Factors outside the control systems of the school that could impact self-efficacy were the students' socioeconomic status (SES) and the educational level of their parents. Students with a lower SES and parents with lower educational status were found to also have

lowered levels of self-efficacy. The students' respective level of achievement and the perceived importance that the school community holds regarding achievement are included within the control system of school factors that impact the stability of self-efficacy (Özgen & Bīndak, 2011). Students confronted with a more challenging mathematics curriculum, which they believed their community highly revered or valued, demonstrated a positive shift in their efficacious belief systems towards the math content.

Merging organizational practices can impact the efficacious belief within a school community. Identified practices that could affect self-efficacy are high expectations for student behaviors and academic performance, high levels of collaborative interaction and collegial encouragement, and strong principal leadership (Moolenaar et al., 2011). A convergence of the specific practices resulted in increased levels of collective efficacy among teachers that led to higher student achievement. Collegial interactions and a shared vision for student expectations strengthened and reinforced efficacious beliefs among teachers. Changes to the teacher configuration to facilitate collaborative practices yielded a shared perspective regarding mutual responsibilities, congruency for student expectations, and an increased sense of effectiveness as a classroom teacher. Reconfigured teacher networks expanded teacher connections that reinforced a shared vision. Enhanced teacher competencies and an increase in the faculty's self-confidence for instructional capacity had a positive impact on student learning. Professional social networks that leveraged school resources and a collective knowledge base among teachers also made positive contributions to student achievement.

Collective efficacy can be as strong a predictor for student achievement as SES (Goddard et al., 2004; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). The reinforcement of collective efficacy

through traversed reorganizational strategies led to improvements in student achievement (Moolenaar et al., 2012). Cultivating and nurturing a strong, collaborative teacher community with a shared vision of success could potentially buttress the successful leadership of the school improvement process. Schools with a social context for the exchange of instructional advice among teachers support a perception for their school's collective impact for student learning. Supporting their collective beliefs could ultimately lead to increased levels of achievement for their students.

Team discourse deters positive social interactions and impedes the positive contributions that the social interactions yield. Constructive teamwork promotes higher levels of collective efficacy through the manifestation of social, affective, and cognitive interactions among the shared community (Purzer, 2011). School leadership's management of social discourse to help minimize off-task behaviors by depending upon the use of negative consequences could potentially result in a diminished capacity for the efficacious beliefs among the school community. Enhanced conflict management skills and the promotion of individual achievement result in higher levels of collective efficacy. Strategies to promote individual achievement within a group setting include a collaborative approach for the assignment of tasks, a procedure for sharing and discussing ideas and viewpoints, and the minimization of off-task behaviors. Conflict management skills are utilized to minimize off-task behaviors and increase constructive teamwork.

Increased teacher efficacy led to improvements in respective professional practices in the classroom. Improved professional practices resulted in benefits for student learning that the increases in student achievement reflected. Ultimately, there

was a reciprocal relationship between teacher efficacy and improved professional practices (Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty, 2010). Improvements for student achievement resulted from the teachers' successful application of their mastery of professional practices. Consequently, teachers realized an increased self-confidence that resulted in a rejuvenation of their efforts. The final result was an efficacious, cyclical system for continuous interactive improvement in student achievement and teachers' professional practices. Progressive improvements for teachers resulted in their increased self-efficacy, which led to progressive improvements for student achievement that resulted in increased self-efficacy for students. A reciprocal and naturally recurring pattern emerged for collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy is the shared perception among teachers in a school community who believe that their combined efforts have a positive impact on student achievement (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of collective efficacy for transformational change that leads to improved outcomes for student achievement (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). These authors found that collective efficacy was a stronger predictor for student achievement than other factors outside the control systems of schools including race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Student achievement attributable to collective efficacy ameliorates the negative impact from lowered socioeconomic status.

School Improvement Processes

Nationally there has been an ideological shift in public education from a locally managed service towards a more federally managed product designed to support interests from the business and economic sectors (Mette, 2013). Turnaround models in education

are similar to the organizational turnaround strategies in the business sector. Organizational shifts in culture systematically permeate the entire process. Organizational culture affects the ability of a group to build capacity, respond appropriately to change, and demonstrate progress with speed and efficiency (Ayiecha & Senaji, 2014). Similar to turnaround strategies in business, turnaround strategies in public education reinforce a radically unique approach from traditional educational models. Like the expected recovery in business using the organizational turnaround model, turnaround models in public education expect recovery from persistently poor performance indicators within 2 years' time. Management is the most influential reallocated variable of organizational turnaround, similar to the role of principals for the turnaround process in public education. Retrenchment of factors within the control systems of the business managers had a positive impact upon organizational turnaround. Control systems that school leadership in public education manages, however, differ widely from those found in the business sector (Mette, 2013; Ayiecha & Senaji, 2014).

Opposition to the turnaround process for public schools also includes arguments regarding perceptions about corporate control overshadowing the decision-making process, policies, and economic challenges faced during the economic recession. The progression of school labels, restructuring processes, and leveraging the management of state and local educational agencies through enhanced federal funding for compliance has driven the proposals for a neoliberal agenda (Mette, 2013). Detractors cite a lack of research for the application of organizational turnaround strategies from business to the public school sector. School administrators that lead school improvement efforts must balance the state and local officials' range of interpretations regarding the intentions of

federal policy. Outside corporate interests that capitalize on the infiltration of federal funding guide the policymakers. Billions of dollars that the federal government funneled into public education have transformed public schools into a business commodity that overshadows the operational decision making for curriculum, instructional resources, assessments, and efficiency (Mette, 2013; Downey, von Hipple, & Hughes, 2008).

In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) evolved under the presidency of George W. Bush. From NCLB, *Race to the Top* grant programs were developed under the administration of President Barack Obama. *Race to the Top* was one of many competitive funding programs under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* of 2009, signed into law to address the greatest U.S. economic challenge since the Great Depression of 1929 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, 2010). State Educational Agencies (SEAs) competed for grants that were, in turn, subgranted to the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). SEAs identified the lowest performing schools based upon their ability to meet the academic needs of specific student subgroups to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Committed LEAs could submit grant proposals to augment support systems for the schools that were identified with the lowest performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The most competitive grants reflected elements of financial commitment to expand opportunities to improve educational outcomes.

The established criteria in *Race to the Top* for the demonstration of academic success included levels of progressive academic achievement that were differentiated by performance levels that categorized schools into subgroups of proficiency (DOE, 2010, 2014). Secretary Duncan announced the implementation of the *Turn-Around* process for underperforming schools in 2009 and called upon the collective work of the public school

systems, charter operators, and the private sector business community to have the

"courage" to address the issue of underperforming schools through the support of a $3.5

billion federal grant. The lowest performing schools were targeted for the *Turn-Around*

designation and limited to the most aggressive forms of reform. Reform included a

requirement that schools be restructured using one of four proposed models:

1. *Turn-Around*—Replace the principal and at least 50% of the school staff.

   Provide the principal with the operational flexibility to support reform efforts.

2. *Restart Model*—Convert the school under an operator of charter schools, or

   close the school and restart it under an operator of charter schools that has

   undergone a rigorous review process.

3. *School Closure*—Close the school and reenroll students into other schools that

   are identified as higher performing in the Local Educational Agency.

4. *Transformation*—Replace the principal and provide the new principal with the

   operational flexibility to support reform efforts with sustained support.

   Initiate comprehensive instructional reforms and increase learning time in a

   community-oriented environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) was passed in 2015 to succeed NCLB.

Although ESSA was passed under President Obama's administration, it became fully

implemented under President Donald Trump's administration. ESSA retains school

accountability and rating school performance, but states have more autonomy to develop

systems respective to the needs of their constituents. New state system plans for the

2017-18 school year required approval from the U.S. Department of Education. States

were required to develop successful student pathways to college and career and to set

goals and timelines for closing their achievement gaps in math and reading for all student subgroups. By 2030, each subgroup must achieve a minimum proficiency rate of 90%. State design of accountability systems may be more holistic, but NCLB requirements for evaluating school performance and informing the community are retained. ESSA retains similar applications in state accountability systems for persistently low-achieving student subgroups, low graduation rates, and lowest performing 5 percent of schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

In addition to the federal system of accountability, states have their own standards for achievement and school quality. Schools are labeled for their state designation based upon the academic achievement profile specific to their state standards. Under NCLB, Arizona schools implemented a tiered system for labeling school performance based upon criteria for student achievement and graduation rate for high schools. Under NCLB, student achievement was initially measured on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) for schools and student subgroups of 10 or more. Graduation rates were based upon a 3-year data analysis (Arizona Department of Education, 2011). Under ESSA, Arizona proposed to continue a similar rating system for evaluating schools and informing the community about school performance. Proposed changes included the use of student performance data from the Arizona Measurement of Educational Readiness to Inform Teaching (AzMERIT), increases in the size of student subgroups from 10 to 20 or more students, including student performance data for AIMS science, and assessment data for successful student pathways to college and career (Arizona Department of Education, 2017).

Performance labels for school accountability that the federal system designated may not be congruent or aligned to the performance labels of state systems. A school could receive a federal underperformance label for academic achievement that consequently targets it for the *Turn-Around* process while it simultaneously receives a more positive label for academic achievement from its state agency. Contradictory state and federal labels could still result in an underperforming designation. The specific components that the federal and state system designations require the schools to address by may not be interchangeable (Garcia, 2011). Each system may carry explicit components respective to its established criteria for measuring academic achievement that result in the designated school performance label. Implications for the congruency of federal and state systems that rate school performance under ESSA are unknown at this point.

Limited public assumptions about student achievement based upon a negative school label may be due to a single factor that does not reflect the broader student achievement at the school. Designation for school improvement occurs when a subgroup of 20 or more students does not demonstrate proficient outcomes for 3 consecutive years. Twenty students is a disproportionately smaller number for schools with large enrollments. For example, a school of 1,500 students would be designated for school improvement based on the proficiency of a significantly lower segment of its students compared to smaller schools. Defining school quality on the proficiency outcomes of 20 students disregards the effectiveness the larger school may have had for its other 1,480 students. Public interpretations about overall school quality from negative labels that are

synonymous with "failing" do not reflect the quality of education that other segments of the school's enrollment, which may be copious in comparison, experience.

This research study explored the efficacious perceptions of principals in urban Arizona schools designated for the school improvement process. These perceptions were focused on the impact that the underperformance label and designation for the school improvement process had on their school's efficacy. The Arizona Department of Education's website for school improvement identified a total of 202 public schools (Arizona Department of Education, 2011). Charter schools were excluded due to their operational variables, which left a total of 83 potential schools for the study. School demographic data identified 38 schools that were targeted for the study. One high school that agreed to participate in the study was not included due to limitations of a single school level. The other 10 K-8 schools that agreed to participate were included in the study.

School quality surveys that public school systems commissioned were limited to a range of indirect and unrelated efficacious indicators. A lack of a quantifiable and correlational database for school efficacy resulted in a qualitative approach for the research study. The public process for labeling school performance and designation for this performance process had implications for the research methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). I developed a semi-structured interview process to guide principals through open-ended questions that probed their perceptions about efficacy. The methodology eased the principals' apprehensions and encouraged participation in a research study about their leadership of a school with an underperformance label and school improvement status that was publicly defined as inadequate. Principals could

reflect upon their work in school improvement and uninhibitedly discuss their professional ideologies and experiences.

Patton indicated that interview questions can be classified into six unique categories that depend upon the focus of the interviewer (2002). As a result, experiences and behaviors can provide insight about the actions and behaviors of the interviewee. This qualitative research study explored if the schools' underperformance labels imposed during the school improvement process impacted the principals' perceptions about efficacy or their decision-making processes (actions and behaviors). This research study explored the impact of the efficacious perceptions of turnaround principals in urban Arizona schools.

Summary

Successful outcomes for school improvement require transformational change regardless of the model utilized for the process. Two of four models require the retention of 50-100% of the previous faculty and staff, leading to the school's identification for the school improvement process. The returning teachers could enter the process feeling ill prepared, less capable, and less willing to invest themselves in the school improvement process. Returning teachers could bring additional challenges to the process that school leadership would have to address including perceptions that students are not motivated to learn, some students could not achieve, or an inability to reach out when needed.

Shared perceptions among the students, parents, and surrounding community that contribute to the collective efficacy of the school may be further impacted prior to the onset of school improvement and throughout the yearly progression of the process. The negative impact from being labeled an underperforming school could suppress the

indicators for collective efficacy and further impede the transformational processes for increased student achievement that school leadership implements. A depletion of collective efficacy creates additional barriers for the school administration's attempts to capitalize upon the existing talents to increase the capacity of instructional leadership among the existing faculty and staff.

Teacher perceptions regarding their own self-efficacy for teaching were highly correlated to the perceptions they have regarding their students' self-efficacy. Students will generally perform to meet the threshold for the expected level of achievement that their teachers establish. Teacher expectations for their students may not be formally shared, but the students innately perceive them. The perceptual threshold of their teacher could bind limitations to student achievement. Higher teacher expectations could yield higher levels of student achievement, but lower expectations could yield lower levels of student achievement (Corkett, Hatt, & Benevides, 2011; Jensen, 2013). Lowered beliefs about capacity to achieve that reinforce fixed mindsets about classroom expectations could ubiquitously extend throughout the school community.

The contemporary political climate for school change underscores the sense of urgency for principals to demonstrate quick turnaround results that student testing outcomes will evidence. Incentivized efforts of teachers to address student achievement could reinforce a school environment that enhances the societal barriers that students typically served at the targeted schools face (Carter & Welner, 2013). Principals who lead the school improvement process need to prioritize efforts and resources in a methodical and informed manner. Purposefully implemented strategies to cultivate efficacious behaviors will elicit stronger persistency and engagement in the learning

processes. Previous research has demonstrated that a 2 percent increase in disengagement could result in a 1 percent decrease in performance on high-stakes assessments (Valentine & Collins, 2011). Strategically implemented interventions for enhanced teacher perceptions about student efficacy could result in correlated improvements in student achievement (Corket et al., 2011).

This research will try to determine if principals in Arizona who led school improvement efforts made decisions about the process based upon efficacious interpretations about their school community. Principals' interpretations about efficacy that they identified as driving forces for their decision-making processes may provide insight to guide future school improvement efforts. Specificity and commonalities for the enhancement of efficacious behaviors could reveal important, overt elements to the school improvement process that should be accounted for in a deliberately tenacious manner. A heightened awareness about self-efficacy could provide a more systematic and streamlined process for implementing school improvement. Enhanced self-efficacy across the school community could be embedded at the core of the plan for the school improvement process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

Previous studies have determined a positive relationship between the self-efficacy of students and academic achievement. Studies have also identified a positive relationship between the level of self-efficacy of teachers and the academic achievement of their students. The triangulated relationship between the self-efficacy of teachers, the self-efficacy of students, and academic achievement has been identified for various student demographics (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Bruce et al., 2010; Siegle & McCoach, 2007).

Over the past decade, many schools nationwide have been identified as underperforming and placed into the school improvement process. The methodology and processes for school improvement are public and may impact the levels of efficacy for a school as it initiates and navigates its course of action. Principals who lead the school improvement process need to be cognizant of the possible implications that efficacy could have for their efforts to initiate and sustain successful process. Systematic and strategic approaches towards efficacy during the school improvement process could support collective efforts, promote success, and enhance timely processes.

The procedures and methodologies for the collection of data used in the research study are explained in Chapter 3. The chapter also describes the population and sample that were targeted for the study. In addition, Chapter 3 provides a description of the instrumentation that was used for the study, the processes for data collection, and the procedures for analyzing and reporting the data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore if the principals' perceptions about efficacy played a role in their decision-making processes during the school improvement process in urban Arizona schools. The study explored if the principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their school community influenced their decisions regarding professional development and intervention strategies during the school improvement process. The study further explored if efficacious perceptions of principals varied based upon the tenure of their faculty members, or if they elicited modified strategies and processes during the annual progression of the school improvement process.

Research Questions

The study explored the perceptions and interpretations of urban Arizona school principals regarding efficacy during the school improvement process. The study explored the principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their schools regarding the strategic decision-making processes that drive the school improvement effort including interpretative decisions about the organizational strengths, professional development needs of faculty members, and changes to evaluative methodologies during the annual progression of the school improvement process. The following questions about the perceptions, interpretations, and responses of urban school principals who lead the school improvement process in Arizona guided the study:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school

community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school

improvement process?

Population and Sample

This study sought a purposeful sampling of school administrators who lead the

school improvement process in Arizona to participate in the researcher's interviews.

Ideally, school principals were a representative balance of similar demographics and

school communities. This study sought principals who reflected comparable

characteristics of the student demographics for their respective schools and exemplified a

diverse range of personal and professional demographics. Striving for equivalency

between principals lessened unintended variances that arise from the dissimilar grades

that schools serve.

I obtained a comprehensive list of participant schools for the school improvement

process from the public domain website of the Arizona Department of Education.

Consultations with representatives from the Arizona Department of Education and online

reviews of the department's website provided more specific data regarding the school

labels, inception dates, contact information, progression in the timetable for the school

improvement process, and demographic information. I obtained additional information

from district level websites for the identified schools.

Efficacy was not a direct measure that most schools addressed. Therefore, a

quantifiable and correlational database was not available for evaluating school efficacy as

it relates to the school improvement process. School quality surveys for climate and

culture vary between schools and districts. Distinct variations between databases are

specific to the informational needs of the respective schools and districts that commission the surveys. Specific indicators that relate to schools identified as underperforming or targeted for the school improvement process also are not available. As a result of these issues, the study afforded a qualitative approach.

The onset of the public labeling process for school quality and contemporary school improvement created challenges for the solicitation of participant principals. Factors such as an individual's professional success, accessibility, and willingness to participate in a study about school improvement created unique challenges. Depending upon the individual, participants could potentially expose their personal and professional vulnerabilities. A more personable and non-threatening method to engage participants resulted in the use of a semi-structured interview methodology for the research study.

I considered all schools identified for school improvement on the Department of Education website for the research study, excluding charter schools and schools that exceeded 3 years of school improvement due to limitations that could not be delineated. The organization, management, and administration of Arizona charter schools created unique variables from their public school counterparts. Schools that exceeded 3 years in school improvement created distinct variables from multiple years of school improvement processes and principal accessibility. A final pool of 83 schools remained. The pool was evaluated for urbanization, demographics, school level, and years in school improvement, which resulted in 38 potential participant schools. I solicited the superintendent or district designee for each of the 38 schools to participate in the study. Ten schools that serve grades K-8 and one high school that serves grades 9-12 agreed to participate in the study. High school performance criteria were uncharacteristic of K-8

schools. Striving for equivalency between principals and unintended variances between dissimilar grade levels, the study focused on schools that served K-8 grade levels, and the single high school was excluded. Three school levels that served K-8 grades were brought into the study including elementary, middle, and K-8 schools. Although similar demographics and year of entry into the school improvement process would be ideal among participants, limitations of the study included the possibility that schools would not share similar criteria.

I asked principal participants to complete a brief questionnaire prior to the onset of the scheduled interview. Results from the questionnaires helped to corroborate demographic data found on the websites for the school, district, and Department of Education. Information about the school's longevity in the school improvement process and the principals' tenure at the school were corroborated in the questionnaire. No variances between websites and questionnaires for demographic data were discovered that needed to be verified or reported in the results of the research study.

Participant Profiles

Sample participants were school administrators in Arizona who have served or were serving as principals during the school improvement process. Schools were categorized according to demographics, student populations, year of entry into the school improvement process, and the level of the school. Thirty-eight principals associated with schools most closely aligned in the classification process were sent requests to participate in the research study. Collectively, a pool of 10 principals represented the sample for the phenomenological research study.

Ideally, the study would have included an equitable representation of schools for each of the annual progressions of the school improvement process; however, unforeseen limitations required the study to include a mixture of participants that were not an equal distribution for the annual progressions of the process. Additional limitations that expanded the framework of the study were demographics, the willingness and/or ability of the districts and schools to participate in the study, and the transition of leadership over the course of the school improvement process. My inability to make contact with the identified school leadership who led the targeted school at the specific points of the school improvement process impeded the research design and expanded the profile of sample schools.

Seven of the principals were new to their school at the onset of the school improvement process. Three of the principals were already members of their school's community prior to the onset of the school improvement process. The three established principals had served in a variety of instructional positions over the course of their seniority at the school. Their current position as the school's turnaround principal met the school improvement criteria for the turnaround process that required replacement of the principal as each had been in their position for 1 year or less at the onset of the school improvement designation. Two of the three established principals reapplied in a competitive interview process before they were eventually reappointed into their principal position. The other established principal was appointed as the turnaround principal and transitioned from a different administrative position at the school site where he had worked alongside his predecessor.

Demographic and faculty staffing data were compiled for the 10 schools that the participant principals served (Table 1). Six of 10 schools had previously been targeted for the school improvement under the leadership of different principals. Some of the schools had experienced school improvement more than two times, which increased the possibility of efficacious impacts. Five of the schools where the participant principals served were in their 1st year of school improvement. The other five schools that the participant principals served had been in school improvement spanning 2 to 6 years. The range of grade levels that the schools of the participant principals served went from preschool up to 8th grade. The percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced meals and were enrolled at the schools of the participant principals ranged from 75% to 100%. The percentage of students who were identified as English language learners enrolled at the schools of the participant principals ranged from 10% to 66%. The percentage of faculty members who were new to the schools of the participant principals at the onset of school improvement ranged from 5% to 94%.

Table 1

School Demographics and Faculty Staffing for School Improvement Process (SIP)

School	Years in SIP	Grade Levels	Total Enroll	Percent ELL or ELD	Percent FRM	Total Number of Faculty	Total Number of Previous Faculty Retained at Onset of SIP	Number Faculty of Faculty New to School at Onset of SIP
A	1	K-6	628	42%	76%	27	23	4
B	3	PK-6	611	23%	89%	39	36	3
C	1	K-8	524	66%	100%	60	49	11
D	6	PS-8	550	10%	75%	30	15	15
E	1	7-8	800	25%	93%	104	62	42
F	1	PK-5	155	35%	100%	37	35	2
G	4	3-5	287	10%	95%	18	1	17
H	1	K-5	479	39%	84%	28	19	9
I	3	6-8	850	45%	95%	49	27	22
J	2	6-8	450	15%	88%	45	5	40

SIP-School Improvement Process
Enroll-Enrollment
ELL or ELD-English Language Learners or English Language Development
FRM-Free or Reduced Meals
K-K indergarten
PK-Prekindergarten
PS-Preschool

Instrumentation

This qualitative research study uses a phenomenological approach. Although the phenomenological study is designed as a descriptive study, it offers insight into the phenomena of how the school improvement process might have impacted the efficacy of the schools and some strategic decisions that their principals made. Specifically, the principals might make key decisions for professional development, intervention strategies, and interpretive processes for faculty based upon their perceptions about efficacy. The principals might seek and employ specific methodologies for the school

improvement process based upon their perceptions about efficacy layered within the school community.

Instrumentation used for data collection included a questionnaire that the principals completed prior to the onset of the interview (Appendix A). Questionnaires contained 10 questions to corroborate website data regarding school demographics, year when the school initiated the school improvement process, the principal's tenure at the school, and the principal's role or position during the school improvement process. Questionnaires were either emailed or mailed via the United States Postal Service to participant principals depending upon the manner they identified as most convenient. Principals' options for returning questionnaires included email, fax, intra-district mail system, and United Stated Postal Service in a stamped, self-addressed envelope. I assessed the returned questionnaires to corroborate demographic and school improvement data about the schools.

I designed the interview questions to support the research questions in the study (Table 2). Aligned to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study, interview questions came from the discussions about efficacy in the literature. The study used a semi-structured interview process to explore principals' perceptions regarding the efficacy of their school community, and their decisions for professional development and interventions. Interview questions also explored the efficacious perceptions of principals and the interpersonal implications with their faculty. I developed guiding, open-ended questions to lead principals through a discussion about their efficacious perceptions. A series of questions guided principals to explore their perceptions about the efficacy of their schools and how their perceptions may have impacted their decisions about

professional development and interventions during the annual progression of school improvement. Interview questions also guided principals to explore the possibility of variances in their efficacious perceptions about faculty members based upon the individual's length of tenure at the school.

Table 2

Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?	Tell me about your background and how you came to be a turnaround principal. Can you tell me about the process that led up to your school being placed into the school improvement process?
A. What are the principals' perceptions regarding an interpretative relationship between the efficacy of their school community and the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?	Tell me about the efficacy of your school community. Explain what impact, if any, being placed into the school improvement process has had on your school community. Explain how your teachers feel about working at a school with a lower performance rating.
B. What are the principals' perceptions regarding the implications from the public labeling process for school improvement and the efficacy of their school community?	Explain what you interpreted about your school from its performance label. How do you feel the labeling process has impacted your school community? Tell me about the impact, if any, that being placed into the school improvement process has had on the efficacy of your school.
C. What are the principals' perceptions regarding variations in the efficacy levels among their faculty members? Do the principals describe perceived differences between teachers new to their school and those already at their school prior to the school's designation for the school improvement process?	Can you tell me about differences in the levels of efficacy among your faculty members? Explain what factors you feel accounted for or contributed to differences in efficacy levels among individual faculty members. Explain a little about the top two to three factors. What about your teachers already at the school prior to entering the school improvement process and your new teachers who came to the school at its onset? Tell me what you believe about variations in the efficacy levels between these two groups of faculty members. Why or why do you not believe it?

Table 2 (continued)

	D. What are the principals' perceptions about the correlational relationship between the efficacy of their school community and the annual shifts in student achievement data used for the school improvement process?	Can you tell me about the achievement data for your school? Explain the process for monitoring achievement data. Please describe some of the fluctuations or shifts you have observed for your school's achievement data during the school improvement process. Explain how these fluctuations or shifts in student achievement data have affected the efficacy level of your school. Do you feel that there is any connection between the two?
2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?		Describe the process for strategically based decision making at your school. Explain the role of efficacy in the process.
	A. What are the principals' perceptions about the role or influence of efficacy in their decision-making processes for school improvement?	Can you explain how your perceptions about efficacy have influenced your decisions for the school improvement process? Do you feel you purposefully made decisions based upon your perceptions about efficacy? Why or why not?
	B. What are the principals' perceptions about the implications of efficacy for their decisions regarding strategic interventions for school improvement?	Can you explain the process for identifying the specific interventions considered important and supportive to the school improvement process? How do you believe your perceptions about efficacy influenced your decision making with regard to interventions? Describe its strategic significance.
	C. What are the principals' perceptions about the implications of efficacy for their decisions regarding strategic professional development for school improvement?	Can you explain the process for identifying and implementing professional development specifically for the needs of the school improvement process? How was its framework designed? How do you believe your perceptions about efficacy influenced your decision making with regard to professional development? Describe its strategic significance.

Table 2 (continued)

	D. What are the principals' perceptions about the role or influence of efficacy for strategic variations in their decision making among their school's faculty?	Tell me how you individualized your professional relationship among your faculty. Describe how your perceptions about the individual efficacy levels among your faculty influenced the professional decisions you made for them. Can you explain how your perceptions about efficacy influenced your individual decisions? Do you consider the decisions to be strategic? Why or why not?

Two administrators who worked in the school improvement process reviewed the interview questions for validity and provided feedback. Nonparticipant administrators' analyses authenticated the objectives of the research study to explore principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their school, the potential impact of efficacious perceptions for decisions regarding professional development and interventions, and possible variances in efficacious perceptions for faculty based upon their tenure at the school during the annual progression of the school improvement process.

Methods and Data Collection

As the researcher, I solicited the governance bodies for all Arizona urban public schools that the Department of Education identified for the school improvement process. Specifically, I targeted districts of public schools that had received an underperforming or failing label and as a result been placed into the school improvement process with a request for consideration to participate in the phenomenological research study.

A letter of informed consent that was mailed electronically or via the United States Postal Service with a stamped self-addressed envelope for its return granted

consent. Principals received descriptions about the purpose and possible implications of the study along with their contributions to the research study, the questionnaires, and the interview process. I informed participating principals about the potential impact of the study for the entire school improvement process and future implications, which included unforeseen challenges and potential gaps to the support systems that were not anticipated by the process through their support of the study. It was also important for participating principals to recognize the anonymity of the study and understand that individual schools and principals were not disaggregated or identified within the results of the study.

Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the principals within 2 weeks of their response. The database for the research study included field notes and transcriptions of the audio recordings made during the interviews. The researcher transcribed field notes during each of the interviews and made transcriptions of the audio recordings immediately afterwards. The principals responded to the interview questions designed to capture answers to the research questions during the interview process (Appendix B). The field notes and transcriptions of the audio recordings were compared to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the database. Participant principals were asked follow-up interview questions as needed for clarification purposes. Finally, the participant principals provided affirmations and acknowledgements for the accuracy and validity of the final interview transcripts as representative of the interviews.

Validity and Reliability

A phenomenological analysis of the school improvement process is the framework for the study that explores the principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their school community. Principals' perceptions about efficacy may have evolved from

secondary perceptions about the school's designation for underperformance and the mandated school improvement process. The study revealed unintended and unrealized outcomes that resulted from the school improvement process. The principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their school could potentially affect the behaviors, attitudes, and processes of the school community as well as the way each of the schools address school improvement.

Qualitative research derives its validity from the purposeful insight it provides for the experience of its participant (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research provides clarity and a richer understanding about a particular situation or interaction from the perspective of the participant. Conceptual validity is enhanced when future studies can be replicated with outcomes similar to the original study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Funneling the data through an inductive and comparative analytical process aided in comprehending the essence of the school improvement process on the efficacious perceptions of principals. The researcher performed a triangulated analysis of the principals' perceptions about the impact of efficacy for strategic decisions regarding professional development, interventions, and individual faculty members. Enriched validity resulted from the inductive, comparative, and triangulated analysis of the research study. Respondent validation from the participant principals also enhanced the validity of the research study.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the final interview transcripts were uploaded and organized with *Zotero* software to expedite the organizational processing. Coding and categorizing the data facilitated the identity of common themes and theory (Merriam, 2009). I used marginal notations as needed throughout the data analysis process. The codification of

the qualitative data deterred inferential outcomes and yielded more descriptive

connotations.

The data were continually coded and recoded throughout the research process.

Key words, common phrases, and frequently used references and concepts were

identified and coded to facilitate the identification of commonalities and patterns within

the collected data (Table 3). The coded data were systematically applied towards the

questions that guided the framework of the study to analyze the identified themes.

Continuous and frequent reviews of the data analysis provided a more inductive and

comparative process to analyze the qualitative data from the study. The process helped to

make analytical sense of the data and provided insight regarding the research questions

that led the study.

Table 3

 Coding for Data Analysis

Codes	Theme	Description
ALD	Framework for School Improvement	ADE/LEA/DOE Oversight
As	Data-driven Processes	Assessment
Bl	Efficacy and Morale	Blame
B	Framework for School Improvement	Budget
BM	Data-driven Processes	Benchmark
C	Data-driven Processes	Curriculum
CAg	Efficacious Leadership	Change Agent
Cch	Faculty Variances	Coach
CoAs	Data-driven Processes	Common Assessments
Col	Faculty Variances	Collaboration
Com	Efficacious Leadership	Community-wide Approach
DM	Efficacious Leadership	Difference Maker
DT	Data-driven Processes	Data Talks
Ef	Efficacy and Morale	Efficacy
Ex	Efficacious Leadership	Expectations
I	Data-driven Processes	Instruction
L	Efficacy and Morale	Label
LC	Efficacious Leadership	Leadership Capacity
M	Efficacy and Morale	Morale
M-R	Faculty Variances	Mid-range Tenure or Seniority Faculty
NT	Faculty Variances	New Faculty
O	Efficacy and Morale	Ownership
PD	Data-driven Processes	Professional Development
Rs	Framework for School Improvement	Resources
T	Faculty Variances	Teacher
TA	Framework for School Improvement	Turnaround
Te	Faculty Variances	Team
T-S	Faculty Variances	Tenured-Senior Faculty

Ethical Considerations

As researcher, I conscientiously monitored my personal biases derived from my private experiences, research, and professional expertise throughout the study. An awareness of bias was essential while conducting participant interviews, analyzing data, and deriving meaning from results.

I adhered to an assiduous effort for ethical processes for the research study and strove to maintain procedures ethically for the collection, analysis, and distribution of the data that the study yielded. The use of pseudonyms for identification purposes when reporting data ensured the preservation of confidentiality. Prior to the onset of the interview process, participants were made aware of the basis of the study and the role I played as the researcher. Full disclosure to the participants for the purpose of the study enhanced its fidelity and credibility.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an explanation about phenomenology as the preferred qualitative methodology for this research study. The chapter also provided descriptions for the research study's population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. In addition, Chapter 3 explained the validity and credibility of the study and important ethical considerations that pertained to the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings and analysis of the principal interviews, questionnaires, and qualitative data are presented in Chapter 4. The findings are based upon the primary research questions:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

The qualitative data collected from the 10 participants in this research study are organized based upon the major themes that emerged from the coding process. The qualitative data are organized according to a categorization of responses from the 10 participants.

The major themes that emerged from the coding process of the participant interviews are:

- Efficacy and Morale

- Data-driven Processes

- Framework for School Improvement

- Efficacious Leadership

- Faculty Variances

This chapter discusses themes as they relate to the impact of the school improvement process on the efficacy and morale of the school community along with perceptions about the impact on the decision-making processes of principals during their leadership of the school improvement process. Additional discussion centers on themes related to principals' interpretations of the impact of the school improvement process on the direct or indirect role of efficacy and on their efficacious leadership during the process. Further, this chapter discusses specific themes about the impact of school improvement on the direct and indirect role of efficacy in the way principals approached and interacted with their school communities during the school improvement process. The research analyzed specific themes about the impact of the school improvement process and its implications for principals' perceptions about efficacy. The goal was to assess the impact of these principals' perceptions on the strategic decision-making processes to address the specific needs of their school and faculty during the school improvement process.

Research Question 1

How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

Efficacy and Morale

Principals shared widespread perceptions about efficacy and morale including high levels of efficacy regarding their school's ability to improve and succeed in spite of label or status. Generally, the labeling process became a source of new and unintended challenges that principals needed to address before the school's academic issues.

Principals perceived current parents as mostly unaffected by the label and designation, but they perceived long-term challenges with new parents who continued to identify the school by its prior label and underperforming status.

Nine of the principals shared that they personally had a positive perception about their school's efficacy in regard to its capacity to succeed in the school improvement process when they entered the process. The other principal expressed reservations about the school's efficacy based upon uncertainties within the framework of the turnaround model that may impact staffing, resources, and overall support he believed to be required for the school to succeed. The principals described the potential and capacity that their schools could achieve and referred to the failing label as a form of personal motivation. They based their perceptions upon their previous experiences in working with schools that their professional colleagues and communities deemed as "challenging".

Principal J spoke about his personal and professional beliefs as an educator, and how these beliefs supported perseverant instructional practices:

> I've always valued education as a great equalizer…And that's why I went into education. And I don't think it's for a lack of intelligence, abilities, capabilities. I think it's that we just have to find the right way, the right path. And so I saw it as a challenge, an opportunity to really make a difference at School J, and with that community. And not only the community, you know, of parents, and students, community members, but the community of educators there. Because when you go through an experience like that, when you're truly open to it, you gain a different perspective on how you approach kids, any kids.

Principal J reinforced a desire to bring the same values and beliefs he held as an educator to the entire community during his tenure as a principal. He described the creation of a "community of educators" that serves a broader school community and included parents and students. Principal J described a belief that education is the "great equalizer" and shared his persistent commitment to connect with all student learners.

Principal G described a perception about how the school improvement label was a motivator to lead the staff through the process. Principal G portrayed motivation as a natural form of transformational leadership and an expression of professional responsibilities:

> The impact is that it just gave me … it was my motivator, honestly. And so it was kind of … as principals, we conform to what we need to do. We transition to what we need to do for our staff. You know, that transformational leadership. And so at that particular time, I was the one—I needed to be their motivator.

The principals did not perceive the process for labeling underperforming schools and designating them for school improvement as helpful. Most principals described the impact as an additional or unforeseen challenge to their initiation of the process. Eight of the principals reported that they had perceived a negative impact on their school's efficacy from the labeling process for school improvement. One of the principals reported a perception of no impact on the school's efficacy from the labeling process for school improvement but felt that the efficacy could or would change once the community had the time to better understand what the designation meant and how it might potentially affect the school and its programs. One of the principals did not perceive any real impact

on his school's efficacy from the labeling process for school improvement. The principal suspected the minimal impact due to the later timing of the school's designation for school improvement after the start of summer break.

Principal A described the notification process and responses from his school community:

It really didn't bother them. I posted the letter in our front office, I put it up on our website and a few other places. Told them this letter… being able to leave schools if they needed to, and all that. And there was not one person who moved their kid. I had pointed out the offer to speak with people about the label, and I got about two questions from people. Like one about what it [the label] was, and what did it mean for their child. And that was about it. That label really didn't affect the outer community, the neighborhood.

According to Principal A, the labeling process or their school's designation for school improvement did not initially affect the broader school community.

A perception of low morale emerged from the principals' interviews regarding the impact on the efficacy of their school from the identification and labeling process for school improvement. Decreased morale from the negative label and the process that designated them for school improvement was a consistent theme. Principals felt a responsibility for rebuilding morale that had been depleted at the onset of their leadership for the school improvement process. Some principals expressed the impact in emotional terms, but others spoke about it in terms of resources, distractors, and time lost from their educational objective.

Principal B shared the emotional toll it took on two different school communities they he had worked with during the school improvement process. This principal felt compelled to "pick up" the teachers and lead them through their sadness. It was a process that was familiar to Principal B from previous tenure at a different school that was, also designated for the school improvement process:

> I think it (the labeling process) brought the teachers' morale down because I picked them up, and they were really, really sad about it. You know, when I picked them up in my school [in my district], the same thing, they thought they were downers.

Principal D described how the labeling of the school created a sense of insecurity for teachers about their professional livelihood. Describing the experience as devastating, Principal D recognized the diminished self-confidence of teachers from the negative label and designation for school improvement. Principal D spoke about a sense of urgency that originated from teacher uncertainty and self-doubt that the label created:

> …You're a Focus School, and you know you're in trouble. It's kind of devastating…because it's a reflection on your own teaching and your livelihood, what you spend every day doing. And I think it's devastating to teachers.

Principal E was straightforward when he described the impact of the labeling process on his school community:

> It's definitely a "moral kicker," right? You know, you don't want to work at a school that's considered an F school, right? Even though you know you're doing some really good things, it's also a "gut check" to see if we

should be doing some things differently…It had a huge impact. The

teachers had to decide whether or not they wanted to stay.

According to Principal E, teachers had to decide if they wanted to work at the school with

its negative performance label and the negative connotations associated with its

implication about their school and their role in the classroom.

Principal G described how the low morale already present at the school fell to

even lower levels from the labeling process for school improvement. Principal G had to

develop comprehensive strategies to acknowledge the situation and honor previous

accolades of the school that had formerly been deemed and labeled one of the most

highly effective schools in the district. The lowered morale temporarily took precedence

over the real issues at the core of the school's performance label: "Well, there was an

impact, a big impact on morale. The morale of the staff was already pretty low and then

we got that, and it became lower than you thought it could go."

Principal G also noted that the initial framework for the site's professional

development plan was designed to rebuild staff morale and efficacy. Elements of

effective instructional practices could not be developed before Principal G facilitated the

school's recovery from the impact of the negative label and established a professional

learning community:

We did a lot of morale building and learning how to trust each other; we

moved into mission and vision of the school, that we all have the same

understanding of what our end-goal would be. What're we doing?

What's our purpose? Then we started looking at the overall strategies,

teaching strategies.

Principal A described the negative label and designation for school improvement as a shameful event. The emotional impact from the label was a perception that Principal A shared with the entire instructional staff: "…they felt embarrassed at first. And, you know, I did, too. It was like a mark, a mark of shame, so to speak."

All 10 principals described similar responses from their parents. Districts are required to notify parents about opportunities to transfer to another school option when their school receives an underperformance label designated for the school improvement process. None of the principals described an exodus of students because of parents opting for the transfer offer. Principals estimated that one to two students transferred to other school options after their parents had received the letter that notified them of the opportunity.

Principal B described parent responses from the impact of the labeling process and designation for school improvement within the context of experiences with working in the school improvement process. Very few parents chose the opportunity to transfer schools but instead chose to remain at their neighborhood school. They made their choices based upon factors beyond the school label or school improvement process:

In both the schools, both of them across the board, the community really didn't care. You're talking about a community of people that are the, you know, the lower economic social sector. And they just want the convenience of a neighborhood school. They're not like the parents at the other, you know, the very end, the upper end school. It's truly, "This is where my kid goes to school. This is the most convenient. This is where the bus is. It seems to be doing a good job." Great! Really, I did not … I

had one parent move into another school, and that was because they

wanted to. It wasn't about the school. We just had to honor it. And this

one, I think I had one last year that wanted to go back. And they got to

move and got busing because of it. They made the movement, but the

only reason why they wanted to go there was because they liked the

program. So I did not see a repercussion at all.

Principal E described similar responses from parents and the outside community.

Neither group of community members responded as Principal E had anticipated:

…the public perception, I don't know, and I'll be honest with you, you

know that the community in general, the community, but not the school

part, really didn't pay that much attention to it. I'll be honest with you. It

was a lot less…what's the word I'm looking for?…That was a lot less

publicity again for a reaction that I would have thought there would have

been. It was very interesting.

Principals noted challenging aftereffects for marketing their schools beyond the

initiation and implementation of school improvement. Current families remained at their

schools and chose their neighborhood school with which they had an established

community relationship. Principals encountered negative perceptions, however, when

they tried to market to new families with whom they had no previous relationship.

Several of the schools still have not recovered to their normal student enrollment rates

several years after making improvements in their labels. Student enrollment rates prior to

the negative label and designation for school improvement were more robust, and the

principals perceived efforts to "sell" their schools to new families to be challenging.

Principal I spoke about challenges to overcoming the parent misconceptions derived from misinformation or outdated information they obtained from Internet searches. Principal I discussed how some parents chose other school options due to negative perceptions about the school's efficacy based on information that was outdated or no longer accurate. Principal I described challenges in marketing the school to new families 2 years after receiving an improved performance label where open enrollment options were in place:

> I mean, it's hard. Well, here in Arizona it's really hard where parents
> have so many choices, you know? With open enrollment and stuff. Once
> the damage is done with one bad label or one bad event…it's hard to undo
> the damage. People don't really understand the label, either…It's a tough
> sell.

Although principals had high levels of efficacy and morale about their school's ability to improve and overcome, they perceived a lower level in the school that its label and school improvement status reinforced. Addressing low levels of efficacy and morale detracts from efforts to address the academic deficiencies that led to the school's underperforming label and school improvement status. Although current parents were mostly unaffected by the label and school improvement status, new parents lacked a direct relationship with the school and continued to identify the school as underperforming. Negative interpretations based upon the prior label and designation for school improvement continued years after the school improved. Marketing the new school label and improved status is a continuing challenge for successful turnaround principals.

Data-driven Processes

An overarching theme emerged to reveal similarities in the perceptions of principals regarding the role of efficacy and data output among their faculty members. Principals reported that they perceived efficacy levels to fluctuate in accordance with fluctuations in data results for student achievement. Principals reported a perceived surge or uptick in the efficacy levels of their teachers when student achievement data represented improved performance. Principals also reported increased momentum in the efficacy levels of their faculty following marked success in student achievement.

Principal H described the following transformation and increased shift in the efficacy among the teachers and students in the school community:

And then I have to say that success breeds success because of the teachers starting to see the successes in those students and the support from everyone at the school. It wasn't, again, one teacher. It was a team effort. They started feeling more confident. And as they felt more confident, I saw the bar being…it's like raising the bar. Okay, then if our kids can do this, then we can do a little more. And so I think we took advantage of every small success to develop a culture of "Okay, if a small success will bring more success"…so that the outcomes very quickly started showing higher levels of learning from our students, and even our teachers.

Principal J described a belief that educators tended to view data externally and to distance themselves from it. A more endogenous perspective would better inform their instructional behaviors in the classroom:

And just as, you know, we talked about efficacy impacting…people have

perceptions when they come in of what kids can do. Or if a school is in

failure, what happens? What that means, what that says about that school.

It's the same with data. People have their own perceptions about what that

means. And typically, I think teachers have, any educator has a tendency

to view data externally. They don't take an endogenous view of, you

know, internally: What does this say about what I'm doing, and how do I

need to change?

Principal participants reported that their schools used of a wide range of diverse

student achievement data. Principals spoke about how their schools used both summative

and formative data to create data-rich school communities that served the specific

learning needs of their respective students. Principals described their development of

school communities dependent upon data outcomes to plan, gauge student learning

processes, monitor progress, and guide next steps. Principals described school plans that

were founded upon data-driven practices to frame goals, objectives, assessments, and

intervention strategies.

Principal C described how the school used data to gauge student placement into

the classes most aligned to their learning needs:

…it lets you know where kids are to begin with. From there you can place

them into programs and things. We also have district common formative

assessments and interim benchmarks that we look at.

Principal G discussed the use of common assessments to gauge instructional

effectiveness and plan for reteaching:

At that point, and what do you need to reteach, I think was one of the other

ones. And so they created those common assessments, those intermittent

common assessments. So that whether you taught a certain skill or

standard, you were able to go back and assess it and then determine if that

was effective or not. Did students grasp it?

Principal B described how his school used benchmark assessments and aligned

student learning to the standards:

Well, it's not rocket science. It's really not. If you're giving the kids a

certain test…I'm not saying teach to the test, but…make sure you're

touching on standards, make sure you're hitting on that concept, you

know, within the core instruction that you're doing, which is aligned to the

core. You know, make sure we're doing some benchmarks. Make sure

we're touching kids before the gaps get too big. You know, let's keep a

real close eye on it.

Principals spoke about school cultures that quantified the effectiveness of

classroom teachers and student learners through the use of multidata sources

administered at various intervals of time. Principals described efficacy levels of teachers

that reflected their progress in the school improvement process. Principals also described

how their instructional staffs depended upon multiple databases at consistent time

intervals throughout the process.

Principal F described the schoolwide approach to progress monitoring of student

learning:

We created an individualized educational plan for each of these kids. We

meet as a whole school, as a group, about these kids. Anyone who works

with these kids, anyone who does a pull-out, anybody who does the

reading intervention, even the counselors, everybody, the PE staff, the bus

driver, even. The community here at the school, we meet for kids, and we

do progress monitoring. We really elevated how we did differentiation.

Principal D spoke about participating in grade-level data reviews three to four

times every quarter:

When they [teachers] were not in cluster, then I would meet with them,

not every week, but probably every other week or so to look at data, to

look over lesson plans, to work with them to make sure we were targeting

kids and their needs. And so, about twice a month I helped with grade-

level meetings, and the grade-level meetings would focus on data, on the

data they were looking at, like the Dibels and progress monitoring, or

AIMS, or their benchmark tests, even question tests and assessments if

they were given. So that would happen…about every other week or every

3rd week…but at least, you know, three to four times every quarter. I

would meet with each grade level to talk about data.

The principals perceived developing an instructional staff that could effectively

use disaggregated student achievement data as an important focus for the school

improvement process. Increased teacher proficiency in the use of data reinforced a

professional culture of sharing best practices, enhanced collegial interactions to support

classroom learning, and inspired teachers to develop even stronger professional skills.

Principal H described his approach to data:

…Asking ourselves, "What is it that children need to know? What do we

do when they don't learn? What do we do when they learn?" And so I

think focusing on exactly what was important for children to learn,

working with teachers on helping them identify the essential learning that

needed to happen and then creating grade-level assessments, to have that

uniformity. Encouraging teachers to create their own assessments on a

weekly basis. Grade-level assessments, and sitting down as a grade level,

as a Professional Learning Community to disaggregate the data, to analyze

it, to share… I think the one thing that made a difference is not being

afraid. Encouraging a culture of sharing of data. Where teachers would

say, "Here's what worked. Here's what didn't work." Sharing strategies,

sharing … interventions for the children that were not able to learn the

first time. What do we do the second time?

Principal G shared how instructional staff developed a high level of expertise in

working with data and could scrutinize it in disaggregated form to determine its

contribution to instruction:

So, we did a lot of work…a lot of release time, but purposeful release

time…by grade level. All of our PD's were about data. They were so

data-ed out…they'd say, "Nope, we've got data." They had data down.

They knew how…they were just as savvy as I was on "Stats", in being

able to go in and out of the data and disaggregate the data. And that was,

that was crucial. So, there was a lot of training on how to look at the data,

how to disaggregate data… looking at bad data, but if, then within the bad

data there's good, there's good things. And then looking at the good data

and not being fooled that it's good, but looking specifically, breaking it

apart and seeing that oh, within the good data there's some issue we need

to fix. And so, they were very savvy in understanding how disaggregating

data was very helpful and a direct correlation to what they were teaching

or needed to reteach a class. So, we did a lot of common assessments.

Principal A described the need for teachers to become more proficient in a

comprehensive range of databases:

Teachers have to get more adept at using student data, you know, in the

classroom, group, and individual level. So, we've gotten better with that.

I think that coupled with having interventionists come in and the push to

do better, I think that helped steadily improve scores overall. It's what we

noticed in the data.

Turnaround principals develop purposeful schoolwide practices for the use of

comprehensive data to guide teaching and learning. Formulating a data-driven learning

environment is a universal approach of principals. Shifting the focus of data as an

evaluative tool to a resource that informs professional practices and promotes efficacy is

a common attribute of principals who lead the school improvement process.

Framework for School Improvement

Principals described the school improvement process as constrictive, without

regard for the specific needs of individual school sites, and lacking direct consideration of

its impact on school efficacy. Principals join school communities that perform at the

expected levels they perceive from their negative performance label and school improvement status. The perceptions of the principals who lead school improvement impact their strategic decisions. These decisions include the design of the School Improvement Plan, professional development, allocation of resources, and faculty assignments.

Principals described school communities that lived up to the lowered expectations they perceived about themselves from the negative label and placement into the school improvement process. The principals described a drop in self-efficacy among the faculty and staff after they learned that the governmental entities that oversaw them no longer believed in them or their professional abilities.

Principal J spoke of an institutionalization of efficacy:

…going back to what I said, it would be, efficacy can be institutional,

too. So if the state and the national government are telling you they don't

believe in your abilities, intelligence, to be able to be successful in

school, then that has an impact in decreasing your own view of your self-

efficacy.

Principal J referred to the long-term effect on the community as a ghost that is always lurking about in the background, holding the school back from achieving its full capacity as long as people remember the negative designation.

Principal H described a community-wide perception about pervasively low expectations:

Even from the community, I remember talking to some parents who

would say, "Oh, we don't think our kids can do that." And I had to

convince even parents, that yes, their kids could do it. Of course, we had

to prepare kids and teach them and make sure we addressed their needs.

But I think the low expectations were not just from the school's staff, but

even from within the community. Parents had to believe that kids could

be there every day, learn, and be successful.

Principals spoke about how the school improvement process could be very

prescribed and constrictive, impeding creative teaching and learning behaviors.

Principals appreciated the additional resources that often came with the designation and

the inclusion of their schools in new and innovative support systems. Principals

expressed some instances of too many resources, which they believed to be excessive or

lacking a close alignment to their school improvement plan. One principal described how

resources were provided but without adequate training or professional development for

their implementation.

Principal G described the variety of resources that became available to the school:

The state provided lots of resources to me as far as trainings, staff

trainings, trainings for the principals. They literally just gave me a

mentor, a mentor that worked with me, but that was a year later. And so

there were some required state trainings that I had to attend, there were

some required in-state trainings, and then trainings that my staff attended.

With the professional development that they were offering, and then when

the district came alongside of me, they offered the training I was

requesting with my staff. And that's how the process began, honestly,

which was nice.

Principal J spoke about a process where faculty who had instructional deficiencies implemented the resources: "So we put all these programs in place, but we never look at the adults implementing them."

Four of the 10 principals expressed frustration about how their school ended up getting identified for the school improvement process. Their schools had not been identified when the original labels were issued. Two of the four actually had a "B" rating from the Arizona Department of Education. Some of the schools moved down into the bottom quartile of ranking among all public schools in Arizona after the charter schools below them on the ranked list closed down when they were identified for underperformance measures. Principals expressed frustration about discrepancies with the accountability systems.

Principal E described his school's ranking:

Maybe 50 charter schools below [their school] closed after ending up in the bottom quartile. Had those charter schools not closed, had those charter schools remained open, we would probably not be in this mess. I'm not one to call it a mess, but situation.

Principal A spoke about how the school had a "B" grade but was identified for school improvement:

We still ended up making a B. We missed our EL points by, I think, one student. There was a mix-up, and we ended up testing 94% instead of 95, although we had the highest reclassification in the district…Still a B…from what I've been told…they lost a bunch of schools off school improvement because they either went out of improvement, or they

actually closed their doors. And they're no longer on their list, and because of the, I believe it's the 10% rule, and it involved taking schools that fell into the category, and we were part of that. We were steered into that category, and we had…between group gaps and our overall bottom quartile for nonperforming, so we were identified in those two areas by the focus schools.

Principals described a process that created unforeseen challenges to their turnaround objective. The restrictive measures that the systems required challenged creative and innovative teaching and learning processes. Principals spoke about how the process for identifying and labeling underperforming schools caused unintended negative connotations that were long term after the school had demonstrated success. Principals agreed that success needs to be measured with consistent accountability systems, but the current process was not helpful and hindered their leadership.

Principal H spoke about the impact on teaching and learning from the school improvement labeling process: "But I do believe that the labeling sometimes gets in the way of being creative, of teaching kids in a way that teaches them more about applying what they've learned in the real world."

Principal D described his experience:

…the process in itself, I would say. I'm going to qualify this for myself as a person who is coming out of that, where I was actually working in the school. I don't necessarily think it was very helpful to me, because, you know, I had studied school turnaround for years. I had seen what wasn't really working. So when I went in, I went in with my eyes wide open.

And I…knew, I would say, quite a bit about how school turnaround takes place. And so, I don't know that the support that was given by ADE was particularly helpful to me. But I don't know that it might be different for other people with less of a background in school turnaround. So, for myself, I'm going to say it wasn't helpful…I'm just going to leave it at that—more hoops to jump through that weren't particularly helpful.

Principal J described the impact of the labeling process: "I don't think they should label schools as failing. I think maybe there's a different way you could do it. I think there needs to be some measure of success assigned."

Principals consider the school improvement process prescribed as lacking specificity to the needs of individual schools and school efficacy. Schools designated for school improvement are functioning to meet the expectations that their underperforming label and status generate. Turnaround principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their schools impact their strategic decisions. The principals' perceptions about efficacy also impact all decisions regarding the school plan, allocation of resources, professional development, and faculty.

Research Question 2

How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Efficacious Leadership

Strategically developing and enhancing efficacious leadership skills is a continuous undertone of principals' work in school improvement. Establishing a

relationally based learning culture of differentiated professional growth that develops teacher capacity at individual levels of professional expertise is common. Recognizing and honoring a school's past, yet guiding a clear understanding and acceptance of its current performance, are the norm. Pervasively low expectations that an underperformance label and school improvement status define are universal challenges of turnaround principals. Creating organizational structures and opportunities for shared decision making to cultivate leadership capacity are familiar tasks for principals who lead school improvement.

Principals described how they used a similar approach during the 1st year of the school improvement process to cultivate a relationally based learning culture. Eight of the principals reported a 1st-year process that acknowledged past accomplishments of their school community but reinforced their current situation to instill a strong sense of urgency for improved practices.

Principals discussed similarities among their faculties and schools regarding expectations. Although they generally reported teachers to be hardworking and concerned about the situation of school improvement, principals had to address a perception of lowered expectations, blaming outside entities, and enabling attitudes about student abilities to achieve at the grade level standards. Principals shared that they openly needed to address incapacitating perceptions and beliefs among their instructional staff as well as students and parents.

Principal G spoke about removing signage about the school's previous success that was outdated and inappropriate for its current situation. Principal G shared the importance of letting the school know that they were capable of similar outcomes again if

they coalesced around their current goals, shared a common mission and vision, and

reinvigorated their professional practices:

> So they actually, when I came on board, that…label…banner that was
>
> flying outside the school was probably…years old at that point. And
>
> when I came on board and I took it down. I said, "We haven't earned
>
> this."

By overcoming defensive behaviors from the instructional staff, Principal G

explained how it was an opportunity to lead the school into a positive trajectory for

success in the school improvement process. When teachers resorted to blaming previous

educational experiences of students and factors outside their control systems, Principal G

reminded them:

> So, it was some hard looking at… they looked at themselves. Of course,
>
> fingers were pointing and blaming, and you know, they wanted to blame
>
> the grade level below that they didn't prepare the students. Or they
>
> wanted to blame the community or the parents for not preparing the
>
> students. And at that point, our district had a great saying that, you know,
>
> "They're bringing their best." The community is bringing what they have,
>
> and what they have is their best. So you need to give them your best.

Principal H spoke of lowered expectations that permeated throughout the school

community. According to Principal H, students and parents no longer believed that they

could achieve at grade level standards:

> When a school and staff, and even the community…see that their school
>
> has a label that is not necessarily a good label, they start believing

that…They start believing maybe kids can't succeed in that environment.

I've seen teachers who have, and not just…at that school at the time, but at

other schools, where they'd say, "Well you know, it's the kids." I think

that's where the blame begins. It's the kids. It's the parents. So I think

that…a school like that needs a leader who can say, "No, there is no

excuse. Our kids can accomplish." And I think that the staff, the

community, and the students need to be constantly reminded that they can

do it, that they can succeed. Because it is very easy when you have a

label, a bad label, or a low label to believe that you can, that your kids

can't accomplish at high levels. And it's everybody. It's not…just the

teachers or … the students. But it's even the parents believing that.

Principal J discussed the importance of principals being cognizant of their own

perceptions about the school's efficacy. Principal J described how the perceptions might

contribute to an efficacy loop that could reinforce an environment of lowered

expectations without informed and deliberate decision-making practices:

I think before efficacy comes perceptions, and then a model…So it's those

mental models that you really have to pay attention to because those will

lead you down the wrong path. You know, because you'll come in with

perceptions, and you'll base your decision making based on those

perceptions. And unless you really examine what they are and why you

have them, and if they're true, your decisions are not going to really

benefit the school. So, I think that's related to efficacy because that skews

either in a good way or a bad way, that whole efficacy loop. But I really

think it's the mental models we bring with us, you know, personally and

as a staff, that affect your decision making. And you have to be really

cognizant of what those are.

Principal J spoke about the importance for principals to be aware of their own beliefs and biases when they join a new school. Otherwise they might bring preconceived ideas about lowered expectations that will affect their ability to perform informed decision-making practices.

All of the principal participants described the need to begin their tenure with the implementation of schoolwide structures and procedures. The principals spoke about a lack of normal schoolwide practices or a lack of enforcement of the school rules and policies that were present. The structures provided an organizational framework for their future work to address academic deficiencies.

Most principals established capacity building through shared leadership practices. Principal F discussed a "communal or shared" style of corporate leadership and the value of teacher input in the decisions that affected the school. The principal made executive decisions when needed, but Principal F portrayed how important it was to strive for collective decision making within the school community. According to Principal F, executive decisions occurred a lot less frequently than shared decisions and were reserved only for the decisions that were not debatable. The communal decision-making approach assured Principal F that all community members had an equitable and valued voice in the decision-making process:

My leadership is more of a communal corporate thought. I really do value

the input of my teachers, whatever they may have to say. And we're so

comfortable with each other that we know we can openly disagree when

it's for the benefit of our children. But we do value what we all have to

bring to the table. So when I do make decisions, I ask for input. And we

build off to where I eventually want to lead the group.

Principal H described how the culture of the school shifted from an individual

perspective and responsibility to a team perspective with collective responsibility for

every student's success:

I think most importantly is developing a culture of it's not one teacher by

himself or herself. We're all in this together. This is a team. If a child is

not learning it, it's not the responsibility of one individual but several

within the grade level. And I think that that's what made a difference at

that school.

Principal B spoke about developing a culture of student advocacy among the

teachers to improve practices that impact student learning. Principal B felt it was

important for teachers to have a legacy of best practices that they would continue to

adhere to once they had the capacity to continue onward successfully after the school

improvement process:

I told the teachers when I came on, they were afraid to speak out, and I

told them, "You need to speak out. Even if it's with me, speak up. We'll

talk about it. We'll collaborate about it." And there were some things I

changed a little bit, of course, and there were other things that I didn't.

And I told them, "You now see that this is effective; you cannot, as a

building, let this go."

Principal H discussed how the broader community that the decision-making process impacted was included in the decision-making process. According to Principal H, the inclusion of parents, and to some extent students, in a broader base of community-wide decision-making processes facilitated the development of transparent leadership and accountability:

>One of the things that was very important to me at the time was to include the community in every decision. Every time a decision was made that was important for the school, that impacted the student achievement and the relationship of that community, the community was included. And so, whether there were decisions that were made, professional development that supported the school, the community was always included.

Principal H spoke about the importance of developing capacity among the school community to make informed decisions about best practices long after successful completion of the school improvement process and his tenure as the school's principal. Parents began coming to the school after benchmark testing or progress reports to review results, ask questions, and offer support. The inclusive decision-making base helped Principal H cultivate higher efficacy levels in parents and students:

>When you hear parents starting to talk about data and how that is showing that the students are doing better, that the school is improving, I believe that it shows you that you have built capacity within not just the school, but within the community.

Principals spoke about the role of efficacy in their decisions about professional development. Principals discussed the role of efficacy in their decisions and interactions

with faculty members, both collectively and individually. Three principals shared that efficacy had played in a role in their decisions and behaviors on an unconscious level, and that they recognized its implications afterwards.

Principal G described rebranding as a strategy that helped the community shed negative connotations from the labeling process for school improvement. The process was time consuming but freed the school from the label and allowed the community to pursue its instructional deficiencies. Professional development sessions supported the process, including a session where faculty and staff were able to speak directly with the district's senior leadership to share their perceptions about the district and their situation. Principal G provided the opportunity to share fears, feelings of disrespect, and not being valued in the eyes of the organization:

> …because the staff had a lot of baggage…and the Superintendent and
> Assistant Superintendent did come out…we had a nice session. We
> conducted a session in which my staff could ask questions, express their
> feelings. They felt, in other words, they felt like they were the step-
> child—that was one of the words they used quite a bit. They felt like they
> were the step-child of the district, and they were being ignored, and that
> no support was coming to them by way of resources to the teachers. Or
> resources to the community, or to the facility. And so, they just felt really,
> really neglected. That really made an impactful difference because then
> they were able to release, you know, let the folks know how they felt, and
> then feel the support…from the head of the district. And…it wasn't…
> you know, the kind of a session in which people were just being rude and

mean. It was just a real beneficial session. And so after that, we were able to release that and then get ready to move forward…They felt the urgency…they were ready to meet the challenge of being urgent in and deliberate in their instructional approaches.

Principals spoke about specific resources they sought to address the school improvement status and its implications for their teachers' efficacy regarding instructional beliefs, practices, and transformation. Resources were available from grant funding or other sources specifically for schools targeted for the school improvement process. They used and continue to use several programs, books, and software platforms at their schools. Principal H referenced their implementation of Professional Learning Communities:

We used the DeFour model at the time, those questions that now our Professional Learning Communities use. "What is it that children need to know? What do we do when they don't learn? What do we do when they learn?"

Principal E discussed how they differentiated professional development for the diversity in proficiency levels of the teachers:

We used Marzano's *Classroom Instruction That Works*, a lot of the book *Teach Like a Champion,* and then we made sure that we took into account the different levels. We've got some really strong teachers here.

Principal D spoke about the school's partnership with Arizona State University (ASU) where it was able to implement a program for the development of instructional leadership. A School Improvement Grant (SIG) funded the opportunity and enabled

Principal D to hire two master teachers to help work with the instructional staff. The program provided more direct teacher support and interactions than what Principal D could offer independently. Principal D was able to devote more time for observations and to monitor collegial interactions.

"So for the 2nd year we actually went into a grant with ASU. It's called TAP, which is the Teacher Advance Program. It's part of the… they had written a very large SIG grant, a teacher incentive fund grant. So as a result of that, I was able to hire two master teachers to help me.

Principal C shared the school's use of *Response to Intervention* (RTI) that *WestEd* facilitated. Neither Principal C nor the school had the autonomy to select the resources, but the principal cited a use of professional development specifically for the school's designation for the school improvement process:

But that came up from around the RTI. Are you familiar with that term, RTI? And having prescriptive programs. It wasn't necessarily *WestEd*. Well, yeah, *WestEd* came in with their RTI component and stated the process. And at the time [the] district chose the programs that they felt would be most effective at the schools.

Nuances of efficacious leadership are infused into the work of principals who lead school improvement to create and cultivate a learning culture composed of professional relationships that promote high levels of efficacy. Addressing ubiquitously low expectations, turnaround principals foster individual and collective capacities of school efficacy. Differentiated professional development aligned to the specific needs of the adult learners is a commonality of principals who lead school improvement and expand

opportunities for leadership. Although turnaround principals initially assume responsibility for their school's organizational practices and procedures, intentionally transitioning to a model of shared decision making is common for building efficacious leadership capacity.

Faculty Variances

Principals who work in school improvement consider the range of faculty expertise in their school to be more profound than in other schools where they have worked. They encounter a higher number of untenured teachers, including teachers new to both the profession and the school site. A continuously high turnover rate creates ongoing challenges for principals who try to build capacity and invest in professional development. Principals generally consider the teachers with the most expertise to have the lowest levels of efficacy, and teachers with the least expertise to have the highest levels of efficacy. Instructional practices or student outcomes do not reflect high levels of expertise. Principals' decisions about leading the school improvement process are strategically aligned to their perceptions about the efficacy of their schools, including teacher assignments and groupings for PLCs and professional development.

Most principals spoke about an extreme variance of professional expertise among their faculties. They perceived the variances as more pronounced than what they had experienced at previous schools. Some principals encountered extreme turnover and had to conduct hiring quickly. An average of 41% of the teachers were new 1st-year teachers at the turnaround schools that the principals served. Principals described newer teachers with the least amount of professional experience as the instructional staff in need of the greatest level of support and professional development. Principals perceived that the

teachers who were the most tenured at the schools and approaching the end of their careers had some of the lowest levels of efficacy among their faculty. Principals perceived their new teachers to have higher levels of efficacy, but levels would fluctuate as they encountered challenges while they learned their craft and developed proficient instructional skills.

Principal J described an experience of taking on a staff of brand new teachers, and a belief that it was a great experience:

So, about 80% of my staff, by the time I got everyone hired, were 1st-year teachers, straight out of school. That's who we ended up with, which is good in a way. You know how you always say that? Well, you just have to be careful, because it was a lot of work. But, you know, really, it was a great, great experience, those new teachers.

Principal J went on to explain a belief about how the experienced teachers at a school could become a part of a dysfunctional system that diverted its focus from students to the needs of the adults [tenured teachers]:

In systems that are dysfunctional, in a lot of schools, you know, number one, it becomes a system for adults. It's all about the adults in the systems, and they kind of forget the kids, and that it's mostly, you know, the educators. But a lot, sometimes in some schools…it was about the parents and the school board. So it depends, but they kind of lose their focus, the cultural shifts is to the adults. Just totally away from the kids, and they just get lost.

Principal D spoke about the disproportionate extremes in professional expertise among the school's faculty:

I had lots of teachers who were either veteran teachers ready to retire or brand new teachers; that was kind of my split. I didn't really have any teachers that were, you know, mid-career teachers.

Principals discussed the need to hold challenging conversations with faculty who were not effective and/or not invested in the school improvement process. The principals attributed ineffective teaching to poor professional practices or lack of current professional development. Faculty not willing or able to invest in the school improvement process included staff who were at the end of their professional careers, staff who believed they did not need to improve or change their current practices, and staff who did not respond to the additional resources and support that were provided to assist with their professional growth.

Principal D spoke about guiding staff who were approaching the end of their careers, and who seemed to be unwilling or incapable of succeeding with the challenges of school improvement:

I gently kind of prodded some people to retire, you know, and tried to fill positions with people that had more of the mindset that I had as far as teaching was concerned. So, yes, there was a lot of strategy in that planning.

Principal B described the need for principals to be strong enough to challenge staff to be accountable for meeting the needs of the students:

So, I guess as an administrator you have to be strong enough to recognize

when people are not doing what needs to be done for kids. And you have

to be strong enough to say, "If you're not able to change, then you can't

stay here. You can't be a part of this team because we're here for kids and

for helping kids be better. And if that's not in your ability level or your

desire, then, you know, this is not going to work." There were some really

hard conversations with probably about four or five teachers that ended up

leaving, and you know, I hate that. I think it's a sad thing, but in the end,

it's what helped to improve the school.

Principal C spoke about some of the more experienced faculty who were

compliant, but who were not committed to the school improvement process: "There's

been some...'Let me come in, and and I'll do what you ask me to do, but I'll do no

more.'"

Although empathetic to teachers and their professional situation within the

context of school turnaround, Principal D articulated an objective to support improved

student achievement:

"You're either going to move forward and make the change we need to

make, or you're going to have to do something else, because you're not

going to stay here at the school." I was really very nice about it, though.

Principals found that the process created additional challenges across most aspects

of school leadership. High turnover rates of faculty and staff required time and resources

to overcome. Turnover rates did not stabilize until after several years as principals

worked to get the best and most effective instructional staffs they could for their school

communities. Three of the principals referenced overcoming challenges they read about in *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and his analogy about the bus: "Get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats." Principals were strategic as they deliberately worked to obtain the right staff for their positions for every grade level and support system.

Principal D spoke about an effort to hire well and to avoid hiring out of desperation:

I'm a firm believer in Dan Collins's book *Good to Great*, where he talks about making sure that you have the right people, and that you have the right people in the right seats on the bus. And don't hire just because you're desperate. Don't get desperate and hire just anybody.

Principal A described working with a faculty member who initially indicated that he would retire rather than address deficiencies. Principal A successfully facilitated the teacher's transition into a position where he could be more effective:

The teacher I felt who couldn't make a difference in student achievement mostly was, unfortunately, was in the…room. That particular teacher felt he couldn't make any headway with those students. And that was an obstacle, in a way. Well, yeah, so individually he was a very "black and white" person. I could not give him an overview. I had to give him very "black and white" instructions about how to approach things. And so I went by the professional development coach, the instructional coach. He laid out a plan…we wanted him to follow the grade level curriculum, but scaffold it up for the children…Take a grade level lesson and scaffold it;

he didn't do that very well. We worked with him for a year. We worked

on into the data system, Galileo, so he could do, you know, ongoing

formative assessments like that…We helped him with a peer-mentor

relationship. In the end, this year…he didn't embrace the change, not

really. I had to put him on a Professional Improvement Plan. He said he

could retire, and I said, "You have every right to retire if you'd like to."

Then I guess he went, "Okay," and he complied. In the end I don't think

he was willing to put forth the extra effort because he was a retirement-age

type person. I wasn't sure if it was a can't, or won't. It seemed like a

little bit of both. I worked with the director. We found another placement

for him…And the way I handled it was, I said, "I think you'd do well if

you focused on these kids. You seem to have a hard time differentiating

among students, which I understand is difficult, but..."

Principals spoke about how they monitored and maintained efficacy during the

school improvement process. Some principals referred to the collective work of their

schools from a team perspective. One principal described the school's collective effort as

a journey that was headed to great outcomes. Another principal described the collective

work in school improvement as a synchronization of staff that respected and supported

each other. Principals expressed their leadership in school improvement as a coach or

guide that was a member of their larger community.

Principal F described the relationship:

Sometimes it doesn't happen the way it's supposed to happen, but that's

what's life is all about. But I do honestly value the personal relationships

I have with my staff. Anything, or whatever they want to share with me,

they share with me; it's been a good relationship with my staff. We're

like one big group. We know if somebody's out of sync, we know

something's wrong, so everybody has their feelers out. Things aren't

running well. Certainly give it attention. We give it support in any way.

Principal H described an interpretation about his presence among staff:

Just the fact that I believe. I'm a very positive person. And I think that

just me always being there, present for my staff, for my students, for my

families. Reassuring them that we were on a journey, but that we, I felt

very positive, and I was sure that we would accomplish great things,

specifically to student learning. I feel that that was very important. I feel

that they needed that.

The principals who work in school improvement consider faculty variances to be

more profound. A disproportionately high turnover rate challenges turnaround principals

and contributes to extreme variances among faculty in regard to professional expertise

and tenure. Tenure includes teachers new to the educational profession and teachers new

to the school site. Principals consider teachers with the most expertise to have the lowest

levels of efficacy about succeeding in the school improvement process; conversely, they

consider teachers with the least expertise to have the highest levels of efficacy.

Principals' decisions for the school improvement process are strategically aligned to their

perceptions about the efficacy of their schools. By strategically assigning faculty

members to specific Professional Learning Communities and professional development

options, principals expand opportunities for collegial learning.

Table 4

Percentages for Range of Tenured Faculty at the Schools

	Total Number of Faculty	Total Number of Previous Faculty Retained at Onset of SIP	Number Faculty of Faculty New to School at Onset of SIP
School A	27	23	4
School B	39	36	3
School C	60	49	11
School D	30	15	15
School E	104	62	42
School F	37	35	2
School G	18	1	17
School H	28	19	9
School I	49	27	22
School J	45	5	40

SIP-School Improvement Process

Summary

Chapter 4 reported the qualitative findings in this study in an attempt to answer the following primary research questions:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Five important findings emerged from this study related to the impact of the school improvement process on principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their underperforming label and designation for school improvement, and the impact of the school improvement process on principals'

perceptions about efficacy relative to their strategic decision-making processes. The first finding is the impact of the school improvement process on efficacy and morale. The second finding is the impact of the school improvement process on principals' leadership to develop and maintain higher levels of efficacy. The third finding is the impact of the school improvement process on principals' perceptions about efficacy for data-driven processes and decisions. The fourth finding is the impact of the school improvement process on principals' perceptions about efficacy for interacting with the range of faculty members at their schools. The fifth finding is the impact of the school improvement process on principals' perceptions about efficacy as it relates to the framework of the governing oversight.

In Chapter 5, I will summarize the findings of this study in relation to the research questions and theoretical frameworks that defined the study. I will also provide recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chapter V summarizes the findings of this phenomenological research study about the perceptions, interpretations, and professional decisions of urban principal participants who lead the school improvement process in Arizona. The study explored principals' perceptions about the efficacy of their schools and the implications of their perceptions for their decisions regarding professional development, interventions, and interactions with and among faculty members. This chapter will discuss the relationship between previous research and the findings of this research study. It will then make recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

This study addressed the primary research questions:

1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1993, 1997) was the primary framework of this research study that explored principal efficacy and the school improvement process. Social cognitive theory was used as the primary guide for the development of the research questions. Dweck's theory about mindset (2006) was a secondary framework of

this research study that explored principal efficacy and the school improvement process. Mindset was used as a secondary guide for the development of the research questions.

Primary Research Question 1

How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?

Three findings from this research study that are related to efficacy, morale, and leadership are associated with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura defined self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capacity to succeed (Bandura, 1993). Successfully completing the school improvement process is contingent upon overcoming the academic deficiencies that resulted in a school being identified and designated for the school improvement process. According to Bandura, teachers who have a higher level of efficacy will be more confident about their capacity to succeed. Efficacious teachers will be more likely to succeed in overcoming the academic deficiencies that resulted in their school's underperforming status and designation for school improvement.

The first finding is related to the negative impact on the efficacy and morale of school faculties. Participant principals described a negative impact on their faculty's efficacy as a result of the underperformance label and identification for the school improvement process. Principals spoke about allocating time during the 1st year of the school improvement process to address the depleted levels of efficacy of their teachers and staffs, and to rebuild capacity. Time spent to rebuild efficacy was diverted from time that could have been directed towards the deficiencies that resulted in their school improvement status. Principals believed that the negative impact on the efficacy of their school was profound and hurtful to their school's academic mission. The academic

mission of schools could not be fulfilled or realized unless the instructional staff realized their capacity to succeed in the classroom.

The second finding of the research study is related to the long-term negative impact from a derogatory school performance label. Negative perceptions associated with undesirable school improvement labels created extended, far-reaching consequences for sustainable student enrollment. Principals described a continuous decline in student enrollment several years following an improved performance label for their school, even at schools where the improvement resulted in a performance label that exceeded the performance labels of similar schools in their community. Principals described lingering misconceptions and negative connotations about their schools, both within and outside of their districts. Principals described challenges in marketing their schools that included a continual need to clarify misconceptions and to defend their current performance label.

The lasting effects from a school's previous underperformance label are also relative to the theory on mindset (2006). A fixed mindset conceptualized from negative perceptions about a school's performance label reinforces negative connotations about its ability to succeed and overcome challenges. Fixed perceptions about school quality create unique challenges. A predetermined mindset about the quality of a school that is derived from an underperformance label and past performance limits its growth capacity and undermines efficacy. Principals who lead school improvement face persistent challenges when they address predetermined misconceptions and negative perceptions about the quality of their schools.

A third finding from this research study is related to collective helplessness and efficacy. Previous research studies have shown the implications of collective efficacy for

student learning (Goddard et al., 2004; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Özgen & Bīndak, 2011). Individual group members may have a higher sense of efficacy, but they are constituents of a larger school community undergoing the turnaround process that outside forces have imposed. A loss of control to outside influences that requires their reorganization reinforces a sense of collective helplessness. Perceptions about the outside pressures levied on their school community decrease the collective efficacy of their group (Bandura, 1997). The community feels a collective sense of helplessness due to the organizational framework that imposes the turnaround process.

Primary Research Question 2

How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?

Three findings in this research study associated with Bandura's social cognitive theory are related to the implications of principal perceptions about efficacy for their decisions about data-driven processes, variances among faculty, and their framework of school improvement (1993). Initiating a process for school improvement is essential for creating a sustainable culture of improvement within the limited window of time provided for the transformation.

The first finding about data-driven processes revealed commonalities in principal perceptions about efficacy and the instructional role of data. Using data to inform teaching and learning was not a common practice at schools prior to the initiation of the school improvement process. Principals have to develop and implement school wide

expectations and practices. Processes for continuously collecting, organizing, and analyzing data have to be implemented to guide instructional practices systemically and comprehensively. Even at schools where a large amount of data was readily available, principals implemented processes to identify and analyze data for their relevancy to teaching and learning. Principals attribute the instructional transformation of their schools to progress monitoring as it helped the school evolve into a professional learning community in its evaluation of data. Positive and negative fluctuations in data corresponded to positive and negative principal perceptions about their school's efficacy across all sectors of the school community. Consistent trajectories in positive data outcomes resulted in consistent increases in positive levels of efficacy throughout the school community.

The second finding from this research study is related to the principals' use of data to address variances in the levels of efficacy among faculty members. Principals encouraged expanded leadership roles for faculty members whom they perceived to have higher levels of efficacy in regard to succeeding in the school improvement process. Perceptions about efficacy guided how principals leveraged the capacity of their faculties and cultivated collegial efficacy. Evidentiary summative and formative data outcomes directed principals' perceptions about efficacy and their decisions about professional development. Data outcomes were applied to individuals, specific subgroups, and school wide.

The third finding of this research study is related to principals' perspectives about efficacy and how they used data to scaffold planning the school improvement process at their sites. Site-specific plans to organize, implement, and monitor the progression of the

school improvement process included considerations about efficacy. Principals perceived increases in the levels of efficacy with positive outcomes on performance indicators and decreases with negative outcomes on performance indicators. Considerations of principals' perceptions about efficacy contributed to their planning for specific strategies in their school improvement plan and addressing targeted deficiencies. Contemplating the implications of efficacy, principals gauged their school community's readiness and receptiveness towards the scaffolding of interventions, assessing the needs for professional development, and introducing new professional practices.

Efficacy and Morale

Findings from this research study indicated that principals overwhelmingly have positive perceptions about their school's efficacy. From the onset of the school improvement process, principals believe that their schools have the capacity to succeed. Principals are personally motivated to succeed and consider the pejorative connotations associated with the schools' negative performance label as a motivational force to succeed. Their prior experiences from working at challenging schools personally and professionally motivated the principals to overcome the negative school performance label at their schools.

The short-term implications for parent efficacy from a school's negative performance label were minimal. Most parents do not accept transfer options to higher performing schools but instead opt to maintain their student's current enrollment at their lower performing school. A negative performance label does have long-term implications for the future enrollment of new students, even after a school has improved and earned a higher performance label.

Principals do not consider the public labeling process that informs the community about a school's quality or proficiency as helpful to the objective of school improvement. The principals perceive the process as an additional challenge, particularly at the onset of school improvement. Publicly labeling the school further depletes school morale and efficacy. Resources, time, and effort to initiate school improvement have to be diverted towards the depletion in efficacy levels.

Data-driven Processes

Guiding school transitions towards consistent data-driven practices is common for principals who lead the school improvement process. Understanding the types of data used to assess student achievement and school effectiveness helps principals develop instructional capacity. A better understanding of data analysis informs how to gauge the learning progressions. Universally, data guide the principals' decisions regarding the use and allocation of resources. Using data to plan and augment professional practices is common for principals who lead the school improvement process. Commodification of data analysis skills systematically builds capacity and enhances human capital by cultivating comprehensive professional expertise. These schools develop professional expertise for comprehensive and sustainable school improvement. Principals who lead the school improvement process create learning cultures that rely upon cyclic data outcomes to modify instructional practices, monitor progress, determine next steps, and augment professional learning plans.

Principals who lead school improvement interpret data fluctuations as efficacious reflections of their school's community. Deliberate approaches of principals to identify, share, and analyze data trends provide unique professional learning opportunities.

Minimizing the quantification of data shifts the focus towards the sources of change, both positive and negative. Instead, principals emphasize effort to identify the basis of data shifts and develop responsive practices that impact learning outcomes and cultivate faculty expertise. Collegially learning about effective instructional strategies that support the academic needs of shared student learners strengthens the learning culture and inspires a continuum of professional growth. Positive changes in data are opportunities for celebration, reaffirm the school's collective efforts, and help to ease anxiety. Positive gains in data and efficacy create surges of momentum to persevere and succeed. In a similar way, by focusing upon the distinctive sources of negative changes in data, principals lessen the negative efficacious impacts. Effectively using multiple forms of disaggregated student achievement data increases teacher proficiencies and creates a culture of shared best practices.

Framework for School Improvement

School improvement targets chronically underperforming schools that typically reinforce instructional and professional practices that are not current, consistent, or aligned to the needs of students. Turnaround principals often find that the schools systematically and ubiquitously function to meet lowered academic expectations perceived about their capacity. A functional capacity that an underperformance label defines is considered to be a common contributing factor for perceptions about lower levels of efficacy regarding the ability to overcome deficiencies. Efficacy levels across the school community become further depleted from its designation for school improvement. School communities interpret the label and designation as an institutional lack of faith.

A team composed of members of bureaucratic oversight initially organizes and frames the school improvement plans. Principals assume team leadership of plans under design using limited longitudinal data for student achievement. Recognizing the collective effort required to transform the school community, principals quickly assess professional capacity and develop subsets of talent to lead different components under their leadership. Shifting away from familiar instructional practices and methodologies is a specific challenge for principals who lead school improvement as they try to limit or eliminate ineffective long-term classroom practices. Initiating the process feels constrictive and devaluing to the school community and negatively impacts efficacy levels. Principals purposefully acknowledge and honor the historical successes of the school as they redirect the community's focus to a broader range of current and relevant data and highlight incremental accomplishments that demonstrate progress.

Mandates of the school improvement process require turnaround principals strategically to overlay targeted interventions and resources that may not align to the needs of their schools. Many of the requirements with school improvement bring additional resources that are appreciated but create unintended challenges to the turnaround process when they are not appropriate or relevant for the school's deficiencies. Finding opportunities to embed the required resources strategically and implement professional development that is unrelated to the school's deficiencies for the sake of compliance is distracting. Principals regard their ability to bridge disconnected and irrelevant mandates as a reflection of their efficacy and capacity as instructional leaders, which is similar to the daily challenges of effective classroom teachers as they strive to bridge the learning gaps among their students.

Gaps in professional expertise among faculty and instructional staff also require the principals' differentiation to build schoolwide capacity. Targeting the professional development needs of individuals and groups within and outside of their community is a strategic process. Using a multifaceted principal lens provides the perspective needed to monitor progress broadly throughout the school community, and to substantiate and collaborate their decisions. Leading an orchestrated process, principals make discrete decisions to delegate and direct professional growth throughout the school community. They use a range of dates to inform and guide their decisions to plan, assess learning progressions, and gauge systematic fidelity of implementation processes. Establishing and cultivating an inclusive professional learning environment around multiple data sources is a strategy of turnaround principals that builds sustainable capacity that will continue after the school has successfully completed the school improvement process.

Efficacious Leadership

Principals recognize the implications for efficacy of their decisions that affect the school community as they lead the school improvement process. Developing and enhancing efficacy while reinforcing a sense of urgency to improve is unique for each school community. Principals are especially sensitive to the implications of the negative performance label when they initiate the school improvement process, and they purposefully acknowledge how the label represents a limited scope of the collective professional assets and historical record of their schools. Devoting time to highlight past honors of the school at the onset of school improvement helped principals assess and establish professional relationships among their school community. Successful

implementation and transformative change are contingent upon the alignment of principals' decisions to the specific issues at each school site.

Emphasizing a limited amount of time and resources, principals methodically plan and allocate for their decisions. Perceptive interpretations lead principals' decision making from the onset of the school improvement process when most lack a wider range of data sources. These sources include relational data and comprehensive student achievement data outside of standardized assessments such as:

☐ Decisions to address perceptions about teacher efficacy and student achievement. Efficacious decisions about the individual needs of faculty members and instructional staff, specific groups of faculty and staff, and the collective needs of the school community.

☐ Decisions to address curricular issues, organizational matters, procedural concerns, and site operations.

☐ Decisions to address perceptions about lowered expectations for teaching and learning. Principals' perceptions about efficacy guide a range of their decisions for leading the school improvement process.

The process of school improvement necessitates that principals be the capacity builders of their school community. Successfully increasing the expectations for instructional practices and student achievement are a consistent theme of school improvement. Principals who lead school improvement purposefully provide opportunities for faculty and staff to reflect upon and assess their professional practices and progress. Principals provide focused opportunities for individual and collective professional analyses.

Principals individually develop and nurture stronger professional competencies on behalf of school improvement to yield stronger school wide competencies. By simultaneously leading individual and schoolwide professional growth, principals cultivate a professional learning community. A professional learning community shares a common vision, goals, and objectives for the process of school improvement. Principals who lead school improvement are opportunistic, capitalize upon their school's strengths, and leverage the resources that will support their capacity-building efforts.

Strategic decisions of principals who lead school improvement about their organization of professional learners, cadre groups, delegation of tasks, and expanding opportunities to work with and among different colleagues expand opportunities for professional growth. Principals' perceptions about efficacy influence how they assign individual members to professional learning groups. Purposefully assigning individual members creates opportunities for collegial interactions that are balanced in professional knowledge and foster collaborative interactions within the professional learning groups. Establishing and modeling professional behaviors for collegial interactions increases the school community's capacity to analyze practices and progress. Collegial feedback that assesses and refines professional practices nurtures a culture of professional learning. Bandura demonstrated that efficacious behaviors of learners increase from observing successful peers as they use the desired competencies (1993, 2000). By creating a nonjudgmental culture of learning, defensive behaviors decrease, and receptiveness increases. Faculty and staff are more willing to try new methodologies and skills without the fear of failure. Building capacity through the emulation of competencies that instill and develop a stronger communal mentality is the result of the professional interactions.

Principals' awareness of their self-biases and self-efficacy strengthens the objectivity of their decision making, particularly as principal awareness relates to their school's negative performance label. Purposefully being cognizant of efficacy diminishes opportunities for additional challenges to arise, including unintended negative perceptions among the school community. Failure to recognize principal self-bias and self-efficacy has unintended consequences if the professional practices of their faculty and staff reinforce the biases about low efficacy. Efficacious leadership includes principals' awareness about self-bias and self-efficacy for their decisions regarding the school improvement process.

Variances Among Faculty

Lacking a system to identify, analyze, and monitor student achievement data is a distinguishing feature of the principals' underperforming schools. Principals must develop a school culture of data-driven practices at the onset of their leadership in the school improvement process. Principals perceived faculty with the least amount of tenure and professional expertise to have the highest levels of efficacy about their capacity to overcome the deficiencies of school improvement because these newer teachers are optimistic about succeeding. Principals generally perceived teachers with the most tenure and professional expertise to have the lowest levels of efficacy among their colleagues.

It is common for principals who lead school improvement to encounter a more extreme range of professional expertise among school faculty. Disproportionately large numbers of teachers who are new to the profession are clustered at the schools, and the newly designated turnaround principal has hired many of them. Although the principals

perceive the newer teachers to have the highest levels of efficacy among their colleagues, these teachers also require the highest levels of support and professional development. Unlike their tenured colleagues, newer teachers believe in their capacity to overcome the deficiencies in student achievement and succeed in the school improvement process. The principals disproportionately perceive tenured faculty with the highest levels of documented professional expertise to have the lowest levels of efficacy about the school's capacity to overcome the deficiencies and succeed in school improvement. Requiring a higher level of professional development to learn newer instructional methodologies, strategies, and resources is a commonality of tenured faculty. Quickly changing ingrained practices and methodologies of tenured faculty that have been reinforced over time is another unique principal challenge for leading school improvement.

Summary

This study explored the implications of principals' efficacy in urban Arizona schools that had been identified as underperforming and targeted for the school improvement process. Ten participant principals who led school improvement provided responses and participated in interviews regarding their perceptions about efficacy. This study explored principals' perceptions about the efficacious impact of the underperformance label, school improvement designation, and their decisions about leading the process. Common themes that emerged in the study include efficacy and morale, efficacious leadership, data-driven processes, variances among faculty, and the framework of school improvement. The study explored commonalities as they related to efficacy in social cognitive theory, and secondarily, to mindset.

Insight gained from the study indicates that targeted schools need foundational support in the public discernment and designation of school improvement. Understanding the possible ramifications from the public disclosure leads to the potential of systematic discourse and unintentionally undermines the initiation process of school improvement. Clarity about the perceptions that develop as a result of the public disclosure should be used to help guide school leadership in assessing their own self-efficacy and that of the entire school community. Negative connotations associated with an underperforming label and public designation exacerbate the challenges of principals who lead school improvement and further deplete efficacy levels throughout their school communities.

Additional implications from the study include opportunities for district and school leadership to identify and seek mechanisms that address the assessment, development, and modification of efficacy among the school community. Comprehending the potential impact for efficacy and student achievement provides school administration the opportunity to better prepare and successfully lead the school improvement process. The study suggests the following implications for educational research, policy, and practice:

- Implications for research about resources to develop efficacious behaviors effectively that could negate the impact of low efficacy levels on student achievement.

- Implications for policy about how the public is informed about school performance and the impact of the school improvement process on efficacy.

☐ Implications for practice that include consideration of efficacious leadership for school leaders who work in the school improvement process. Additional implications for practice are criteria to ensure that school leaders can address individual and collective efficacy that the processes of school improvement impact.

Recommendations for Future Research

Metacognitive efficacious processes may not be specifically required for the school improvement process, but purposeful practices for its enhancement might ensure a timely and more streamlined outcome of success. Increasing student achievement through positive efficacious relationships that are research based demonstrates positive relationships between the self-efficacy of teachers and their students (Bandura, 1997; Carroll, 2011; Purzer, 2011), and collective efficacy and student achievement (Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Özgen & Bīndak, 2011; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). It is important for research about the development of efficacious behaviors to support the school administration that leads the school improvement process to create sustainable success for student achievement outcomes. Research that results in effective professional development to cultivate and improve efficacy is needed to support student achievement and school improvement.

A better understanding is needed about the short- and long-term implications on efficacy from the public labeling of schools and placement into the school improvement process. Stronger understanding about unintended consequences could yield more informative processes to inform the public about school quality. Another requirement is added insight in identifying a more comprehensive range of indicators to evaluate school

performance. Indicators that are aligned to the needs and values of parents and community, and less on annual assessments, could lessen negative efficacious impacts based on limited criterion. More insight is needed regarding the labeling process' long-term impacts on efficacy and public perceptions about school quality that may affect enrollment patterns of targeted schools.

Recommendations for Policy

The first implications for school improvement in the Arizona ESSA Plan will result when the 2017-18 school grades are released with a comparative analysis to the 2016-17 results. Optional criteria in the Arizona ESSA Plan for school climate and culture do not specifically address efficacy. Although the minimum number of students in a disaggregated subgroup has increased to 20, the number of subgroups has increased by three, and the 95% of student participation on annual assessments remains. Arizona's process for informing the public about school quality is unchanged and includes a quantified A-F letter grade and targeting the lowest 5% of schools.

It is recommended that policymakers include a broader measure of school quality to inform the public about school quality. Additional information about special programs, parent and community engagement, parent and student satisfaction, before and after school enrichment programs, accessibility, safety, facilities, technological capacity, and stability of faculty and staff should be included in the broader measure. Policy for a comprehensive school performance label is recommended to provide a broader perspective about a range of school quality data for grade level cohorts and a more informative label without the limitations of the current system that impact efficacy.

Understanding the fuller impact of policies upon the school improvement process

provides a broader perspective for practice and successful outcomes.

Recommendations to policymakers include consideration of the implications of

the process that publicly informs communities about school quality ratings. A process is

needed that would eliminate or limit the current system that continually readjusts the

lowest 5% of schools identified for the public as underperforming. Negative

connotations that are associated with a negative performance label based upon the

limitations of current criteria will impede future enrollment at the school regardless of

future performance labels that are positive. Overcoming a negative public label creates a

different challenge that schools carry indefinitely in defense against negative impacts on

the efficacy of the school community. Policies that sunset a negative performance label

after exiting school improvement and aggressively promote an improved label would

help schools disassociate from prior underperformance labels.

Recommendations for Practice

The implications for practice suggest that efficacious leadership be a criterion

worth consideration for leaders who work in the school improvement process. One need

is for district- and school-level leadership to realize and see the capacity of schools.

Another need is for principals who have the aptitude and leadership competencies to

succeed in addressing the issues surrounding efficacy that result from the

underperformance label and school improvement designation. Understanding the impacts

on efficacy, and the strategies and practices to promote positive efficacy, are important

leadership qualities that could minimize the negative impacts from the onset of the school

improvement process. Negative perceptions and misconceptions about the label and

school improvement designation have a negative impact on efficacy throughout school communities, and they impede an expeditious initiation of the improvement process. A better understanding about their negative implications on efficacy and an increased awareness about efficacious responses in the community will advance a more streamlined school improvement process.

Efficacious school leaders believe in their community's ability to succeed. The negative label and school improvement designation impact faculty, staff, parents, and students. Shifting the foci, efficacious leaders persistently emphasize evidentiary progressions towards success. Guiding practices and developing capacity that is coalesced around obtainable goals that lead to school improvement are priorities of efficacious leaders. It is essential to demonstrate innate behaviors of positive efficacy and a growth mindset to overcome deficiencies. While implementing effective organizational practices and procedures, efficacious leaders simultaneously assess professional capacity and expertise. With a strong belief in their school's capacity to succeed, efficacious leaders immediately begin a continuous process to raise efficacious beliefs across their school's community. Framing assets and resources to address capacity helps efficacious leaders lessen the negative effects of the underperforming label and quickly rebound from the school improvement designation.

Recommendations for practice include provisions for immediate interventions to address deficiencies to help school communities remediate issues before a pattern of chronic underperformance emerges. Students, teachers, and schools would benefit from immediate knowledge and support. Responses that people perceive as punitive are not necessary or helpful. Immediate access to appropriate interventions and resources at the

onset of concerns would be a more effective practice. A more responsive practice would preempt the negative impacts that the underperformance label and school improvement have on efficacy. The timing of school interventions should be optimized, beginning when deficiencies can be absolved and before enduring patterns of underperformance have emerged. More understanding about the entry point of outside interventions that maximize success and devising ways to lessen their impact on positive efficacy may help schools avoid the improvement process all together. Once the school improvement process is underway, a school community perceives interventions as more punitive, which causes a negative impact on efficacy.

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Appendix A

Principal Questionnaires

1. What grade levels are enrolled at your school?

2. What year did your school enter the school improvement process?

3. How many years has the school been in the current school improvement process?

4. What year did you begin your current role at the school?

5. What is the school's current performance grade and label?

6. Complete the following information regarding the student demographics of your school:

    Student Data:

    Total Student Enrollment_____

    Percentage ELD Enrollment_____

    Percentage of FRD Enrollment_____

    Graduation Rate (High Schools Only)_____

    Faculty Data:

    Total Number of Faculty at the Initiation of School Improvement_____

    Number of Prior Faculty Retained at Initiation of School Improvement_____

    Number of New Faculty New to School at Initiation of School Improvement_____

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?	Tell me about your background and how you came to be a turnaround principal. Can you tell me about the process that led up to your school being placed into the school improvement process?
A. What are the principals' perceptions regarding an interpretative relationship between the efficacy of their school community and the school improvement status, label, or rating for their school?	Describe how you would define efficacy. Tell me about you the efficacy of your school community. Explain what impact, if any, being placed into the school improvement process has had on your school community. Explain how your teachers feel about working at a school with a lower performance rating.
B. What are the principals' perceptions regarding the implications from the public labeling process for school improvement and the efficacy of their school community?	Explain what you interpreted about your school from its performance label. How do you feel the labeling process impacted your school community? Tell me about the impact, if any, being placed into the school improvement process has had on the efficacy of your school.
C. What are the principals' perceptions regarding variations in the efficacy levels among their faculty members? Do the principals describe perceived differences between teachers new to their school and those already at their school prior to the school's designation for the school improvement process?	Can you tell me about differences in the levels of efficacy among your faculty members? Explain what factors you feel accounted for or contributed to differences in efficacy levels among individual faculty members. Explain a little about the top 2-3 factors. What about your teachers already at the school prior to entering the school improvement process and your new teachers who came to the school at its onset? Tell me what you believe about variations in the efficacy levels between these two groups of faculty members. Why or why do you not believe it?
D. What are the principals' perceptions about the correlational relationship between the	Can you tell me about the achievement data for your school? Explain the process for monitoring achievement data.

	efficacy of their school community and the annual shifts in student achievement data used for the school improvement process?	Please describe some of the fluctuations or shifts you have observed for your school's achievement data during the school improvement process. Explain how these fluctuations or shifts in student achievement data have affected the efficacy level of your school.? Do you feel there is any connection between the two?
2. How do principals describe their perceptions about the efficacy of their school community relative to their strategic decision-making processes for the school improvement process?		Please describe the process for strategically based decision making at your school. Explain the role of efficacy in the process.
	A. What are the principals' perceptions about the role or influence of efficacy in their decision-making processes for school improvement?	Can you explain how your perceptions about efficacy have influenced your decisions for the school improvement process? Do you feel you purposefully made decisions based upon your perceptions about efficacy? Why or why not?
	B. What are the principals' perceptions about the implications of efficacy for their decisions regarding strategic interventions for school improvement?	Can you explain the process for identifying the specific interventions considered important and supportive to the school improvement process? How do you believe your perceptions about efficacy influenced your decision making with regard to interventions? Describe its strategic significance.
	C. What are the principals' perceptions about the implications of efficacy for their decisions regarding strategic professional development for school improvement?	Can you explain the process for identifying and implementing professional development specifically for the needs of the school improvement process? How was its framework designed? How do you believe your perceptions about efficacy influenced your decision making with regard to professional development? Describe its strategic significance.
	D. What are the principals' perceptions about the role or influence of efficacy for strategic variations in their decision making among their school's faculty?	Tell me how you individualized your professional relationship among your faculty. Describe how your perceptions about the individual efficacy levels among your faculty influenced your professional decisions made for them. Can you explain how your perceptions about efficacy influenced your individual decisions? Do you consider the decisions to be strategic? Why or why not?

Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

May 19, 2015

Charlotte Patterson

Dear Ms. Patterson,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "Exploring Principals' Perceptions About Self-Efficacy in Urban Arizona Schools Designated for the School Improvement Process." Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped document.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Anthony Colella

Office of Institutional Review Board
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