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Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning

Joann Cardillo
Seton Hall University

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DELIVERING THE EXPECTATION OF ABBOTT:
CREATING A CULTURE OF SUCCESSFUL
TEACHING AND LEARNING

BY

JOANN CARDILLO

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning. Abbott schools are currently identified as those which serve populations of students living in poverty in New Jersey. Landmark Abbott v. Burke legislation provides funding to implement sweeping reforms in schools for children struggling to meet academic expectations. This case study examines one school which has consistently delivered the promise of Abbott by educating students in a culture that offers best practices in teaching and learning to a successful end. It investigates teacher efficacy as it relates to student achievement in an urban elementary magnet school. This knowledge provides an understanding of the importance of the affective domain in school reform, and of the enabling structures which can nurture a school culture to support best practices. The population includes forty-one teachers assigned to a public school in New Jersey. The selected school offers families in the community choice in the public school arena, and enforces an open admission policy.

A mixed methodology design is employed and the unit of analysis is teachers. The quantitative elements examined analysis of descriptive statistics, correlations, and independent t-tests derived from the data provided by the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran and Anita Woolfolk Hoy. The qualitative segment includes interviews of six teachers who participated in the survey and an interview with the principal of the school.

The analyses of the findings determined that efficacy exists in this school and may be a strong indicator of the consistent academic success of the students as measured by the NJASK3&4 test results. The data implies that nurturing personal and collective teaching efficacy creates a school climate conducive to student achievement. The results of the study can support the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) initiative. The initiative is a partnership
between the New Jersey Department of Education and its respective schools struggling to meet adequate yearly progress, as measured by State mandates and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Focusing on developing the affective domain of a school structure may support delivery of the results that currently elude urban schools nationwide.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many in my professional life to acknowledge, those who have inspired me to this end. I will begin at the beginning, with Dr. Anthony Colletta, my supervisor for junior practicum experience. You made this profession come alive for me through your guidance and instruction verifying that I made the right career choice 32 years ago. I am honored to have you serve on my committee and to have our connection come full circle. You led me to my first teaching assignment at School 19, and my first principal, Ms. Elizabeth L. Pisacreta, who has since become a dear member of my extended family. Betty, you introduced me to the protocols of professionalism in teaching. You modeled integrity, and high ethical standards, your patience and leadership set the foundation for my moral compass, which has served me well to this day. I thank you for the firm foundation upon which I have built a career.

The opportunity to work for Ms. Maria L. Lopez came as I returned from childcare leave. Maria, you were a new principal charged with a new school and opportunity for teachers to try fresh ideas. You took a risk, recognized raw talent, and allowed me to follow my instincts. You valued hard work, tenacity, and encouraged the creativity that led to the idea of my entering the world of School Leadership. Thank you for setting me free and mentoring me. You have taught me to persevere; your friendship and caring spirit will always be with me.

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through much together, and I thank you for your support in my leadership journey.

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I wish to acknowledge “my girls”, Ms. Debra Martinez and Ms. Renee Barisse, who, from the beginning, have encouraged and supported me, and Ms. Maria Choy who has quietly been my rock; you are true friends, all of you, to have committed to this cause.
DEDICATION

This is dedicated first to God and then to my husband Alan who is a true partner in our life’s journey. You saw the potential and nurtured it one day at a time. Your confidence in my abilities surpasses what I dare dream for myself. Thank you for acknowledging my strengths and compensating for my weaknesses, but most of all for your love and quiet presence.

To my son Alexander, your arrival in this world changed the course of my life. I am here today because God presented you to me. It was clear from the moment I held you that I could not ask you to do your best without setting the example. You are now an adult with wisdom beyond your years as well as the playfulness of the boy you were. Channel your energy and talents toward what makes you happy; continue to be true to yourself, the courage to do so is within.

To family and friends past, present, and future, you too in some way, have contributed to the journey. Thank you.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

School reform is often initiated by an outside venue led by way of state or federal mandate. The most successful educational reform that serves students well, begins at the door of a caring schoolhouse. "It is nurtured and sustained by staff who believe that student achievement is defined by a host of indicators that reflect both effort and excellence, not just test scores" (Corbett, Wilson, and Williams, 2002, p. 10). An understanding of the construct of teacher efficacy is the underpinning of this study and the basis for the development of the research questions. Examining what is right with schools can support nationwide efforts that strive to meet the needs of all children, including those identified as socio-economically deprived.

Most educational reform focuses on urban school reform; yet educators, legislators, and communities at large agree that inner cities are in crisis nationwide with regard to student achievement. Plethora of reforms touted to be "research based" are consigned to classrooms via policymakers rather than educators. Elmore (2004) states, "Educators, like most practitioners learn most of what they do from what they do" (p. 216). Therefore, these reform efforts lack the essential commitment needed to stay the course for lasting change, as they often are not embedded in the culture of the school. Strict adherence to specific model requirements, minus needed curriculum and professional development, has created unrealistic expectations. These models often stifle educators and create confusion and a lack of continuity regarding delineation of roles and the responsibilities of school personnel. Consequently, the leadership and a sense of common purpose needed to influence the
required changes atudes urban public schools, creating school cultures not conducive to positive student outcomes.

Creating collaborative cultures appears to be an effective strategy in developing efficacy in teachers, especially in the early years of their careers. Fostering an empowered staff can lead to high levels of teacher efficacy that improve adult interaction and learning. Faculty relationships based on trust, mutual understanding of the curriculum, and students, create a caring culture.

Teachers who model behaviors associated with high self-efficacy can deliver positive outcomes for students who do not come to the school setting with the desired social skills needed to learn and meet school expectations. These teachers attempt to work with students for longer periods before deciding to refer them for special education services (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Research indicates that students who believe that they are cared for in schools by staff and their peers, perform better on tests (Ryan & Patrick, 2001, p. 84). Children in urban schools with caring cultures understand that rules do not create boundaries, but open up possibilities for support that will lead to the ability to focus on learning, and not on the social ills they face outside the school environment (Noguera, 2003).

Promoting caring schools creates a sense of belonging and commitment. Positive school-wide cultures lead to collective teaching efficacy. The research on effective schools done by Edmund as cited by Kratzer (1996), verifies that there is a strong connection between school climate and student achievement. It supports the fact that caring schools change urban children’s lives. Kratzer questions how these schools are developed. How do we move from ineffective to non-effective schools? Her study of a low-income Latino school touches on the affective domain and the well-being of individuals and that of schools.
Practices that help all faculties to assimilate into schools that expect the best from both adults and children in emotional, social, and academic domains need to be observed, documented, and replicated through professional development practices that are peer-driven. Educators in caring schools understand that programs developed for these domains strengthen the ability to complete a school’s academic mission. The idea that school is more than a place to learn academics is one whose time has come. Schools, especially those in high poverty neighborhoods, need to be safe havens for the children and families they serve.

Statement of the Problem

This case study seeks to determine the level of efficacy that exists among teachers at a successful urban elementary school. It also attempts to identify the enabling structures that provide a school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning. The study concludes with strategies for school administrators to consider as they continue their efforts to support teachers and ultimately sustain positive student outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

In landmark Abbott rulings throughout the 1990s, the New Jersey Supreme Court mandated reform that provides students in urban districts with educational opportunities equal to the wealthiest communities in the state. The 1998 decision represented a landmark posture by the Court, as it linked issues of equity with the comprehensive set of remedies which, in execution, called for significant educational reform in the state’s 31 poorest districts (Abbott v. Burke 188 NJ.578.8332A.2d 891). Abbott V set the stage for an increase in academic programs and the closing of the achievement gap. Suburban sprawl depleted cities of the rich cultural and educational heritage that historically provided the state with opportunities for work, education, and social experiences (Gold, 2007).
The research focuses on one Abbott elementary school created as a result of state takeover and bused to rented facilities outside the city; this school has consistently met and surpassed adequate yearly progress with regard to the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge for grades 3 and 4 (Appendices A-D). The study investigated teacher/collective efficacy in the school as it relates to student achievement. The case explored a school that began as a K-6 school in 1992, to alleviate overcrowding in an overpopulated school district with severe facilities issues. It was a Pre-K-6 school in 2002 and then in 2005 was reconfigured to be a Pre-K-5 elementary school. The school, located in the third largest city in New Jersey, serves approximately 330 children with 41 teachers. In 2000, the state district superintendent returned this school to the city limits after years spent out of district in leased facilities. It kept its own identity, principal, instructional plan, and school budget and adjusted to becoming a school within a school. Entrance to this program is in great demand, with families entering the school by application. Special education in grades K-5 is in a full inclusion setting. A part time child study team and a full time guidance counselor work along with a behavioral social worker to identify and advocate for students and families who are struggling with issues and who look to the school for assistance and guidance.

All classes implement the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning. The program supports and encourages children to take responsibility for their learning, behaviors and actions in a social setting. The responsive classroom approach provides a highly structured classroom environment in which children work collaboratively with teachers and support staff, and is evident throughout the school. Pre-K classes are in trailers adjacent to the main building and have a class size of approximately 15 students. The class size in kindergarten through grade five is 20-22 students offering two sections per grade
level. The school building has twelve standard size classrooms and one multi-purpose room that serves as a gym and a lunchroom. Two of the twelve classrooms are set up as a library and the others divided into multi use areas for specialists as well as a semi-private teacher’s room. Class size is smaller than that of many of the schools in the district due to severe space limitations. In the second year of the school’s existence, the State District Superintendent reconstituted a portion of the staff to include veteran teachers chosen to support this unique teaching and learning situation. The decision provided experienced educators to mentor fellow inexperienced staff members and build a foundation for a positive school culture. Originally assigned as support staff, two of these teachers transitioned to positions created to support and implement the Coalition of Essential Schools reform model chosen by the teachers and administration.

The school’s philosophy and vision is “to share responsibility with the entire educational community to provide a safe, caring environment.” It is supported by the principles of the nationally recognized Coalition of Essential Schools Model. The model encourages personalization of services to students and families and promotes providing opportunities for teacher growth. The staff professes to support children emotionally, socially, and cognitively in an intellectually stimulating setting where individual ideas are valued. This is evidenced by the inclusion of a social worker on staff, who specializes in behavioral counseling. The purpose of this strategy is to support students who may not need a referral for special services if they receive specific counseling sessions, and their parents receive recommendations for behavioral adjustment activities at home.

The instructional priorities plan focuses on the needs of the students in an organized, cohesive manner. The New Jersey state core curriculum content standards are taught as
faculty plan for and deliver lessons that are project based and thematic in structure. E.D. Hirsh’s Core Knowledge Curriculum was used to provide a framework for curriculum development in planning for the school’s theme. It provides a complement to the current standards and develops a sophisticated knowledge base for students to connect learning to real life experiences and cultural literacy. The use of Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences allows for all children to acquire successful knowledge acquisition. Lesson plans accommodate all learning styles and provide a wide range of questioning, resulting in a broad scope of educational opportunities and experiences for every child using the learning domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Displays of student work in both the hallways and classrooms are current, showing evidence of higher order thinking skills and celebrating each child at his or her developmental level.

This school uses research-based programs in daily lesson planning. Two years after the school’s inception, the school instructional team chose the Open Court Reading Program to give students a strong phonemic awareness foundation. This has evolved to develop strong reading skills, allowing for comprehension of content, not only in literacy instruction, but also in the thematic units unique to this small learning community. A storytelling initiative provided by a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation introduced a classic literature base to all students, and the study of world languages continues to be a component of the humanities theme offered at this school. Program innovations include hero studies, Shakespearean festivals, and American traditions embedded throughout the school activities calendar. The individualized needs of each student are the focus of the instruction and instructional strategies include mainstreaming and inclusion, as well as programs for gifted students. The Fast ForWord research based computer program addresses literacy through
neuroscience. Students attend a sequence of computer-based lessons to develop the ability to highlight their phonemic awareness and support classroom instruction in reading and language arts. These technology-based lessons heighten experience-dependent learning in the brain, to develop the components of spoken language essential for reading skills to begin to emerge.

Professional learning opportunities are offered to staff through a variety of venues. Collaborative group studies, grade level meetings, and in service days center around activities and discussions such as lesson study, analyzing student work, and improving teaching methods. Professional development, offered by the district, is turn keyed to staff at grade level meetings and used to plan lessons in both vertical and horizontal articulation. Faculty members often choose to go on to graduate level studies in areas that enhance school programming, and, according to the school report card, 42% of staff members hold a Master's degree. Staff participates in a Summer Institute where year long planning, curriculum mapping, and school wide goals are set annually. Experienced teachers in the same grade or subject area mentor newly hired staff. Staff attendance between the years 2002 and 2006 fell consistently above 95%, while student attendance is above 90%. Suspension rates at the school have decreased significantly as compared to other larger elementary schools. This is attributed to the structured play component of the Responsive Classroom program, which provides organized activities during recess.

In 2002, this school was honored as an N.J. Star School by the State Department of Education and was a National Blue Ribbon School Nominee in 2006-2007. A new principal was appointed in January 2007.
Research Questions

This study examines what influence (if any) the level of teacher efficacy and its enabling structures has on explaining the success of this school.

Question 1: What is the level of efficacy exhibited by the teachers in this school in the following areas: (I) efficacy in student engagement, (II) instructional strategies, and (III) classroom management?

Question 2: What is the relationship, if any, between a teacher’s sense of efficacy with respect to student engagement, instructional practices and classroom management?

Question 3: What enabling structures exist in this school to promote a successful school community?

Proposition

Given equal basic teacher qualifications and instructional resources as other schools within the same district, a school that demonstrates “collective teacher efficacy” along with enabling school structures, will consistently meet standards and mandates. Confirmation of this proposition would suggest that nurturing personal teaching efficacy and supporting the collective efficacy of school staff, along with developing enabling school structures, might create a positive culture and ultimately result in the development of an exemplary school community.

Conceptual Framework

Teacher efficacy and school culture are both constructs which have been widely researched and discussed in the area of social science. The theory of locus of control and self-efficacy was developed by Rotter (1966) and both Berman & Mc Laughlin (1977). Mc Laughlin & Marsh (1978) conducted a Rand study that first attempted to measure general
teacher efficacy. Guskey discusses the Rand Corporation “Change Agent Study” and reports that these researchers discovered that a teacher’s sense of efficacy was “the most powerful teacher attribute[s] in the Rand analysis” (p. 84). Rose and Medway developed the Teacher Locus of Control scale in 1981 and other researchers have since developed measures to determine personal teaching efficacy as well as collective efficacy to determine its relationship to teaching and learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 1998).

In 1977, Albert Bandura introduced the concept of social cognitive theory, which does not continue the strand of work started by Rotter, but offers a new dimension to the study of efficacy. The actual construct of personal teaching efficacy stems from Bandura’s Theory and serves as the framework of this case study. Bandura defines self-efficacy as belief in one’s capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). It links self-efficacy to academic performance as it determines that behavior is motivated by environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). Gibson and Dembo further relate this theory to education by studying teachers’ perceived sense of efficacy as it relates to devoting more time to teaching, learning, and celebrating student success (Bandura, 1997, p. 241). Hoy and Spero (2005, p. 344) note that “In the past two decades, researchers have found links between student achievement and three kinds of efficacy, the self efficacy of students, the sense of efficacy of teachers, and the collective efficacy of schools” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Pajares, 1996; Ross, 1992, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Research has determined that teachers with “high efficacy tend to maintain high academic standards, concentrate on academic instruction, monitor students on task behavior, and develop a warm, supportive classroom environment”. This resulted in high student achievement as measured by test scores (Ashton, 1983, p. 4).
Teacher efficacy and enabling school structures are accepted educational concepts; therefore, this case study employs Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as the basis for the conceptual framework. While many studies have confirmed that there is a relationship among the constructs, current efforts regarding reform of urban schools have not widely embraced these concepts to support school improvement (Elmore, 2004). In order to improve student achievement, attention to personal teaching efficacy and collective efficacy should be pursued. Creating a culture of collaboration for all learners, including adults, is an important step in developing professional learning communities that value the commitment necessary to garner successful results. "Educators who are building professional learning communities recognize they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all, therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture" (Dufour, 2005, p. 36). Collaboration with regard to teaching and learning allows faculty to move from isolated classroom experiences to embracing professional support from colleagues as well as forming bonds of trust. This behavior creates enthusiasm in a school culture that supports the development of collective efficacy.

Understanding theories of efficacy and enabling structures and analyzing how they relate to positive school cultures to achieve increased student achievement, can serve as a basis of interest to support reform efforts in failing schools. A case study design will provide the depth of interest needed for this study to explore personal teaching efficacy, collective efficacy and enabling school structures. It will determine if these concepts can serve the broader educational community in efforts to educate urban students to the level of their suburban counterparts.
Limitations of the Study

This research is a case study. It is limited to the faculty of one Abbott School in an urban district in New Jersey. It focuses on enabling structures of successful schools, and the study of efficacy, specifically in student engagement, instructional practices and classroom management. The survey is limited in its use of the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschamen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy. The interviews were limited in using six faculty members.

Significance of the Study

Walker and Gutmore (2000) stated that the ultimate evidence of the success of Abbott will rest on whether students in the Abbott districts have been able to successfully demonstrate their mastery of the standards established in the state’s core curriculum frameworks (Garcia, 2006, p. 29). Therefore, this case study explores the construct of teacher efficacy as a construct identified with a school that is successful as determined by the consistent achievement on the NJASK3&4. The current move toward restructuring under-achieving schools to meet adequate yearly progress, as defined by NCLB mandates, may be served by this research.

The NJ Department of Education has reorganized to include a new Division of District and School Improvement; its mission is to provide districts the needed support to improve teaching and learning, thus leading to successful student achievement. New Jersey CAPA teams can use the findings as they support efforts toward successfully implementing practices that deliver positive results relating to students’ academic performance.
Definition of Terms

Abbott Districts are identified urban school districts in the state of New Jersey with the lowest socio-economic factors as identified by the landmark State Supreme Court rulings in the decade of the 1990s. There are currently 31 identified Abbott Districts in New Jersey. Funding has been increased to include other districts with students who qualify based on socio-economic status.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) refers to the growth needed in proportion to students who achieve. State benchmark schools that fail to make AYP for 2 years in a row in the same subgroup are categorized as in need of improvement. Those that receive Title I funds to improve learning for disadvantaged students face a range of consequences New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

Bloom’s Taxonomy clearly defines cognitive objectives from simple to complex. In 1948 Benjamin Bloom presented his work on a classification of the educational process. Three domains are identified as: the cognitive domain, affective domain and the psychomotor domain.

Coalition of Essential Schools is an organization founded by Theodore Sizer to support school reform using core common principles and personalized support to schools. Its philosophy is based on the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire.

Collective Efficacy is the shared judgment of a school’s teachers that the faculty as a whole can collaborate and execute the actions necessary to produce positive outcomes for students (Bandura 1997).

Cultural Literacy is described as the font of information possessed by all competent readers belonging to a certain culture. “It is shared knowledge that enables educated persons
to read general text with an adequate level of comprehension and grasp the central message as well as the unstated implications of the underlying context that give full meaning to what is read" (Hirsh 1987).

**Enabling School Structures** are bureaucratic structures which allow for open communication and problem solving opportunities among all stakeholders. The structures promote minimal interference in the implementation of educational experiences and trust among adults is valued and encouraged (Sweetland, 2001).

**General Teacher Efficacy** is the extent to which the teacher believes he/she has the capability to affect student performance (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977 p. 137).

**The National Blue Ribbon School Program** has been established by the U.S. Department of Education, which established the N.C.L.B. Blue Ribbon School program to honor those elementary and secondary schools in the United States which make significant progress in closing the achievement gap, or whose students achieve at very high levels. The program recognizes and presents as models both public and private elementary and secondary schools that meet specific assessment criteria relevant to socio-economic status, and test scores that meet or exceed national norms United States Department of Education (USDE).

**New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK3&4)** assesses student achievement in the knowledge and skills defined by the New Jersey Core Curriculum in language arts literacy, mathematics, and science. It replaced the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment, and was implemented in 2003 to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.
Personal Teaching Efficacy is the personal belief which an educator has in his/her own teaching ability. Teachers who demonstrate high personal teaching efficacy typically devote longer hours to preparation, provide academic focus in the classroom and utilize multiple forms of feedback from students (Bandura, 1997).

A Professional Learning Community is a social model that flows from the assumption that “the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure students are taught, but to ensure that they learn” (DuFour, 2004, p. 6).

School Culture or “Inner Reality” (Peterson and Deal, 1993) reflects what organizational members care about, what they are willing to spend time doing, what and how they celebrate, and what they talk about (Robbins and Alvy, 1995, p. 23).

Self-Efficacy is a “belief in one’s capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required in producing given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) initiative is a partnership among the New Jersey Department of Education, schools and districts, as well as local educators, which is designed to empower schools and districts to go beyond current efforts to improve student achievement. It identifies needs and develops solutions to improve school performance (NJDOE).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law on January 8, 2002. It is a broad-based reform for schools requiring stronger accountability for results based on standardized test scores. It encourages proven education methods and choice for parents with regard to where their children are educated.
Summary

The current academic tension nationwide calls for a paradigm shift in how we prepare and execute school reform efforts. Recognizing that schools are social entities charged with having teachers meet the vast educational needs of every child, is a reality of our complex society. This research investigates the construct of teacher efficacy in order to comprehend how we can best direct educational reform efforts to meet the needs of all children including those identified as socio-economically deprived, and execute school reform efforts. Acknowledging that from a teacher’s perspective “efficacy affects the effort that they invest in teaching, the goals they set, and their aspirations” (Tschanren-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, p. 783), this study will explore personal teaching efficacy and collective teaching efficacy. It explores efficacy and enabling structures as important components in creating a platform for setting realistic academic goals and attaining positive student outcomes. Chapter one consists of a brief introduction and background of the problem, purpose, significance of the problem, research questions and proposition. Chapter two presents a review of the literature related to Abbott v. Burke legislation, efficacy, school culture, enabling structures, and effective schools. Chapter three describes the design of the study, its methodology, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures. It will present the demographics, the survey tool, interview process, and the statistical analysis used to draw analytical conclusions. Chapter four provides the data and the results of the analysis of both the survey instrument and the interview process. Chapter five presents a summary and discussion of the findings of the study, implications for policy and practice, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

"The good news is that social science validates a fairly simple recipe that each teacher
has the power to accomplish, teacher by teacher, classroom by classroom, and school by
school. This is, indeed, the only way educational change to close the achievement gap can
happen" (Williams, 2003, p. 134).

The literature for this case study begins with the history and purpose of Abbott v.
Burke in the State of New Jersey. It continues with a review of theories of efficacy, both
personal teaching efficacy, and collective efficacy as well as school culture, enabling
structures and effective schools research. The summary of this review establishes the
importance of this study as it pertains to the examination of student achievement in urban
schools, particularly in New Jersey. It supports the current efforts of the New Jersey
Department of Education as they evaluate prevailing urban reform efforts.

Abbott v. Burke

The Abbott v. Burke New Jersey Supreme Court decision, and N.J.A.C. 6A:10A-1.2,
determined that children in urban districts with low socio-economic structures receive the
same entitlements in education as set forth by the New Jersey Constitution. Regulations
ensured that the students in districts that were then designated Abbott, were afforded the
same funding parity as those of the most affluent in the state. In 1985, four districts in New
Jersey challenged the school funding formula in the Abbott v. Burke case. In Abbott 1, Abbott
v. Burke, 100 N.J. 269, 495A.2d376 (1985), specific school districts were represented by the
Education Law Center on behalf of the poor children; they were Camden, Irvington, East
Orange, and Jersey City. The administrative law judge ruled that the state funding formula
was unconstitutional since it did not provide a thorough and efficient education mandated by
the state constitution to the poor students in New Jersey. Abbott II, Abbott v. Burke, 119 N.J.
287,575 A.2d 359 (1990), was the result of a fact finding initiative of the administrative law
judge to whom the Abbott I case had been remanded (Jackson, 2003). The Commissioner of
Education appealed the decision, but the court ordered that the 1975 Public School Education
Act N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-1to 33 was unconstitutional and would need to be amended or new
legislation passed to ensure that the urban school districts received funding to support the
disadvantaged urban poor. The Public School Education Act was funded by initiating the first
state income tax.

state taxes under the Quality Education Act of 1990 N.J.S.A.18A:7D-1to 37 to assure equal
funding between wealthy and poor districts, however it was found to be unconstitutional
because it did not provide a through and efficient education to poor urban children (Jackson,
2003). In 1996, the legislature demanded a standards-based approach to education and
enacted the Comprehensive Education Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA
N.J.S.A.18A: 7F-1to 34). It provided all children equity in education using standards and a
new funding policy. A challenge to the decision immediately occurred followed by the
Abbott IV Abbott v. Burke, 149 N.J. 145. 693 A.2d 417 (1997) decision. It clarified that the
state would provide special needs districts with funding to close the gap between wealthy
districts and those with special needs. It declared the CEIFA unconstitutional in this decision,
and required the Education Law Center and the Commissioner to provide to the Supreme
Court recommendations for facilities and supplemental programs for the identified districts.
In 1998, Abbott V Abbott v. Burke, 153N.J. 480, 710 A.2d 450 provided the forum for the
Commissioner to present the findings ordered by Abbott IV to the Supreme Court. The recommendations were enough for the court to identify the educational programs to be implemented in the then 30 districts designated Abbott. This historical ruling was litigated through the next six years with rulings from Abbott VI to Abbott X.

The litigious journey began with the revision of the state constitution in 1875. The original constitution was presented in 1776, but the revised version stated: “The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the state between the ages of five and eighteen years” (N.J. State Constitution of 1947, Article VIII Taxation and Finance, Section IV, Paragraph 1).

The infusion of the much needed funding was not ensured to be used to its maximum capacity. Funding was appropriated to build new schools and for renovations to age-old buildings during the McGreevey administration; however, poor oversight of the School Construction Corporation stopped the progress of securing adequate facilities mandated by Abbott V. Urban students continue to be educated in facilities that do not provide adequate resources to implement curriculum standards mandated by the state in Abbott III. The education of an entire generation of children with regard to the Supreme Court Abbott Regulations has been lost to the inability to plan and put in practice what is needed to fulfill the “promise of Abbott” (Sciara, 2007).

Throughout these historic, tumultuous times, the Education Law Center (ELC), founded in 1973 by Paul Trachtenburg using a grant from the Ford Foundation, has monitored the educational reforms of Abbott. This non-profit organization has been the advocate for the Abbott saga from its inception. Early on, in 1981, Marilyn Morehouse, Executive
Director of the Education Law Center, filed the Abbott v. Burke litigation. After the litigations, and once money was appropriated to the districts, the stakeholder conversations included these questions: Would the new revenues improve the education? Would the funding formula equalize the revenues? What would be the consequences of attempting to help the poor at the expense of the wealthy? (Firestone, Goertz, Nagle and Smelkinson, 1994). More than a decade later, current educational conversations are led with the discussion of failing schools, high property taxes, and constitutional conventions.

In May of 2005, the then Education Commissioner, William Librera, proposed to the legislature that there was a need to reduce the number of Abbott Districts to approximately half of the thirty-one. The immediate response from the Education Law Center was one of extreme caution, as this approach appeared to be an attempt to reduce the strain put on property owners across the state to provide funding to urban schools. A new lawsuit filed in 2005, called for developing a management plan by the Department of Education as required by the Abbott Regulations. In 2005, formal evaluations of Abbott programs began. Acting Governor Richard Codey signed legislation in 2005 to begin the process of the state withdrawing from the three Abbott takeover districts, Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark. The improvements that the takeover had promised for the most part, had never materialized. Both the district and state’s inability to build capacity, set goals and implement many of the program requirements and facilities’ needs, have currently forced all stakeholders to regroup efforts to meet the demands of the law.

The No Child Left Behind legislation, enacted by President George W. Bush in 2002, has created a new background drama of mandates for the New Jersey Department of Education. Abbott regulations must be considered along with federal mandates for specific
programming in low performing schools. The State of New Jersey will continue to be closely observed by a nationwide audience as it continues to strive to meet the commitments of Abbott v. Burke. In January of 2007, faced with a financial crisis, the New Jersey Legislative body voted to pass a highly controversial school funding formula that promises to continue to provide support to school districts designated Abbott. However, this funding formula will disperse monetary allocations to all children in the state who meet the profile of the poverty level described in the Abbott Law.

"While the study of judicial impact has largely concerned political scientists and scholars interested in law and society, the school finance litigation is of interest to educational researchers and social scientists focusing on the impact of the courts' equity and adequacy decisions regarding reforming major policies of state government" (Walker et al., 2006, p. 439). While it continues to speak to parity in funding, the new funding formula sets a monetary figure of per pupil expenditure far below what wealthy districts would consider adequate to educate a child. Therefore, communities which desire increased funding beyond the cap would have to vote to increase property taxes to meet the need. Opponents of Abbott v. Burke blame the law for contributing to the statewide financial crisis, since the influx of funding to Abbott districts enmeshes tales of corruption with stories of success in specific schools intent on delivering the promise of Abbott.

The Education Law Center is positioned to challenge this latest action and New Jersey's Abbott v. Burke Landmark Decision will remain at the forefront of funding decisions nationwide as the state continues to seek to provide fiscal equity to students living in poverty. Walker, Achilles, and Francis (2006) state that although the courts have ruled in favor of providing equity in educational opportunities, it is not guaranteed to provide the
intended outcomes in schools. They outline two distinct periods of Abbott implementation since 1998 under the leadership of both political parties. There is a shift from mandated whole school reform models to a concise district budgeting process. This requires districts to focus on state mandated reform initiatives that include a strong focus on early childhood education. Early literacy reforms remain a priority as well as mathematics instruction in the early grades. Research indicates that progress is evident in the Abbott districts with regard to parity and equitable education outcomes (Walker et al., 2006). Abbott v. Burke provides a framework for school reform in New Jersey, yet implementation of the reforms continues to be fraught with difficulty.

**Theories of Efficacy**

The study of teacher efficacy began by applying Rotter’s social learning theory (1954), which includes the theory of locus of control, to studies that would determine efficacy in teachers with regard to student achievement. Locus of control refers to general beliefs regarding what actions are reinforced in life. Using the theory requires an understanding that behaviors and expectations are determined by internal and external expectations. Internal expectations are those that people feel control in executing and are responsible for the outcome. Thoughts of chance or an understanding that one does not have enough control of a situation in an outcome determines external control (Marsh and Weary, 1995). The theory of locus of control is presented on a continuum, and participants of studies can be classified along the continuum from various degrees of internal control to various degrees of external control.

Behaviors and expectations are internal controls and apply to the theory of *learned helplessness* described by Abramson & Seligman (1998); it applies to the external control
area of the Rotter continuum. Anderman & Miggley (1997) determined from their studies that students who believe that the factors for achievement are out of their reach, are unlikely to see any reason to hope for improvement. This is analogous to the work of Spero & Woolfolk Hoy (2005) on pre-service teachers, student teachers and novice teachers with regard to developing personal teaching efficacy, as well as the work of Woolfolk & Hoy (1990) who examined the structure and meaning of general teaching efficacy and personal efficacy for new teachers.

The 1976 Rand study utilized Rotter’s theory and was developed and executed to analyze gains made by minority students enrolled in innovative education programs funded by the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Researchers McLaughlin, Marsh and Berman (1978) developed a two-item measurement tool based on Rotter’s Theory of the Locus of Control (1966). The theory of the locus of control in this study assessed how people feel regarding the internal and external implications of efficacy with regard to student achievement. **Rand Item 1** seeks responses to the statement, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” (Armour et al., 1976, p. 73). The item centers on external control and is the basis of the definition of general teaching efficacy. **Rand Item 2** states, “If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students” (Armour et al., 1976, p. 73). Following this theory, it was then determined that despite environmental concerns, teachers have the power internally to reach students and motivate them to successful outcomes (Tscheppen-Moran et al., 1998).

The Rand research was the first to examine efficacy as it relates to the theory of the locus of control and to identify it as a powerful construct in determining characteristics of
teachers and how they relate to student achievement (Armour et al., 1976). Rotter's theories are used by other researchers in work relating to teacher efficacy as they attempt to determine how teachers accepted responsibility for student success and failure in situations that were in and beyond their control (Fives, 2003). Rose and Medway (1981) created the teachers locus of control survey and determined correlations between the results of this study and the results of the Rand study, thus building on the body of research regarding teacher efficacy.

Teachers, who scored high on the internal response to the concept of efficacy, felt they could control classroom outcomes and reported less stressed in their work. They believed that they had the ability to teach children to a positive end. This work set a foundation to move forward in the investigation of teacher efficacy.

Guskey (1981) developed a tool to measure efficacy based on Rotter's theory, and incorporated the attribution theories of Weiner (1979) to create the Responsibility for Student Achievement Scale. This scale defined efficacy as "a teacher's belief that he or she can influence student learning even of those students who are difficult or unmotivated" (Guskey, 1987, p. 41 as cited in Fives, 2003). Weiner and Rotter's theories build on the assumption that the teacher is willing to respond and take control of the learning process even though (s)he understands that (s)he has no control of a student's life outside the school and classroom environment. Research to support theories of efficacy has determined that how teachers structure academic activities in their classrooms, is a reflection of their belief in their own instructional efficacy (Gibson and Dembo, 1984).

Bandura's social cognitive theory laid the groundwork to define teacher efficacy as a "self-efficacy deriving from a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Self-efficacy is
said to determine how people make decisions and to what degree they will persist in a difficult situation. Bandura ascertains that social conditions are embedded in human functioning; and through collective efficacy, people can determine the direction their environment will take to a successful end. His social cognitive theory is guided by the belief in one's capability to execute a plan to a successful end (Bandura, 1997). The theory is based on outcome expectancy; the idea that people can act at the expected level of competency (Bandura, 1986). He states that if individuals believe they have control over future events, they will attempt to exert that control to a positive end. Bandura explained that self-efficacy is different from self-concept or self-worth. It is specific to a particular task, yet it can be associated with Rotter's theory of locus of control with regard to internal control and the development of self-efficacy.

According to Rotter (1966), internal controls are related to hard work and one's personal ability to make change, while external control sends the message that your actions are not enough to determine your future. Those who feel choices are controlled by outside forces develop an external locus of control, internal control on the locus of control continuum relates to higher academic achievement (Findley & Cooper, 1983). Bender (1985) supports this by determining that failure in schools leads to an external locus of control. Rotter's theories determine that developing self-efficacy can improve school environments.

Tschannen Moran and Woolfolk Hoy expanded on the idea of teacher efficacy and associated it with significant variables that include student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management. The research looks at these relationships and seeks to determine how a person's beliefs influences their response to basic situations in life, how much they choose to press forward and work to positive outcomes in life, goal setting, and
decision making. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is based on teachers' perceptions of their ability and skills. He maintains that teachers who do not see themselves as effective do not put forth the effort needed to develop themselves, or their students, to maximum capacity. He also affirms that teachers with a high sense of instructional efficacy believe that difficult students are reachable and can learn if extra effort is made to bring them along using effective teaching skills (Bandura, 1997).

Both Rotter and Bandura's theoretical frameworks of efficacy come from a physiological perspective; however, Bandura's social cognitive theory begins with the study of self-efficacy and outlines the domains of human development within a specific framework. These domains include mastery experiences, psychological experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1977). The factors are not isolated from each other and are measured at different levels according to the experiences of the person. The domain of psychological experience relates to one's belief in his/her competence to successfully complete tasks. Vicarious experiences are skills that are modeled by others, and social persuasion is described as a specific response from a supervisor or colleague (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Bandura's theory (1977) is the basis for the development of what is defined as teacher efficacy. It is the innate sense of confidence that humans have, but develop to various degrees. Much of the early research in the study of teacher efficacy is of quantitative design, and has determined connections between personal teacher efficacy and student achievement in analysis of the data (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) have shown through their studies that self-efficacy and personal teaching efficacy are different concepts and that teachers who believe in themselves do not always think that they can affect
student-learning outcomes through their own efforts. However, research states that teachers who have been nurtured early on in their teaching experience build a foundation of skills that develops personal efficacy, which can then evolve into positive relationships with colleagues, students and parents (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). High self-efficacy allows teachers to begin to explore methods other than traditional teaching methods, to take risks, succeed and fail, and know how to regroup and plan for success.

Ashton (1985) defines a teacher’s sense of efficacy as “their belief in their ability to have a positive effect on student learning” (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, p. 355). This definition is very close to the view that Gibson and Dembo (1984) have of the basic construct. Personal teaching efficacy brings the construct to another level as Gibson and Dembo developed the idea by meshing both teacher efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. Both levels of efficacy can lead to positive and negative outcomes based on whether or not the levels of efficacy are high or low and how educators perform in the environments they are faced with.

The two questions created for the Rand study dealt with both constructs. Question one studied general teaching efficacy and Question two explored personal teaching efficacy. The methodology for the study was qualitative using an interview process. They found significant correlations in only one of the five samples studied. Gibson and Dembo (1984), observed classroom management styles with regard to maximizing teaching and learning time and meeting the needs of all learners. Teachers noted to have a strong sense of efficacy, differentiated their instruction and had classroom management plans and processes in place. These teachers believed students could meet expectations clearly outlined for them. Consequently, the expectations for behavior and relationship building with students play an
important role in how students perceive the teacher's ability to perform, thus ultimately influencing their own behaviors and outcomes.

High efficacy teachers created classrooms that supported large and small group instruction as well as developing clear expectations for all students to move through lessons engaged and on task with minimal distraction. Low efficacy teachers, sometimes assigned to the most difficult students, could not manage the practices described above; therefore, they were less successful in producing high rates of student achievement. Dufour (2004) acknowledges that teachers who perceive that they can help students learn, can change the culture of a school; it is not the construct of teachers thinking that their students have ability. Personal teaching efficacy and collective efficacy are the driving factors to ensure student success. Dufour offers the example of Elisa Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*; Professor Higgins believed in himself first, even though he knew she was capable of transitioning her behavior. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) conducted a study by developing a model of collective efficacy and used this to work in a large district in the Midwest. The study determined that collective teacher efficacy was associated with student achievement in reading and mathematics. In examining the variables in other studies executed, it was determined to have a greater impact than socio-economic status.

The Pullar Model (1982) of teacher development is based on studies of pre-service and in service teachers. It provides a framework to relate the above dimensions to teacher efficacy by discussing performance efficacy as it relates to teaching competency and evaluation methods. The model defines teacher development offering a three point criteria. These criteria are, *self-concerns*, explained as how new teachers focus on adequacy and perceptions of experienced staff; *tasks of teaching* refers to making sense of teaching and
learning; and impact, where teachers attempt to understand students’ needs regarding the social, emotional and cognitive realm of education (Dangel, 2005, p. 131). Turkey and Wood (2002), as reported in Dangel (2005, p. 137), disagree with the order of Fuller’s construct and determine that teachers entering education from non-traditional venues are often focused on impacting students’ lives and supporting the broader picture of social issues. Their studies were done with Teach for America participants. There are research studies that have directly explored the relationship between school organizations or culture and teacher efficacy (Ross, 1994; Stein & Wang, 1998). Ashton and Webb did a study in 1983 on two sets of teachers in two schools regarding efficacy, and noted that teachers displayed a higher sense of efficacy when they worked in teams, saw students develop over time, and shared clear educational aims. Researchers are currently calling for larger studies with diverse samples including student achievement factors and teacher evaluation tools with regard to predicting personal teacher efficacy (Fives, 2003).

Collective teacher efficacy emanates from Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory. He defines it as “an emergent group level attribute that is the product of coordinative and interactive dynamics (Bandura, 1997, p. 7). As the social cognitive theory deals with the human agency, it allows people to share beliefs and develop goals for the common good. As investigated in this literature review, strong connections have been established between high efficacy rates in teachers and high outcomes of student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy 1990). Collective efficacy pertains to assumptions, values and norms; shared beliefs about the school’s capability to innovate and attain goals (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). As research has been done to determine if teacher perceptions and efficacy are linked, the study of collective efficacy has been limited. Pajares
(1996) offers that the ability to collect intensive data from multiple schools places limitations on the amount of studies done.

Tschanner-Moran et al. (1998) developed a model of teacher efficacy that sought to reduce the "conceptual confusion" regarding the construct of teacher efficacy. While the model is based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, the researchers interpreted and analyzed the sources of efficacy found in his work. They also included the conceptual strands of Rotter's locus of control to create a measure to determine the effects of teacher efficacy on student achievement. Bandura's research yielded the understanding that teacher efficacy is content specific, thus levels of efficacy do not remain constant, but are based on subject matter, the learning environment, and the teacher's ability to analyze and work through the tasks presented in situations. As presented earlier, Bandura (1986, 1997) describes these as the four sources of information: mastery experiences, physiological arousal, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion. These four domains of efficacy, along with the ability to analyze the tasks within the framework of teaching competence, are the basis for a model of collective efficacy thought to bring schools to a level of performance that supports the development of successful schools.

Researchers are currently calling for larger studies with diverse samples including student achievement factors and teacher evaluation tools with regard to predicting personal teacher efficacy. They caution that, "The affective state of an organization has much to do with how challenges are interpreted by organizations" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 485). The collective efficacy of the school has much more to do with the response coming from a positive perspective. In 1993, Bandura continued his work with collective teaching efficacy. Through his research he, "observed a relationship between collective efficacy and
mathematics and reading achievement" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 498). Tracz and Gibson (1986) also studied these constructs and found correlations between teacher efficacy and instruction, particularly in mathematics and language arts. Goddard et al. (2000) describe the analysis of teaching tasks and group competence as being highly interrelated and essential for developing collective teacher efficacy along with the four sources of information referred to in this review (Bandura, 1997). The premise for the use of this model to determine teacher efficacy is that “high collective efficacy will be the acceptance of challenging goals, strong organizational effort, and a persistence that leads to better performance” (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 486).

DaFour (1998) states, “Those who develop their school’s capacity to function as a professional learning community must face the challenge of shaping cultures”. Professional learning communities encourage teachers to focus on student work reflectively, by discussing where students are in their learning, and adjusting for re-teaching and teaching new content. He determined that the level of collaboration among teachers can move forward in atmospheres where authentic dialogue can help teachers to “focus their efforts on ensuring that teaching, student learning and relationships are significantly improved” (2005, p.173). This aligns with the work of Hoy and Sweetland (2007) as they also call for authentic discussions to take place between educators who are committed to school improvement. Professional learning communities encourage teachers to have the critical discussions, instruction and assessment that can develop norms and expectations for all staff and faculty. Dufour (2005) discusses the Nintendo effect and describes returning assessment and feedback to students as imperative. He cautions that students will only remain engaged if they know that teachers value and care enough about the work they assign, to collect it,
assess it, and return it to them with relevant remarks. The window of time for this to make an impact is narrow, but the rewards in terms of student achievement are great. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1997) and the domains of collective efficacy confirm that this work is within our reach.

Malloy (1998) states that growing bodies of research and case studies have led to supporting an understanding of the importance of what he refers to as the social dimension of school change (Malloy as cited in Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 41). A caring school creates expectations that empower staff and set the stage for self-efficacy. As efficacy develops, it extends itself to high levels of personal teaching efficacy that support desired outcomes in successful schools. While accountability, monitoring and evaluation plans are important, the study of what works in schools and how the importance of teacher efficacy factors into the equation, must be re-visited. Kratzer (1996) discusses a successful urban school environment as one that embraces diversity and creates structures that keep students safe and able to focus on doing their best work, resulting in an atmosphere where every learner in the community is valued. Reform strategies that take a humanistic approach to serving schools with agendas for all children, must develop "teacher resilience" (Williams, 2003, p. 132). Williams outlines characteristics that include traits of self-efficacy, which lead to positive student outcomes when teachers are nurtured. Teachers, in turn, develop a high level of teaching efficacy as described by Sergiovanni when he discusses teachers' self-efficacy as "a belief that students can learn if taught and a belief in one's own ability to successfully teach them" (Sergiovanni as cited in Williams, 2003, p. 131). This translates into gains in academic outcomes for all students.
Research studies done by Hoy, Hannum and Tschannen-Moran (1998) have shown that if teachers in low socio-economic districts believe they can motivate urban students beyond their outside issues, students will make rapid progress in learning (William, 2003, p. 158). Goddard et al. (2000) suggest that understanding how teacher efficacy develops in a school will help to determine the social norms and behaviors that influence the way schools work. Research indicates that the importance of welcome efforts made by leadership in caring schools to collaborate in solving critical issues as well as participating in instructional planning is critical to new staff and welcomed by veteran teachers (Barth, 2001). Coleman (1985, 1987) in the Goddard et al. (2000) study, states, “If most teachers in a school are efficacious, the normative environment will press teachers to persist in their educational efforts. Moreover, the press to perform will be accompanied by social sanctions for those who do not” (2001, p.483). Bandura (1993) has concluded that understanding self-efficacy, teacher efficacy and collective teacher efficacy can support positive student achievement and although Goddard (2000) did not replicate the study, the findings were consistent with the theory of collective efficacy and Bandura’s work.

**Enabling School Structures**

Research regarding enabling school structures suggests that school bureaucracies can hinder innovation and progress leading to positive outcomes in student achievement. Weber, (1947) as stated in Hoy & Sweetland (2001), outlines the properties of bureaucracy and offers that bureaucratic structures can be harmful to schools and ultimately to the educational programs developed and offered to students. Research also outlines that bureaucracy can support schools providing a structure by which innovation is possible (Craig, 1995; Dubinsky, & Joachimisthaler, 1988) as documented by Hoy and Sweetland. How schools
respond to bureaucracy is of interest to researchers who study both ends of this construct continuum.

Adler and Borys (1996) offer theoretical analysis that presents the idea of enabling and coercive structures. Their theory delves into moving theory into practice, allowing enabling structures to exist in schools; creating opportunities for communications between staff and administration, identifying problems and results, encouraging differences, promoting trust, working through mistakes and delighting in differences (Sweetland, 2001). Sweetland contrasts this with a description of coercive structures that promote top down bureaucracies, viewing problems as constraints, mistrusting, forcing consensus, punishing mistakes, and creating a fear of the unexpected (2001). Hoy & Miskel (2001) suggest a theory that places enabling structures and coercive structures on a continuum, allowing for an understanding of the various structures that can both support or destroy schools. Sweetland elaborates on the continuum concept and discusses the idea of authenticity, allowing an enabling school structure to assist in professional interactions (2001). He suggests that faculty who work together with administration to view problems truthfully can develop an atmosphere that supports student achievement.

According to Hirschorn (1997), as reported in Sweetland and Hoy (2000), districts determined to practice coercive bureaucracy blame the state, other interventions or factors, rather than accepting responsibility for implementing rules and procedures that hinder progress. Mintzberg (1989), as reported by Hoy, described coercive structures as "machine bureaucracies". The theory of implementing enabling school structures upholds creating schools that nurture positive relationships between staff, and administration, and the structure sets a tone for higher levels of collaboration, and discussions that focus on student needs.
The negative side of school structures, as outlined by Hoy and Sweetland (2001), supports a lack of creativity and an almost lethargic atmosphere. They report that in schools where rules are more important than results in day-to-day administration, these coercive acts will result in frequent absenteeism, stress, and general job dissatisfaction (Hoy & Sweetland 2000). Hoy and Sweetland (2001) studied dimensions of enabling structures labeled centralization and formalization by Adler and Borys (1996) and merged them to form an integrated concept of structure as they further research school structures by measuring factors along a continuum.

The design of enabling structures allows increased participation by employees creating an atmosphere that promotes problem solving in an environment of trust and cooperation. This has also been developed by Hoy (2007) into a new construct called academic optimism. He defines this as uniting three concepts: efficacy being the belief that faculty can make a positive contribution to student learning when teachers believe in themselves. Trust is the belief that the school community of learners can work together to improve student learning and that teachers believe in their students, and academic emphasis, defined as the enactment of the beliefs, is where teachers act to improve the academic success of students (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000, 2001). Hoy and Sweetland (2000) show evidence to support that highly centralized authority leaves decision making to few stakeholders, while low centralization gives more decision making authority to employees, allowing for creative thinking to flow through the organization.

Jim Collins describes this in Good to Great as breaking through to attain "level five leadership". He advises that the environment needed to create such a climate must evolve from trust, yet results must be delivered with a ferocious resolve to produce results (2001, p. 30). Collins states that there is no solid research to support a list of characteristics of those
who can move organizations forward, but he offers his understanding that it refers to the best in human beings and those who seek the truth will be better for the effort (2001, p. 38).

Enabling structures that focus on shared leadership can create effective behaviors to include skills that teachers currently have and which otherwise might not have surfaced yet can enhance a school program rather than an authoritarian approach (Yukl, 2006). A balance of characteristics in a school that practices shared leadership provides knowledge and teacher leadership skills among the stakeholders (Senge, 1990). In contrast, autocratic decision making methods stifle freedom of ideas, and keep teachers at bay regarding the development of collective efficacy, as described in Bandura’s theory (1997). This supports the academic optimism proposed by Hoy & Sweetland (2007) as well as the concept of authenticity in enabling school practices.

The work of Hoy and Sweetland provides a direct link between academic optimism using a path model linking factors of “urbacity”, socio-economic status, leading to positive student achievement in a study done in the areas of mathematics and science. Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) again created a measurement of academic optimism that included the above factors but directly linked the socio-economic status with student achievement and academic optimism. Positive learning environments create knowledge (Senge, 1990) and schools that commit to this idea often go beyond expectations. This relates to the idea of professional learning communities and the importance of providing time for teachers. This supports Sweetland’s research (2001) regarding creating authenticity in school programs and eliminating coercive behavior that would not allow teachers to face the reality of truth. Nyberg (1993), as stated in Hoy (2001), relates this to varnishing the truth. Hoy then goes further to explain that enabling structures to empower teachers is a relevant factor to
successful reform (2001). He offers the following guidelines to enabling rules that support success.

**Hoy's Guidelines to Promote Enabling Rules**

- There are times rules don’t work; suspend them.
- Some rules lead to mindlessness; avoid them.
- Some rules support mindfulness; embrace them.
- Some rules become unnecessary; eliminate them.
- Some rules create dependence; beware of them.
- Some rules create playfulness; invent them.
- Rules set precedents: if the precedents are bad, change the rules.
- Rules are best to guide but not to dictate. (Hoy, 2007)

The importance of implementing enabling structures in business was developed by Adler and Borys (1996) and applied to schools by Hoy and Sweetland (2000). Enabling structures support teachers and students in schools that are determined first to be safe organized environments, and second, are focused on the business of teaching and learning.

**Effective Schools Research**

In 1966, James Coleman published the Equal Educational Opportunity study, commonly known as the Coleman Report. This was the beginning of the effective schools movement, and, in essence, Coleman determined from his study that schools had little or no effect on student learning (Clewell, 2007). The reaction to this statement began a stream of research to challenge this finding. Edmonds (1979) developed correlates of school effectiveness that included instructional leadership, high expectations for student achievement, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, emphasis on basic skills and the
frequent monitoring of pupil progress. Findings for effective school studies have been
"consistent even though they have been conducted in various urban schools around the
country" (Rosenholtz, 1985, p. 353 as reported in Clewell, 2007, p. 5). Marzano (2005), in
his effective schools research, determined five basic characteristics of effective schools. They
reflect the work of Edmonds (1979) as they call for a guaranteed viable curriculum,
challenging goals, effective feedback, parental and community involvement, a safe and
orderly environment, collegiality, and professionalism. Purkey & Smith (1983) associate
effective schools with orderly schools where classrooms and teachers respond accordingly to
the level above them.

The Louisiana Quality Effectiveness Study (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993) addressed
both school and classroom characteristics and used quantitative and qualitative methods to
gather data. The results reported higher time on task for students, frequent introduction to
new material, encouragement of independent practice, high expectations, positive
reinforcement, firm discipline, a friendly environment, displays of student work, and pleasant
classrooms, (Reynolds et al., 2002, as presented in Clewell, 2007, p. 6). Snipes, Doolittle
and Herlihy (2002) bring the study of school effectiveness to the district levels using a case
study methodology and determining that effective districts share many common approaches
that include curriculum alignment, support to the school sites, and initiation of reforms at the
elementary schools and intensive reading and mathematics instruction in the early grades
(Clewell, 2007). However, Marzano continues to focus on the school itself as the "proper
focus for reform" (2003, p. 10). Elmore (2004, p. 106) in his work on school reform creates
Domains of Large Scale Improvements, which charges educators and reformers to reflect and
develop structures for gaining an understanding of what students and teachers know and then what they need to know.

Six dimensions of organizational health have been identified. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) present school climate as school health and in their work on determining the characteristics of an effective school, they draw on the constructs of both Rotter’s Theory of Locus of Control (1966), and Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1977). A healthy school as defined by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993, p. 358) speaks to “technical, managerial and institutional levels in harmony; and the school is meeting both its instructional and expressive needs as it successfully copes with disruptive external forces and directs its energies toward its mission”. The six dimensions come from the Organizational Health Inventory developed by Hoy, Podgurski, & Tarter (1991), and are listed and defined as follows (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993, p. 358):

- **Institutional Integrity** is the ability of the school to cope with its environment in a way that maintains the instructional integrity of its programs. Teachers are protected from unreasonable community and parental demands.

- **Principal Influence** is the principal’s ability to influence the actions of superiors. Being able to persuade superiors, get additional consideration and be unimpeded by the administrative hierarchy are necessary skills to be effective managerially.

- **Consideration** is principal behavior that is friendly, supportive, open and collegial; it represents a genuine concern by the principal for welfare of teachers.

- **Resource Support** refers to a school where adequate classroom supplies and instructional materials are available and extra resources are readily supplied if requested.
• Morale is a collective sense of friendliness, openness, enthusiasm and trust among faculty members. Teachers like each other, their jobs, and help each other; and they are proud of their school and feel a sense of accomplishment in their jobs.

• Academic Excellence is the extent to which a school is driven by a quest for academic excellence. High but achievable academic goals are set for students; the learning environment is orderly and serious; teachers believe in their students' ability to achieve, and students work hard and respect those who do well academically.

Achilles (1987) refers to the research and evaluation of effective schools as “making sense”, in that concepts developed from the theory can support understanding what successful schools have to offer and building a model from this venue, rather than focusing on what is wrong with schools. Setting goals for schools that include teacher input, assures necessary steps are embedded in instruction to meet these goals. He offers examples of this in the results of the SHAL project, designed and implemented to improve city schools. The research project is built on change theory and the effective schools work of Ronald Edmunds (1979). The goal of the project was to create change within structure of the school. The idea behind SHAL was Students Study Hard And Learn; often this slogan interchanged with Students Here Are Learning based on the context of the instructional need. Teachers were empowered to develop strategies to create a nurturing environment that met student needs. The success of the project is measured by student outcomes on the California Achievement Tests. Collaboration among staff to solve problems outside the academic domain supported results in student achievement. This work was phased in over time and set a firm foundation for the school culture to evolve using parent and community meetings as well as a strong commitment to keep the school staff together for the three-year implementation and phase-in.
For the most part, the school culture improved when outside evaluators (Achilles et al., 1983, 1985) observed and reported on the program. The success of the study indicated that although change in school structures can bring positive outcomes for children, the personalization efforts of the teachers to meet student needs were developed by teachers who created opportunities for successful teaching and learning. Case studies and reports on successful schools indicate that a positive learning environment is important to successful student learning, and, is therefore, the key to success.

Currently the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is supporting a study to examine how K-12 financing can help schools raise student achievement levels. The study discusses a continuous cycle of instructional improvement and calls for teachers to be aware of research and relevant data regarding student performance. Weiss (2007) indicates that this would require trying innovative approaches and assessing students for prior knowledge, building on knowledge, assessing, making corrections and assessing again. This cycle is described as relying on “multiple strategies for teaching and multiple strategies for assessing learning and assumes that these decisions are today best left to educators who know their students” (Weiss, 2007, p. 5). This is in conflict with specific accountability plans that force one-dimensional education on schools as the means to improve student achievement.

Environments, as described by Weiss, would need enabling structures as offered by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993).

The research refers to striking a balance of teacher freedom to adjust for delivery of instruction based on student needs and performance assessment results. Professional development programs for districts and teacher support systems are needed in order to implement the shift in pedagogy. This cycle of continuous improvement calls for creating
interlocking academic programs thus eliminating dependence on textbooks delivered in a page-by-page sequence and the practice of teachers focusing on their areas of expertise and interest rather than content assigned to their specific grade level. The tools and structures to deliver education in this context often do not yet exist, which is often due to developers of support software programming not having a working understanding of teaching and learning. The School Finance Redesign Project described by Weiss, calls for venture capitalists to invest in innovation to improve educational practices. Attempts at this were at their peak in 2000 and have since waned significantly, creating the possibility of a stalemate in moving forward to support enabling structures and creating an outlet to return to a comfort zone of ritualistic approaches that can be coercive in implementation and unsuccessful in review of best practices.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and the constructs of personal teaching efficacy and collective teaching efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 1998) should link to school reform efforts that focused on student achievement gains. Kenneth Boulding, (1989) author of *Three Faces Of Power* discusses power as a three part process to change organizations. Although school was not the initial focus of his work, schools can benefit from this research. Boulding offers three forms of power: stick power, which is the power of the threat; carrot power which is the power of incentive; and hug power, which is derived from shared vision, values and beliefs (DuFour, 2005, p.182).

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a national network of schools and centers engaged in re-structuring and re-designing schools to promote better student learning and student achievement (Educational Testing Services, ETS). Established in 1984 by Theodore Sizer at Brown University, it began with a five-year study of America’s high schools. Since
then it has included attention to reforms of elementary and middle schools nationwide. The Coalition does not profess a whole school reform model but rather works within a philosophy of Common Principles. The principles are focused on goals and objectives for student success based on decisions and behaviors decided upon by the entire school community. It recommends the concept of teachers as coaches and educators taking on informal roles in the school structure based on student need rather than strict adherence to the class assignment. The school is encouraged to stress values of trust and decency.

Collaborative planning is encouraged and the phrase “Less is More,” (ETS, p. 36) is recommended to guide curriculum decisions allowing for mastery of skills instead of routinely presenting content of traditional lessons. Assessment is done through observation and informal evaluation of student needs. The Coalition considers student exhibitions of content knowledge to be a natural response to the learned outcomes of all students. Differentiated projects based on learning styles are encouraged and student collaboration is encouraged. Authentic activities are said to empower children to work to their highest skill level while providing teachers a true performance level to plan further lessons appropriate to their response (CES).

Current research verifies that there are successful schools with low socio-economic status in urban areas across this country (Chenoweth, 2007). Their commonalities are simple, yet powerful. Faculties all focus consistently on improving instruction, and preparing children for their future. These schools are described as places where children and teachers are happy and cheerful. Students love to read and reading instruction is consistent with the developmental levels of student learning. There is no excessive focus on test preparation, just a clear understanding of grade level content and test strategies (Chenoweth, 2007). The
criteria for identifying the schools in the It’s Being Done study was socio-economic status, high levels of student achievement, small achievement gaps, two years of test data, graduation rates for high schools in the study, meeting adequate yearly progress, and open enrollment of students. Each school visited by Chenoweth was different, in that their approach to instruction and learning was unique to their school. “Teachers and administrators know that the children in their schools can learn, and they know that it is up to them to figure out how to teach their students” (Chenoweth, 2007).

This confirms the research done by Douglas B. Reeves on successful schools of poverty. Identified by characteristics as 90/90/90 schools, these are schools that have 90% free and reduced lunch status, 90% were minority students and 90% met district or state academic benchmarks in academic areas (Reeves, 2000). One of the factors that evolved from the recent research done on performing schools, is the consistency of teachers examining student results in performance based assessment and coming to a consensus on scoring student work. The process for this dialogue among teachers was different in each school, yet it was teacher driven and implemented consistently across the board once a determination was made as to what was considered passing work. The use of scoring rubrics sent a message to students that clearly outlined what the expectations were for writing samples and these expectations are delivered across grade levels and among the content areas. Reported in Literacy Development of Students in Urban Schools, Reeves states, “it is the collective work of teachers, students, parents, and leaders that will ultimately take us out of this malaise” (Flood and Anderson, 2005, p. 321, 388). As with the Coalition of Essential Schools philosophy, the 90/90/90 schools did not subscribe to reform models but focused on the strengths of each school to achieve success for every student. The pressure to perform
well on tests was kept in perspective and the intensity lies with teachers being empowered to
approach teaching and learning from a perspective of student needs (Reeves, 2007).

Summary

Research results indicate that all students can attend schools that are successful at
providing outstanding educational practices on a consistent basis. However, regardless of the
mandates of Abbott v. Burke and of No Child Left Behind, we still struggle to deliver the
quality of instruction needed to prepare students to meet their academic potential.
Researchers have also found that the construct of teacher efficacy and collective teacher
efficacy (Bandura, 1997) can be a concept to explore in the reform of schools not meeting
with success as measured by district, state and adequately yearly progress benchmarks set
forth by NCLB. Teacher efficacy when developed in pre service teachers, new teachers, and
veteran teachers, allows for an environment of collective efficacy to occur (Goddard et al.,
2000). By creating a collaborative culture among school staff, opportunities for student
growth are possible. Every member of the school community can participate in setting goals
and striving to see that they are met consistently and fairly to the benefit of the students
(Edmonds, 1979). Children and families who are nurtured in these schools find that they are
extensions of the home and are ready to accept the norms and standards for success.

Researchers have also found that while schools need rules and regulations to keep
order, a coercive environment of ridged behaviors will ultimately lead to stress and negative
behaviors developing among staff and students (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993). The development
of enabling structures that can provide processes for the teaching and learning to occur at
maximum capacity must be implemented if student achievement is desired as an outcome
(Sweetland, 2007).
Chapter three will describe the design of the study along with the methodology and procedures. It will present the demographics, survey instruments, as well as the statistical analysis and data collection procedures.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

“Isolated and few in number though they may be, a significant number of schools that serve poor children manage to demonstrate that it is possible for students to achieve at high levels” (Noguera, 2003, p. 19).

The purpose of this study is to investigate teacher efficacy and enabling school structures to determine if these constructs support successful student achievement as measured by the NJASK 3&4 assessment.

Research Design

The study is a single case study design as it represents a “critical test of a significant theory” (Yin et al., 1971, p. 41). Case studies provide a means to investigate real life situations and can allow a holistic approach to study innovative programs in specific situations to which the reader can relate (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). Researchers often utilize a case study method when theories of psychology are the basis for the study’s framework (Merriam, 1998, p. 43). A mixed methodology design was employed and the unit of analysis was teachers. Mixed methodology allowed the research questions to be clarified and systematically responded to and for the data analysis to be interpreted clearly (Haller & Kleine, 2001, p. 88). The researcher selected this school, one of fifty-two in this Abbott district, due to its consistent successful performance as measured by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK 3&4). (Appendices A-D).

Population

The population of this study includes current and retired faculty, classroom teachers, and specialists in the areas of Art, Physical Education, Foreign Language and Music. Faculty
demographic information indicates that the gender make-up of the school is predominately female teachers (92.7%) as opposed to males (7.3%). Thirty-nine percent of the teachers have been teaching for 0-5 years and sixty-one percent of the teachers have been teaching for 6 years and more. Thirty-nine percent of teachers have been in the district for 0-5 years, while 61.2% of the teachers have been in the district for 6 years and more. Pre-K teachers make up 34.1% of the faculty, elementary teachers 41.4% and content specialists and certificated support staff make up 24.4%.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the School Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years +</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in the school district</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years +</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Grade level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre K-K</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (Grades 1-5)</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Area Specialists</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments

This case study gathered data using the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Long Form) developed by Tschannen-Moran, at the College of William and Mary, and Woolfolk Hoy at the Ohio State University (Appendix F). The scale is divided into three subscales of
eight items each for a total of twenty-four items. The three dimensions of efficacy targeted in
the instrument are student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

The results garnered from the instrument support the responses to the research questions.

The Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale consists of twenty-four items assessed along a
nine point continuum with anchors at 1-Nothing, 3-Very Little, 5-Some Influence, 7-Quite A
Bit, and 9-A Great Deal. Previous factor analyses have identified three eight-item subscales:
Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, and Efficacy in
Classroom Management. Table 2 describes the items that measure each of the subscales.

Table 2: Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale: Items Related to Subscale Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable 1: Subscale Efficacy in Student Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How much can you do to motivate students who have less interest in school work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How much can you do to help your students to value learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How much can you do to foster student creativity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How well can you assist families to help their children do well in school?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable 2: Subscale Efficacy in Instructional Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. To what extent can you provide an alternate explanation or example when a student is confused?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable 3: Subscale Efficacy in Classroom Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. How much can you do to calm a student down who is disruptive or noisy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining the entire lesson?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. How well can you respond to defiant students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In previous research, reliabilities for the subscales have ranged from .92 to .95 for the full scale of twenty-four items (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Table 3 reports the reliability of the subscales.

**Table 3: Reliabilities for Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Normed Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Student Engagement</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Classroom Management</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study includes a qualitative element, based on interviews with six teacher volunteers. The teachers participated in a discussion session answering questions related to the research questions. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the enabling structures that have allowed for the effectiveness of the school and its level of consistent success. The interview questions are linked to the subscales of the survey. The interview questions are developed by the researcher, grounded in research, and derived from a theoretical base. The intent of the interview process for this study was first, to further support the quantitative survey results, and second, to gain first-hand descriptions from staff members and the principal regarding their contributions to the success of their school. The process renders a voice to the study and allows for first-hand understanding of teacher strategies in the preparation and execution of instruction that is meaningful. To establish face and content validity the ten questions were reviewed by a jury of experts. Interview questions are as follows:

**Question 1:** What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?
Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

Question 3: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

Question 4: How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

Question 5: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

Question 6: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

Question 7: What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

Question 8: What importance is the teacher's voice in the decision making structure of the school?

Question 9: How many years have you been in teaching?

Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school?

Data Collection

All forty-one teachers received a copy of the research instrument developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy. Teachers were introduced to the study by letter, and then at a faculty meeting they were asked to complete the survey placed in their school mailboxes (Appendix F, I). One week later, thirty-four of the forty-one (92%) surveys were returned to the researcher via a drop box placed in the teacher's room.
The teachers were informed of the interview process with a flyer posted in the teacher's room and at their mailbox station (Appendix I). Those interested in interviewing e-mailed the researcher; six teachers responded to the request to be interviewed; all of those represented the elementary classes. The interview questions were given to the respondents for review prior to the discussion (Appendix J). The six one-on-one interview sessions took place on three consecutive days in the school library immediately after school. Appointments were scheduled with respondents and each interview took approximately twenty minutes. The respondents read and signed the informed consent form at the interview session assuring them anonymity before beginning the session (Appendix H). Interviews were tape-recorded, and upon the completion of the six sessions, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the data to determine common themes and responses (Appendix K). An interview session was completed with the original principal of the school. She opened the school in 1992 and retired on January 1, 2007. The interview questions were developed by the researcher and sent to the principal before the session. The interview was recorded, transcribed by the researcher, and analyzed to determine common themes and responses regarding enabling school structures and collective efficacy.

**Data Analysis**

Using descriptive statistical analysis and Pearson Coefficients, relationships were determined between the subscales of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Independent t-tests on the three subscales determined the significance of the academic degree levels and the years of teaching in relation to the construct of teacher efficacy. Qualitative interviewing, which was utilized to answer the research question on enabling structures, begins with the assumption that the perspective of
others is meaningful, knowledgeable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The
taped sessions of the interviews were conducted and each transcript was typed verbatim from
the interview sessions.

Thematic content analysis was generated from the responses to each interview
question which provided rich information. The information was analyzed to detect patterns
and perceptions from the teacher’s perspective to illuminate trends and reveal the teacher’s
thoughts and ideas in order to provide a better understanding of teacher efficacy and enabling
school structures. Patton (2002) indicates that pattern codes illustrate recurring themes that
become discernable after gaining familiarity with local events and relationships. Pattern
codes were used to create a visual format, or a model to understand the interconnection
between the codes. Themes were supported by direct quotes and the assimilation of
characteristics was compiled to create themes.

Summary

In this study, the researcher analyzed data regarding teacher efficacy, enabling school
structures and effective schools in an urban elementary school. The instruments utilized in
the study were the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and
Woolfolk Hoy. The researcher developed the interview questions. This is a mixed
methodology study which utilized a variety of statistical analyses to determine teacher
efficacy, and specific enabling structures that support successful student achievement at this
school. Chapter Four presents the data and analysis of the results of the survey instrument,
the teacher interviews and the principal interview.
CHAPTER IV
Analysis of the Data

This case study examines the construct of teacher efficacy as it pertains to creating a culture of successful teaching and learning in an elementary environment. Positive student outcomes, measured by using NJASK 3&4 results, have determined the success of this public school located in the third largest city in New Jersey. Teacher efficacy is explored in this study due to the consistent gains in student achievement. To evaluate teacher efficacy, all forty-one certificated teachers in this public school received a copy of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale consisting of twenty-four items. It consists of three subscales; Efficacy for Instructional Practices, Efficacy for Classroom Management, and Efficacy for Student Engagement. This chapter seeks to answer the research questions and the proposition stated in chapter one. It examines the questions to determine if efficacy is evident in this school. The study explores if years of teaching and degree status are related to the efficacy levels of the teachers. It also seeks to determine if the proposition holds that given equal basic teacher qualifications and resources, along with other schools in the district, the nurturing of personal teaching efficacy leads to collective efficacy, thus enabling the school structure to create successful student outcomes. The presentation of the findings will include a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents, analysis of the survey results and interview data. In the context of the case study, an interview with the Principal of the school was conducted to provide an understanding of the school culture created through enabling school structures.

The survey questions collected information regarding teacher efficacy using the subscale domains of student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management.
Although 34 teachers responded to the survey, many chose not to fully complete the questions related to demographic characteristics. The table below reveals that while most respondents chose to answer the questions, two did not respond while others sporadically gave information in certain areas and eliminated others. This may be attributed to the study targeting a specific school and population in the district.

The respondents to the survey were 85% female, 6% male, and 9% did not indicate their gender. The highest percentage of teachers, 35%, have been teaching between 6 and 10 years. The range of 0-5 years was reported by 27% of the teachers, 11-15 years by 9%, 16 years and over by 20%, and 9% of the respondents chose not to indicate their teaching experience. The number of years in the school district mirrors the teaching experience data. The largest number of years teachers have been in the district (35%) is reported by 6-10 years. 26% and 24% respectfully, fall between the 0-5 years and 11-15 years. Only 6% have been in the district 16 years and more. 9% of the respondents failed to provide this information.

In looking at ethnicity, 17% of respondents did not respond to this question. 71% were Caucasian, 0% percent were African American and 3% were Hispanic. 47% of the teaching staff had a B.A. or a B.S. and 38% of the staff had a Master's degree. 15% of the staff did not respond to this query.

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years +</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in the school district</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years+</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ Years</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A./B.S.</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale includes three subscales, efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. The scale consists of twenty-four items represented in a Likert scale with 1 representing Nothing, 3- Very Little, 5- Some Influence, 7- Quite a Bit, and 9 - A Great Deal. All three subscales are included in the analysis of the data. In comparing the mean efficacy scores, the subscale of student engagement has a mean of 6.92 and fell below TschanneM-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's mean of 7.3. In comparing efficacy in instructional strategies and efficacy in
classroom management, respondents in this study had a mean of 7.46 on the efficacy in instructional strategies and 7.45 on the efficacy in classroom management, which are both larger than Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's mean for efficacy in instructional strategies (7.3), and efficacy in classroom management (6.7).

**Question One:** What is the level of efficacy exhibited by the teachers in this school in the following areas: (I) student engagement, (II) instructional strategies and (III) classroom management?

In looking at the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, subscale one, efficacy in student engagement, results indicate for all questions that teachers' beliefs are high, with responses tending more toward the "quite a bit" and "a great deal" end of the scale. For example, on each one of these questions, over 60% of respondents chose a 7, 8, or 9. For both questions 1 and 2, 35% indicated that they can get through to difficult students and help students to think critically quite a bit. Another 26% of the teachers reported a great deal. With respect to controlling disruptive behavior, teachers felt very competent to do so. Moreover, 45% indicated that they can do a great deal in controlling disruptive behavior. Regarding motivating students, teachers feel they have a strong impact according to the results in Table 5. 44% responded 7 on the Likert scale with respect to expectations about controlling student behaviors. 47% of the teachers rated themselves very highly in offering students expectations for behavior. This was the highest percentage for any item on this subscale.

According to the findings reported in Table 5, teachers in this school believe they can get students to do well in their schoolwork. 26% of the teachers rated themselves with a 7, 24% an 8, and 32% a 9. Question 7 asked how well teachers rated themselves in terms of responding to difficult questions from their students. Responses were very high, with 35%
choosing 7, 35% choosing 8, and 17% choosing 9. A total of 87% of the teachers in this school feel they can respond to difficult questions from students. This was the highest combined percentage for any question regarding the subscale of efficacy in student engagement. 97% of the teachers who participated in this survey reported a 6 or higher on the Likert scale in believing that establishing routines to keep things moving smoothly keeps students engaged.

Table 5: Student engagement: subscale one: reported percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.</th>
<th>Likert Rating Scale Teachers believe they can...</th>
<th>1 Nothing</th>
<th>2 Very Little</th>
<th>3 Some Influence</th>
<th>5 Quite a Bit</th>
<th>6 A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Respond to difficult students</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Support students thinking critically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Control disruptive behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Motivate students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clearly offer expectations of behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Convince students they can do well</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Respond to difficult questions from students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Establish class routines</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In looking at table 6 of the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale, subscale two, efficacy in instructional practices, results indicate that teachers believe are higher percentages with responses indicating more toward the “quite a bit” and “a great deal” end of the Likert scale. Again, each one of the questions represents over 60% of the total 7, 8, or 9 responses on the scale. In both questions 9 and 10, 44% indicated they could help students’ value learning as well as gauge how well students comprehend what they have taught. This is indicated by a response of 7 on the scale. 38% of the teachers reported in question 13 with a response of 7, 30% with a response of 8 and 21% with a response of 9, indicating that they feel they can
have children follow class rules. In response to question 14, regarding how much they could improve the understanding of a child who is failing, 91% of the teachers felt they could get through to students. 95% reported that they could establish a classroom management system. This percentage includes the scores of 5 and 6 represented on the scale.

Teachers believe they can craft good questions for students according to the results for question 11, as 35% responded with an 8 on the Likert scale, and 26% responded with a 9. Question 12 discussed teachers fostering student creativity; 79% of the teachers reported with scores of 7, 8, and 9, that they believe this is possible. Overall, the subscale of efficacy in instructional strategies noted higher total percentages combining responses 7, 8, and 9.

Teachers clearly demonstrated that they have a high level of ability to create lessons that motivate students to think critically as well as keep them engaged in instruction through establishing routines and expectations for learning. They report that they can control disruptive behavior and act on their expectations for students to work hard and receive positive results.

Table 6: Instructional strategies: subscale two: reported percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.</th>
<th>Likert Rating Scale</th>
<th>1 Nothing</th>
<th>2 Very Little</th>
<th>3 Some Influence</th>
<th>4 Quite a Bit</th>
<th>5 A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Help students value learning</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Gauge student comprehension</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Craft good questions for your students</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Foster student creativity</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Have children follow class rules</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Improve understanding of failing students</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Calm a disruptive student</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Establish a class management system</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 represents the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale, subscale three, efficacy in classroom management. Consistently the results indicate for all questions that teachers’ beliefs are higher percentages with responses indicating more toward “quite a bit”, and “a great deal” end of the Likert scale. For example, each one of these questions represents over 50% of the total 7, 8, and 9 responses. In question 17, 35% of the teachers responded 8, believing they can adjust lessons for individual students, and in question 23, with regard to implementing alternate strategies in classroom instruction, 41% of them reported a 7 and 41% of the staff reported an 8. Both questions totaled 85% responses of a 7, 8, or 9. 53% of the teachers reported in question 22 with responses ranging from 4 through 9 that they could assist families with helping their children to do well. While this represents over 50% of responses, it is the lowest total percentage of combined items 7, 8, and 9 on the entire scale.

In response to question 19 regarding keeping problem students from ruining a lesson, 68% of teachers responded 7, 8, and 9, believing that they have an impact on controlling this behavior. This appears to be in a ten-point range with what is indicated in question 3 subscale student engagement, regarding controlling disruptive behavior which totaled 75% for the same three items; also, question 21 reported at 77% regarding defiant students. In question 24 teachers believed they can provide challenges for capable students as indicated by individual percentages of 21%, 7, 44%, 8, and 17%, 9 representing 82% of teachers’ responses. In relation to question 18, 80% of the teachers reported that they could use a variety of assessment strategies; 38% of the teachers noted an eight. This subscale confirmed that teachers feel strongly regarding the use of alternative assessments and stress the use of various strategies to assure that all students have the opportunity to understand the content and skills presented in their daily lessons. They feel strongly that they can respond to defiant
students and support efforts to assist families in engaging in the education offered at the school. Adjusting lessons for students who need challenging content as well as basic skills, appears to be important to these teachers.

Overall, teachers’ beliefs were reported the strongest in subscale two instructional strategies. Teachers were consistent in their responses, thus confirming that they know they can help students to become successful learners and to create a classroom where teaching and learning is valued.

Table 7: Classroom management: subscale three: reported percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.</th>
<th>Likert Rating Scale Teachers believe they can...</th>
<th>1 Nothing</th>
<th>2 Very Little</th>
<th>3 Some Influence</th>
<th>4 Quite a Bit</th>
<th>5 A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Adjust lesson to individual student needs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Use a variety of assessment needs</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Provide an alternative explanation or example for students</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Respond to defiant students</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Assist families to help their children in school</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Implement alternative strategies in your classroom</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Provide challenges for capable students</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question Two: “What is the relationship, if any, between a teacher’s sense of efficacy with respect to student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management?”

Correlation statistics examined the relationships between the subscales. The coefficients allowed us to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between two subscales. Pearson’s Correlation determined if there was a significant relationship between the efficacy in classroom management and efficacy in student engagement scores.
Overall, there was a significant relationship with $R = .513$ and $p = .002$. The data suggested a moderate correlation between efficacy in classroom management and efficacy in student engagement scores for the entire sample. Teachers who reported feeling efficacious in their classroom management skills were also more likely to report feeling efficacious with respect to promoting student engagement.

The Pearson's Correlation suggested that there was a significant relationship between efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management scores $R = .451$ and $p = .007$. The data suggested a moderate correlation between efficacy in instructional practices and efficacy in classroom management for the entire sample. Teachers who reported feeling efficacious in instructional practices were also likely to report feeling efficacious with respect to classroom management.

**Table 8: Correlations between the subscales: Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales of Efficacy</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in classroom management <em>and</em> efficacy in student engagement</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in instructional strategies <em>and</em> efficacy in classroom management</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 presents the means for the three subscales, efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. The overall mean for efficacy in student engagement is 6.92 as compared to the normed mean of 7.3. The overall mean for instructional strategies is 7.46 as compared to the normed mean of 7.3. In addition, the overall mean for classroom management is 7.45 as compared to the Normed mean of 6.7. The overall mode of the survey results was 7, indicating that teachers in this school have "quite a bit" of personal teaching efficacy; this may contribute to the development of
collective teaching efficacy. The mean for efficacy in student engagement was lower than the normed mean but higher in the other two areas.

**Table 9: Means for Subscales: Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Normed Mean</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Student Engagement</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy in Classroom Management</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test examined the differences between Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees of the teachers for the three subscales. Results of the t-tests are reported in Table 10. The student engagement subscale did not show a significant difference between teachers having a Bachelor’s degree and teachers having a Master’s degree. While there is no significant difference between teachers who hold a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree with respect to student engagement subscale, the mean efficacy score for the Master’s degree is higher than the mean difference for teachers with a Bachelor’s degree. An independent t-test was used to determine if degree level significantly relates to efficacy in instructional strategies. The instructional strategies subscale did not show a significant difference between teachers having a Bachelor’s degree and teachers having a Master’s degree. While there is no significant difference between the Bachelor’s and the Master’s degree in the instructional strategies subscale, the mean score for the Master’s degree is again higher than the mean score for the Bachelor’s degree. A third two-tailed independent t-test was conducted for the classroom management subscale to examine if degree level significantly relates to efficacy in classroom management. The classroom management subscale did not show a significant difference between teachers having a Bachelor’s degree and teachers having a Master’s
degree. While there was no significant difference between the Bachelor’s and the Master’s degree on the classroom management subscale, the score for the Master’s degree is higher than the score for a Bachelor’s.

In examining all three subscales, it was determined that there was no significant difference between academic degrees. The mean difference was examined in each subscale. For student engagement there was a mean difference of .47 between Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees with the Master’s degree participants scoring higher. The instructional strategies subscale also shows a mean difference of .47 with the Master’s degree participants scoring higher than those with a Bachelor’s degree. In classroom management there was a mean difference of .69 with the Master’s teachers scoring higher than the teachers with a Bachelor’s degree. The mean difference was overall higher in this subscale. Teachers with a Master’s degree had higher mean scores; the largest mean difference occurred in the classroom management subscale. Overall, degree level does not have an impact on a teacher’s capacity for student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management as efficacy is defined in this case study.

Table 10: Independent T-Tests: Differences between Academic Degrees and Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale 1</th>
<th>BA/BS</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale 2</th>
<th>BA/BS</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>906</td>
<td>.373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale 3</th>
<th>BA/BS</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An independent t-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in efficacy based on years of teaching experience on the three subscales. Results of the t-tests are reported in
Table 11. There was no significant difference in a teacher's sense of efficacy as it relates to student engagement. There is no significant difference based on years of experience; however, the mean efficacy levels were higher for those with six or more years of experience. An independent t-test was conducted to determine if there were differences in efficacy on the instructional strategies subscale. Results of the t-tests are reported in Table 11. There was no significant difference in a teacher's sense of efficacy as it relates to instructional strategies. A third independent t-test was conducted on the classroom management subscale to examine if there were differences in efficacy as it relates to classroom management. Results of the t-tests are reported in Table 11.

In examining all three subscales, it was determined that there was no significant difference based on years of experience. For student engagement, there was a mean difference of .19 between 0-5 and 6 or more years of experience. Teachers having 0-5 years of teaching experience demonstrated higher levels of efficacy. The instructional strategies subscale reported a mean difference of .12 with teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience having higher levels of efficacy. On the classroom management subscale a mean difference of .59 was observed. Teachers with 0-5 years had a mean efficacy score of 7.91 compared to 7.32 for teachers with 6 or more years of teaching. The mean difference was overall higher on the subscale of classroom management. Teachers with years of teaching experience of 0-5 reported higher mean scores; the greatest mean difference recorded in the classroom management subscale. Overall, years of teaching do not have an impact on efficacy in student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management as efficacy is defined in this case study.
Table 11: Independent T-Tests: Differences between Years of Teaching and Efficacy in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>6 &amp; above</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale 2</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>6 &amp; above</td>
<td>T value</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale 3</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>6 &amp; above</td>
<td>T value</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>.966</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Teacher Interviews

The significance of the data accumulated in qualitative research does not lie in individual pieces, but rather in using the pieces to create a meaningful picture of what is collected as understood by the researcher (Piantanida & Garmin, 1999, p. 146). Six teachers volunteered to be interviewed for this study; they also participated in the survey component of this study. The interview questions were developed to seek answers to the research question regarding enabling structures. They served to confirm the research of Hoy and Sweetland (2000) regarding enabling schools to create a climate that nurtures positive relationships among faculty and staff; questions 1, 3, 9 and 10 relate directly to this idea. These school cultures can support the external conditions conducive to the development of personal and collective teaching efficacy; questions 2, 4, 5, and 6 relate to investigating the culture of this particular school. Question 7 was developed to seek specific examples of concrete strategies implemented by these school practitioners to create a culture of successful teaching and learning.

The certified school faculty has three males assigned to this school. One male and five females were interviewed. Three teachers have been working at this school for six to ten years, and have only taught in this school. Two teachers have been in the district for longer
than sixteen years. One respondent represents the initial faculty hired by the state at the inception of the school. The other respondent has been with the school district twenty-six years and requested to teach in this school upon its return to the city. A transfer occurred when the movement of other staff provided a vacancy. Four of the six teachers are Caucasian, two are African American, three of the respondents hold a Bachelor’s degree and three hold a Master’s degree.

The information gathered is unique to each respondent, yet themes and patterns emerged in the analysis of the data. The six teachers were interviewed over the course of three days. Interviews took place individually after school and lasted approximately 20 minutes each.

The interview questions relate to the research questions and are based on the theoretical framework of the study (Appendix J). The coding of the data is in the context of grounded theory, which provides standardization for the analytical process (Patton, 2001, p. 127). Specific themes emerged from the analysis; the table below represents the descriptive statistics of the interview respondents.

Table 12: Demographic Characteristics of Interview Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1/6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Years in School</strong></td>
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<td>0-5 years</td>
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<td>6-10 years</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>16+ years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6/6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Years in School District</strong></td>
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<td>0-5 years</td>
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<td>6-10 years</td>
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<td>11-15 years</td>
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<td>16+ years</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>M.A.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6/6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The interview questions for the six volunteer teachers were developed to investigate the existence of enabling structures in this school. Questions 6, 7, and 8 relate to gaining a deeper understanding of the personal and collective efficacy of the faculty from a representation of teachers on staff and their work with professional learning communities. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were developed using the research of Hoy and Sweetland (2001) and their theories regarding the importance of creating enabling structures in schools to assist school administration and staff in creating a culture of teaching and learning. Enabling structures are defined by the researchers as those that “invite interactive dialogue, view problems as opportunities, foster trust, value differences, capitalize on and learn from mistakes, delight in the unexpected, and facilitate problem solving” (p. 298). Questions 9 and 10 served to clarify where the respondents were in terms of their years of service in education and in this particular school.

**Question 3**: What enabling structures exist in this school to promote a successful professional learning community?
Content analysis was the initial source of analyzing the transcribed documents. The transcripts were studied holistically as well as individually to determine themes and patterns.

**Interview Question 1**

*What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty staying focused academically?*

Teacher responses included three consistent strategies: refocus and redirect, accessing prior knowledge and gaining trust. However, there are nuances in the responses. Respondent 1 clarified the difference in strategies used to redirect negative behavior vs. lack of understanding.

I find that either most of the times, they are not focused because they do not know what I am doing or it is just a behavior problem. If it is for a student that I feel is not a behavior problem but they are not getting what I am teaching, I would try to reteach or restate what I have already taught in a different way. When that doesn’t work sometimes I have to remove them from the group because I sit my children in groups of four for cooperative learning, but if they are continually destructive, sometimes I have to move them away from the group and sit them somewhere else in the room. (R1)

As noted by respondent 5, redirecting students by moving their seat closer to the teaching area is a strategy used to focus students academically.

The teachers try to find strategies that would allow them not always to be in a large group. Try to move their seat, try to sit them closer to the teacher, try to sit them with students who will redirect them if need be. (R5)

The use of one on one instruction to redirect and refocus the student was also offered by respondent 4.

In my class, I do partnering students with somebody who is usually on task at all times. It helps them focus; they can work together side by side. Sometimes I do one on one instruction if it is possible to help them focus and sometimes just changing the actual activity to help them understand may help them stay focused. (R4)
The strategy of accessing prior knowledge and keeping lessons relevant to help students stay focused was one used by respondent three.

I try to see what interests the student and then I take it to their interest. I'll use what they know, who they know. I'll pull their characters and their interests into the lesson. (R3)

Gaining the trust of the student was also mentioned as a strategy that allowed students to stay focused academically.

I would try to reach the child through interests that they have to gain their trust that what I am doing is going to help them reach their goals. You might give them alternative projects or activities to gain their trust. (R2)

Students' “buying in” to what is happening in the classroom was mentioned by one teacher who also discussed the construct of trust and a sense of family and community.

We work on students' self esteem. When students feel better about themselves, their behavior usually follows. I think the students really buy in that they are part of something and not just a teacher-student relationship. (R6)

**Interview Question 2**

*How does the staff engage all students in the content of instruction?*

Teachers responded with multiple approaches to engage students as active learners to include differentiation of instruction. A teacher discussed differentiation regarding the use of centers to present material in different ways.

With our planning, we try to differentiate our teaching. Our students obviously are at different levels, they learn by different ways. We have centers that we use and the centers are differentiated. Some students may learn by writing, so I would give them something hand-on to do. I use vocabulary as an example when they have to write definitions. My lower students I would tell them to draw a picture of what that word means to them. So, it is through our planning, it is through grade level meetings, it is through town meetings, it is through our centers and that type of thing. (R1)

Respondent 2 added that material and thematic units provided differentiation in the classroom.

We are reaching students through a variety of curriculum and incorporating the different math, science and language arts and social studies, so you’re touching a variety of
learning styles and by using different materials and reaching their learning style, you can engage all the students. We also work together to develop thematic units. (R2)

The importance of reaching children to assure learning was taking place was mentioned by more than one staff member.

We usually individualize for the children or use differentiation. I really stress the student to help the student because they know each other and they understand on their level. If their classmates come to them and say, “it’s like this”, well the teacher means this, and then they will get it. (R3)

The construct of peer coaching is offered in the context of having “students help students” (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Williams offers a model of “teacher resilience” that encourages teachers to dialogue with each other regarding values and beliefs by forming study groups to discuss student work and share stories (2003, p. 132,33). When students see this approach modeled by adults in a school setting, it sets a standard for high expectations for all learners; peer learning then becomes accepted practice thus raising the level of teacher efficacy.

It was mentioned that the size of the group supported teaching to various learning styles as well as peer coaching.

The staff would do large group instruction, based upon observation or other types of assessments, divide students up, and teach in a different way, more one on one. When children are placed in small groups they learn better from each other; they speak their language as opposed to teacher language. A lot of times, other children can explain how they understand it so it clarifies it for some students. (R5)

When interviewed, teachers also commented on cooperative learning activities as a way to target specific students with their learning styles. An example of this was having students use audio materials to enhance their opportunity to learn.

Once again, we have a variety of teaching methods. We use traditional methods; then we break out into groups and we use centers. We use the model of cooperative learning, audio listening skills, and hands-on so we give students many opportunities and many ways to experience learning. (R6)
Overall, the themes that emerged from this question create a different ideal of how the organizational structures of twenty-first century schools have different needs to attain positive student outcomes. Bolman and Deal (2003) offer the idea that schools are always struggling to meet the needs of all of the external forces that they are forced to depend on. If schools focus on real change, the change must come from within and student needs should drive the change. Learning styles and differentiation require teachers to change the organizational structure of their classrooms to gain results for all students. Collins and Porras (1994), as reported in (Sergiovanni, 2001 p. 128) discuss stability for schools as being their inner core. Schools that care for children begin to develop a real sense of urgency regarding each student being successful.

Interview Question 3

How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

The answer was a resounding all for one and one for all. Everyone replied with the big idea that everyone was equal in his or her responsibility for student success and that they are truly family. One teacher said that the “family atmosphere” brought about common goals and high expectations” (Bandura, 1986).

The structure of the school is an amazing thing to see because I see many schools in my outside position as county union president and we are truly a family. We all work with a common goal that all kids can learn. We develop high expectations; there is a lot of belief that the teacher acting as a professional can teach within broad parameters; however, district-wide those parameters now seem to be tightening up. (R6)
Being part of a team that contributes to helping children understand anything and everything was mentioned as being important. It was determined valuable to ask others about ideas in lesson planning; that is often difficult for new teachers.

We are all a team and however we can contribute to helping the children understand anything and everything we try to teach them, everyone is a part of that. We have PLCs that are professional learning communities where teachers of different grades get together and they discuss what they do and how they portray the information to the students so that helps us to get a better understanding and actually add to what we’re doing to get the students to understand. (R3)

Sergiovanni identifies rigor as a standard and as a value. He offers that a “philosophy of community must validate the dream of the human heart” (2001, p. 68). This is evidenced by the teachers repeatedly talking about how they care for each other as a staff and how they have decided what they value in academics.

Teachers know each other, talk to each other, and that is what makes them a successful school. What this school has always stressed was to provide more than the prescribed time to address basic learning which would be Language Arts and Math in the primary grades. (R5)

The school community appears to care about each member of the school regardless of the role they play; in the daily workload everyone works together. Instructional support members as well as custodial staff each do their part to ensure that the children’s needs are best served and an optimum environment for learning is in place consistently.

It is very important that everyone whether they are the custodian right up through the principal have a stake in what is going on. First of all, the children are told we respect everybody, but also the entire staff is made to feel that they are responsible for these children whether it be the lunchroom aide, the custodian, the special subject area teachers; no one is put on a different level. (R2)

Teachers talked of teaming with math and literacy coaches to plan for students who are behind in core content area and of situations where vertical and horizontal articulation provided them with the knowledge expectations for the next school year.
We also have grade level meetings, data team meetings where the coaches and teachers come together and they discuss where the children are, and where we are striving to get them within the subject areas, or what is a better way for them to understand this portion of the lesson. Everyone throws out ideas. I had the coach come in and she had a fabulous lesson.

The continuity of the academic program including the six-day cycle schedule was a theme that each respondent brought to the discussion.

We have a six-day cycle that we engage in, this way students do not miss their specials. We do benchmarks for students so we disaggregate data to instruct our teaching; we do assessments for their reading.

In response to the question, respondent 4 offered,

I think it is really a “bottom up philosophy”. For example, Four Square Writing, we try to start from kindergarten so that by the time the student gets to the higher grade, they are already familiar with it and we just have to go a little bit more with it to master it. We all try to give the same kind of holistic tests and standardized tests, so it keeps a pace. A lot of us see what the grade above us requires the student to master and we teach toward that as well. (R4)

The responses to interview question three is supported by the research of Hoy and Sweetland (2000) who state that teachers and students in schools with enabling structures can focus on the business of teaching and learning.

**Interview Question 4**

*How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?*

It appears that the constructs of mentoring, collaboration and collegiality are evident in this elementary school. Everyone attested to the collegiality of the staff, and respondent 4 spoke of a social component in reaching out to new teachers. This is supported by Bandura’s theory of personal and collective teacher efficacy (1997). Development of collective efficacy in a school increases with teachers displaying efficacy behaviors and improving the success of others through their own actions. These are described as having the ability to give and
receive important feedback regarding teaching and learning. Discussing students with each another in the context of looking at student work, or meeting specific needs with approaches known to work with a particular child, defines collective efficacy in a school community (Fives, 2003, p. 35). Teachers who have high levels of teaching efficacy may naturally demonstrate behaviors that new teachers need to successfully meet first year responsibilities and remain in the profession. Teacher efficacy does not develop as fast as could be expected and it cannot happen if a new teacher is in an isolated circumstance. Many factors, including school culture and climate, weigh heavily in a teacher’s decision to pursue teaching as a lifelong career commitment. A novice teacher mentioned an open door policy for teachers who need help from each other.

My experience as a new teacher coming here well, everyone was “oh whenever you need me you know let me know, knock on my door, there is no problem”. When I did not understand something, that teacher let me come into their classroom and view the lesson how they did it and how I could do it to help my children to understand what was going on. That was great. That was exciting. That made me even more excited about teaching. (R3)

Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986, 1997) outlines the importance of providing support to beginning teachers include feedback from colleagues. Woolfolk Hoy and Tschannen-Moran also suggest that teacher efficacy could be impacted by a faculty member’s ability to successfully complete all of the tasks connected to good teaching, especially as pre-service teachers or teachers early on in their careers (1998). As she reflected, one teacher remarked there is no formal plan in place to welcome new staff.

It is intrinsic to the individuals of this school to support new faculty. On grade level, the other grade level teacher can be supportive to a new faculty member.

The school was described as bright and cheerful. A teacher remarked that teaching is often an isolated profession but not so in this school.
I think it is the climate and the culture; you feel it when you walk in. Bulletin boards jump out at you, and there is nurturing. We have common preps, common planning, and Summer Institute before the school year starts we all come up with the broad ideas on how we want the school to run. There is support and collegiality here. (R6)

The idea that everyone on the faculty has something of value to share was evident in response to this question. The six dimensions of a healthy school outlined by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) includes morale as an important variable in a healthy school organization. It is described as a “collective sense of friendliness, openness, enthusiasm and trust among the faculty members. Teachers like each other, their jobs, and help each other; and they are proud of their school and feel a sense of accomplishment in their jobs”.

**Interview Question 5**

*Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?*

One theme emerged from this question, indicating that teachers value modeling and consider it the best source of professional development. This is described by Fullan “building the capacity of the school and developing the daily habit of working together”. Fullan stresses “learning by doing it and getting better at it on purpose” (Fullan, as stated in DuFour, 2005, p. 19) Teacher efficacy develops when a staff has the opportunity to work together to understand how content can be presented in multiple ways for understanding. One teacher admitted to being a visual learner and gained valuable skills by first watching an experienced teacher and then working collaboratively to pick up the nuances that would make the particular lesson more effective.

Just like anything, watching something first hand and seeing it is much easier. I am visual; I need to see it done. I know that I learn a lot from another teacher doing it in front of me so it’s really back to working together collaboratively and taking it from somebody who knows a little bit more. (R4)
All six teachers interviewed agreed that the opportunity to watch experienced teachers model lessons helped them to become better teachers. One admitted that at first he did not value other teaching styles but he changed his mind as he was observing fellow teachers informally while working with small groups of at risk students as an in-class academic support teacher.

I went around to many classrooms and worked with groups of students or individually. I would watch a teaching style and sometimes my initial reaction was one of doubt because the style was different from mine. As I watched and saw how a teacher was comfortable in her style, I began to see student learning and though I am here twenty-six years, I then learned from the variety of styles I observed. (R6)

What sold him on the modeling of various approaches to lessons was evidence that the presentation benefited the students. He has since returned to a classroom assignment, and has consciously incorporated techniques he observed as fellow staff members modeled them. Respondent 5 replied that “watching someone do the lesson makes much more of an impact than just reading about it or being lectured about it”. Another response offered that colleges do not provide students enough time in the classroom to see teaching and learning take place.

I think that college courses do not lend themselves to letting teachers, whether they are young or old, have enough experience in the classroom. Observing an experienced teacher give a lesson to show how they present a skill, enables them to reflect and think about what they came to the school with and how they’re given different ideas on how it could be done. (R2)

Reflecting on observations also surfaced as a valuable practice to support modeling lessons upon completion. Increasing participation by employees supports problem-solving skills of a staff and creates an environment of trust and cooperation. Hoy (2007) offers this as academic optimism and includes efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis as the core variables of the construct. The responses to the question regarding modeling assure that teachers are asserting their collective efficacy to bring new teachers along in developing personal
teaching efficacy. Bandura's social cognitive theory stresses the importance of people responding to their environment and acting at an expected level of competency (1997).

Interview Question 6

*How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?*

While this question was asked directly about collective efficacy, it evoked discussion regarding the themes of ownership, responsibility, and of shared decision making. It was interesting to note that although each interview was private, all of the respondents replied in this direction. The three areas that emerged connect to the belief systems professed by the teachers in this school. Corbett, Wilson, and Williams studied common beliefs of urban teachers and shared that those teachers who are committed and make careers in urban areas “believe that all students achieve” (2005, p. 8). It is important to the success of the teacher and the student. A teacher told a story of a student in her class who was now in the next grade.

My first comment is “it takes a village “and it’s not only in the neighborhoods, but in the schools. It helps anyone new to come in to feel what the atmosphere is in this school. The teachers come together. They come together with the children. I had a student last year that never did his homework. Never finished his assignments, I had to push, push, push. He was nowhere near honor roll. He is on honor roll this year. When I heard that, I called the teacher and I asked if I could personally see him. I gave him the biggest hug and I even bought him something nice and I let him know how proud I was and that this is what I was trying to get him to do last year, but now he has figured it out. (R1)

She related this story to the researcher and had tears in her eyes; she explained that his success was important to her and she expressed how it made her feel as a teacher. She cared enough, to help him celebrate his taking responsibility for his progress. The result of what happens to the children appears to be important to all respondents. This dedication to the success of the students was confirmed as others spoke of the same expression of
ownership of all children in the school. These teachers take responsibility for everyone, even those not assigned to their class.

It's not about us; it's about getting the children to where they need to be. As a first-grade teacher, I watch the children go up the grades, I know I'm not their teacher any longer, but when I see them in the hallway and they are doing something they are not supposed to do, I'm not just going to let it go. I'm going to step in and say "you know what you're supposed to be doing; you know what your teacher's rules are, how you should listen to them, what they are telling you to do, you just can't do what you want to do". (R3)

The diversity of the urban environment was mentioned as a positive because everyone can want the same outcome but can take responsibility for teaching in his/her own way so all students can be successful.

We all want the same outcomes and everyone brings a different background to their classroom but that is the beauty of teaching, everyone has a different style and is allowed to be an individual, as long as the result is the same, the diversity and the staff is what makes the staff successful. (R5)

An interview with another teacher confirms that collective efficacy is a group effort and it produces a positive school climate for all students (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001), as she discussed working as a group and helping to make the environment positive and productive.

We reflect and think about how we can do this better. If you do it as an entire group, it only makes for a more positive productive school climate for achieving students. (R2)

Collectively, even though we may not agree with everything, consensus says we all discuss it, and together we know where we want to go and how we are going to get there. It was made clear by respondent 6 that this faculty consults one another in any situation they feel they might need the support and expertise of certain individuals on the staff.

We are not told of a vision. We develop the vision so as we develop it we take ownership of it. Collectively, even though we may not agree with everything, consensus says we all discussed it, "I have some problems here" or "I like this" but together we rather know where we want to go and how we are going to get there and then the support from the administrators or coaches or facilitators helps. (R6)

They made the vision for the school and they take ownership of it. They exercise shared decision making by having everyone on the "same page".
I think if everyone is on the same page, we can observe each others’ strengths and build upon those things. We all want the same outcome and everyone brings a different background to their classroom, but that is the beauty of teaching, everyone has a different style and is allowed to be an individual, as long as the result is the same, the diversity of the staff is what makes the staff successful. (R5)

Bandura discusses the construct of collective efficacy as that which develops the higher order and critical thinking skills needed to problem solve and make the kind of shared decisions highlighted by these conversations (1986, 1997). It was mentioned that the staff works together toward common goals. When academic data reveals a weakness, everyone is notified and they brainstorm together as to how they can build a continuum of support up the grade levels to meet targeted goals. Another teacher also commented that watching and dealing with experienced teachers helps the staff to develop together.

I think it is the same thing, you learn from each other; there is a lot of discussion in the teacher’s room outside of the classroom, amongst the grade levels. A lot of us talk to each other friendly. Watching, dealing with experienced teachers and discussions makes it move smoothly. (R4)

DuFour’s statements regarding the importance of developing a school’s capacity and shaping a school culture is evident in the interactions of this faculty (1998). They know that they can accomplish any goal they set together as a staff. They plan to win.

**Interview Question 7**

*What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?*

Every teacher reacted to this question with passion. Three consistent terms emerged with one common theme. They were common planning / data teams and instructional coaches. It is important for teachers to meet in order for students to be successful. The value of what they feel they offer with regard to student needs requires them to plan with their grade level cohort on a daily basis. One spoke of meeting her grade level teacher every
morning for a few minutes to discuss the plans for the day. She described their relationship as very close and she felt it was necessary for the students in both classes to see their teachers collaborating.

We want to make sure we are on the same page, that we are not overwhelming the children with work because we are teaching two different subjects and content. Because we want everyone to be successful, we work together. The only way that they are going to work well is if we work well together. (R5)

This strategy prevents homework overload and is often discussed in school as a strategy known to be successful for the school as a whole. They brought up the data team meetings held during workshop time. She reported that the teachers planned for students using data from tests or benchmarks in any subject area.

Each day we all have one prep a day that we can all come together with our co-teacher and sit and plan or there may be certain lessons that we want to do specific things with our children and make sure that all grades are doing them together. I know that sometimes I need help with my planning with my centers, and my coaches will come and help me plan. (R1)

Roland Barth, whose research is in the area of school culture through the concept of caring schools, uses the example of teachers having passion for their work in successful schools (2001). He also implies that teachers who collaborate help students to see what collaboration means. Teachers discussed common planning time.

We have common preps periods, we have in-service days where we talk about what the vision of the school is and how we are going to get there. Scheduling is very progressive in that our administrators and coaches realize the importance of talking together and seeing each other and having the time to meld the different curriculums. (R6)

A staff member describes the level of persistence displayed by the teachers in the school.

We are the type of faculty that just cannot let go. We collaborate during lunch periods, and we will collaborate on our own time. We just make the time because we see a reason and we want to. (R2)
Collins describes this as delivering results with a ferocious resolve (2001). This resolve can indicate that collective efficacy can bring about the results indicated by the consistent, outstanding student achievement of the students in this school.

The term vision came up more than once with different teachers during the interview sessions. They indicated that they had common goals, but mention of a formal school mission or vision during the interview session did not happen. Studies on efficacy indicate that if students in low socio-economic areas have teachers who are motivated, they too will be motivated to learn (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

Interview Question 8

What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision making of the school?

The response to this question brought concerns to the surface. The teachers were outspoken as to the importance of the teacher’s voice in the decision making process of the school, as a beginning sense of frustration with district level mandates that they are now being required to implement. They discussed mandates and the inability of the teachers to develop yearlong plans.

The teacher is the heart of the classroom and knows the needs of what will get the content to come across. We were initially allowed to do a yearlong plan that had a rich curriculum in it and we would strategize how we would reach these goals. Now mandates are being given to us, and, we are more textbook driven. The creativity is being taken away and we are limited with the time we must spend on each thing, so rather than giving the children a broad, rich curriculum, they are limiting us and telling us how to teach and tying our hands from what we feel are better strategies. Initially through our yearlong plans and rich curriculum, we reached high excellence. Right now, we are striving for that. It’s just harder to reach those goals because we are not being allowed to teach using our techniques that we know are best practices. Using materials that we know will not give the children the good basic skills that they need to achieve and that reaching excellence is going to be tougher and tougher as we follow these other programs. The teachers see this as restrictive to their implementing the best practice strategies known to be successful for this school as a whole. (R2)
The next response came from a teacher who feels that he learns "from the work he sees his colleagues model that is different from his own style", so he understands that everyone has his/her own style of teaching.

The teacher’s voice, I believe, should be one of the most respected and sought after components of making the school. It is not always true. Our voice here was always taken into consideration, and, as you know, the school was out of district for a while because of building space, so we really developed our own philosophy outside the cookie cutter umbrella of the district philosophy. Through that and by experimenting, listening, failing, and succeeding, the school became the oasis of an urban school. This is because of the value put on teacher input. (R6)

It is evident that this question, more than any other question, concerned all teachers. It was the first question that they seemed unsure and hesitant about answering.

When I first came to this school the teachers, they all said the things they felt were important for the kids to know. Right now, there’s a little struggle with the district, the teachers know the children, who they are, how they learn, know what to do to get them to the point they need to be, but the district is pulling us away from that, it’s different from when I first started here. (R3)

The teachers interviewed “know their students and they know how to get the information across to them” said respondent 3. One teacher thinks that the teacher’s voice is often taken as complaining in a negative way but felt that “the classroom teacher has the most impact on the child and should be heard”. On the other hand, another felt that the teacher’s voice is heard at this school and that leaders listen to their opinion where the students are concerned. Five out of six teachers (83%) showed concern over the possible loss of voice in this school. Staff should suggest that teachers should determine the innovations and delivery of instruction and “the cycle of improvement” (Weiss, 2007). In his research on enabling school structures, Hoy discusses the negative connotation of the word bureaucracies. He refers to the theories of Adler and Boyrs (1996) that outline two types of bureaucracies, those that are enabling and those that are coercive. He advises that coercive
situations provide procedures in organizational structures that force subordinates to comply without input or discussion. Enabling structures put in place in organizations and schools promote feelings of trust and have processes in place that allow for problem solving to occur early on in situations which are often resolvable.

**Interview Questions 9 and 10**

*How many years have you been in teaching? How many years have you been at this school?*

For verification purposes, this information was repeated during the interview session for auditory documentation. A range of elementary teaching services is represented in the interview sample. Responses to these questions have been discussed and reported in table 12.

**Analysis of the Principal Interview**

How a principal listens to and reads the school’s existing culture communicates an interest, concern, or disdain for existing traditions. All that the principal does, says, and reacts to, signals the values which he or she holds. Above all else, a principal is a teacher in the best sense of the word (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 21). The principal of the school was interviewed to add depth to the story and her perspective to the unique history and evolution of this school. She opened the school in 1992 and remained principal until she retired in January 2007.
Question 1

How was the principal of this school selected?

The principal responded by stating that she was selected through a committee interview process.

Question 2

What policies, procedures, and/or strategies were utilized to ensure that All teachers received adequate support and technical assistance? All students were adequately engaged in instructional activities? Student performance was assessed on a regular basis.

The principal answered this question with honesty and spoke as if it were yesterday as she recalled the opening of the school. She described a process that began in early August of 1992 and the school was set to open in September. The school district was in turmoil and the takeover had been in place for only a month. She discussed the lack of policies and procedures to open a new school, the unique situation of being sent to a neighboring town with donated furniture and supplies, as well as not having a working knowledge of who the staff would be and where the children would come from.

During the first two years, the most important strategies I remember completing were an analysis of the test scores. At that time we were using the California Achievement Tests and the results indicated on the average, the students sent to the school by my fellow administrators scored in the 25th percentile in math and reading and language arts. I knew then we were in trouble.

She mentioned using research (Edmond, 1979) to begin to plan the school’s academic thrust. However, most of the first year was spent catching up to the quick decision to open the school without a budget and completing managerial issues such as getting teachers desks for their classrooms. They spent hours sifting through books and supplies sent from schools who were asked to donate what they had no use for. It was also a challenge to transition eight
special needs classes with the support of only a social worker. While solving these issues was a priority, the problem of low student achievement remained evident and an action plan was developed to put in place enabling structures to assure that communication could begin regarding academics.

I then began to outline an action plan that included academic goals, teacher leadership ideas, staff development student activities and curriculum, and instruction. I met with the Director of Funded Programs and other newly appointed state staff regarding the needs of the school. At this point, our action plan became our school improvement plan. We focused on goals and activities that led to student support, academic engagement, and assessment. These were addressed in the plan and everyone followed the plan.

One of the first actions of the administrator was to create a schedule to structure the school day around large blocks of time set aside for literacy and mathematics instruction.

I created a schedule to allow teachers to meet for common planning time, this was not yet mandated by the state but I felt it was important to the program we were developing. A self-assessment was completed using Edmond’s indicators (1979) and this was used to compare us to a district-wide analysis of the schools.

Edmond’s indictors included instructional leadership, high expectations for student achievement, an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, emphasis on basic skills and frequent monitoring of pupil progress (1979). The first action plan for the school worked around using these correlates as the foundation of building a school program that was not coercive but enabling, allowing teachers to work collaboratively in an environment that had placed them together with a design that gave them no choice but to begin anew.

With regard to technical assistance and support, the district was involved with restructuring and state mandated assessments. Many people felt that this school was a temporary solution to an overcrowding situation and that the school would not survive. Since we were outside the city limits, we were left to form the school on our own and everyone worked to help each other.

Overall, although the current situation was not always in the best interests of certain staff, the idea that this was an opportunity to create something new caused other teachers to
work together and be successful and some to make plans to return to a traditional school setting. The principal indicated that they continued to survive and get better every year even when they were told they would move to a new location and a new town outside the district. She mentioned that each year they waited to hear if they would exist the following year and that the school moved three times in its first seven years of existence. However, they continued to develop plans for the school and turned to professional development to improve their instructional practices.

The teachers and I determined that literacy was the key to our students’ success and most of the activities we planned centered around language arts and literacy. A phonics component was added to the reading instruction in the primary classrooms and later as our analysis of the standardized test scores continued, it was determined that the basal reading program offered by the district was inadequate to the needs of our students.

This conversation is evidence that the practice enabling two-way communication with administration was evident early on in this school’s existence. Teachers collaborated with the principal and created a language arts program that met the needs of the students. Their discussions with the principal determined a need for changing the program beyond what was offered by the district. They used assessment data to determine this need and moved forward to solve the problem. Hoy and Sweetland (2001) conducted a study regarding enabling school structures and found that communication among all of the stakeholders in a bureaucracy is key to the success of any organizational structure. This research supports the idea that problems can be solved through discussion, analyzing information, and acting responsibly as a team. They offer this example in their work stating, “A rule not to act without data provides the stimulus for problem solving whereas a rule to follow procedures exactly is restrictive and hinders (2001, p. 3).
The development of thematic units appeared to serve as a springboard for teachers to work across grade level and to explore the constructs of learning styles. The principal reported how they would apply this research to the units of study. They worked to create a common thread that they would plan together throughout the year and meet the goals set for student achievement.

The school faculty again developed a cohesive school wide plan and began to provide cross-curricular instruction throughout the themes that had been developed year to year. We budgeted for and met every August for a school wide Summer Institute. This was three days of intense planning of curriculum and instruction to be executed during the upcoming school year. Mapping and timelines were created and a school wide calendar of events was planned. When school opened in September, everyone was on the same page with regard to what our goals were. It was then left to the teachers to make the decisions as to how they would execute them to a successful end.

Teachers continued to take advantage of the staff development opportunities offered by the school, district, and outside venues. There was a systematic effort to build capacity for good teaching and learning that benefited each other and ultimately the students. Mentoring of new staff was a priority and as teachers left to accept other assignments it became important to hire teachers that could work together to assure the vision for the school was on target and moving forward.

I assigned new staff to more experienced staff for mentoring and support. For example, I had two first grade teachers, one experienced and one new; this model proved very successful as the experienced teacher gave of his or her expertise, set the tone for high standards, and explained by example the culture and the norms of the school. The new teacher offered creativity, energy, a wealth of best practices and knowledge of the research offered at the college level. I also utilized the staff in the areas of their strengths as teacher leaders to support school wide activities and for specific training and mentoring.

The principal offered the importance of the partnership arranged by the superintendent that provided quality staff development and leadership mentoring. She referred to the action as one that was a turning point for the school in terms of being named one of four theme schools in the district. Since the faculty was already enmeshed in the curriculum aspects of themes, it
was a natural fit. To be acknowledged for this work was certainly a morale booster. Hoy discusses enabling structures as providing an atmosphere where teachers enjoy being professionally challenged. The support in these schools empowers teachers and encourage collective efficacy to develop (Hoy & Sweetland 2000).

Critical Friends groups supported by the Coalition of Essential Schools, our whole school reform model allowed teachers to assess their teaching techniques through reading and discussion of professional articles and journals. We were again taken through a rigorous self-assessment; this provided teachers with the ability to reflect on their own values and beliefs and how they brought their instruction to the students.

Keeping students and teachers engaged and encouraging academic excellence was demonstrated by the principal’s commitment to visiting classrooms daily and being visible throughout the school day. Enabling school structures research puts emphasis on the principal taking on the role of the instructional leader of the school rather than that of the plant manager. Hoy and Miskel (2001) suggest that working together with administration on instructional matters can help to move students forward academically.

To assure that all students were adequately engaged in instructional activities, I made my presence be known throughout the building on a daily basis. I would randomly stop in to see what was happening in classrooms and ask teachers if they needed my help with anything, which could include meeting with parents with them to work out any potential learning or behavior issues. I met with students who appeared to be disengaged and explained this behavior was not acceptable at our school. My belief in being present throughout the school sent the message of high expectations to both the staff and the students.

Paperwork and managerial tasks became a second priority to monitoring student achievement and teacher quality. Use of the Responsive Classroom program theories and suggestions was reported to help teachers with classroom management skills and to create an orderly environment. Malloy (1998) discusses the social dimension of school change and
states that caring schools lead to empowering staff and the development of collective efficacy (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

The responsive classroom allowed teachers to develop classroom rules with students that were useful and effective. The teachers set up their classrooms using the suggested research designs and reported to me that this helped with classroom management. I observed that it created a culture of caring and respect for one another.

Scheduling adjustments were important to the success of this school. The school schedule was adjusted for academic reasons as well as school celebrations. As data was disaggregated the principal remarked that limited staff was utilized to support students in crisis or those who needed extra support on specific concepts.

All staff was utilized to provide tutoring to students who needed help academically and schedules were adjusted to provide sessions for students based on needs. Use of limited staff was maximized. An inclusion program provided special needs students with in classroom instruction. Students remained with their peers and received the support needed for success based on their individual education plans.

**Question 3:**

**How were teachers selected to work in this school?**

The assistant superintendent put in place the staff that was sent to the school upon its inception through transfers from existing locations and the hiring of new staff. They did not necessarily want to be in this position and were not prepared for the work that was needed to create a new school program. They came from schools that had different cultures and norms and could not change to meet the needs of this school.

Some examples of the staff that was sent were a terminally ill teacher and a strong union activist. Another teacher assigned to this school was not ill at the time of her arrival but died within the first year of the school.
Question 4:

*How does the staff engage all students in instruction and assessment at each grade level?*

The principal repeated that the curriculum mapping and planning was the tool that engaged students in instruction and that the authentic assessments started at the primary level helped teachers to know their students.

The primary grades piloted authentic assessment techniques and at one point teachers in our school mentored staff in other schools regarding this topic. Teacher observations were also used as an assessment tool to assure understanding of where students were in their skill set.

Question 5:

*What factors enabled collective efficacy to develop in this school environment?*

The response to this question included the characteristics of effective schools set forth by the Coalition of Essential Schools Principles, which include creating a culture of mutual respect between teachers and administrators, shared decision making and collaboration, and the idea that less is more (ETS, p. 36). Also, developing a plan of action that has depth will serve students well. Chenoweth refers to this as teachers and administrators knowing their children well (2007). The principal felt that collective efficacy emanated from the school culture and how teachers had the opportunity to bond while they planned and executed the yearly plan for students.

High expectations and the belief that we could make a difference in our children’s lives also contributed to collective efficacy. We were open to every opportunity that came our way and made it work for us. Our school plans were cohesive and attached to our budget. We adhered to the plan and did not deviate in that respect. We celebrated as a staff and as a school community. Teachers were encouraged to take risks and to view failures and mistakes as part of the learning process.
Question 6:

*What supports were in place to assure the academic success of this school could be maintained?*

Maintaining the academic success of the school was within the reach of all of the staff set in place at the school when this principal retired. She discussed the district again being in a state of transition, but felt that this school staff was grounded in best practices and could continue to offer what the school community had come to expect in terms of student achievement. She cautioned that the decisions that are currently being mandated by the district were not in the best interests of the school in terms of the curriculum demands. She offered that a balance must be kept between the needs of this school and the demands of the district.

The district finds itself again in 2008 in major transition and decisions that have been made are not in the best interests of this school. The new principal must have the ability to balance the needs of the school and serve the requirements of the district. The principal will need to be grounded in a true understanding of what makes this school unique and understand how all these extenuating factors can affect the operation of a successful school. She must look to her staff to continue to do what they know will bring positive results in student achievement.

Question 7:

*What importance is the principal’s voice in the decision making structure of the school?*

When this question was asked, the principal responded without hesitation. “Very important” she replied. The principal is accountable and should lead with a vision.

The principal should have a vision of what the school should be; a mental picture to return to daily. She must be able to convey it to the staff and bring them aboard assuring them that they can make this a reality. The school cannot exist without the principal and the principal cannot work in isolation of the staff. Success will not happen if there is not a cohesive plan and staff.
Question 8:

What role did central office play in the success of the school as it relates to successful student achievement?

It was mentioned that very little could be credited to central office staff in terms of the success of the school. One issue which the Schools That Work study discusses is how the principal engages the hierarchy of the school system. It states that the principals in the study found creative ways to work with the district to satisfy what was needed to successfully run the school. The principal returned to the history of the school, its conception at the beginning of the district takeover in 1992, and how it has seen transitions of four state district superintendents - soon to be five. She referred to the partnership with the Center for Educational Innovation, stating that their involvement with the school brought the level of professional development to support the work that was being done on thematic lesson planning. The acknowledgement of this school being chosen as a theme school went a long way to support the efforts of the staff of the school as they worked year after year to make success happen for children.

An important milestone for us was when the second state district superintendent acknowledged us and declared us a theme school. The partnership with the Center for Educational Innovation was the catalyst to bring us to another level of teaching and learning as we were given some budget money for more sophisticated staff development often provided by retired principals and university professors. Therefore, I would have to say that the district did offer some support in our endeavors, but our mission and vision was already set and very different from other schools. This school is successful because it happened at the grassroots level. The staff in the school started it not by any directive sent by the district.

Question 9:

How many years have you been in administration? Can you offer some thoughts on school leadership?
The principal reported that they were in administration prior to her assignment as principal at this school but when becoming the principal of this school she set about doing something different as a leader.

Prior administrative experiences did not provide me with a model to emulate when I was charged to begin this school. I knew I needed to do something different so I turned to the research on effective schools and to the staff to create the school. We learned from each other, celebrated our successes, and accepted our failures as lessons well learned. I read every summer regarding research and best practices that is how we formed the vision. It helped me to lead my staff in the direction of success, as it is important to understand that you cannot do it alone.

**Question 10:**

**How many years have you worked at this school? Can you offer thoughts on its success?**

The principal was sent to the school at its inception in 1992. She has since retired in 2007.

This school by all appearances should have been a failing school. It was established quickly without planning and I often wonder whether that was the intent. Seasoned district staff, new staff, and students were put together without much thought to the culture that could have been created. Many senior staff members were angry that they were transferred to this school and were taken away from their friends and their schools. Later on, several of them went back to in district schools because they could not buy what was happening in this school---teaching and learning.

Working at developing a culture of teaching and learning had to be done by collaborating and relying on staff who understood the vision of something different.

The success of the school had to do with long hours, a vision, high expectations, planning, trusting the staff, and shared decision making. Also it was about having knowledge and believing you cannot sleep on your laurels. Setting a plan to improve every year and doing something about it every day. To conclude, the history of this school’s unique inception cannot and should not be replicated. It was an experience for all who participated to reflect on and to be proud of. I often wonder at times how we had the nerve to survive the odds, to get this school to its present state of excellence. This model can be used to develop enabling structures in any struggling school.

Hoy’s guidelines to promote enabling rules clearly indicate that rules can often be a nemesis to any organization if they hinder progress moving forward. Hoy and Sweetland
(2000) indicate that enabling structures should provide a safe organized environment, and second, focus on the business of teaching and learning.

Summary

The research questions and proposition in this study are acknowledged using both quantitative and qualitative research analysis. Data was collected using The Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale, a survey comprised of three subscales: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices and efficacy in classroom management. Forty-one teachers were invited to participate in the survey process and thirty-four responded to the request. It appears in analyzing the above three subscales that personal teaching efficacy and collective efficacy exist at this school in consistently high levels. The analysis of the results of the survey consistently reveals that teachers in this school have high levels of personal teaching efficacy leading to collective teaching efficacy. Each subscale indicates over 60% of the teachers scored themselves 7 or above for each item. The responses consistently represent the high end of the Likert scale and are represented by “quite a bit” and “a great deal” in determining the choices to be made. Overall, the results indicate that efficacy in instructional strategies does influence classroom management techniques; likewise, efficacy in classroom management can support the delivery of strong instructional strategies. Teacher interviews were conducted with six volunteer teachers; all of whom had participated in the survey process. The interview questions were related to both the research questions and the proposition set forth in chapter one. A detailed interview was conducted with the principal emeritus of this school. It provided a deeper understanding of the unique situation of this specific school. Her frank responses to the questions regarding the school climate indicate
that enabling structures exist at this school, allowing the school culture that was created to facilitate the development of high levels of personal teaching efficacy as well as collective efficacy of the entire school staff. It also confirms the proposition that given equal basic teacher qualifications and resources, along with other schools in the district, the nurturing of personal teaching efficacy leads to collective efficacy thus enabling the school structure to create successful student outcomes.

Chapter five will present a summary of the research, policy implications, recommendations for further study and conclusions.
Chapter V

Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

"Teachers' sense of efficacy is a little idea with a big impact. Teachers' judgment of their capability to impact student outcome has been demonstrated to effect teacher behavior, student attitudes and student achievement" (Tschantzen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2002).

Chapter one presents the problem to be studied and its place in the current educational arena. Chapter two offers a literature review that includes a brief synopsis of the Abbott v. Burke decision, theories of efficacy, enabling school structures and effective schools research. Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study to collect and analyze the data used to determine the levels of personal and collective teacher efficacy as well as the enabling school structures that support the existence of effective school practices. Chapter four presents the analysis of the data and chapter five reports a summary of the findings, recommendations for practice and further research as well as concluding remarks.

Summary of the Findings

The Abbott v. Burke New Jersey Supreme Court decision and N.J.A.C. 6A:10A-1.2, determined that students in urban districts with low socio-economic structures receive the same entitlements in education as those students in the wealthiest districts in the state. The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher efficacy in an urban elementary school to determine how the construct of efficacy relates to the consistent student achievement of the students as measured by the NJASK3&4. It explored the enabling structures that exist in the school to promote a successful school climate. The study also analyzed how teachers' instructional strategies and classroom management skills engage students and can relate to personal and collective teaching efficacy. Best practices are identified through in depth
interviews, and an understanding of how enabling school structures can influence efficacy in student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management was revealed.

A series of studies outlined in the literature review determine that collective efficacy does have an impact on student achievement in the areas of language arts, mathematics, and science (Goddard et al., 2000). Studies using the theoretical frameworks of both Rotter (1966) and Bandura (1977) confirm the importance of teachers believing that they are capable of affecting student achievement (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zelman, 1977, p. 137). Studies using the theories of Hoy and Sweetland have also confirmed that enabling school structures set a firm, healthy school environment (Hoy, Podgurski, & Tarter, 1991), while others offer the results of goal setting and the implementation of specific characteristics of effective schools (Achilles, 1987).

Research proposes that social sciences offer the answer to the challenges facing students and teachers today working at it teacher-by-teacher, classroom by classroom, and school-by-school (Williams, 2003). Williams also discusses efficacy as being a trait of teacher resilience along with caring, problem solving and having a sense of hope and meaning (2002, p. 132). This study relates to the work of the above scholars as it determines that high levels of teacher efficacy do exist and have an impact on student success in both language arts and mathematics assessments. The enabling structures identified in the interview sessions also indicate that a healthy school environment, as described by the respondents, does exist and provides a school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning having specific characteristics of effective schools as well as teachers who are caring and nurturing in their academic practices.
Research questions one and two address the quantitative elements of this study and data was collected using the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). It examines the three subscales of efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. Analysis of the survey results reported consistently high levels of personal teaching efficacy in all three subscales. It can be further stated that collective school efficacy exists in this urban school based on the responses to the interview questions.

Pearson Correlations were used to analyze research question two, which investigated the subscales to determine if a relationship existed between efficacy in classroom management and efficacy in student engagement. While significant, moderate correlation was found between the subscales, suggesting a possibility that teachers who are determined to have efficacy in classroom management are also likely to have efficacy in student engagement.

It also analyzed two subscales to determine if a relationship existed between efficacy in instructional strategies and efficacy in classroom management. A significant but low correlation was found between the subscales of efficacy in instructional practices and efficacy in classroom management, suggesting a possibility that teachers who are determined to have efficacy in instructional practices are also likely to have efficacy in classroom management.

Independent t-tests were conducted to analyze differences in academic degree level between Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees of the three subscales; efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices, and efficacy in classroom management. In examining the data it was determined that there is no significant difference between
academic degree level in each of the subscales. Therefore, teachers' obtainment of a Bachelor's or Master's degree had no relevance when determining levels of efficacy in the three subscales. Independent t-tests were again used to analyze the differences in years of teaching experience between 0-5, and, 6 and above of the three subscales of efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional practices, and efficacy in classroom management. In examining the data it was determined that there is no significant difference between teaching experience 0-5 years and teaching experience 6 and above in each of the subscales. Therefore, years of teaching had no relevance when determining levels of efficacy in the three subscales.

The findings of the research indicate that regardless of degree level and years of experience, personal teaching efficacy, that is, the personal belief that an educator has in his or teaching ability, does appear to exist at this school. Teachers who demonstrate high personal teaching efficacy typically devote longer hours to preparation, provide academic focus in the classroom, and utilize multiple forms of feedback from students (Bandura, 1997). The staff at this school collaborates with one another and report that they go to each other to gain expertise or to learn about student needs to assure positive outcomes for students (Bandura, 1997; Hoy, 2007). They assume that they have control over the learning process and show internal control in their development of self-efficacy. This can be determined by their willingness to work hard and make the changes needed for successful teaching and learning (Rotter, 1966). The teachers in the school create classroom management systems allowing students to move about through differentiated centers of instruction, thus increasing learning time using other instructional strategies to engage students in the learning process (Gibson and Dembo, 1984).
Research question three investigates the enabling structures in this school that support student achievement. The interview questions developed for the analysis were developed using the research questions and the proposition. The results of the teacher interviews determine that teachers' values and beliefs in this school are related to personal teaching efficacy. Interview question 8 asked, *What importance is the teacher's voice in the decision making structure of the school?* In analyzing the data, the theme of values and beliefs was the number one response. In order of importance, each of the six respondents discussed it in the context of their concerns about losing their autonomy in decisions regarding classroom instruction and the philosophy that has been established by this school community (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Five out of six staff members felt that there was a possibility of their loss of voice in implementing what they strongly feel are best practices at this school. The responses to this question were delivered with passion and priority. Teachers have concerns that a top down administration could not allow them to continue their success.

In interview question 7 teachers were asked, *What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?* All of the respondents also discussed the importance of common preparation periods / instructional coaching and data team meetings. The teachers felt that it was important to meet to discuss students' test results and benchmark results to plan for further instruction (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). More than one teacher mentioned the term vision (DuFour, 2004) during the interview; the concept of sharing and collegiality was evident by their response. There is eagerness to know what the other was offering in their classroom and working toward continuity of instruction for each grade level. A sense of personal and collective efficacy is evident as they are in touch
with each other professionally in order to support student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000).

A sense of efficacy was evidenced in the response to interview question 4: *How does the faculty support new teacher assigned to this school*, interview question 3: *How does the structure of this school enable positive school outcomes in academic performance?* in addition to interview question 1: *What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty staying focused academically?*

Teachers discussed the themes of collegiality and continuity of program as being a priority. It was determined that mentoring new teachers is embedded in the culture of this school and the practice of isolating new teachers does not exist. This supports the existence of the collective efficacy of this faculty. Hoy and Spero (2005) discuss the importance of supporting teachers in their early years of the profession to assure that they receive the necessary instruction to begin to develop self efficacy, defined as “the belief in one’s capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required in producing given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Hoy and Hoy (1990) also contributed to the literature with a study of pre service and student teachers’ sense of efficacy and beliefs. They determined the importance of mentoring new teachers, other models of teacher development call for new teachers making sense of learning and having an impact on the lives of their students. The teachers in this school offered information on working as a team and consider this school to be a family, as all of the stakeholders and staff join in the planning of goals and expectations on a yearly basis. They referred to a six-day cycle of instruction as creating a platform to deliver uninterrupted instruction regardless of the design of the school calendar. The instructional coach model is described as a resource to enable students to reach positive
school outcomes (Coalition of Essential Schools, 1984). Collaborative planning and the importance of each staff member were highlighted, indicating that enabling school structures are the norm for this school (Hoy and Sweetland, 2007).

The strategies which teachers offered that related to successful instruction were redirect and refocus, building trust and accessing prior knowledge. All six respondents offered different instances where the strategies have supported students who were not able to grasp new concepts the first time they were presented. Elmore (2004, p. 222, 223) states that building capacity for learning is important to both the teacher and the student and relates that it comes to them from outside sources; thus the strategies of redirect and refocus and accessing prior knowledge enhance student learning. He suggests the idea that along with performance-based accountability, one must offer the theory of improvement. Stressing improvement strategies builds the capacity of both the teacher and the student. The construct of gaining the trust of students relates to developing enabling school structures where the school community can avoid coercive behaviors and unnecessary rules (Adler & Borys, 1996; Hoy, 2007; Sweetland, 2001). Trust is gained when teachers and students can be free to work in an innovative environment that allows for trying new lessons and perhaps failing, adjusting, and trying again.

Peer coaching and differentiation surfaced as the themes for Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction? Teachers' response to this query was to apply strategies for learning that allowed them to step back from the role of traditional instructor to assume that of the facilitator. They mentioned creating a classroom atmosphere where students could learn from each other and from centers provided for them to explore content from different learning styles and perspectives. It appears that their strong
sense of self-efficacy allows them to organize their classrooms to deliver instruction in this manner. Personal teaching efficacy and collective efficacy may provide the instinctive knowledge as to when they can step back and allow this practice to drive student learning. Bolman and Deal (2003) discuss changing schools to support the needs of the students; the classroom structure described above lends itself to characteristics of effective schools.

Respondents discussed modeling lessons as interview question 5 was asked: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill of new teachers? Teachers expressed an interest in this strategy. This may be attributed to high levels of personal and collective teaching efficacy. Faculty state that they learn more from seeing lessons done by each other than hearing someone lecture on a specific topic (Fullan, 2004). Enabling structures that include scheduling peer observations into the school day serve as embedded staff development opportunities and can be supported offering professional learning communities in the school. These teacher driven experiences can support developing new teachers to be experienced in strategies and content area information more quickly than they would be able to grasp them in the isolation of their own classroom. The findings revealed for this question agree with the research on enabling school structures as determined by Hoy and Sweetland (2001). Those enabling structures set forth in this school create a culture of effective school practices for teaching and learning, allowing students to consistently perform successfully on the NJASK3&4 assessments.

The interview with the principal provided the leadership perspective of the unique situation of the school as well as the history of the school at its inception through its first 16 years of existence. The responses to the questions posed confirm that a high level of efficacy does exist among the faculty of this school. It is clear that the administration and staff of this
school created plans for this school to succeed, and then to excel. The model for this school was simply a steadfast desire to persevere and to get the job done with the involvement of all of the stakeholders. The circumstances of the school assure us that educating urban children to the level of excellence is within our reach.

The proposition set forth in chapter one is confirmed to suggest that nurturing personal teaching efficacy and supporting the collective efficacy of a school staff along with developing enabling school structures could create a positive school culture and ultimately result in the development of an exemplary school community. In studying the test score data of the NJASK3&4, the survey results and the interview sessions, teachers in this school appear to have high levels of personal and collective efficacy. This is evidenced by their willingness to discuss their school and the professional responsibilities they take on in supporting student achievement. There appears to be a sense of collaboration and a continued push to set and meet academic goals determined by the faculty. Teachers showed concern with district initiatives that are in direct conflict with the philosophy that the school was built on. They discussed a vision that surpassed the construct of creating a rote mission statement for the school. They pride themselves in being on the same page with regard to academic planning and are open to accepting responsibility for understanding weaknesses in student skill sets that can be addressed by all grade levels. This is evidenced by the work they attempt in planning with instructional coaches and each other during their annual summer institute, budgeted for and executed every August. The interview with the school principal confirmed what the teachers had reported and added a dimension from the leadership perspective of this specific case study.
Recommendations for Practice

- Provide opportunities in teacher scheduling to form common planning time daily for teachers to discuss student needs, academic issues and analyze data generated through various forms of assessment.

- Identify teachers who use best practices in schools and have them partner as grade level teachers to build capacity for excellence in teaching practices.

- Foster a culture of trust in schools that will allow teachers to try new concepts and be willing to reflect on successes and failures as part of the learning process.

- Provide quality professional development to staff and make plans to turnkey information to all stakeholders.

- Review theories offered in this study; implement appropriately in reform situations.

- Celebrate the success of staff and students as they meet with small successes. Do this often and with sincerity.

Recommendations for Policy

- CAPA Teams should explore the constructs of teacher’s efficacy enabling school structures and effective schools research to support reform efforts in failing schools.

- The Department of Education should provide districts with analyzed data regarding failing schools. Schools can then understand their needs and begin to apply good practices utilizing data properly to guide instruction.

- School reform efforts should acknowledge that all schools are different and have different needs and circumstances regarding their journey toward excellence. Do not require specific programs as a response to failure.
• The New Jersey Department of Education should provide training for district staff in statistical analysis of school data is necessary for accurate decision making regarding programs and budgets.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

• Replicate and expand this study in five years.

• Initiate a parent involvement study of this school and compare it to other neighborhood schools to determine if offering a choice admission policy supports a successful student achievement.

• Do a comparative study of this school and a failing school using the theory and constructs determined for this study.

**Conclusion**

The promise of Abbott begins and ends with the lives of the children which this law intends to serve. The school in this study attempted and successfully delivered this promise to the students placed in its charge. It evolved from a grassroots effort of tireless educators committed to every student. The analysis of the data reveals what we already know to be true - school reform is not easy, yet it is possible. To accomplish reform we need commitment from every citizen willing to take up the charge and work together for one common goal; the successful student achievement of all students in New Jersey. This study also establishes that school reform does not mean we work harder doing the same things we have always done and expect the results to be different. It also does not require buying into the latest educational trends and expecting that implementing them will assure success. It requires dedicated educators to reflect only on student needs, then to systematically develop effective programs to meet those needs, and finally to commit to innovatively implementing
them, assessing progress, and adjusting programs accordingly. This method of school reform will require our state, school districts, neighborhoods and communities to believe it is possible, and that it is worth doing. Research has proven the value of the theories and constructs of personal teaching efficacy, collective efficacy, and enabling school structures. They deserve to be understood and used as powerful tools in today's educational arena in developing successful schools. The rulings of the New Jersey Supreme Court in the Abbott v. Burke Decisions placed New Jersey at the forefront of school reform in our nation. It is therefore our legal responsibility to the children this law protects to do this work until we get it right.
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Trachtenburg, P., Liss, B., & Sadoonick, K. A. (2005, June 3-4). *Setting the stage for informal, objective deliberation on property tax reform: What we know, what we need to know about education funding and taxes.* Background Rutgers, Newark Institute on Education Law and Policy.


Appendixes A-D
New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
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<td>March</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Field Test</td>
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<td>School Scores</td>
<td></td>
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### Appendix B: New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
#### Grade 3 Mathematics

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</table>

#### Subgroup scores

1. **Economically disadvantaged**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 86.6 | 82 | 62 | 74 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 33.3 | 23 | 24 | 17 |
   | Number of students tested | 30 | 22 | 21 | 23 |

2. **African American**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 85.7 | 80 | 64 | 76 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 23.8 | 30 | 23 | 17 |
   | Number of students tested | 21 | 20 | 22 | 29 |

3. **Hispanic**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 93.8 | 92 | 86 | 100 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 43.8 | 23 | 29 | 0 |
   | Number of students tested | 16 | 13 | 7 | 1 |

4. **Special education**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
   | Number of students tested | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
### Appendix C: New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
#### Grade 4 Language Arts/Literacy

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<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
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</table>

#### Subgroup scores

1. Economically disadvantaged

| % proficient plus advanced proficient | 92 | 95 | 91 | 100 | 86 |
| % of students advanced proficient | 12 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of students tested | 25 | 19 | 22 | 11 | 21 |

2. African American

| % proficient plus advanced proficient | 88.9 | 94 | 92 | 89 | 82 |
| % of students advanced proficient | 11.1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of students tested | 18 | 18 | 24 | 9 | 17 |

3. Hispanic

| % proficient plus advanced proficient | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 92 |
| % of students advanced proficient | 9.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of students tested | 11 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 13 |

4. Special education

| % proficient plus advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 |
| % of students advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of students tested | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
## Appendix D: New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge
### Grade 4 Mathematics

<table>
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<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>Percent of total students tested</td>
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<td>Percent of students alternatively assessed</td>
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</table>

**Subgroup scores**

1. **Economically disadvantaged**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 88 | 100 | 91 | 91 | 76 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 72 | 58 | 23 | 36 | 29 |
   | Number of students tested | 25 | 19 | 22 | 11 | 21 |

2. **African American**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 83.4 | 100 | 92 | 78 | 76 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 66.7 | 56 | 29 | 33 | 24 |
   | Number of students tested | 18 | 18 | 24 | 9 | 17 |

3. **Hispanic**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 85 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 90.9 | 67 | 0 | 60 | 39 |
   | Number of students tested | 11 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 13 |

4. **Special education**

   | % proficient plus advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 | 50 |
   | % of students advanced proficient | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
   | Number of students tested | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
Appendix E

Table 2

The Development of Teacher Efficacy
### Table 1

#### The Development of Teacher Efficacy

<table>
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<th>Researcher(s)</th>
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<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>RAND researchers McLaughlin &amp; Marsh, (1978); Berman &amp; McLaughlin (1977)</td>
<td>&quot;the extent to which the teacher believed he or she had the capacity to affect student performance&quot; (McLaughlin &amp; Marsh, 1978, p. 84)</td>
<td>RAND Items: Two-item measure reflecting internals and external control, described as personal and general teaching efficacy</td>
<td>Ashton, Buhr, &amp; Crocker (1984)</td>
<td>A teacher's belief in his or her ability to have a positive effect on student learning</td>
<td>Ashton vignettes: Assessed outcome and efficacy expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose &amp; Medway (1981)</td>
<td>The extent to which a teacher believes that he or she can control student outcomes</td>
<td>Teacher Locus of Control (TLC) Scale: Assessed teachers feelings of an internal or external locus of control for student outcomes</td>
<td>Gibson &amp; Denbo (1984)</td>
<td>&quot;a belief that teachers can help even the most difficult or unmotivated students&quot; (p. 569)</td>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES): Two-factor model of general and personal teaching efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guskey (1981)</td>
<td>A teacher's belief or conviction that he or she can influence how well students learn, even those who are difficult or unmotivated</td>
<td>Responsibility for Student Achievement (RSA) Scale: Assessed general responsibility, responsibility for student success and for student failure.</td>
<td>Tschannen-Moran &amp; Woolfolk Hoy (2001)</td>
<td>&quot;...a judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcome of student engagement and learning...&quot; (p. 783)</td>
<td>Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale: Assesses efficacy for student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Figure 1. Teacher efficacy and teacher knowledge. (From H. R. Fives, 2003, p. 56.)*
Appendix F
Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)
### Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale 1 (long form)

**Teacher beliefs**

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

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<tr>
<td>1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. How well can you respond to delinquent students?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?</td>
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Appendix G
Superintendent and Principal Letters
September 24, 2007

Office of the Superintendent

Dear Superintendent:

I am currently a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive EdD program in leadership, management, and policy. My dissertation topic is *Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning*. Its purpose is to determine what influence, if any, school culture has on student achievement, and how personal and collective teaching efficacy affects student achievement.

At this time in my doctoral program, I am required to request written permission from the superintendent to complete this study. This is a procedure set forth for verification purposes and is a requirement of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Human Subjects Research. There are no risks in this research or monetary benefits of this study. The school selected for this case study is Renaissance One School of Humanities as it has consistently met and exceeded district, state, and national benchmarks as measured by the NJASK 3&4. The study will investigate teaching and learning, thus ultimately providing insight into successful methods that support an outstanding urban school program leading to higher levels of student performance. All certificated teachers at the school will have the opportunity to volunteer to participate by completing a research-based survey developed by Dr. Megan Tschannen-Moran, professor at the College of William and Mary, and Anita Woolfolk Hoy, professor at Ohio State University. Interested staff members will receive the enclosed Informed Consent Form, outlining the purpose of the research. Participants may choose at any time during the data collection process not to participate without penalty.

The survey distribution process will be planned with the principal, and participants will return their surveys to the researcher in a drop box provided for the school. The participants will be asked if they would be interested in a brief interview regarding their school’s success. These will be scheduled after school to ensure no interruption to the school day. The data will be reported in the dissertation without naming the school or the district. The data will be stored on a memory stick and remain secure in a locked cabinet in my home. After the required 3 years, the data will be destroyed. Anonymity and confidentiality are requirements through the IRB review process. I have enclosed a copy of the teacher solicitation letter, the Informed Consent Form, and the recruitment flyer with this correspondence.

I can be available to discuss this case study further if you wish. Thank you in advance for your prompt response and professional support in this request.
October 1, 2007

Principal

Dear Principal:

I am currently a doctoral student at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, enrolled in the Executive EdD Program in leadership, management, and policy. My dissertation topic is Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the study is to determine what influence, if any, school culture has on student achievement, as well as how personal and collective efficacy can also affect student achievement. The case study focuses on teacher perceptions. I have received permission from the superintendent to conduct my research in the district and am requesting your permission to conduct the research in your school.

The research to be collected is both qualitative and quantitative, and requires teachers to complete the Ohio State Teachers’ Efficacy Scale. It was developed by researchers Dr. Megan Tschannen-Moran, on staff at the College of William and Mary, and Dr. Anita Woolfolk Hoy, on staff at Ohio State University. The survey consists of 24 items, and every certified staff member in the school is eligible to participate. I will also ask for teacher volunteers to interview regarding the success of your school. These interviews will take place after school in an assigned location in the school. The teacher volunteers will receive an Informed Consent Form for their signature should they choose to volunteer. If you agree to participate in the study, we would discuss the distribution of the surveys to all of the volunteer teachers and assign a due date for their return to a drop box in the teacher’s room. A flyer and letter of solicitation will be placed where teachers can have an opportunity to read and decide whether they are interested in contributing to the research; copies of these are included with this correspondence. Those educators who volunteer will receive an Informed Consent Form to read and sign regarding the Institutional Review Board’s policy on research anonymity and confidentiality. The names of all participants will remain confidential as well as the name of school and the district.

I will be analyzing the data myself, and report on them in the dissertation. Upon completion of the study, all data will be on a USB memory stick and remain secure in a locked cabinet in my home. I have also enclosed a copy of the survey for your review as well as the Informed Consent Form. At this time, I would also appreciate a letter granting permission on school letterhead for verification purposes. There are no risks in this study and no monetary benefits to this study.

Thank you for your professional attention this request and your support in this endeavor. If you have any further questions, you may contact me using the above e-mail address.
Appendix H
Informed Consent Form
Informed Consent Form

Affiliation:

JoAnn Cardillo is a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive EdD program.

Purpose of the Study:

The title of the study is Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the study is to determine what influence, if any, school culture has on student achievement, as well as how personal and collective efficacy can also affect student achievement. The study is based on the perceptions of teachers.

This research is quantitative and uses the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by researchers Megan Tschannen-Moran at the College of William and Mary and Anita Woolfolk Hoy at Ohio State University.

Procedure:

The data for this study will be gathered using a survey. The surveys will be sent to the principal of the school, who will distribute them to the teachers with an expected due date. Those volunteering to participate will fill out the anonymous survey and return it to the principal. Again, no names or identifying factors will be used. After the due date has passed, the researcher will then pick up the completed surveys from the principal and analyze the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Project:

By signing the Informed Consent Form, the participant will consent to participate in the study by filling out the survey. The results will be analyzed without any reference to the school or the district. At any point in time, a participant may choose to not hand in a completed survey and end his or her participation in the study. The participant may do so without penalty or loss of any kind.

Anonymity:

Please be assured that responses will be kept completely confidential. No names will be included in any work product or on any document. Only the researcher will analyze the data. Any results will be included in the dissertation without reference to participants or the school.
Security of Stored Data:

The data will be stored on a memory stick and locked in a secure cabinet in the home of the researcher. The data will be destroyed after 3 years. No one else will have access to the data.

Confidentiality of Records:

No one will have access to the names of the participants volunteering for this research. No mention of any subject's name of school, principal, superintendent, or district will be included in the researcher's dissertation.

Risks:

There are no risks in this research.

Benefits:

There are no benefits in this study, monetary or of any other nature, to the participants.

Alternatives to Research Study:

If any chosen participants are unavailable to receive their surveys on the chosen date, the participants will have the opportunity to approach the building principal to request a copy of the survey and return it completed within the allotted time. Anonymity will also hold true for these participants.

Acquisition of Further Information:

The following can be contacted for further information about this study:

JoAnn Cardillo, Researcher (973)-321-0490
Elaine Walker, PhD, Faculty Advisor (973)275-2307
Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079-2685

Mary F. Ruzicka, PhD, IRB Director (973)275-2723 or (973)313-6314
Office of the Institutional Review Board
Presidents Hall -Third Floor
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079
Participants may view a copy of the researcher's dissertation upon completion. The dissertation will be available in the Walsh Library at Seton Hall University's main campus.

Permission to Use Audio Tape Recorders:

Paper copies of the survey will be distributed, collected, and analyzed.

Acknowledgment of Informed Consent Forms:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, and civil rights. The Chairperson of the IRB can be reached at (973) 275-2723 or (973) 313-6314.

I have read the material above, and I agree to participate. I am aware that I will be given a copy of this Informed Consent Form for my files.

Check here if you are willing to participate in the research if chosen.

Name ____________________________

Date ______________________________
Appendix I
Teacher Letter of Solicitation and
Recruitment Flyer for Interviews
November 2007

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University enrolled in the Executive EdD program. I have received permission from the state district superintendent and the principal of your school to conduct this research.

My dissertation topic is Delivering the Expectation of Abbott: Creating a Culture of Successful Teaching and Learning. The purpose of the study is to determine what influence, if any, school culture has on student achievement, as well as how personal and collective teaching efficacy can also influence student achievement. I will be surveying volunteer members of the certificated teaching staff of your school willing to participate in this study. I will also be seeking volunteers to be interviewed in an after-school session to discuss the success of your school. The research instrument identified for the survey will be the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale Efficacy Scale; it was developed by Megan Tschannen-Moran, researcher and professor at the College of William and Mary, and by Anita Woolfolk Hoy, professor and researcher at Ohio State University. I will also be asking volunteers to participate in an interview using predetermined questions regarding your school’s success.

Attached to this letter is an Informed Consent Form. Should you choose to participate, you must sign and return it to me to receive a copy of the survey. After completing your survey, please place it in the blank envelope provided for you and drop it in the drop box in the teacher’s room to ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality. By taking part in the group survey and/or the interview, you are consenting to become part of this study. All surveys and interviews will be anonymous, and if you should decide at any time that you no longer wish to participate, your refusal to participate holds no penalty. Please be assured your answers are confidential. Names of participants will not be disclosed in the work product, or the completed dissertation. The data will be stored on a USB memory stick and locked in a cabinet in the home of the researcher. The data will be destroyed after a 3-year period. There are no risks in this research or monetary benefits to this study.

This dissertation was reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subjects’ privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. You can reach the chairperson of the IRB at (973) 313-6314.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your kindness and anticipated participation in my endeavors. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the attached Informed Consent Form and return it to receive a copy of your survey.
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED:
Recruitment Flyer

By Whom?
My name is JoAnn Cardillo, and I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University at the College of Education and Human Services in the Department of Educational Leadership, Management, and Policy. I am conducting research for my dissertation within the Executive EdD program.

For What?
This study attempts to determine if school culture impacts student performance. The study will investigate teachers’ perceptions regarding personal teaching efficacy as well as collective efficacy in a professional learning community. The study will also explore the enabling structures that connect to your school’s success. This case study will be limited to your school.

When?
I will be asking you to complete a teacher survey that should take no longer than 15 minutes and return it to the drop box in the teacher’s room by the suggested due date. I have received permission from the superintendent and the principal of your school to conduct my research in the district. Participation in this research study is strictly voluntary.

How?
I am asking you to volunteer to participate in this research. I plan to use the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by researchers Megan Tschannen-Moran and Anita Woolfolk Hoy. It is a survey developed to gain a better understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning. I will also interview teachers who volunteer to discuss what makes your school consistently successful. I am fully aware of the confidentiality and anonymity requirements of the participants of this study. Upon completion and collection of the study, I will then analyze the data and report the results in my dissertation without mention of teachers, the school, or the district. An Informed Consent Form will fully disclose anonymity, and I will follow strict confidentiality measures. All responses are confidential, and names of the participants, the district, and the school will not be published in the work product, or the completed dissertation. The data will be stored on an USB memory stick and remain secure in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. After 3 years, all data regarding this research will be destroyed.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this research study. If you are willing to contribute your ideas to this case study or have any further questions, please e-mail me.
Appendix J
Interview Questions
The interview questions presented are grounded in research and derived from a theoretical base:

**Teacher Interview Questions**

**Question 1**: What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

**Question 2**: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

**Question 3**: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

**Question 4**: How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

**Question 5**: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

**Question 6**: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

**Question 7**: What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

**Question 8**: What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

**Question 9**: How many years have you been in teaching?

**Question 10**: How many years have you worked at this school?

Examples of the research are as follows:


Social cognitive theory is the construct of teacher efficacy that supports teachers’ perceptions of their ability to believe and act upon these four sources of expectations: mastery experience, psychological and emotional status, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion.


Professional learning communities in schools work at “ensuring all students learn, promote a culture of collaboration, and get the results needed for a successful academic and social experience for every child.”


A healthy school has organizational factors that support teachers and allow them to make decisions regarding instructional strategies and school culture. This ability creates a strong morale that will, in turn, nurture collective efficacy among faculty and staff in professional learning communities.


Theoretical analysis supports the identification of successful schools regardless of socioeconomic factors. Specific structures can enable schools to operate efficiently and innovatively, resulting in meeting high academic standards in a caring culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument Reviewed</th>
<th>Check if you do not have additions/revisions to the instrument</th>
<th>List additions/revisions to the instrument:</th>
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Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________________
Principal Interview Questions

These interview questions are grounded in research and are derived from a theoretical base. The researcher used the common characteristics identified for the Schools That Work study completed by Seton Hall University, which developed them. It was commissioned by Gordon McGinnis, director of the Citizens for Better Schools, to examine effective schools located in Abbott districts in the state of New Jersey.

I Enabling Supports of the Principal

Question 1: How was the principal selected to be principal of the school?

Question 2: What policies, procedures, and/or strategies were used to ensure the following: All teachers received adequate support and technical assistance. All students were adequately engaged in instructional activities. Student performance was assessed on a regular basis.

Question 3: How were teachers selected to work in this school?

II High Levels of Instructional Delivery

Question 4: How does the staff engage all students in instruction and assessment at each grade level?

Question 5: What factors enabled collective efficacy to develop in this school environment?

Question 6: What supports were put in place to ensure the academic success of this school could continue to be maintained?

III Innovative Use of District Services

Question 7: What importance is the principal’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

Question 8: What role did the central office play in the success of this school as it relates to successful student achievement?

Question 9: How many years have you been in administration? Can you offer some thoughts on school leadership?

Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school? Can you offer thoughts on its success?
Examples of the research are as follows

Social cognitive theory is the construct of teacher efficacy that supports teachers' perceptions of their ability to believe and act upon these four sources of expectations: mastery experience, psychological and emotional status, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion.

Professional learning communities in schools work at "ensuring all students learn, promote a culture of collaboration, and get the results needed for a successful academic and social experience for every child."

A healthy school has organizational factors that support teachers and allow them to make decisions regarding instructional strategies and school culture. This ability creates a strong morale that will, in turn, nurture collective efficacy among faculty and staff in professional learning communities.

Theoretical analysis supports the identification of successful schools regardless of socioeconomic factors. Specific structures can enable schools to operate efficiently and innovatively, resulting in meeting high academic standards in a caring culture.
Appendix K
Interview Transcripts
Interview Transcripts

*Teacher Interview 1*

**Question 1:** What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

*Respondent 1 Response:* I find most of the times they are not focused either because they are not understanding what I am doing, or it's just a behavior problem. If it's for a student that I feel is not a behavior problem but they are not getting what I am teaching, I would try to reteach or restate what I have already taught in a different way to see if they can get what I have gotten, either by using manipulative or doing something different on the board that I may have done. There are times that I will do one-on-one. If they are doing work in their workbook, I will go to them and sit with them on a one-on-one. Behavioral problem students, my first attack is to constantly call on them, just constantly let them know that they need to pay attention, and if they are not paying attention, then they can't answer me. When that doesn't work, sometimes I have to remove them from the group because I sit my children in groups of four for cooperative learning. But if they are constantly destructive, sometimes I have to move them away from the group and sit them somewhere else in the room. That's basically what I do.

**Question 2:** How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

*Respondent 1 Response:* With our planning, we do try to differentiate our teaching. Our students obviously are at different levels; they learn by different ways. We have centers that we use, and the centers are differentiated. Some students may learn by writing, so I would give them a piece to write. Some students may learn by hands-on so I would give them something hands-on to do. I use vocabulary as an example when they have to write definitions. My lower students I would tell them to draw a picture of what that word means to them. So, it is through our planning, it's
through grade-level meetings, it's through team meetings, it's through our centers, and that type of thing.

**Question 3:** How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

**Respondent 1 Response:** We have a 6-day cycle that we engage in. This way, students don’t miss their specials. We do benchmarks for students so that we disaggregate data to instruct our teaching; we do DIBELS, which is also a type of assessment for their reading. We have coaches for our children. We have data team meetings where we analyze the data and see where our children stand and what needs to be taught more than other things.

**Question 4:** How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

**Respondent 1 Response:** My personal experience and what I've observed since I've been here [is that] a new teacher in this school usually gets a mentor, someone that they can go to when they have problems with any aspect of teaching being a classroom teacher. Not only the mentors but the teachers in the school themselves are very cooperative. A new teacher can go to any teacher. Any teacher in the school would be more than happy to help them with anything that they have any difficulties with.

**Question 5:** Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

**Respondent 1 Response:** I think that's very important. Personally, I have found that very helpful for me. When you are new at anything, you may not be good at everything that you are doing. There may be pieces of it that you are good at and pieces that you do, but you may not be the best at. When teachers come in and model, it shows you other ways that you might be able to get through to the children and give a good lesson. I think it's a great way for teachers to learn.
Question 6: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

Respondent 1 Response: My first comment is “it takes a village” and it’s not only in the neighborhoods, but it’s also in the schools. It helps anyone new to come in to feel what the atmosphere is in this school. It’s not every teacher for themselves, or every child for themselves. We’re a family. The teachers come together. They come together with the children. I know personally, since I’ve been here every student I’ve had, I’ve watched them and they know Ms. G is going to come and ask their teacher from their next grade and the next grade after that, “How are they doing?” And if they tell me they’re not doing well, [I ask,] “Well, why not?” Can I get in a little anecdotal story? I had a student last year in the second grade that never did their homework, never finished his assignments. I had to constantly push, push, push. He was nowhere near honor roll. He is on honor roll this year. When I heard that, I called the teacher and asked could I personally see him. I gave him the biggest hug, and I even bought him something nice, and I let him know how proud I was and that this is what I was trying to get him to do last year, but now he’s figured it out. So I think it’s good that the teachers follow the students in their future grades as long as they’re in that same school.

Question 7: What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

Respondent 1 Response: Each day, we all have one prep a day that we can come together with our coteacher and sit and plan lessons, or there may be certain lessons that we want to do specific things with our children and make sure that both grades are doing them together. We have data team meetings where we can sit and plan as far as our planning is concerned regarding any
subject. We have our coaches come if we need help to plan. I know sometimes I need [help] with my planning with my centers, and my coaches will come and help me plan.

*Question 8:* What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

*Respondent 1 Response:* With this school, I have found our voices are very important, and I really feel it’s because the leaders listen. The leaders know that we are in the classroom with the children. Six hours a day, 6½ hours, whatever it averages out to, and we’re with them every day. The leaders know that we know our students, so they listen to our opinions about it. The past leader of this school has been a good listener so the teachers have always had a voice in this school.

*Question 9:* How many years have you been in teaching?

*Respondent 1 Response:* Six years.

*Question 10:* How many years have you worked at this school?

*Respondent 1 Response:* Five years.
Teacher Interview 2

Question 1: What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

Respondent 2 Response: I would try to reach the child through interests that they have to gain their trust that what I’m doing is going to enable them to reach their goals. You might give them alternative projects to do or alternative activities that will gain their trust so, therefore, we can move on and those children can then become more of a member of the whole academic group.

Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

Respondent 2 Response: We are reaching students through a variety of curriculum and incorporating the different math, science, and language arts, and social studies, so you’re touching a variety of learning styles, and by using different materials and reaching their learning style, you can engage all the students. We also work together to develop thematic units.

Question 3: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

Respondent 2 Response: It is very important that everyone, whether they are the custodian right up through the principal, have a stake in what is going on. First of all, the children are told that we respect everybody, but also the entire staff is made to feel that they are responsible for these children, whether it be the lunchroom aide, the custodian, the special subject areas, the gym teacher, art teacher, music teacher. No one is put on a different level. The instructional assistant and the teacher are both looked upon as the teacher, and everyone knows what the theme is, what is being taught so they’re all working together integrating their feelings.

Question 4: How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?
Respondent 2 Response: It's very important to have a family atmosphere, that we're here to be for one another, we cannot be here as a single entity or an isolated person. You can't close your classroom. You need to work together. You need the intellectual support of one another to support your programs, your curriculum, and your career goals. You need the emotional development to understand the kids and to get through the personalities. You're there to support teachers, to welcome their new ideas, and to share where we have been, what we have done.

Question 5: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

Respondent 2 Response: I think that the college courses do not lend themselves to letting teachers, whether they are young or old, have enough experience in the classroom. Observing an experienced teacher give a lesson, to show how they present a skill, enables them to reflect and think about what they came to the school with and how they're given different ideas on how it could be done.

Question 6: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

Respondent 2 Response: I see energy throughout the building that people build on. When we were doing thematic teaching, you can see this strand going throughout the school. It shows that everybody is going towards the same target. When we come to a standstill, we reflect, and we think about how can we do this better. If you do it as an entire group, it only makes for a more positive, productive school climate for achieving students. You're working towards a common goal, and you know if it's an area that we're becoming weak in, let's look at it, let's brainstorm, let's think about how can we do this and what can we do to build from one grade to another.
Question 7: What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

Respondent 2 Response: We have common prep time together, but because we are the type of faculty that just cannot let go, we collaborate during lunch periods, and we will collaborate on our own time. We just make the time because we see a reason and we want to.

Question 8: What importance is the teacher's voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

Respondent 2 Response: The teacher is the heart of the classroom and knows the needs of what will get the content to come across. We were initially allowed to do a yearlong plan that had rich curriculum in it, and we would strategize how we would reach those goals. Now, mandates are being given to us, and we are more textbook driven, and the creativity is being taken away, and we are limited with the time that we must spend on each thing. So, rather than giving the children a broad, rich curriculum, they are limiting us and telling us how to teach and tying our hands from what we feel are better strategies. Initially, through our yearlong plans and rich curriculum, we reached high excellence. Right now, we're still striving for that. It's just harder to reach those goals because we're not being allowed to teach using our techniques the way we are comfortable with, techniques that we know are best practice, and [we're] using materials that we know will not give the children the good basic skills that they need to achieve and that reaching excellence is going to be tougher and tougher as we follow these other programs.

Question 9: How many years have you been in teaching?

Respondent 2 Response: I have been teaching about 23 years.

Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school?

Respondent 2 Response: This will be my 17th year.
Teacher Interview 3

Question 1: What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

Respondent 3 Response: I try to see what interests the student, and then I take it to their interest. Say if it's a cartoon character, I'll say oh, o.k., "Well, if this cartoon character did this, how do you think the cartoon character would reply," instead of putting in the, o.k., "Well, Jane did this, and John did this." How do you think it's going to stand out? I'll use what they know, who they know. I'll pull their characters and their interests into the lesson.

Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

Respondent 3 Response: We usually individualize for the children or use differentiation. We have centers where they go, and they try to understand what's going on with the lesson that was just taught to them. I really stress the student to help the [other] student because they know each other, and they understand on their level. Maybe since I'm giving it to them on my level and how I think they should understand what I'm saying, they don't get it, but if their classmate comes to them and says, "Oh, it's like this, well, the teacher means this," then they'll get it.

Question 3: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

Respondent 3 Response: Well, here, everyone within the building, we are all a team, and however we can contribute to helping the children understand anything and everything, we try to teach them. Everyone is a part of that. We have PLCs that we hold, "professional learning communities," where different teachers of different grades get together, and they discuss what they do and how they portray the information to the students so that helps us to get a better understanding and actually add to what we're doing to get the students to understand. We also
have grade-level meetings and data team meetings where the coaches and teachers come
together, and they discuss where the children are, and where we are striving to get them within
the different subject areas or what is a better way for them to understand this portion of the
lesson. Then everyone throws out ideas. We will get a coach to come in and teach a lesson within
the classroom. Maybe they'll understand it this way. I'm doing it this way, you're adding to it,
we'll come together, and they'll be able to understand. Like an input output situation I had. I
tried to explain to my students. They did not get it. I had the coach come in, and she had this
fabulous lesson. She had a machine that inputted the information, and this is what we wanted the
machine to do. The machine spit out the information, and that really got their attention and really
grabbed them, and they understood it.

*Question 4:* How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

*Respondent 3 Response:* My experience as a new teacher coming here well, everyone was, "Oh,
whenever you need me, you know let me know, knock on my door, there's no problem." When I
did not understand something, that teacher let me come into their classroom and view the lesson,
how they did it, and how I could I do it to help my children to understand what was going on.
That was great. I was . . . I felt very . . . what is the word, I cannot find the word, but I felt like,
"Oh you know, this is so nice, you know, I don't have the stress behind, oh what do I do now, oh
my goodness I don't feel like they're going to fire me because I don't know what I'm doing."
No, it's like, "Oh come, come, let me show you what's going on, let me help you to understand,
whenever you need me." That was exciting. That made me even more excited about teaching.

*Question 5:* Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set
of new teachers?
Respondent 3 Response: The people showing us what to do, people that have the experience working with children, do the modeling of the lesson. New teachers just coming in, they feel like they know, went to college and got the information. I could spit it out to the professor in a classroom, but when it comes to dealing with children, and how to bring them back, instead of just going on, I am learning to do what I am supposed to do. Putting it out there, teachers show you ways to encourage children, ways to make sure that the children understand. They teach you if children do not get it this way, well you can turn it around to make sure they understand it. It’s very helpful, I must say, very helpful. So if you are not sure of something, you are not sure how to attack it, the modeling really helps.

Question 6: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

Respondent 3 Response: Here in this building, we are all a team. Even though we may not have the same personal interests or experiences, we all come together and we bypass that. It’s not about us; it’s about getting the children to where they need to be. As a first-grade teacher, I watch the children go up the grades. I know I’m not their teacher any longer, but when I see them in the hallway and they’re doing something they’re not supposed to do, I’m not just going to let it go. I’m going to step in and say, “You know what you’re supposed to be doing; you know what your teachers’ rules are, how you should listen to them, what they’re telling you to do, you can’t just do what you want to do.” They say, “Yes, but you’re not my teacher.” I respond, “But it doesn’t matter that I’m not your teacher, I’m a teacher, and I know what you’re supposed to be doing, and you know what you’re supposed to be doing, so just do it.”

The teachers here all come together, and they work at helping one another to get to where we need to be. Instead of saying, “Oh no, I don’t want her stuff to be better than my things,” it’s
not like that. We all work together, and we try to make sure that if something is wrong with a lesson or situation, they approach the person and say, “That really doesn’t work, maybe you should try this.” I am very receptive to that approach, and teachers are the same as well with me. If I should see something that I think doesn’t quite fit, maybe I’ll mention it, and maybe they’ll say, “Oh well, it really doesn’t, maybe I should try it that way.” We are not competitive. We all work together. We’re like a family. Let’s come, let’s work together.

*Question 7:* What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

*Respondent 3 Response:* As a first-grade teacher, there’s another first-grade teacher, only two of us in this small school. When we come together, we think of things, what do your students need, my students need this, how can we set this lesson to grab everyone and not just those selected few you know are going to understand? Then we have the collaborative meetings. It helps us to come together again and collaborate with the coaches. Everyone needs help all the time, no one is perfect, no one knows what to do at every single moment, every single lesson. It’s not like that, that I know. Some people may think that they have that ability to do on their own. We have to come together, and sometimes you may have a lesson which you think is just great and it may be, but someone may not get it, then you are frustrated, you are wondering what to do and then you come along with that experienced teacher or ask for the coaches, and they will help you. We do things like that. Even the custodians will come in and say, “In Spanish, it means this.” Then you can jump off of that and think, if I say it this way, the Spanish-speaking students will get it.

*Question 8:* What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?
Respondent 3 Response: When I first came to this school, the teachers, they all said things that they thought were important for the children to know. We talk about how to bring the information, the knowledge, that the children need to grow up and succeed. Right now, there's a little struggle with the district, the teachers know the children, know who they are, know how they learn, know what to do to get them to the point that they need to be, but the district is pulling us away from that, it's different from when I first started here. It is all about the teacher knows the students and they know how to get the information across to them, but now you have to do it this way and it has to be done in this length of time, but that way is not always the correct way for the students.

Question 9: How many years have you been in teaching?

Respondent 3 Response: I have been teaching for 4 years. This is my fourth year. I started off in preschool, and then I came into first grade in the public school system.

Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school?

Respondent 3 Response: This is my 3rd year at this school.
Teacher Interview 4

**Question 1:** What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

**Respondent 4 Response:** In my class, I do partnering students with somebody who is usually on-task at all times. It helps them focus; they can work together side-by-side. The seat in the classroom usually needs to be moved closer to me. Sometimes I do one-on-one instruction if it's possible to help them focus, and sometimes just changing the actual activity to help them understand may help them stay focused.

**Question 2:** How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

**Respondent 4 Response:** Trying to bring it to their level as much as possible. We are bringing the task to self-incorporating their life in a situation so that they can understand it. We do differentiation, we do centers, a lot of hands-on if possible. I feel it [keeps] them engaged, also moving them from the desks to the carpet and teaching a lot of lessons from the carpet instead of at their desks keeps them engaged.

**Question 3:** How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

**Respondent 4 Response:** I think it is really the “bottom-up philosophy.” For example, Four Square Writing, we try to start from the kindergarten so that by the time the student gets to the higher grade, they are already familiar with it, and we just have to go a little bit more with it to master it. We all try to give the same kind of holistic test and standardized tests, so it keeps a pace. A lot of us see what the grade above us is requiring the student to master, and we teach towards that as well.

**Question 4:** How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?
Respondent 4 Response: Usually they get a mentor or, since we are a small school, it’s usually a team teacher, so we usually work together collaboratively. Everybody seems to be friendly, especially when it’s somebody who hasn’t taught here or [a] new teacher, we piggyback off each other and help them all the way through.

Question 5: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

Respondent 4 Response: Just like anything, watching something firsthand and seeing it is much easier. I am visual; I need to see it done. I know that I learned a lot from another teacher doing it in front of me so it’s really back to working together collaboratively and taking it from somebody who knows a little bit more.

Question 6: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

Respondent 4 Response: I think it is the same thing, you learn from each other; there is a lot of discussion in the teacher’s room, outside of the classroom, among grade levels. A lot of us talk to each other friendly. Watching, dealing with the experienced teachers, and discussions makes it move smoothly.

Question 7: What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

Respondent 4 Response: We have a weekly common prep; basically, it is the scheduled time that we can work with our partner and do all our planning. Data meetings are part of our planning. We look to see how our kids are doing and plan.

Question 8: What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?
Respondent 4 Response: It is extremely important; unfortunately, I do not think that we have enough voice. In our school, it is in a School Leadership Meeting, and if you are not on it, you do not really have any say. I think even once you are on it, it still becomes administration so you really do not have much input. I think that if there was more voice and more acceptance of what teachers have to say in making decisions for the entire school, I think things would go a little bit different, smoother. I do not think we have enough voice now, often we are just told what to do. It is our classroom, yet we have to do as we are told.

Question 9: How many years have you been in teaching?

Respondent 4 Response: Six.

Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school?

Respondent 4 Response: Six.
Teacher Interview 5

Question 1: What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

Respondent 5 Response: The teachers try to find strategies that would allow them to be not to always be in a large group. Try to move their seat, try to sit them closer to the teacher, try to sit them with students who will redirect them if need be.

Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

Respondent 5 Response: The staff would do large group instruction and based upon observation or other types of assessment, informal assessment, divide the children into groups to reteach and ensure that they are understanding or teach in a different way, different from the whole group way, more one-on-one. When children are put into the smaller groups, very often, some children can learn better from other children, and they learn better when the children speak their language as opposed to teacher language. A lot of times, other children can explain how they understand it so that clarifies it for some students. Other students definitely do need more one-on-one with the teacher, but many students do learn better if the whole group lesson they learned can demonstrate their understanding with other students.

Question 3: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcome in academic performance?

Respondent 5 Response: Because this is a small school, everyone on staff has a good understanding of everyone else's schedule and their workload. What this school has always stressed was to provide more than the prescribed amount of time to address basic learning, which would be the Language Arts and Math in the primary grades. In the primary grades, there needs to be more teacher-directed instruction. As they move towards more academics and higher up in
their grades, children can work more with small groups, more independently, and since we have longer blocks of time, prescribed children have more of an opportunity to learn and demonstrate their work. Therefore, I think that the class size has a lot to do with the success of this school. The fact that it is not a huge school, that teachers all know each other, we are all on the same page, and that we talk to each other has allowed us to be a successful school.

*Question 4*: How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

*Respondent 5 Response*: On grade level, the other grade-level teacher can be supportive of a new faculty member. Also at lunchtime, many times, if you can give that social component you can open up a discussion or ask questions and ask if anyone needs help with anything, but as far as a prescriptive support system, I do not really see that. I think it is more intrinsic to the individuals in the school to support the faculty.

*Question 5*: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

*Respondent 5 Response*: In order to do it, you have to see the thing done; it is the way that we teach our children, of course that is the way that teachers would have to learn how to be good teachers. Watching someone do the job, do the lesson, makes much more of an impact than just reading about it, or being lectured about it.

*Question 6*: How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

*Respondent 5 Response*: I think that if everyone is on the same page, we can observe each other's strengths and build upon those things. We all want the same outcome and everyone brings a different background to their classroom, but that is the beauty of teaching, everyone has
a different style and is allowed to be an individual. As long as the result is the same, the diversity and the staff is what makes the staff successful.

**Question 7:** What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

**Respondent 5 Response:** I have a common prep period every day with the other grade-level teacher and also at lunch time we'll talk, after school we'll talk, in the morning we'll talk, so we have a very close relationship. We want to make sure that we [are] on the right page, that we are not overwhelming the children with work because we are teaching two different subjects and the content. Because we want everyone to be successful, we work together. The only way that they are going to work well is if we work well together.

**Question 8:** What importance is the teacher's voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

**Respondent 5 Response:** Well, the teacher's voice is very important; however, it's not always heard. I think many times a teacher's voice is taken as complaining, in a negative way. When you are in the classroom every day, who better to have an impact on what goes on in the school than a classroom teacher? Sometimes, it seems if you make mention or suggest different things, it is taken as complaining.

**Question 9:** How many years have you been in teaching?

**Respondent 5 Response:** Eight years.

**Question 10:** How many years have you worked at this school?

**Respondent 5 Response:** Eight years.
Teacher Interview 6

Question 1: What strategies do teachers use when working with students who are experiencing difficulty in staying focused academically?

Respondent 6 Response: We use a variety of strategies in this school. First, we build a sense of family and community in the school that the students really feel safe and part of. We have clear expectations for student behaviors, rewards, and punishment. We use a carrot-and-stick approach. We work on students' self-esteem. When students feel better about themselves, their behavior usually follows. I think because of the structure of the school, small classes, K-5, uniforms, community involvement, field trips, I think the students really buy in that they're a part of something and not just a teacher-student relationship.

Question 2: How does the staff engage all students in understanding the content of instruction?

Respondent 6 Response: Once again, we have a variety of teaching methods. We use the traditional methods; then we break into groups, and we use centers. We use the model of cooperative learning, audio listening skills, and hands-on so once again we give a student many opportunities and many ways to experience learning through a variety of teaching styles.

Question 3: How does the structure of this school enable positive student outcomes in academic performance?

Respondent 6 Response: The structure of the school is an amazing thing to see because I see many schools in my outside position as county union president, and we are truly a family. From the lunch monitors to the custodians to the administrator, we all work with a common goal that all the kids can learn. We develop high expectations; there is a lot of belief that the teacher acting
as a professional can teach within broad parameters. However, district-wide, those parameters now seem to be tightening up.

Question 4: How does the faculty support new teachers assigned to the school?

Respondent 6 Response: I think it is the climate and the culture; you feel it when you walk in. The school is bright, the bulletin boards from every classroom jump out at you, and there is a nurturing. We have common preps, common planning, and Summer Institute before the school starts where we all come up with the broad ideas on how we want the school to run. I think new teachers immediately (even though they are new and they are coming into a different environment) feel that there is a support and camaraderie, a collegiality here. Many times, teaching is an isolated profession when you in the classroom, but outside of that, we are very collegial.

Question 5: Why do you think modeling lessons by experienced staff contributes to the skill set of new teachers?

Respondent 6 Response: I would take it a step further and say by all staff. I’ve been teaching for 25 years, and we all teach in a style that we are comfortable with. For the past few years, I was an academic support teacher. I went around to many classrooms and worked with groups of children or individually. I would watch a teaching style, and sometimes my initial reaction was one of doubt because the style was different from mine. As I watched and saw how a teacher was comfortable in her style, I began to see student learning and though I am here 26 years, I then learned from the variety of styles I observed. I have since returned to the classroom, and I now incorporate some of that in my style. Therefore, of course, we think the way we teach is best, but when you see consistent ongoing modeling, you see the benefits of different styles. I think modeling is valuable, and teachers should have more of that experience as professional
development opportunities. To see colleagues in the school and other buildings teach and to observe how they teach and how they set up the classroom and their lessons.

**Question 6:** How does collective efficacy help teachers in this school to become successful educators?

**Respondent 6 Response:** Again, we are not told of the vision. We develop the vision, so as we develop it, we take ownership of it. Collectively, even though we may not agree with everything, consensus says, we all discuss it, “I have some problems here, or I like this,” but together we rather know where we want to go, and, how we are going to get there and then the support from administrator, coaches, or facilitators helps. That’s collective efficacy. We work together, we talk, and we have many opportunities to share as a staff.

**Question 7:** What opportunities do you have for collaboration in instructional planning and lesson implementation?

**Respondent 6 Response:** We have common prep periods with my other fifth-grade teacher. We have in-service days where we talk about what the vision of the school is, how we’re going to get there and scheduling is very progressive in that they know, our administrators and our coaches realize the importance of talking together and seeing each other and having the time to meld the different curriculums.

**Question 8:** What importance is the teacher’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

**Respondent 6 Response:** [The] teacher’s voice, I believe, should be one of the most respected and sought-after component of making the school. It’s not always true. Our voice here was always taken into consideration, and as you know, the school was out of district for a while because of building space, so we really developed our own philosophy outside of the cookie-
cookie umbrella of the district's philosophy. Through that and by experimenting, listening, failing, and succeeding, the school became a oasis of an urban ed. school. That is because of the value put on teacher input. Now that we are back in the district, we are having a cookie-cutter approach. We talk about student learning styles, but we never talk about or give any credence to teacher's teaching style. They want everybody to teach the same way, to follow the same pacing, not to have any leeway to remediate for the students; instead, this is how you will do it. I believe it is going to add to a diminishing of the accomplishments of this school if it continues to happen. Too often, administrators who are removed from understanding school dynamics make decisions without any actual reality of what is going on in the classroom.

*Question 9:* How many years have you been in teaching?

*Respondent 6 Response:* Twenty-six years.

*Question 10:* How many years have you worked at this school?

*Respondent 6 Response:* Eight years.
Principal Interview

Question 1: How was the principal of this school selected?

Response: I was selected to be the principal of this school by having to go through an interview process with a committee.

Question 2: What policies, procedures, and/or strategies were utilized to ensure the following:

All teachers received adequate support and technical assistance.

All students were adequately engaged in instructional activities and that student performance was assessed on a regular basis.

Response: Initially, when the school was established there were no policies, procedures, strategies, or budget put in place. The initial thrust was strictly managerial, to set up the school, assign classrooms, distribute furniture, develop school and teacher schedules, and gather school and student supplies. Policies did not exist at any level for the district to set up a new school. The district had just become a state takeover district and was undergoing many changes. The newly appointed superintendent decided to open a school in a neighboring town in order to accommodate some of the overflow from the three district schools and a special education population that was underserved. This was in August of 1992, prior to a September opening of a new school. Materials came from sending schools. Other school districts donated furniture, and finally the state supplied a copy machine and teachers’ desks. During the first 2 years, the most important strategies I remember completing were an analysis of standardized test scores. At that time, we were using the California Achievement Tests, and the results indicated that, on average,
the students sent to the school by my fellow administrators scored in the 25th percentile in Math and Language Arts. I knew then we were in trouble. This led to scheduling an uninterrupted block of time for Language Arts and Mathematics. I created a schedule to allow teachers to meet for common planning time. The state or the district did not yet mandate this, but I felt it was important to the program we were developing. A self-assessment of the school was completed using Edmonds’ indicators (1979). This was used to compare to a district-wide analysis of our school. I then began to outline an action plan that included academic goals, teacher leadership ideas, staff development, student activities, and goals regarding curriculum and instruction. I met with the director of funded programs and other newly appointed state staff regarding the needs of the schools. At that point, our action plan became our improvement plan. We focused on goals and activities that led to student support, academic engagement, and assessment. These were addressed in the plan, and everyone in the school followed the plan.

With regard to the adequate support and technical assistance, for the first few years, the district was involved in restructuring and the state-mandated assessments. Many people in the city felt that this school was a temporary solution to an overcrowding situation and that the school would not survive. Since we were not located within the city limits, we were left to form the school on our own, and everyone worked together to help each other. Each year we waited to hear if we were going to be in existence for the upcoming September. We continued to survive and get better at our practices each year. The following are some activities that were in place through our school planning process. We decided to focus on thematic instruction and began to develop themes using the frameworks of the district curriculum.

The school community developed a professional development plan on its own while making use of the district’s planned activities geared toward the new state assessments. Both the
teachers and myself determined that literacy was the key to our students' success, and most of the activities we planned centered on Language Arts and literacy. A phonics component was added to the Reading instruction in the primary classes, and later, as our analysis of the standardized test scores continued, it was determined that the basal reading program offered by the district was inadequate to the needs of our students. After careful research, the staff selected the Open Court reading program as a supplement to the district program, and eventually the entire program was infused as the primary tool for literacy instruction at all grade levels in this school. Our scores began to climb steadily during this time. Teachers were trained in the use of the program that required them to introduce vocabulary beyond that of the basal reader and to teach critical thinking skills such as inference and problem solving in its core instruction.

In 2006, the district mandated we return to the use of a basal reader. The Open Court program was not aligned with the district benchmarks and assessments that were developed using the new reading series purchased centrally and implemented in all school locations. If the district had developed curriculum benchmarks, we might have been able to align our program to those, but updated curriculum in Reading and Language Arts did not exist. The principal and teachers of our school had no say in the choice of the district program even though consistent test scores, outstanding student writing, and the school's appointment to Star status by the State Education Department now evidenced the success we were experiencing.

Staff development was key to our success. We continued to develop themes using curriculum mapping and thematic instruction as well as studying the research on learning styles; these were added into the components of planning our academic programming. The school faculty again developed a cohesive school-wide plan and began to provide cross-curricular instruction throughout the themes that had been developed year for year. We budgeted for and
met every August for a school-wide staff Summer Institute. This was 3 days of intense planning of curriculum and instruction to be executed during the upcoming school year. Mapping and timelines were created, and a school-wide calendar of events was planned. When school opened in September, everyone was on the same page with regard to what our goals were. It was then left to the teachers to make decisions as to how they would execute them to a successful end.

The district initiatives at this time were focused on raising test scores and supporting efforts for schools to meet first state benchmarks and then with meeting the NCLB requirements in each school location. When teachers received staff development offered by the district, they returned to the school and trained other teachers during the common planning block. This built our capacity for instruction and increased the knowledge base of all of the classroom teachers. They piloted the ideas in their classrooms, made adjustments, and learned much along the way. Outside staff development was budgeted for so teachers chose appropriate programs that would support meeting school-wide instructional goals. The information from these workshops was systematically shared among the appropriate staff members.

I assigned new staff to more experienced staff for mentoring and support. For example, I had two first-grade teachers, one experienced and one new; this model proved very successful as the experienced teacher gave of his or her expertise, set the tone for high standards, and explained by example the culture and norms of the school. The new teacher offered creativity, energy, and a wealth of best practices and knowledge of the research offered at the college level. I also utilized the staff in the areas of their strengths as a teacher leader to support school-wide activities and for specific training and mentoring.

A partnership was arranged by the second state district superintendent with the Center for Educational Innovation in Manhattan, who provided us with quality staff development and
leadership mentoring for myself. We were given [the] opportunity to visit other successful urban schools that were reformed within their partnership networks and were outside of our district. We quickly saw what was possible, took those ideas, and further developed our own style of success. Specialists such as Music, Art, World Language, and Physical Education teachers were included in training and school visits. They worked their curriculum within the school themes to support the strength of our programs. Critical friends groups supported by the Coalition of Essential Schools, our whole school reform model, allowed teachers to assess their teaching techniques through the reading and discussion of professional articles and journals. This best practice was not yet mandated by the district. We were again taken through a rigorous self-assessment; this provided teachers with the ability to reflect on their own values and beliefs and how they brought their instruction to the students. The Coalition of Essential Schools principles gave us an overview of what a school in a democratic society should aspire to be.

To assure that all students were adequately engaged in instructional activities, I made my presence be known throughout the building on a daily basis. I would randomly stop in to see what was happening in classrooms and ask teachers if they needed my help with anything, which could include meeting with parents with them to work out potential learning or behavior issues. I met with students who appeared to be disengaged and explained that this behavior was not acceptable at our school. My belief in being present throughout the school sent the message of high expectations to both the staff and the students. I had a vision for this school, a picture of success in my mind’s eye. I worked with the staff to develop a mission statement, but it was the vision that we shared that kept us going. Often, paperwork that was sent to complete from the district remained on my desk for weekends or evening work because instruction was a consistent priority. I came to school on days off to catch up and clean off my desk.
Grade-level meetings continued weekly and gave the staff a forum to discuss issues that emanated from ongoing data analysis. I attended as many of these sessions as possible to gauge if there was a need to regroup our strategies or to offer assistance. I must admit that after a while teachers would run these meetings and I would become a silent observer in the process so I could see how they would offer solutions to move forward successfully. Minimal interventions became necessary as they became comfortable with their abilities to successfully plan and teach their students. They worked out ideas and activities that would support the weakness indicated by disaggregated data results. There were staff members in the beginning of our evolution who did not agree with where the school was headed. They had other opportunities to join other schools, and then, through the hiring practices set forth by whole school reform mandates, we were trained and interviewed our own teacher replacements. We looked for qualities in these teachers that would best support our needs in keeping students on track with their teaching and learning.

A blackboard configuration was established across grade levels in each classroom to provide a quick snapshot of the instruction taking place for the day. It also served to keep students focused on their goals. The Responsive Classroom allowed teachers to develop class rules with the students that were useful and effective. The teachers set up their classrooms using the suggested research designs and reported to me that this helped with classroom management. I observed that it created a culture of caring and respect for each other. Centers were labeled in classrooms, and differentiated instruction allowed students to remediate skills, practice what they had learned, or expand their knowledge on topics that were part of the themes presented in instruction. All staff was utilized to provide tutoring to students who needed help academically, and schedules were adjusted to provide sessions for students based on need. Use of limited staff was maximized. An inclusion program provided special needs students with in-classroom
instruction. Students remained with their peers and received the support needed for success based on their individual education plans.

School-wide academic essential questions were posed and responded to based on the developmental abilities of each grade level. This was done three times a year, and it kept the entire school focused on the themes developed for the year. The work was displayed on a bulletin board outside my office to share with everyone.

Student performance was assessed using authentic assessments, portfolios, work sampling, and traditional tests. We also used rubrics, and I developed a grading policy that outlined required assessments based on the NJCCC standards. This assured that all learning styles were represented every marking period and gave students an opportunity to succeed. I monitored this every marking period and met with teachers until they were sure that their assessments reflected the instruction in their daily lessons and routines. Midyear and end-of-the-year assessments were required by the school plan and were used to drive instruction.

Question 3: How were teachers selected to work in this school?

Response: At the inception of the school, an assistant superintendent handled all transfers and new hires in the school. Originally, as the school was prepared to be opened, the principals of the three sending schools chose those teachers and students who would attend the school. Some examples of the staff that was sent were a terminally ill teacher and another was a strong union activist. Another teacher assigned to the school was not ill at the time of her arrival but died within the 1st year of the school. There were also new hires to the district that were assigned to the school randomly as needed. Both the principal and the school secretary were new to the position.
**Question 4:** How does the staff engage all students in instruction and assessment at each grade level?

**Response:** I touched upon instruction and assessment in responding to question 2; however, it is worth repeating that the curriculum mapping and planning drove instruction and the assessments were varied to meet student needs. The primary grades piloted authentic assessment techniques, and at one point, teachers from our school mentored staff in other schools regarding this topic. Teacher observations were also used as an assessment tool to assure understanding of where students were in their skill set. This was carefully documented and used during conferences with parents as well as to confirm results of data analysis.

**Question 5:** What factors enabled collective efficacy to develop in this school environment?

**Response:** I think collective efficacy was developed through our school-wide mission, vision, and focus. Our grade-level themes created the environment for teachers to bond. High expectations and the belief that we could make a difference in our children’s lives also contributed to collective efficacy. Shared decision-making, an open door policy for me, the trust I placed in the teachers’ ability, created a mutual respect between us, and we all took pride in our work. I maintain that my ability to listen and adjust schedules as needed created a window of opportunity for teachable moments to occur. We were open to every opportunity that came our way and made it work for us. Our school plans were cohesive and attached to our budget; we adhered to the plan and did not deviate in that aspect. We celebrated often as a staff and as a school community. Teachers were encouraged to take risks and to view failures and mistakes as part of the learning process.
Parents came to expect the fabulous shows of teaching and learning presented two or three times a year. These performances were always standing room only, and they were based on our themes and school-wide sharing of knowledge. I will admit that our traditional home school council did not take off and flourish on a monthly basis, but I could always count on parents to participate in school events, or to help us with field day activities, or for any other purpose that made our school better for their children. I consistently gave the message that we were all stakeholders in the process of educating our children.

*Question 6:* What supports were put in place to assure the academic success of this school could be maintained?

*Response:* The staff that was left in place upon my retirement have the ability to maintain and continue the academic success of the school if the new administration so chose. By new administration, I mean the principal and the district staff. The district finds itself again in 2008 in major transition, and decisions that have been made are not grounded in effective schools research. They are not in the best interests of this school. The new principal must have the ability to balance the needs of the school and serve the requirements of the district. The fifth state district superintendent will be named by the State Department of Education and the governor to begin the 2008-2009 school year. Legislation and regulations are being created to change the way schools are run statewide. The principal will need to be grounded in a true understanding of what makes this school unique and understand how all these extenuating factors can affect the operation of a successful school. I know this will not be an easy task. She must look to her staff to continue to do what they know will bring positive results in student achievement.
**Question 7:** What importance is the principal’s voice in the decision-making structure of the school?

**Response:** Very important. In the end, the principal is the one being held accountable. However, the principal must help the staff understand that as a school everyone is accountable for student achievement. The principal should have a vision of what the school should be a mental picture to return to daily. She must be able to convey it to the staff and bring them aboard, assuring them that they can make this a reality. The school cannot exist without the principal, and she cannot work in isolation of the staff. Success will not happen if there is not a cohesive plan and staff.

**Question 8:** What role did the central office play in the success of this school as it relates to successful student achievement?

**Response:** Very little. During the time that this school was developing into a strong cohesive entity and the staff was becoming a school community, the district was undergoing major transitions, much as they are now again for the fifth time since state takeover. An important milestone for us was when the second state takeover superintendent acknowledged our success and declared us a theme school. The partnership with the Center for Educational Innovation was a catalyst to bring us to another level of teaching and learning as we were given some budget money for more sophisticated staff development often provided by retired principals or university professors. The third superintendent listened to my presentation of our school’s vision and allowed us to continue our practices as long as success continued to be the result of our work.

The district training was consistent and gave us a clear understanding of state expectations in terms of the new assessments. For 2 years, as part of the whole school reform
movement, all schools had a budget that allowed for upgrading of equipment in classrooms that included technology and materials. Teachers began experimenting with integrating this in instruction, but training at the district level was on a first-come, first-serve limited basis. We took advantage of all of this and hired the appropriate staff to run our newly created library and media center. Therefore, I would have to say that the district offered some support in our endeavors, but our mission and vision [were] already set and very different from other schools. This school is successful because it happened at the grassroots level stated by the staff in the school, not by any directive sent from the district.

Question 9: How many years have you been in administration? Can you offer some thoughts on school leadership?

Response: I was a high school vice principal for 2 years and an elementary vice principal for 6 years before becoming the principal of this school for 16 years. These prior administrative experiences serving two different principals did not provide me with a model to emulate when I was charged to begin this school. I knew that I needed to do something different; so I turned to the research on effective schools and to the staff to create the school. We learned from each other, celebrated our successes, and accepted our failures as lessons well learned. I read every summer regarding research and best practices that is how we formed the vision. It helped me to lead my staff in the direction of success, and it is important to understand that you cannot do it alone. After a while, the staff caught on to my practices and would tease me in June to find out what I planned to read each summer! I maintain that your success is your staff’s success and your community’s success.
Question 10: How many years have you worked at this school?

Can you offer thoughts on its success?

Response: This school by all appearances should have been a failing school. It was established quickly without planning, and I often wonder whether this was the intent. Seasoned district staff, new staff, and students were put together without much thought to the culture that could have been created. Many senior staff members were angry that they were transferred to this school and were taken away from their friends and their schools. Later on, several of them went back to in district schools because they could not buy into what was happening in this school—teaching and learning.

There was very little in supplies, and those that were delivered from the sending schools were for the most part old. The copy paper was dry and damaged the copy machine, and the student penmanship paper was yellow and crumbled around the edges. There was no budget. Parents were angry that their children were being transported to an out-of-town facility when they lived next door to their neighborhood school. Years later, they did not want their children to go to these schools. Eight special education classes were sent staffed mostly by new teachers.

For months, there was only one social worker to support this population. In its first 2 years, two staff members and two students died. In 7 years, the school moved three times. The school community was disappointed repeatedly when efforts to build a new school did not occur. It still does not have an adequate facility.

While all of this apparent chaos was occurring, first I and then a few trusted staff members set up the strategies discussed above that made this school successful. The strategies were based on current research on effective schools, analyzing data, and meeting the specific needs of the students and the staff. I understood as the principal, the location of the school was
just a matter of geography, and I saw the advantages of the situation early on. I believed that learning could occur anywhere, and although the buildings we were sent to never met my expectations, teaching and learning could and did take place.

I was the principal of this school since its inception in 1992 for 16 years. I retired last year, and the school in 2008 is in its 17th year of existence. The success of the school had to do with long hours, a vision, and high expectations, planning, trusting the staff, and shared decision-making. Having knowledge and believing you cannot sleep on your laurels, creating a plan to improve every year, and doing something about it every day. To conclude, the history of this school's unique inception cannot and should not be replicated. It was an experience for all who participated to reflect on and be proud of the work we did. I often wonder at times how we had the nerve to survive the odds, to get this school to its present state of excellence. However, the result of what was created came from hard work, planning, and implementing a vision. This model can be used to develop enabling school structures in any struggling school. It can support the development of personal and collective teaching efficacy and ensure a culture that promotes successful student achievement.