

EXPLORATION OF NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY TEACHERS'  
EFFICACY BASED ON COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS OF SELF-IDENTIFIED  
PRACTICE DILEMMAS

Ritsa Mallous

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of  
Education (Early Childhood, Intervention, and Literacy).

Chapel Hill  
2014

Approved by:

Harriet Able

Lynne Vernon-Feagans

Jocelyn Glazier

Xue L. Rong

Deborah Eaker-Rich

© 2014  
Ritsa Mallous  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## **ABSTRACT**

Ritsa Mallous: Exploration of New Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers' Efficacy Based on Collaborative Conversations of Self-Identified Practice Dilemmas  
(Under the direction of Harriet Able)

The transition from being a preservice teacher education student to a beginning teacher is a difficult shift centering on conflicts between new teacher beliefs and values and the reality of teaching. It is during this vital career stage, when new teachers are constructing their sense of professional self and beliefs about teaching, that they are most vulnerable and prone to leave the teaching profession.

This study investigated new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas from a new teacher support program conducted at a Southeastern University. This issue is a high priority for teacher preparation programs, school districts and new teachers, given that many new teachers feel they lack the confidence and competence to be effective teachers, and our educational system is at a critically low level of retaining these teachers. Through the use of new teacher support groups modeled after a Critical Friends Group protocol, teacher efficacy is explored in early childhood and elementary teachers using Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Rotter's Locus of Control as frameworks.

Results indicated that several factors affect beginning early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy. These include school culture, school policies and procedures, parents, students and classroom management, teacher preparation, teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession. As part of teacher efficacy problem-solving in collaborative conversations,

participants offered empathy, ideas and strategies to resolve dilemmas, and helpful advice, which appeared to result in teacher empowerment. Furthermore, participants' updates revealed that many 'felt better' and more confident about their daily practice dilemmas, which seemingly led to a higher sense of efficacy.

Implications suggest teacher preparation programs could play an important role in fostering the resiliency and persistence that help novice teachers ensure high levels of teacher efficacy and success during their initial years of teaching. Teacher preparation programs should include courses focusing on Bandura's four sources of efficacy complete with practice teaching in challenging settings, so as to prepare teachers for the reality of teaching in diverse areas. Additionally, learning communities and support groups like the program seminars can likely be an avenue to increase efficacy by engaging a network of like-minded teachers in collaborative conversations of challenges they face as beginning teachers. Exploring new teacher efficacy has the potential to inform teacher preparation programs and induction efforts on necessary support systems for new early childhood and elementary teachers to improve their ability, confidence, practice, and student learning, and ultimately to reduce teacher attrition.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With immense gratitude to my adviser, mentor, friend, and grad school mother, of course I owe it all to you ☺ To my committee members, whose support and encouragement is greatly appreciated, thank you for helping me become a better teacher, researcher, and scholar. To Calvary, I deeply thank you for your willingness, skills, friendship and encouragement throughout the last stages. To my family, none of this would be possible without you. To my dearest friends who helped me through the good times and more challenging times, you know who you are. To Ty, love you more. To Muse, thanks for continuously providing the best music to keep me going.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	6
Frameworks of Social Learning and Efficacy .....	7
Rotter's Locus of Control .....	7
Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory .....	8
Bandura's Dimensions of Efficacy .....	9
Teacher Efficacy .....	11
Models and Strategies to Enhance Teacher Efficacy .....	14
Learning Communities and Support Groups .....	14
Teaching Context .....	20
Examining Preservice Teacher Efficacy .....	22
Mastery and Vicarious Experiences in Course Content Areas and Field Experiences .....	22
Vicarious Experiences, Verbal Persuasion, and Physiological States in Teaching Contexts .....	27
Examining Inservice Teacher Efficacy .....	29
Mastery and Vicarious Experiences, and Verbal Persuasion in Content Areas and Constructing Internal/External Factors .....	29
Mastery and Vicarious Experiences in Contexts and Programs .....	30

Summary .....	33
CHAPTER 3: METHOD .....	36
Research Design.....	37
Role of the Researcher .....	38
Participants .....	40
Recruitment.....	40
Participant Demographics .....	41
Benefits/Risks to Participants .....	42
Procedures .....	43
Program Seminars as Modified Critical Friends Groups .....	43
Seminar Logistics.....	44
Whole Group Discussion .....	45
Data Analysis .....	46
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....	50
Efficacy Defined .....	50
Theoretical Orientations Guiding Data Analysis .....	51
Teacher Self-Identified Efficacy Dilemmas.....	52
Surviving the First Years .....	53
School Culture.....	54
School Atmosphere.....	54

Administration .....	55
Colleagues .....	57
School Policies and Procedures .....	59
Curricula and the “Ideal” in Teaching .....	59
Teacher Expectations and Accountability .....	61
Parents .....	64
Students and Classroom Management .....	66
Teacher Preparation .....	69
Teacher Burnout and Staying in the Teaching Profession .....	71
Problem-Solving Strategies and Related Updates .....	75
School Culture .....	76
School Atmosphere .....	76
Administration .....	76
Colleagues .....	77
School Policies and Procedures .....	79
Curricula and the “Ideal” in Teaching .....	79
Teacher Expectations and Accountability .....	61
Parents .....	81
Students and Classroom Management .....	82
Teacher Preparation .....	84

Teacher Burnout and Staying in the Teaching Profession .....	84
Collaborative Conversations as a Strategy for Promoting Teacher Efficacy .....	85
Summary .....	87
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	89
Decreased Teacher Efficacy Highlighted in Teacher Practice Dilemmas .....	90
Teacher Characteristics and Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Efficacy .....	91
Inter-Relatedness of Personal and General Teaching Efficacy .....	92
Rotter’s Internal versus External Locus of Control .....	93
Improving Teacher Efficacy through Problem-Solving.....	94
Conclusions and Future Prospects.....	98
Implications .....	99
Practice.....	99
Policy .....	100
Teacher Preparation Programs .....	100
Teacher Induction Programs .....	102
Current Political Context .....	103
Limitations .....	104
Future Research.....	105
APPENDIX A:.....	108
APPENDIX B: .....	114

APPENDIX C: .....	117
APPENDIX D: .....	118
APPENDIX E: .....	124
APPENDIX F: .....	125
APPENDIX G: .....	126
REFERENCES .....	128

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A critical issue in education today is how to recruit, retain, develop, and support a high quality teaching force prepared for today's diverse schools. Research reports that teacher attrition is a major issue for the U.S. education system (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) reported that across the nation 9.3 percent of public school teachers leave before they complete their first year in the classroom. Additionally, approximately one-third of all beginning teachers leave the profession within their first three years of teaching (NCTAF, 2003), increasing to around 50 percent after their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; NCTAF, 2003). Unfortunately, turnover among the nation's teachers rank significantly higher than other professions, emphasized further by the alarming number of teachers leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to investigate new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy using a new model of teacher support. *New/beginning early childhood and elementary teachers* refer to teachers in grades PreK-5, with one to five years of experience. Bandura (1997) defines perceived *self-efficacy* as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3) or a personal belief that one is able to do what it takes (e.g., plan and act) to accomplish a task at a particular level of quality. For new teachers, these beliefs are crucial as they are directly related to confidence levels and competence in behaviors and teaching abilities. This affects teaching practices, student outcomes, and teacher retention. New teacher efficacy is a significant topic because the

transition from being a preservice teacher education student to a beginning teacher is a difficult shift centering on conflicts between new teacher beliefs and values and the reality of teaching. It is during this vital career stage, when new teachers are constructing their sense of professional self and beliefs about teaching, that they are most vulnerable and prone to leave the teaching profession.

Thus, beginning teacher support is a high priority for school districts and preservice teacher education programs alike. According to a series of national studies, lack of collegial and administrative support, student misbehavior and disinterest, insufficient salary, lack of teacher autonomy, lack of professional development opportunities, and inadequate allocation of time all contribute to the departure of teachers (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004; NCES, 2003). Although many school districts have reputedly high levels of teacher attrition, research and wisdom of practice suggest a wide variety of solutions to the problem, including induction programs, teacher collaboration initiatives, increased sharing of instructional and curricular control with teachers, rewards and recognition programs, support for teachers seeking high-quality professional development, efficient management of resources, maintenance of attractive and well-organized school environments, and “career ladders” recognizing and rewarding excellence (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O’Ferrall, 2007). Moreover, a study done by Perrachione, Rosser, and Petersen (2008) identified intrinsic and extrinsic variables that influenced teacher job satisfaction and retention. It was found that three intrinsic motivators—personal teaching efficacy, working with students, and job satisfaction—were perceived to significantly influence satisfaction and retention, while two extrinsic motivators—low salary and role overload—did not have any effect. The authors concluded that teachers who experienced satisfaction at their school and/or satisfaction with the profession of teaching were more likely to

remain. Additionally, university schools of education must collaborate with local school districts and welcome them as equal partners in the education of preservice teachers and for continued support of inservice teachers. According to Mihans (2008) effective practices of teacher support include administrative and collegial support, creating and supporting mentoring and induction programs, positive working conditions, professional development in tune with teacher needs, adequate compensation and resources, and autonomy.

Beginning teachers have also recommended changes in teacher education programs at higher education institutions. According to Marshall & Marshall (2003), those changes have included increasing the amount of time education students spend in field-based classroom activities while also starting students in field-based activities earlier than their teacher preparation program. In addition, beginning teachers stressed the importance of courses and experiences focused on classroom management and working with diverse students and their families (Marshall & Marshall, 2003).

New teachers need extensive support and learning on the job in order to develop and enhance their efficacy. Research documents that new teachers struggle in their first few years in the classroom with both environmental and people related issues (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). These issues often include classroom management, differentiated teaching and assessment strategies to accommodate for diverse student learning styles and abilities, student motivation, and collaboration with colleagues and parents (Veenman, 1984). New teachers' behaviors and teacher efficacy are strongly influenced and affected by these variables. Too many times teachers begin their first teaching jobs filled with excitement, confidence and knowledge, only to have this excitement and confidence shattered when faced with a lack of support and the multiple obstacles of teaching. Studies have shown many new

teachers feel they were unprepared to become effective teachers (Hermanowicz, 1966; Benz, Bradley, Alderman & Flowers, 1992; Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001), and this lack of preparation can have significant effects on teacher efficacy, including low confidence and uncertainty in teacher abilities.

Historically, teaching has not had the kind of structured initiation or induction process characteristic of many professional occupations. Although teaching involves intensive interactions with youngsters, ironically the work of teachers is largely done in isolation from colleagues (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). This is especially consequential for new teachers, who are often left on their own to succeed or fail, and in which initiation is akin to a “sink or swim” experience (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Considering the significance of retaining new teachers and improving teacher efficacy, there has been a growth of support, guidance, and orientation programs—collectively known as induction—for beginning teachers during the transition into their first teaching jobs (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The literature investigating teacher induction programs appears to support that such programs help retain new teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Although the overall goal of these support programs is to improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers, with the ultimate aim of improving the growth and learning of students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), other objectives of these programs include teacher socialization, adjustment, development, and assessment (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Thus, linked to these goals and objectives, teacher induction programs have the potential to improve teacher efficacy.

This study focuses on new early childhood and elementary teachers’ efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas from a new teacher support program conducted at a Southeastern University. Teacher efficacy is a high priority for teacher

preparation programs, school districts and new teachers, given that many new teachers feel they lack the confidence and competence to be effective teachers, and the U.S. education system is at a critically low level of retaining teachers. Through the use of new teacher support groups modeled after a Critical Friends Group (CFG) protocol, teacher efficacy is explored in early childhood and elementary teachers. Exploring new teacher efficacy has the potential to inform teacher preparation programs and induction efforts on necessary support systems for new early childhood and elementary teachers to improve their ability, confidence, practice, and student learning, and ultimately to reduce teacher attrition.

The purpose of this study is to explore new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas. Specific research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are beginning early childhood and elementary teachers' self-identified dilemmas related to their efficacy?
2. How does problem-solving in teachers' collaborative conversations reflect teachers' efficacy?

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Exploring new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy is critical for improving teachers' confidence levels and practice, student outcomes, and teacher retention. Teachers' perceptions of their own efficacy have great impact on the accomplishment of tasks and related goals (Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, & Ellett, 2008). Bandura's social cognitive theory posits that we are motivated to perform an action if we believe the action will have a favorable result (outcome expectation) and we are confident we can perform that action successfully (self-efficacy expectation). Outcome expectancy is a judgment of the likely consequence such actions will produce. For example, new teachers more likely will implement a reading intervention for their struggling readers if they (a) are confident they are able to implement the reading intervention successfully (self-efficacy expectation), and (b) believe the intervention will result in improved reading skills and higher reading scores (outcome expectation). Moreover, reciprocal causation is evident as implementing the reading intervention results in improved reading skills, higher reading scores, and improved efficacy in new teachers. These higher reading scores and improved efficacy, in turn, result in increased implementation of the intervention.

This review provides background information on early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy. First, frameworks related to teacher efficacy are discussed, such as Bandura's Social Cognitive theory and Rotter's concept of Locus of Control. These frameworks are emphasized since they both guide the present research study with their focus on efficacy. Under Bandura's theory, his dimensions of efficacy are explained and how they relate to teacher

efficacy. Second, models and strategies that enhance teacher efficacy are discussed. This includes related literature on teaching contexts, support groups and learning communities given the importance of these models for new teachers to enhance their efficacy and the current study's methodology. Third, relevant literature on teacher efficacy concerning preservice teachers and inservice teachers at the beginning teacher stage is thoroughly discussed.

Using the terminology and definitions of Cantrell et al. (2003) and Dellinger et al. (2008), which are derived from Bandura's theory, the researcher uses the terms *teacher efficacy*, *personal teaching efficacy*, and *general teaching efficacy* throughout her paper. Teacher efficacy is the umbrella term that encompasses both personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a teacher's individual beliefs in his or her capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation. This includes perceived confidence in his or her abilities as a teacher. General teaching efficacy is the belief that student learning can or cannot be influenced by effective teaching, or the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance.

### **Frameworks of Social Learning and Efficacy**

Although there are various theories and frameworks of social learning, the researcher chose to focus on Bandura's Social Cognitive theory and Rotter's Locus of Control since they focus specifically on efficacy and can be easily applied to teacher efficacy. Much of the current literature on personal and general teaching efficacy uses Bandura's theory as a framework; however Rotter's Locus of Control has also been emphasized in studies of efficacy.

**Rotter's Locus of Control.** Locus of control (Rotter, 1966) refers to the extent to which people believe they have power over events in their lives. A person with an internal locus of

control believes he or she can influence events and their outcomes, and is therefore guided by his or her personal decisions and efforts. Someone with an external locus of control believes his or her behavior is guided by external circumstances, such as fate or luck, and therefore blames outside forces. Rotter's view was such that behavior was largely guided by "reinforcements" (rewards and punishments) and through these contingencies individuals come to hold beliefs about what causes their actions. These beliefs, in turn, guide the kinds of attitudes and behaviors people assume. Thus, teachers' beliefs about the challenges they face in their schools and classrooms can reflect either an internal or external locus of control. For example, teachers who feel they are responsible for and can control disruptive behavior in the classroom have an internal locus of control (teacher controls), whereas teachers who feel that parents are to blame for bad behavior and therefore have no control over this have an external locus of control (teacher cannot control).

**Bandura's Social Cognitive theory.** Social cognitive theory revolves around the process of knowledge acquisition or learning directly correlated to the observation of models, or the behaviors of others. Effective modeling teaches general rules and strategies for dealing with different situations. Social cognitive theory explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns, while also providing the basis for intervention strategies (Bandura, 1997). According to social cognitive theory, the learner acquires knowledge as his or her environment converges with personal characteristics and personal experience. In other words, personal factors and the environment influence behaviors, while the environment is impacted by behaviors and personal factors, and personal factors are impacted by behaviors and the environment (Dellinger et al., 2008). For example, with newly inducted teachers, teacher

efficacy beliefs influence teaching behaviors and practice, which, in turn, impact student learning. Additionally, student learning impacts teacher efficacy and teacher practice.

Effective functioning, however, requires more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills and a level of competence (Bandura, 1986, 1993). The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competence are inadequate predictors of future behavior and action (Pajares, 1996). Bandura believed that the development of a strong sense of efficacy was required to put the acquired skills to use (Evans, 1989). Knowledge and action is mediated by a person's belief in their abilities to put the skills to use (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Therefore, inherent to social cognitive theory is the notion of self-efficacy, in which people measure their own value by their competence, agency, and ability to promote change (Bandura, 2001). Learning is a function of the extent to which individuals are able to reflect upon and internalize their own successes and failures. Self-efficacy is achieved when the learner identifies his or her ability to perform a specific task in a specific situation. Self-efficacy beliefs are a dynamic personal factor that Bandura (1997) states are critical to human agency or our ability to act.

***Bandura's dimensions of efficacy.*** Bandura (1997) identified two dimensions of efficacy: self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. Self-efficacy is a future-oriented belief about the level of competence a person expects to display in a given situation. When applied to teaching, this self-efficacy factor is generally known as personal teaching efficacy (Cantrell, Young, & Moore, 2003). Teachers with a high level of personal teaching efficacy have confidence that they have adequate training or experience to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning. Such teachers will expend great effort to reach goals, will persist longer in the face of adversity, and rebound from temporary setbacks to a greater degree than teachers with low personal teaching efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Outcome expectancy is the notion that an intention to undertake some action is based on the expected success of that action. When applied to teaching, this factor is most often called general teaching efficacy, and it extends beyond an individual teacher's view of his or her own capabilities to a view of teachers in general (Cantrell et al., 2003). Teachers with low general teaching efficacy may believe a teacher really cannot do much about a student's motivation and performance because of the influence of other factors, such as home environment. When both personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy are applied to teaching, it can be said that "...teachers who believe student learning can be influenced by effective teaching (general teaching efficacy) and who also have confidence in their own teaching abilities (personal teaching efficacy) should persist longer, provide a greater academic focus in the classroom, and exhibit different types of feedback than teachers who have lower expectations concerning their ability to influence student learning" (Gibson & Dembo, 1984, p. 570).

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy and outcome expectations are shaped by four sources of information: (a) Mastery experiences, (b) Vicarious experiences, (c) Verbal persuasion, and (d) Physiological and affective states. The first provides the greatest opportunity to develop efficacy because performance accomplishment derives from personal practical experience. Teachers' efficacy is influenced by mastery experiences which include the act of teaching itself. Vicarious experience involves a person observing another's performance and gaining confidence from this in a manner of craft apprenticeship. This can be seen in teaching internships with the relationships between preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers. Additionally, the interactions and relationships between newly inducted teachers and experienced mentor teachers have the potential to positively impact new teachers' efficacy. These interactions can also influence teacher confidence either positively or negatively through

verbal persuasion. Emotional arousal, or the stress of performance, relays emotive information which can affect efficacy. In teaching, it can be said that both personal and general teaching efficacy affect and are affected by personal teaching experiences, internships, observations of and collaborations with other teachers, and the state of teachers' emotions while teaching (e.g., energized, stressed). Bandura (1997) states the evidence across studies is consistent in showing that perceived self-efficacy contributes significantly to the level of motivation teachers have and their performance accomplishments.

**Teacher efficacy.** Efficacy expectations focus on beliefs of whether behaviors can be performed. Many inquiries into the efficacy beliefs of teachers have focused on their perceived confidence to be instructionally effective (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), manage effective learning environments (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990) and influence student learning (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In the context of schools, personal teaching efficacy can be defined as a teacher's individual beliefs in their capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation (Dellinger et al., 2008). Efficacy beliefs are task and situation specific; thus, efficacy beliefs are not believed to be a trait of an individual (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1999), but rather an active and learned system of beliefs held in context. As a result, efficacy beliefs vary in strength, level and generality (Dellinger et al., 2008). Strength refers to the intensity of a person's belief in their ability to do a certain task. Efficacy beliefs may vary by level or by the perceived degree of difficulty of tasks. Generality is the degree to which efficacy beliefs about one task may generalize across a range of similar activities in the same or other domains of functioning. For example, new teachers may strongly believe they are fully prepared to work with English as a Second Language (ESL) learners since their courses and experiences in their teacher preparation programs gave them the knowledge and skills to work with these

learners. However, once they begin working with ESL learners, they suddenly do not feel they are fully prepared to teach this population, possibly because they lack needed support systems or they do not feel they received adequate education. This can result in a lack of confidence in their abilities as teachers, or low teacher efficacy.

Self-efficacy is expressed in everyday terms when we talk about feeling confident to do something (Bleicher, 2007). Thus, teachers who have high personal teaching efficacy expectations will express they are confident in their own abilities to teach. These teachers believe they are competent enough to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning. Such teachers will expend great effort to reach goals, will persist longer in the face of adversity, and rebound from temporary setbacks to a greater degree than teachers with low personal teaching efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, regardless of their confidence in their own abilities, there is not always an equal confidence in how well students will achieve in their learning. Thus, Bandura's second construct of outcome expectation is critical to understanding the whole act of teaching. Outcome expectations are based on whether behaviors will result in certain outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) states that, "the outcomes people anticipate depend largely on their judgments of how well they will be able to perform in given situations" (pp. 21–22). When applied to teaching, outcome expectation is known as general teaching efficacy. Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, and Zellman (1997) define general teaching efficacy as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance" (p. 4). Student performance is an outcome of teaching behaviors, and learning behaviors of students. Even so, general teaching efficacy by itself overlooks the unique role played by teachers' beliefs in their abilities to perform the wide variety of teaching tasks required in various teaching and learning contexts (Bleicher, 2007). General teaching efficacy is focused

on effective teaching and how student performance is affected; a possible outcome of successful teaching behaviors and student characteristics and behaviors. Therefore, general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy work together to produce the outcome of a teacher's actions.

Teacher efficacy can be enhanced through success and reflection about thinking and behavior, or reduced through repeated failures (Fry, 2009). Teacher efficacy has been used in educational research as a means of examining teacher success. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) identified teacher efficacy as a variable that influences teachers' persistence and instructional behavior, student achievement, and teachers' beliefs that they can help the most unmotivated student learn. They indicated that teacher efficacy consists of three measurable factors: (a) efficacy in student engagement, (b) instructional strategies, and (c) classroom management. Yost (2006) explained that "resilient teachers can think deeply, problem-solve, and feel confident in their ability to meet the needs of their students. This leads to high levels of efficacy, which in turn leads to greater persistence and risk-taking" (p. 74). According to Chang (2009), studies during the last 40 years (e.g., Hermanowicz, 1966; Benz, Bradley, Alderman, & Flowers, 1992; Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001) indicated teachers have frequently revealed their teacher training did not prepare them to be effective teachers. This lack of training could have generated beginning teachers with low levels of efficacy who lacked confidence in their capabilities and were uncertain about their future teaching tasks. As such, teacher preparation programs play an important role in fostering the resiliency and persistence that help novice teachers ensure high levels of efficacy and success during their initial years of teaching. The following research provides information regarding teaching models and strategies

that can enhance teacher efficacy. In addition, information regarding how teaching contexts can affect teacher efficacy is also included.

### **Models and Strategies to Enhance Teacher Efficacy**

Too often novice teachers feel unprepared to teach in the diverse school settings readily found in the U.S. today. They begin their teaching careers lacking the confidence and support required to become effective teachers. Teacher preparation and induction programs are vital in promoting high teacher efficacy in order for teachers to feel competent and confident in their abilities, and have the necessary support systems to stay in the teaching profession. Universities and school districts must collaborate to provide teacher preparation programs that produce knowledgeable, motivated, and confident teachers and effective induction programs for new teachers to include learning communities and support groups for professional development. These learning communities and support groups provide a safe community where teachers can share and reflect on their teaching to improve practice and heighten teacher efficacy.

**Learning communities and support groups.** Recently there has been an increase in professional development that includes *learning communities and support groups*. These refer to collaborative systems or networks of people sharing a common interest for the purposes of support and reflection for improved practice. In teaching, professional learning communities are strong when teachers demonstrate shared norms and values, collaboration, and reflective dialogue. Learning communities and support groups can likely be an avenue to increase personal and general teaching efficacy by engaging in what Florio-Ruane and Clark (1993) describe as “authentic conversation.” This face-to-face conversation is conducted in an atmosphere of safety, trust and care between people who share a common ground and to whom it is clear that everyone in the conversation from the least to the most experienced has something to offer and

something to learn (Florio-Ruane & Clark, 1993). Authentic conversation is not defensive or slanted by fear of negative consequences regarding what was said. These conversations are satisfying both as ends in themselves and as means to professional development by, for example, problem-solving. The potential exists for these sorts of collaborations to positively impact teachers' efficacy.

According to the Alabama State Department of Education (2010), the Continuum of Communication includes five levels: (a) monologue, (b) polite conversation, (c) discussion, (d) collaborative conversations, and (e) dialogue. Monologue can be described as one-way communication with one person dominating, where the person rarely yields to questions or comments and does not invite discussion (ASDE, 2010). Polite conversation can be described as two-way communication, where people are polite and courteous to one another, and conversations are usually surface rather than authentic. Discussion involves breaking down ideas as participants tend to listen, in discussion, with their own ideas in mind (ASDE, 2010).

The last two levels—collaborative conversation and dialogue—require skillful conversation that includes effort, intention, and focus without judgment or lack of listening. Both collaborative conversations and dialogue are productive; however there is a slight distinction between the two (ASDE, 2010). Dialogue, as described by Bohm (1996), is not about a particular topic, and there is no leader or agenda. The purpose of dialogue is the exchange of ideas. All of the skills of collaborative conversation are used in dialogue; it requires intention, listening, and the setting aside of assumptions and judgments. However, collaborative conversations have more of a purpose than dialogue. Collaborative conversation is two-way communication which is recognized by the presence of norms that are intentionally used by all participants (ASDE, 2010). Normative patterns of conversation include respect for diverse

points of view, equity of response opportunities, and listening to understand others (ASDE, 2010). As participants listen to understand others they refrain from judgment and ask questions to clarify their own understanding. The skills of collaborative conversations include establishing and practicing norms, listening effectively and attentively, questioning for reflection, clarity, and inquiry, and identifying and uncovering personal and others' assumptions (ASDE, 2010).

The role of collaborative conversation to meet the goals of increased support and professional development has been studied in several contexts. For example, in her article, Rust (1998) investigated small groups that were formed voluntarily by teachers and teacher educators to examine issues of professional development associated with preservice and inservice teacher education. These groups were developed by teachers and researchers who were participants in the Sustainable Teacher Learning and Research Network Project, a network of ten distinct Professional Development and Inquiry Groups in the United States, Canada, and Israel. The groups met regularly to pose and pursue teaching problems and issues and to provide intellectual and moral support to one another. Fundamental to the project was the idea that teachers, by actively working together to frame and solve education-related problems, could create their own powerful opportunities for learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Fullan, 1991; Lieberman, 1995) by using conversation rather than a transmission-oriented approach to professional education. As young teachers have been tracked through their beginning years of their careers, Rust and Orland (2001) have suggested that authentic conversation is essential in the continuing professional development and growth of teachers. These conversations have the potential to improve teacher efficacy.

A Critical Friends Group model (National School Reform Faculty [NSRF], 2000) is another example of a learning community that supports teacher efficacy. Designed to build

collaboration with colleagues through the use of conversation, this arrangement purports to develop supportive environments for teachers while they develop and improve their teaching strategies, and thus, enhance their efficacy. A CFG is a professional learning community consisting of a small group of educators who come together and are committed to improving their practice through collaborative learning. Critical Friends Groups are designed to create a professional learning community, make teaching practice explicit and public by “talking about teaching,” help people involved in schools to work collaboratively in reflective communities (Bambino, 2002), and establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry (Silva, 2002). Furthermore, CFGs provide a context for teachers to build relationships with peers, so thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning can help educators improve their teaching and learning. Moreover, it has been shown that participating in a Critical Friends Group is more satisfying when compared to other kinds of professional development for several reasons: it is focused on teachers’ own teaching and their own students’ learning, it takes place in a small group of supportive and trusted similar colleagues, and participants have control over their own professional learning needs (NSRF, 2000).

All new teacher support program seminars referred to in this study were based on Critical Friends Groups, which provided the forum for the newly inducted teachers in this study to engage in collaborative conversations of their practice dilemmas. The program seminars brought together new teacher graduates to discuss the kinds of challenges they face in the classroom, and to problem-solve issues of concern in a CFG format. The benefits of a CFG include improving collaboration through participation and increased reflection of one’s profession (Franzak, 2002). It was felt that collaborative conversations in these types of groups would engage participants as part of a community of learners where everyone was valued and respected, and all dilemmas

were seen as equally important. Additionally, these conversations and groups could yield critical information as participants shared dilemmas and became more comfortable with each other—listening to each other without judgment and partaking in problem-solving strategies of dilemmas. Also, these types of groups would be an avenue for sustained professional development throughout the years of the project. As part of collaborative conversations and Critical Friends Groups, focusing on practice dilemmas was important for several reasons. First, it gave participants a chance to have a voice and know that they are not alone when it came to dilemmas in teaching; hence, a possible avenue to improving confidence and teacher efficacy. Also, it gave participants a way to come together as a community of teachers to support each other and problem-solve dilemmas. Furthermore, it gave participants a chance to reflect on themselves as educators and, thus, improve upon their teaching practices, which could improve student outcomes. Lastly, it was a chance to review and improve the University's teacher education programs—mainly to determine what preservice teachers need in terms of courses and experiences to allow them to be confident and successful educators.

Similar to collaborative conversations used in Critical Friends Groups, Stanulis, Fallona, and Pearson (2002) explored the kinds of challenges novice teachers face in sustaining a classroom environment and how they work through these challenges within the context of a teacher support group. The ways in which experienced teacher educators could help novice teachers make the transition to teacher was examined using the theoretical framework of communities of practice (Maynard, 2000). Findings showed that each participant struggled with three predominant issues during their first year of teaching: (a) induction into the isolation of teaching, (b) interest in NOT abandoning university teacher preparation, and (c) need to learn from mentoring. The authors concluded beginning teachers must be provided with greater levels

of mentoring support from peers in schools and from university teacher educators.

Comparatively, a study by Thies-Sprinthall and Gerler (1990) on the impact of support groups on beginning teachers showed that these teachers experienced an increase in the amount and depth of reflection on personal and best practices, a shift from egocentric to student-centered concerns, and that norms of collaboration were established beyond the support groups themselves.

Hines, Murphy, Pezone, Singer, and Stacki (2003) proposed a model for university involvement in teacher education which focused on supporting new teachers through the development of independent New Teacher Networks (NTN), or learning communities. These NTN included beginning teachers and university faculty from School of Education programs at Hofstra University. The key components of this learning community included multi-layered mentoring, collaborative teams and partnerships, and professional involvement. In a supportive atmosphere, network members developed their “knowledge-of-practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) as they examined their classrooms and shared views about controversial issues affecting local communities and education. Hines et al. (2003) concluded that the model recognized the significance of teacher learning, the creation of teacher knowledge, and the situational and social nature of cognition. Additionally, the model acknowledged the importance of discourse communities in shaping learning experiences that were powerful enough to transform a teacher’s classroom practice. Furthermore, members reported that involvement supported their ability to teach in troubled minority schools and helped them to overcome their inexperience and sense of isolation.

Also using the framework of learning communities, Flores, Hernandez, Garcia, and Trevino (2011) explored the effectiveness of an induction program in Texas using a case study approach. The Teacher Academy Induction Learning Community (TAILC) assisted participants

through a continuum of learning to teach which began with teacher preparation, progressed through induction, and continued with professional development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Within these communities of practice, induction mentors guided teacher candidates through their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in the acquisition of skills and the internalization of knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as they transitioned to the teaching profession. It was concluded that effective teacher induction support assists new teachers through their zones of proximal development in becoming members of a community of practice. This, in turn, provides opportunities for learning, reflection, and transformation that will ultimately prepare teachers who are culturally competent, possess strong teacher efficacy, and demonstrate sociocultural consciousness (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007). Meyer (2002) further confirmed that novice teachers could benefit from belonging to a learning community in his study of the STEP+ learning community in California. STEP+ served as a solution to the isolation participants reported feeling in their schools. By participating, teachers felt a sense of community, they had a voice, and they were supported as they engaged in constructive conversations. This included tackling dilemmas of practice, discussing classroom teaching, and reflecting on experiences. These learning communities have the potential to improve teacher efficacy as they engage teachers in a supportive environment where teachers feel comfortable and that they are heard. These communities can also assist new teachers in their transitions to the reality of teaching in diverse contexts.

**Teaching context.** Teachers need to be prepared for the various contexts they can encounter—whether they are middle-class suburban schools or inner-city schools. Many early studies of school contexts and teacher efficacy describe the difficulties and uncertainties that teachers and student teachers experience (Lantz, 1964; Fuller, 1969). However, these studies

were typically conducted in middle-class suburban environments (Pilard, 1992). Even so, the ordeals of the student teacher and teachers in these types of environments are typically seen in other contexts, such as inner-city schools. Ordeals that teachers encounter in these multiple contexts include developing self-confidence, being overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy and circumstances, and interpersonal conflicts. In a study done by Rushton (2000) of student teachers interning in inner-city schools, it was found that the results were mostly consistent with previous studies carried out in middle-class suburban schools. However, there were also important differences. For instance, although early research found that the experience of student teaching in schools led to anxiety, self-doubt, and personal change, there was also a degree of purpose and determination not described in previous research. Rushton's study disconfirmed the earlier finding (Lantz, 1964) that interns need to be placed in nonthreatening classrooms to foster the development of their efficacy. He found that the intensity of practice teaching in inner-city schools actually accelerated the development of teacher efficacy.

Haberman (1995) argued that teachers should practice teaching in the most challenging conditions, not the most ideal conditions, so that novice teachers will then be prepared to teach in both the suburbs and the inner-city. Teachers in inner-city schools can be faced with many cultural problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence, so it is important for teachers to understand the economic, social, and political factors that maintain these problems (Kozol, 1992). Hence, teacher preparation programs should include a strong multicultural program complete with practice teaching in diverse settings, so as to determine how those diverse settings affect the efficacy beliefs of student teachers.

Teacher efficacy is essential to understand at both the preservice and inservice levels given the need to prepare, support, and retain high quality teachers that display the confidence

and abilities to successfully teach in today's schools. The focus of the current study is to examine teacher efficacy as it pertains to new early childhood and elementary teachers. The following studies portray a synthesis of early childhood and elementary efficacy using Bandura's four sources of information that shape efficacy.

### **Examining Preservice Teacher Efficacy**

The literature on preservice teacher efficacy can provide valuable information on teacher preparation programs, and preservice teachers' confidence and competence in their own teaching abilities. This has the potential to ensure that all preservice teachers have enough confidence in their teacher training and experiences to feel prepared to teach in their own classrooms. The following sections depict studies in preservice early childhood and elementary teacher efficacy as it relates to course content areas, field experiences, and teaching contexts using Bandura's four modes.

#### **Mastery and vicarious experiences in course content areas and field experiences.**

Bleicher (2007) aimed to examine changes in personal science teaching self-efficacy (PSTE), outcome expectancy (STOE), and science conceptual understanding in preservice teachers after participation in an innovative science methods course. Seventy preservice elementary teachers participated in this study. The course focused on supporting conceptual understanding in the area of earth science by immersing preservice teachers in engaging hands- and minds-on activities. Changes in preservice teachers' science conceptual understandings and teacher efficacy were measured by a series of science tests and the Enochs and Riggs (1990) Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (STEBI-B) before and after participation in the study. Bleicher (2007) found that PSTE, STOE, and science conceptual understanding increased significantly during participation in the course due to the hands- and minds-on activities. The

author concluded that novice learners need extensive guidance with understanding and employing core science concepts, and the relationship between science learning confidence and science teaching confidence needs to be studied further. Furthermore, the author believed that science content knowledge and personal teaching efficacy should be highlighted in preservice teacher education (Bleicher, 2007). Also looking at personal science teaching efficacy, Gunning and Mensah (2010) examined the personal teaching efficacy of one preservice elementary school teacher during and after her participation in Science in Childhood Education—a 16-week, elementary preservice science methods course. During the course, student teachers were engaged in discussions that challenged their incoming conceptions of science teaching, and presented with activities and materials to help them develop new knowledge and attitudes about science and science teaching. Moreover, students developed their own learning and personal teaching efficacy through their prior and current experiences, done within a sociocultural context. The study suggested that the types of experiences offered within the course, through course assignments and the classroom environment, were valuable for preservice elementary teacher's learning to teach science and for increasing their personal teaching efficacy. Implications included teacher education experiences for preservice elementary science teachers that include elements of Bandura's (1997) four modes, constructed through course assignments within a mentoring and nurturing environment. Cantrell et al. (2003), in their study of preservice elementary science teachers, agreed that teacher education courses in particular need to focus on Bandura's four strategies for increasing efficacy. They suggested teacher preparation programs need to: (a) Provide early field experiences for preservice teachers; (b) Survey preservice teachers about their high school science experiences and offer opportunities for preservice teachers to assist with extra-curricular science experiences in local school districts; (c) Provide

many opportunities for mastery experiences in teaching science; and (d) Develop a community of learners within methods classes which provides a safe climate for risk-taking and ample opportunities for vicarious experience, positive physiological and emotional arousal, and social persuasion.

Bursal (2009) investigated Turkish preservice elementary teachers' personal mathematics teaching efficacy (PMTE) and personal science teaching efficacy (PSTE) beliefs at the end of their teacher education program. The sample consisted of 127 Turkish preservice elementary teachers from a central-Anatolian Turkish university. Measurement instruments included the STEBI-B and the Mathematics Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (MTEBI-B). Results showed that a majority of the participants believed they were well prepared to teach both elementary mathematics and science, but their PSTE scores were significantly lower than their PMTE scores. Turkish female preservice elementary teachers were found to have slightly higher PMTE and PSTE scores than their male peers. Additionally, participants with mathematics/science high school majors were found to have significantly higher PMTE and PSTE scores than those with other high school majors. Furthermore, Newton, Evans, Leonard, and Eastburn (2012), in their study which examined the relationship between mathematics content knowledge and teacher efficacy of preservice teachers during an elementary mathematics methods course, showed that a positive moderate relationship between content knowledge and personal teaching efficacy was found. No relationship was found between content knowledge and outcome expectancy. The authors suggested that preservice teachers with different levels of content knowledge may attend to different sources of information when making efficacy judgments about teaching. These findings are consistent with Cantrell et al. (2003); however the former authors extend their findings from science to mathematics.

Haverback and Parault (2011) investigated the differential impact of two field experiences, tutoring (mastery) and observing (vicarious), on preservice teachers' personal reading teaching efficacy and content knowledge. The participants were 86 university students randomly assigned to each group. All of the participants were enrolled in a semester long language development and reading acquisition course. Participants completed an adapted reading version of The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). In addition, scores on students' in-class final exams were used as an assessment of students' reading content knowledge, and participant interviews were conducted to assess the impact the tutoring or observing field experiences had on any changes that were reported in their scores. Results showed that both groups reported growth in personal reading teaching efficacy and content knowledge, and mean score differences showed the observers changed more in their reading efficacy than the tutors. Moreover, Haverback and Parault (2008) conducted a review that explored the research on field experiences and tutoring as well as the role these different experiences may play in preservice teacher efficacy and knowledge of teaching reading. Overall, researchers found that field experiences have varying effects on efficacy; however, tutoring field experiences in particular have been found to have a positive impact on preservice teachers' abilities to teach a particular content (e.g., reading).

Goker (2006) tested whether student teachers trained using a peer coaching training program would demonstrate greater improvement on measures of identified instructional skills (e.g., using examples and asking questions) and personal teaching efficacy, than those just receiving traditional supervisor visits. Two groups of student teachers (32 in total) from the English Language Teaching Department of the European University of Lefke, North Cyprus were compared in regard to their (a) personal teaching efficacy, and (b) development of

instructional skills. In the peer coaching experimental group: (a) students received immediate feedback related to their teaching from persons in authority and from a peer and (b) post-conferences were always based on direct observation of instruction. Data included video- and audio-taped lessons and conferences, observations, and surveys. Results showed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental condition on seven variables measured. Teachers found peer coaching was effective in a way where student teachers reported a sense of freedom to ask questions and express their own opinions, and an increase in effectiveness of instructional skills and self-confidence due to consistent feedback. Peer coaching provided student teachers with more time to negotiate strategies than traditional supervision, and promoted autonomy and self-directed learning, which helped these teachers feel less anxious and more confident when interacting with peers during discussions. The findings of this study suggested that peer coaching may play a crucial role in improving the teaching performance of these trainees, and can be a vehicle to develop personal teaching efficacy. The author concurred with previous research that found experiential activities, such as teaching practica or other mastery experiences, seem to have a greater impact on preservice teacher efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990).

These studies indicate there are positive relationships between content and teaching knowledge, and teacher efficacy. Thus, there is a need for teacher education programs to focus on Bandura's (1997) four constructs of self-efficacy, mainly mastery and vicarious experiences, in all course content areas, and to provide courses that emphasize content and teaching knowledge. Furthermore, field experiences offered in conjunction with methods courses are valuable for preservice early childhood and elementary teachers' learning to teach and to increase their efficacy. Mastery and vicarious experiences in particular, such as teaching

internships, seem to have a greater impact on preservice teacher efficacy. Considering additional factors that influence preservice teacher efficacy, the following section describes studies that emphasize teaching contexts and how this relates to teacher efficacy.

**Vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states in teaching contexts.** Rushton (2000), in his qualitative study, described the resolution of five middle-class student teachers' conflict and growth toward efficacy during their year interning in an inner-city school. Interns specializing in urban/multicultural elementary education student taught for a full academic year in a Master's degree program at the University of Tennessee. This program was specifically designed to help student teachers understand the socioeconomic, cultural, and political issues that face those who work in inner cities. Analysis of interviews, written reflections, and group discussions revealed a sense of culture shock felt by interns upon entering the inner-city schools. Interview data highlighted a series of conflicts each participant experienced. These included concerns of getting along with their collaborating teachers and their students and coping with doubts about their own abilities and values. However, once they moved past the shock of their initial experiences, the participants were able to view their new situations and culture from a perspective that was both accepting of the environment and, ultimately, empowering of self. This began with the recognition that both their personal and academic backgrounds had left them unprepared for the reality of inner-city schools, and went on as they came to accept the contrast between reality and their preconceptions. Over time, as the interns adjusted to the cultural differences and grew to better able cope with them, they reached a state of personal teaching efficacy. Thus, personal teaching efficacy emerged across several experiences, and growth in personal teaching efficacy began as the interns attempted to manage problems and take risks as their confidence increased (Rushton, 2000).

In their study, Knoblauck and Hoy (2008) investigated student teachers' efficacy beliefs, collective teacher efficacy beliefs, and perceived cooperating teachers' efficacy beliefs in three different school settings. Collective teacher efficacy had been defined as "the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students" (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). In terms of cooperating teachers, they provided teacher efficacy information for the student teacher in the form of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion. The student teacher beliefs were examined with the focus on context, primarily the school setting (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban), to determine whether setting played a role in the development of the student teachers' efficacy beliefs. The research participants included 102 student teachers, and teachers' sense of efficacy was measured using the TSES, Collective Efficacy Scale, and the Perceived Cooperating Teachers' Efficacy Scale. Results showed that all three setting groups exhibited significant increases in student teachers' efficacy following student teaching. This was based on survey data collected four times throughout the 16-week student teaching period. Additionally, urban student teachers exhibited significantly lower perceived collective efficacy. Moreover, perceived cooperating teachers' efficacy was predictive of and positively related to the student teachers' post-TSES scores.

The previous studies reveal that there is a reciprocal causation between teacher efficacy and teaching context. Still, additional studies need to be conducted to explore these various teaching contexts. Much of the literature on preservice teacher efficacy reports that preservice teachers, for the most part, have high levels of efficacy upon finishing their teacher preparation programs. However, their confidence levels in themselves and their teaching abilities to positively affect student performance drop when placed in their own classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to look at preservice teachers and their beliefs in their teacher preparation programs to

readily prepare them for teaching. Also, this can inform new teachers as to if and in what ways their efficacy beliefs change as they transition to their first teaching jobs.

### **Examining Inservice Teacher Efficacy**

Examining inservice teachers' efficacy has the potential to ensure that all beginning teachers have the confidence and support systems needed to be effective teachers and to remain in the teaching profession. The following sections describe studies in beginning early childhood and elementary teacher efficacy as it relates to content areas, and teaching contexts and programs using Bandura's four sources of information that shape efficacy.

**Mastery and vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion in content areas and constructing internal/external factors.** Chang (2009) sought to explore the developmental process of and possible changes in beginning elementary mathematics teachers' efficacy. Participants were six beginning elementary mathematics teachers purposefully selected from Taichung, Taiwan using a multiple-case study method. Data was collected through interviews, recordings, observations, and reflection notes. Based on the data analysis, a five-gradation developmental model and its characteristics of elementary beginning mathematics teacher efficacy was developed and proposed. Themes regarding teachers' efficacy development included: consequences of instructional decision making (regarding the goals teachers set, efforts they made, and persistence while facing learning difficulties), teaching behaviors and performances, and physiological and emotional reactions. This study verified that the construct of internal (e.g. teachers' knowledge of mathematics education) and external factors (e.g. support from others) played a significant role in contributing to continuous efficacy development. Though all participants attained generally positive changes, they showed differentiated developmental processes across gradations, and similarities within gradations, under the

influence of both internal and external factors. Also looking at factors that could affect teacher efficacy, Cheung (2008) compared 725 Hong Kong and 575 Shanghai primary school inservice teachers on their teacher efficacy. After administering the Chinese versions of the TSES, the Shanghai teachers reported significantly higher efficacy than did the Hong Kong teachers. Follow-up questionnaires were then administered to the Shanghai inservice teachers to determine what factors contributed to their high teacher efficacy. Results of the questionnaire showed that the three most commonly cited factors for the contribution of teacher efficacy in the Shanghai teachers were: (a) respect and confidence placed in them by students and parents, (b) the training they received from universities, and (c) the experience they gained from daily teaching practice.

**Mastery and vicarious experiences in contexts and programs.** Fry (2009), in her article, reported the results of a case study about elementary school teachers' induction experiences. She sought to answer the question, "What makes novice teachers feel successful and want to remain in the profession?" Bandura's (1977) construct of self-efficacy beliefs was used as a lens to examine how personal characteristics and professional experiences either contributed to new elementary teachers' success, increased sense of personal teaching efficacy, and desire to remain in the profession, or contributed to their desire to leave teaching. Four beginning teachers participated in this study. Interviews, emails, teacher journals, and classroom observations were used as part of data collection. Analysis showed that four major themes emerged: (a) successful classroom communities, (b) a student-centered approach, (c) overcoming obstacles, and (d) lifelong learners who value effective teacher education. Findings indicated only two participants remained in the teaching profession after two years, and these two participants were able to enhance their efficacy by essentially creating their own induction support, despite teaching in schools that did not provide formal induction programs. Fry (2009)

concluded that teacher educators and K-12 personnel responsible for induction need to consistently and effectively provide research-based support to novice teachers, rather than leaving to find it on their own. Looking at a critical component of induction, Yost (2002) sought to understand how mentoring as a professional development tool can have a direct effect on teacher efficacy. Yost (2002) studied a mentor program at a small Midwestern university in which mentors and mentees were enrolled in mentoring classes in their graduate programs. Mentor participants in the study were four veteran elementary educators with teaching experience ranging from eight to 17 years. The mentees were novice teachers in their first year of teaching. The mentors were released full time from their teaching duties for the school year, and the new teachers took over the full responsibilities of teaching in the mentors' classrooms. Data collection included interviews, documents, and observations. Findings showed the mentors became more aware of their teaching and of the responsibilities they had to their students, and how this encouraged personal learning and growth. Additionally, mentors commented that simply being chosen to serve as mentors provided them with a new professional definition as it affirmed their competence as teachers. Yost (2002) concluded that the mentorship program empowered the mentors, helping them to grow in confidence and in their willingness to better their district. In a study of another significant support system, Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, and Miels (2012) examined how instructional support to teachers of preschool children with disabilities and challenging behaviors affected three teachers' classroom practices. Five preschool special education teachers in North Carolina participated, however three were included in the study. Participation in the study involved: (a) answering questions related to classroom behavior management practices, (b) attending training on behavior management strategies for young children, (c) actively implementing at least two strategies presented during the training,

and (d) regularly interacting with members of their supportive online learning community for four weeks. Interviews and interactions from an online learning community were used to disclose whether the participants had implemented effective intervention strategies in their classrooms following the training. Findings showed the teachers felt more competent in managing challenging behaviors after the online interaction with their colleagues, and the teachers' online interactions were a highly effective way to impact teacher efficacy. Therefore, special education preschool programs should consider providing more opportunities for the teachers to build their own learning communities to interact and support one another.

Guo, Justice, Sawyer, and Tompkins (2011) examined how teacher (teaching experience, perceptions of teacher collaboration and teacher influence) and classroom (children's engagement) characteristics predicted personal teaching efficacy for 48 preschool teachers in the U.S. Measures included questionnaires of teachers' sense of personal teaching efficacy and perceptions of school community. In addition, a systematic observation was conducted in each classroom to assess the quality of teacher-child interactions, including the level of children's engagement. Results showed a significant interaction effect between teachers' perceptions of collaboration and children's engagement in predicting teachers' reported personal teaching efficacy. Specifically, a higher level of children's engagement was associated with a higher level of personal teaching efficacy when teachers worked in preschools with high levels of staff collaboration. Teacher experience and influence in decision-making were not related to personal teaching efficacy. The authors concluded that as teacher efficacy continues to be a potent construct in studies of teachers' instructional practices, examining the context variables associated with teacher efficacy will improve understanding of this construct and its influence on teaching and children's learning process.

The results from these previous studies indicate that further studies are required in teacher efficacy in specific content areas for inservice teachers. However, these studies also reveal how critical induction programs are for novice teachers. When induction programs consistently and effectively provide support systems for new teachers, these support systems can contribute to new early childhood and elementary teachers' success, empowerment, increased sense of teacher efficacy, and desire to remain in the profession. Learning communities, support groups, and mentoring programs are just a few examples of support systems that can have a positive impact on teacher efficacy. Additionally, Guo et al. (2011) believe that a better understanding of factors that influence teacher efficacy may be crucial to ensuring the quality of teachers. Moreover, identifying attributes of teachers and classrooms which are linked to teacher efficacy will provide valuable information in efforts to develop tailored and innovative approaches to increase teacher efficacy.

## **Summary**

Given the disturbing numbers of teachers still leaving the teaching profession within the first five years, there has to be a collective effort on the part of universities and school systems to provide and maintain effective support systems for new teachers to enhance their personal and general teaching efficacy. These support systems start at the preservice level and extend well beyond the first few years of teaching. Teacher preparation and induction programs have the opportunities to assure teachers are competent and confident in themselves and in their teaching abilities, and develop and enhance their efficacy.

Preservice teachers need to feel assured their teacher training prepares them to fully take on the multiple duties they will face as classroom teachers. This includes providing courses and experiences that comprise Bandura's four modes of efficacy development. Teaching internships

provide preservice teachers the opportunity to develop high teacher efficacy through mastery and vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. This is done through teaching, apprenticeship, and developing relationships with cooperating teachers. By exposing student teachers to a variety of school settings for their field experiences, they will come to understand the most rewarding and challenging aspects of diverse teaching contexts and how these shape physiological states. Courses that focus on content knowledge and pedagogy, and incorporate authentic experiences are necessary. Field experiences provide the opportunity for student teachers to learn the profession of teaching, reduced anxiety, and develop high teacher efficacy.

Beginning teachers continue to require support as they face the constant demands and challenges of teaching. Looking at Bandura's modes of information, teacher efficacy is greatly shaped by mastery and vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion. Beginning teachers are continuously learning and developing their efficacy by actively teaching, participating in support groups and/or mentoring experiences, and through communication with colleagues, students, and parents. Learning communities and support groups can provide a safe place where teachers can share and reflect on their teaching through the use of collaborative conversations to heighten teacher efficacy, which, in turn, will empower teachers, improve practice and student outcomes, and reduce teacher attrition. Teachers should have the opportunity to regularly participate in these types of communities, or have the chance to create their own. Likewise, mentorship programs where novice teachers learn through mastery and vicarious experiences from expert teachers should be a necessity in induction programs. These types of support systems can provide valuable information as to the factors that influence new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy, how these teachers deal with teacher efficacy issues, and the kinds of support

these teachers need in their teacher preparation programs and in their classrooms to promote their efficacy.

The above studies on preservice and inservice teachers' efficacy demonstrate a lack of research on the concerns new early childhood and elementary teachers have regarding their efficacy in different contexts and content areas. Furthermore, additional research is needed focusing on specific factors that contribute to teacher efficacy, such as school culture, school policies and procedures, parents, students, and teacher preparation. Therefore, this study examines new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas. Specific research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are beginning early childhood and elementary teachers' self-identified dilemmas related to their efficacy?
2. How does problem-solving in teachers' collaborative conversations reflect teachers' efficacy?

### **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

The purpose of this study is to explore new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas from a new teacher support program conducted at a Southeastern University. *New/beginning* refers to teachers one to five years post-graduation. This chapter provides an overview of the research design, study participants, program seminars, and data analysis. Participant recruitment and demographics are discussed, as well as procedures to include seminar logistics, collaborative conversations and Critical Friends Groups.

The new teacher support program is an ongoing collaborative project focused on teacher support of newly inducted teachers, one to five years post-graduation, from a Southeastern University's Birth-12 teacher education programs. The project involves recent graduates from the University's teacher education programs who meet three to four times during the school year for approximately four hours each to explore the successes and challenges they face as new classroom teachers. In support groups modeled after CFG's, graduates problem-solve issues of concern or "practice dilemmas" in the workplace and discuss how teacher education curricula could be more aligned with the challenges teachers face in today's classrooms. The goal of the program is to serve as a teacher support model for newly inducted teachers and to inform teacher education practices in the University's School of Education. Currently in its sixth year, this study focused on years 1-3 of the project: 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012.

The program is adapted from a model used in the Teacher Education Program at the University of Washington (UW-TEP, 2006), which used a Critical Friends Group (CFG)

protocol (National School Reform Faculty [NSRF], 2000). CFGs are designed to make teaching practice explicit and public by “talking about teaching,” helping people involved in schools to work collaboratively in reflective communities (Bambino, 2002), and establishing a foundation for sustained professional development. These groups are also designed to establish relationships with peers so thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning can be expressed to improve teaching and learning. CFGs engage group members in collaborative conversations regarding problems selected by individual group members. The skills of these “collaborative conversations” include establishing and practicing norms, listening effectively and attentively, questioning for reflection, clarity, and inquiry, and identifying and uncovering personal and others’ assumptions. Normative patterns of conversation include respect for diverse points of view, equity of response opportunities, and listening to understand others. This arrangement purports to develop supportive environments for teachers while they develop and improve their teaching. Additionally, the potential exists for these collaborations to positively impact teacher efficacy.

### **Research Design**

The research questions lent themselves to the use of qualitative research methods. Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugauch, and Richardson (2005) state that qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular context that involves empiricism, knowledge production, particular research skills and tools, production of scientific evidence, and coherent articulation of results. Qualitative research seeks to answer questions such as “what is happening?” and “why or how is it happening?” (Shavelson & Towne, 2002, p. 99 as cited in Brantlinger et al., 2005) while

exploring phenomena, attitudes and beliefs. Qualitative research is often inductive in nature where certain contexts or small numbers of individuals are studied (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

The use of qualitative research methods were most appropriate for this study since it sought to explore the phenomenon of teacher efficacy through the interactions among a culture of teachers who shared common experiences. The research questions lent themselves best to this approach because they pursued to answer how early childhood and elementary teachers interacted with each other and problem-solved in a support group as they explored the phenomenon of teacher efficacy. The use of a Critical Friends Group method allowed collaborative conversations to develop rich and authentic descriptions. Additionally, inductive methods are used for data analysis to capture the experiences of the participants.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As individuals who have a history and background themselves, qualitative researchers realize their interpretation of research data is only one possibility, and their report does not have any privileged authority over other interpretations readers, participants, and other researchers may have (Creswell, 2008). It is important, therefore, for qualitative researchers to position themselves within their report and identify their standpoint or point of view (Denzin, 1997). The qualitative researcher shares personal history, values, background and experience with the reader as these influence his or her interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative researcher uses his or her subjective understanding and relationship with the participants to investigate their understanding and experience of the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2008). The judgment and interpretations of both the participants and the researcher are valued as important contributors to understanding the reality of the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The researcher's experience as an early childhood educator in various public schools confers both advantages and disadvantages to her role as a researcher. Before beginning graduate school full-time to pursue her Ph.D. in Early Childhood, the researcher was a kindergarten teacher for nine years in the Florida and North Carolina public school systems. She has had many experiences working with children and families from diverse backgrounds, including low- and high- achieving students, children with behavior concerns, and children with disabilities. Additionally, her first few years in the classroom were extremely difficult—feeling as though she was not fully prepared to teach and having low self-confidence in her abilities. In particular, she felt she lacked the skills needed to effectively teach diverse students, and was unaware of potential support systems available to her. Because new teacher support and teacher efficacy in early childhood and elementary education were areas she had not only personally dealt with firsthand, but which had the most effect in her teaching, her focus and interest in exploring support systems for teacher efficacy in new early childhood and elementary teachers is high. Furthermore, understanding the importance of early educators and seeing the currently high numbers of teacher turnover today, exploring personal attitudes and feelings of these new teachers is a priority for the student researcher.

For the first year of the program, the researcher was the research assistant. She saw this project as being exceptionally beneficial to new teachers and wished she had had the experience of coming together with similar colleagues in her first few years of teaching to talk about issues in the classroom. Her duties as research assistant included organizing the program seminars, and being the contact person for the participants. This allowed her to be in close contact with the participants throughout the year and develop more personal relationships with them. During the last seminar of the first year, she also facilitated a whole group, focus group session. This

session was conducted primarily to gain insights as to what support systems teachers needed, and how sharing dilemmas with colleagues helped participants think about their own practices.

For years two and three of the program, the researcher was a focus group facilitator for the early childhood and elementary teachers. This role allowed her to observe participants and facilitate focus group discussions. In this role she may have been perceived as more of a ‘researcher’ and expert, and not as a public school teacher. During this time, the participants could have been more intimidated by having a graduate student at a major university as a facilitator, which, in turn, could have inhibited their discussions.

## **Participants**

**Recruitment.** For year one, the teacher education graduates were selected using an informed sampling procedure in which program coordinators of early childhood, elementary, middle grades, and high school teacher preparation programs were asked to identify their recent teacher education graduates from the University’s School of Education undergraduate and graduate programs representing a range of skill and competence levels employed in different areas of the state. As a result, 36 nominations were solicited and all nominees were invited to participate in the seminars. This was done by obtaining access to the School of Education’s alumni listserv. Twenty-one participants attended one or more seminars in year one.

For years two and three, the teacher education graduates were selected by attaining contact information through the School of Education’s listserv for all teacher graduates from the teacher preparation programs from 2006-2011. Approximately 850 nominees were invited to participate in the seminars in 2010 and 760 in 2011. The same format for inviting the participants was used as in the first year of the program seminars. Twenty-five participants

attended one or more seminars in year two, and 29 participants attended one or more seminars in year three.

From these recruitment procedures, there were a total of 75 participating teachers across the three-year timeframe of the larger project. Thirty-three of the participants taught at the middle grades/secondary level, and 42 participants taught at the early childhood/elementary level. Approximately 83 percent of participants had between 1-3 years of experience, and all participants were University teacher education graduates who taught in rural and urban/suburban schools across the state.

For the purposes of this study, drawn from the larger project, early childhood and elementary participants from all three years of the project were studied. This included participants from PreK through fifth grade, one to five years post-graduation. However, from the initial 42 early childhood and elementary participants, five were not included in the study due to non-consent. As a result, a total of 37 participants were included in this study: twelve from year one, nine from year two, and 16 from year three. Six of the total number of participants attended more than one year of the program seminars, and two of these participants attended the seminars for all three years. The proposed number of participants should yield adequate data on teachers' efficacy, and provide opportunity for thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973).

**Participant demographics.** Year one participants included one from the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, four from the Child Development and Family Studies (CDFS) program, five from the Elementary Education program, and two from the Master for Experienced Teachers (MEDX) program. Ten participants had between 1-3 years of experience, and two had more than ten years of experience. All 12 participants were female.

Year two participants included one from the MAT program, one from the CDFS program, and seven from the Elementary Education program. Eight participants had between 1-3 years of experience, and one participant had four years of experience. All nine participants were female.

Year three participants included one from the MAT program, three from the CDFS program, one from the MEDX program, and 11 from the Elementary Education program, of which one was also a Teaching Fellow. Thirteen participants had between 1-3 years of experience, and three participants had four or more years of experience. Fifteen participants were female and one was male.

Across the three years of data, there were 36 females and one male. Approximately 83 percent had between 1-3 years of experience. Participants were solicited from the following programs: Child Development and Family Studies, Elementary Education, Master of Arts in Teaching, Master for Experienced Teachers, and Teaching Fellows. Appendix A provides detailed participant demographic information.

**Benefits/risks to participants.** Depending on the year of the program, participants received a monetary stipend between \$35 and \$100 for each session they attended, plus mileage costs. Additionally, participants received breakfast and lunch at each session. Because teachers too often work in isolation, having opportunities to share ideas and experiences with colleagues had the potential of being helpful to participants' efficacy, since participants were able to reflect on their own dilemmas in the classroom and support others in problem-solving.

It might have been possible that participation in this study may have caused slight emotional distress if, through reflection on his/her teaching experiences, a teacher recognized a weakness in his/her teaching, possibly causing lower teacher efficacy. The chances were low

that this would happen; however, if participants experienced any distress from the seminar discussions, the researcher and investigators were all experienced educators who could have provided resources and advice regarding potential solutions.

There was the possibility of risk to the subjects if their identities were ever discovered or revealed. These risks were minimized by maintaining confidentiality of the data linked to participants by use of pseudonyms. Additionally, Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent to participate in the larger research study (Appendix B) was obtained for each year. Participants were informed of the research study and had the option of participating or withdrawing from the study without implications. Written consent for audiotaping discussions (Appendix C) was obtained during each seminar for each year, and audiotapes were immediately erased after transcription. Furthermore, all acquired materials were securely contained in a locked office on campus and on a secure server.

## **Procedures**

Three program seminars were conducted during the 2009-2010 year, and four each during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 years. All sessions were conducted on Saturdays at an off-campus location from 10am-2pm.

**Program seminars as modified Critical Friends Groups.** All seminars were modeled from a Critical Friends Group format, which included a facilitator and note taker, to determine newly inducted teachers' practice dilemmas and resolution strategies (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Using a modified CFG format, participants were divided into small teacher groups for each session according to the grade level they taught. This format allowed for collaborative conversations to develop. The roles of "presenter" and "critical friends" varied as individual teaching dilemmas were discussed. The purported benefits of CFG included improved

collaboration through participation and increased reflection of one's profession (Franzak, 2002). For all three years, there were between two and four focus groups for each seminar, with an average of two early childhood/elementary groups and two middle grades/high school groups. Each group, at any given time, had between three and nine participants.

**Seminar logistics.** Prior to the initial seminars, participants were provided with sample case study practice dilemmas corresponding to the age group in which they taught (Appendix D). For the early childhood/elementary groups, the practice dilemmas presented issues regarding behavior management in a first grade classroom and a teachers' overcompensation for a struggling student's learning needs in a fifth grade classroom (Wasserman, 1993). During the morning of the initial seminars, the teacher participants were asked to identify the dilemmas in the case study and discuss possible resolution strategies. Based on these sample dilemmas, the seminar participants summarized their own practice dilemmas with a *Dilemma of Practice Planning Sheet* (Appendix E), allowing participants to reflect on their self-identified dilemmas in the classroom and to guide them in the problem-solving discussions among participants. This open-ended planning worksheet asked participants: (a) What is your dilemma? Consider the multiple viewpoints (e.g., teacher's, students', parents', and colleagues') within your dilemma, (b) Why is this dilemma important to you?, and (c) What questions might help colleagues better assist you as they consider the dilemma with you? After the initial seminar of discussing sample case study and participants' dilemmas, participants continued discussions of their practice dilemmas and possible resolution strategies in subsequent seminars. Specifically, they had the opportunity to receive feedback and further develop their practice by sharing their experiences with colleagues from diverse school settings. These practice dilemmas were prepared by the participants prior to the sessions using the *Dilemma of Practice Planning Sheet* as a guide.

Each teacher group included a facilitator who monitored the group's discussion to ensure equal participation from group members and continued discussion of practice dilemmas and resolution strategies. The facilitators were graduate students with prior public school teaching experience who were provided training regarding their role in the dilemma discussions. They were instructed not to provide solutions for participants but to ensure equal participation of all group members and that all dilemmas and problem-solving strategies should be respected and discussed. In addition to the group facilitators, each group had a note taker who recorded participants' general comments and made notes regarding the tone and nature of the discussions. The facilitators and note takers for each group remained the same throughout the seminars. Each focus group session lasted approximately 1.5 hours, with one conducted in the morning and one in the afternoon for a total of approximately three hours per seminar day. At the end of each seminar day participants were given a feedback form (Appendix F) to reflect on their seminar experiences.

**Whole group discussion.** During the afternoon of the last seminar for each year a graduate student who served as the Research Assistant of the project summarized the practice dilemmas and problem-solving strategies discussed by all groups in the previous seminars. The teacher participants were given an overview of the major themes and issues identified by the researchers from the previous seminars to ensure accuracy of the data coding and analysis according to the participants' original intentions and comments. This procedure served as the "modified" member check process (Bogden & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2008) ensuring interpretations of the teacher participants' dilemma problem-solving discussions were accurate. During this whole group discussion, participants had the chance to confirm preliminary data (dilemmas) presented and add any new dilemmas. Additionally, they discussed what support

systems teachers needed, how sharing dilemmas with colleagues helped participants think about their own practices, and next steps for continuing and improving the program seminars.

### **Data Analysis**

IRB consent for this study was obtained early summer 2013 as a secondary data analysis (Appendix G). Transcripts, observational field notes, and feedback forms served as the primary sources of data collected on new teacher efficacy in this study. All program seminars were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, and field notes were recorded to capture the tone and nature of the discussions. Additionally, feedback forms were given to each participant at the end of each seminar for reflection. To maintain participant confidentiality, transcripts and field notes were blinded by the use of pseudonyms, and feedback forms were collected anonymously. This seminar data was analyzed by coding data using a constant comparative method where categories and subcategories of teacher efficacy were constantly revised and recoded as seminar transcripts, observational field notes, and feedback forms were analyzed.

Data analysis began early spring semester 2013 and continued through early spring semester 2014. A constant process of reading, coding, analyzing, organizing, and reviewing the data was used to cluster the data into categories and subcategories, with specific examples included for each category and subcategory. This helped the researcher understand participants' efficacy dilemmas and problem-solving strategies. Open coding was initially performed, where the researcher read the data several times and created preliminary labels for information. Codes were originally assigned on a line-by-line basis. Once the data was saturated with codes, the researcher identified axial codes through a second layer of coding to highlight the theme of teacher efficacy dilemmas and corresponding problem-solving strategies. Memo writing (Charmaz, 2000) was also used to interpret and organize the data, and identify emerging

relationships. Generative moments (Carlsen & Dutton, 2011) were recorded to capture any “moments of deep inspiration, connectedness, burst of insight and expansion of thought”. As the data analysis process proceeded, categories were constantly compared and contrasted and then grouped under the theme of teacher efficacy. These categories were determined by consistently exploring the seminar data. Furthermore, each category had subcategories with specific examples related to issues of teacher efficacy.

Under the theme of teacher efficacy, which includes personal and general teaching efficacy, the researcher included conversations and dilemmas regarding beliefs and feelings of personal competence, self-esteem, and confidence in pursuing and/or completing tasks and goals. Furthermore, conversations regarding beliefs of personal power and how this affects situations were included, as well as conversations regarding teaching abilities, student outcomes and achievement. Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a teacher’s individual beliefs in his or her capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation. This includes perceived confidence in his or her abilities as a teacher. General teaching efficacy is the belief that student learning can or cannot be influenced by effective teaching, or the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance. General teaching efficacy extends beyond an individual teacher’s view of his or her own capabilities to a view of teachers in general, and can include uncontrollable factors in teaching. Hence, dilemmas related to teacher efficacy included school culture, working with students and parents, teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession, and teacher preparation. Additionally, as the literature supported uncontrollable factors in teaching, dilemmas related to unchangeable school policies and procedures were included, such as curricula and teacher accountability.

As feedback forms and whole group discussion transcripts served mainly as debriefing data on the program seminars and support systems in general, specific examples related to teacher efficacy were solely highlighted as part of the data analysis. Furthermore, because qualitative data is not necessarily mutually exclusive, teacher efficacy issues were integrated to include both personal and general teaching efficacy. For example, a teacher might feel his or her own inadequacies and lack of confidence (personal teaching efficacy) hinder a student from achieving and, therefore, moving to the next grade (general teaching efficacy). Hence, participants' personal and general teaching efficacy can be affected concurrently by particular teaching situations. Therefore, dilemmas of teacher efficacy include an integration of both personal and general teaching efficacy dilemmas.

Two researchers, the researcher and a research assistant with no affiliation with the study, coded one-third of the transcript data. The researcher first had an initial discussion with the research assistant to discuss terms and definitions of teacher efficacy before blinded transcripts were given to and coded by the assistant. The researcher and assistant met frequently to discuss codes and the number of agreements and disagreements were calculated to reach inter-rater reliability using the formula of  $(\text{number of agreements} / (\text{number of agreements} + \text{number of disagreements})) \times 100$ . The number of agreements and disagreements was calculated per page and totaled for each transcript, and inter-rater reliability coding was established at 80 percent. This reliability procedure served as an inter-observer agreement index in which the data coders sought to reach agreement on thematic categories and subcategories and the inclusion of specific data into those categories. A high level of agreement in coding is recommended as a means to strengthen reliability in qualitative research (Creswell, 2008). For those data in which agreement

was not initially obtained, peer debriefing and discussion was used to determine agreement of the inclusion of the data into categories. The researcher conducted final analysis of the data.

This thematic analysis generated a greater understanding of teacher efficacy as it applies to new early childhood and elementary teachers. Understanding new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy is crucial in empowering teachers and improving confidence levels, teacher practice, student outcomes, and teacher retention. Exploring new teacher efficacy has the potential to inform teacher preparation programs and induction efforts on necessary support systems for new early childhood and elementary teachers that can ensure high levels of efficacy, and which can ultimately reduce teacher attrition.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to explore new early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas. Specific research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are beginning early childhood and elementary teachers' self-identified dilemmas related to their efficacy?
2. How does problem-solving in teachers' collaborative conversations reflect teachers' efficacy?

In the description of results, Teacher Efficacy will be used as the umbrella term encompassing both Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE) and General Teaching Efficacy (GTE). Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a teacher's individual beliefs in his or her capabilities to perform teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation. This includes perceived confidence in his or her abilities as a teacher. General teaching efficacy is the belief that student learning can or cannot be influenced by effective teaching, or the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance. General teaching efficacy extends beyond an individual teacher's view of his or her own capabilities to a view of teachers in general (Cantrell et al., 2003). The following describes how personal and general teaching efficacy are integrated into the broad framework of teacher efficacy.

### **Efficacy Defined**

Study results indicated that teacher self-identified dilemmas of efficacy and corresponding problem-solving strategies fall under the general theme of Teacher Efficacy.

Teacher efficacy includes both personal and general teaching efficacy, since these are integrated to produce the outcome of a teacher's actions. Additionally, results indicated personal and general teaching efficacy issues were not necessarily mutually exclusive, as issues were frequently integrated. In other words, PTE issues often overlapped with GTE issues. For example, a teacher might have felt her own inadequacies and lack of confidence (PTE) hindered a student from achieving and therefore moving to the next grade (GTE). Hence, both PTE and GTE could be reflected concurrently in particular teaching situations. Therefore, dilemmas of teacher efficacy include an integration of both personal and general teaching efficacy dilemmas.

### **Theoretical Orientations Guiding Data Analysis**

Results are guided by the research questions, and integrate Bandura's Social Cognitive theory and Rotter's concept of Locus of Control. According to Rotter, a person's "locus," or "place," is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes they can control their life) or external (the person believes their decisions and life are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence, or by chance or fate). Thus, teachers' efficacy dilemmas as reflected in their collaborative conversations can be shown as either internal (teacher controls) or external (teacher cannot control, or uncontrollable). For example, a teacher might believe they are fully responsible and in control of managing their classrooms; hence, exhibiting an internal locus of control.

Bandura's theory posits that efficacy development is shaped by four sources. Even though a lack of teacher efficacy is demonstrated in participants' dilemmas, problem-solving strategies shared reflect how they enhance and support participants to develop high efficacy using Bandura's four components: (a) Mastery experiences, (b) Vicarious experiences, (c) Verbal persuasion, and (d) Physiological and affective states. Teachers' efficacy is greatly

influenced by mastery experiences which include the act of teaching itself. The experiences teachers encounter when they have their own classrooms has the most influence on developing efficacy. Vicarious experience involves a person observing another's performance and gaining confidence from this in a manner of craft apprenticeship. The interactions and relationships between newly inducted teachers and experienced mentor teachers have the potential to positively impact new teachers' efficacy. These interactions can also influence teacher confidence either positively or negatively through verbal persuasion. Physiological and affective states, or emotional arousal, relay emotive information which can affect efficacy. These four sources of efficacy development are demonstrated in participants' problem-solving strategies.

As Bandura and Rotter are mirrored in teachers' dilemmas and problem-solving strategies, participants' contextual factors and how these relate to dilemmas are also discussed. These contextual factors consist of teacher characteristics, number of years' experience, and classroom/school diversity. Furthermore, because participants attended multiple program sessions, subsequent updates on teacher efficacy dilemmas from one program session to the next based on participants' problem-solving discussions are included. Lastly, whole group discussions and feedback data reflecting teacher efficacy is shared. The whole group discussions were part of each final program seminar in each year where participants discussed support systems. These discussions included how the program seminars themselves helped to improve teacher efficacy through Bandura's components. Feedback form data was used for teacher reflection and debriefing of the program seminars.

### **Teacher Self-Identified Efficacy Dilemmas**

In their collaborative conversations, participants' efficacy dilemmas were revealed as they discussed the difficulties of surviving the first years in the classroom. These dilemmas

included several factors influencing teacher efficacy, such as school culture, school policies and procedures, parents, students and classroom management, teacher preparation, teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession. Examples of these teacher efficacy issues are presented next and are analyzed using Rotter's concept of Locus of Control. Participant contextual factors are also included.

**Surviving the first years.** New teachers are constantly trying to survive in the teaching profession. They worry if others see their perceived inadequacy as they try to fulfill the expectations of teaching and of others. Kimberly, a second-year kindergarten teacher who taught in a school where the majority of the student population were minorities, worried how her colleagues viewed her. She stated, "...I didn't worry about the kids at all, but everybody else in the school and their opinions about what I should be doing and if what I was doing was right." In response to this teacher's concerns, Kathryn, a second-year first grade teacher, discussed how her feelings of inadequacy dissipated with an additional year of teaching experience: "...when you get more experience, you don't get that feeling of, 'I don't know what to do in this situation,' because you probably have experienced something like that before." Emma, a first-year second grade teacher in a Title 1 school, had feelings of inadequacy as well as she tried to prove herself to others: "I definitely have felt inadequate...you are at the bottom of the totem pole and you have to prove yourself and represent yourself and the school you graduated from. It is a lot of pressure to be what people expect...I hope they are not judging me on what they see now based on what they saw before [in student teaching]."

Unfortunately, many new teachers are trying to survive without needed support from others. Kathryn, a third-year first grade teacher teaching in a Title One school serving children and families from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, remembered her first year

experience of every man for himself: “My first year, people told me that I have to do my best. I would think, ‘I’m a first year teacher and I have no idea what that looks like,’ and no one knew how to help me. People had the mentality of every man for himself, you do your best and you get through it the way you can.” Khloe, a fifth-year K-5 ESL teacher serving a mostly Spanish speaking population, stated, “A lot of people don’t want to help the first year teacher...we were taught to ‘survive and subvert,’ and that is what you have to do.”

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is the notion in which people measure their own value by their competence, agency, and ability to promote change. These statements reflect how first-year and even more seasoned teachers experience distress and inadequacy as they try to survive the challenges they face in the beginning years of teaching, which can lead to a low sense of efficacy. As such, the following factors contribute to the anxiety beginning teachers experience trying to survive the first years of teaching, and their lack of teacher efficacy.

**School culture.** Participant dilemmas related to school culture included school atmosphere, administration, and colleagues—specifically low staff morale, feelings of isolation, feeling uncomfortable sharing successes in staff meetings, and a lack of support working with administration. Additional dilemmas included working with teaching assistants, a lack of confidence and intimidation in voicing ideas and opinions with grade level teammates, and collaborating with other colleagues and resource teachers. The following examples portray these school culture issues.

**School atmosphere.** School atmosphere, how a school “welcomes” its staff, seemed to have a profound influence on teacher efficacy as described in participant conversations. Avery, a first-year second grade teacher who taught in a high SES area, discussed how she did not feel comfortable sharing her successes in staff meetings due to low staff morale: “I’ve noticed low

morale in staff meetings and development...not feeling comfortable sharing your successes because other people take it the wrong way like you're trying too hard." Other teachers expressed similar concerns in feeling uncomfortable sharing ideas, which can negatively affect their efficacy.

Even though a negative school atmosphere can have an adverse effect on teacher efficacy, a number of teachers experienced a positive school atmosphere as they felt like they "...had a voice and are able to share professionally as adults, in a way that feelings are validated and accepted and used in a constructive way and not used against you." As shown in the field notes, a sense of community amongst participants was created through the program seminars, as participants continued to share thoughts on positive collegial school atmospheres, leading to high teacher efficacy. For example, Heather, a second-year fourth grade teacher serving a middle to upper class ethnically diverse population, was trying to balance finding a voice and sharing ideas, and being a young teacher who might not be as knowledgeable: "As a second year teacher, I am starting to realize that I have a voice and I have an opinion and my principal respects me and what I have to say...but then I think, 'What do I really know?' So it is a struggle balancing between being a younger teacher and being comfortable sharing my ideas." These comments suggest that beginning teachers in ethnically and economically diverse settings appreciate the opportunity to freely express their ideas and dilemmas with their coworkers in a collegial manner, such as participating in the program seminars. This could possibly lead to their improved efficacy.

**Administration.** Administrative support clearly influences teachers' sense of efficacy as exemplified by the following participant comments. Brooke, a third-year fourth grade teacher who taught in a school whose student population was predominately high SES, stated, "I feel

very supported and I feel like she [principal] would be there if I needed something. This makes me feel good.” Tara, a second-year African-American teacher in a Title 1 school, agreed: “...it’s nice to have that support, to let you know that you’re not going to get fired.” These teachers’ positive experiences with their principals indicated their strong sense of efficacy due to the support they felt.

Unfortunately, not all teachers feel supported by their administration. This can create various obstacles in teaching and lower teacher efficacy. Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher from a rural school, was having a difficult time with her administration and her parents. She did not feel supported by her administration, and was having a challenging start to the school year:

I don’t feel supported at all...a combined kindergarten and first grade class is REALLY impossible in public school...I was using my resources to try to learn HOW to teach my class the best way...I got students that needed to be in a much higher class than a combination class. Their parents started to complain. I started to get watched. It got to the point where my principal sat me down in her office and said, ‘You’re not doing what you TOLD me you were doing. You’re not doing the right things, I don’t see this.’ That was REALLY bad. It’s hard. I don’t feel supported.

Similarly, Violet, a second-year second grade teacher from a high SES suburban school talked about how her administration did not support her when her parents became upset over their child’s evaluation. This lack of support could have affected her efficacy. She exhibited a more external locus of control than Kathryn, as Violet felt the parents were the problem and her principal should have supported her:

I thought, ‘Your kid’s just not a genius and I’m sorry to be the one to break it to you,’ but then they went to my administration and I had to take the fall for it in a major way. It became my problem and it resulted in many meetings...When all this happened with that parent, I expected my principal to tell her that I am doing what was asked—best practice, what research shows—and that didn’t happen...Not having your back takes the wind out of your sails.

As shown in the above examples, administrative support is critical for teachers’ efficacy, whether they are novice or more experienced. A lack of needed support can result in additional

challenges with parents and students, and therefore lower efficacy. Furthermore, some participants had a more external locus of control, as they felt the principal should be a source of support when teachers face these challenges.

***Colleagues.*** In addition to relationships with their administrators, teachers are consistently working with colleagues to maintain an environment conducive to learning. A critical component of school culture seemed to be respectful interpersonal relations between colleagues resulting in high teacher efficacy. Unfortunately, respectful relationships were not always exhibited in school settings. For example, Kourtney, a first-year PreK teacher in a predominantly African-American school, had issues with her teaching assistant (TA), and recognized part of the problem as exemplified in the following instance:

I have a TA who is older...She is really great and is always asking to do things but sometimes we do not always agree on ways to do things...I'm trying to work on being more assertive on what I want her to do...I think because of the age difference sometimes...I'm not comfortable telling older people that I'm right and they're wrong...I hate confrontation and realize that this is a skill I need to work on...

This dilemma reflects a lack of confidence and personal insecurities in confronting and challenging the veteran TAs practices. This lack of confidence directly impacted this teacher's efficacy.

Collaborating with grade level teammates also has the potential to either positively or negatively affect efficacy. For example, Jasmine, a fourth-year fourth grade teacher from an urban Title 1 school discussed a particularly negative situation that happened when she expressed a different opinion than her colleagues:

I had a very different opinion of grading, and I felt very attacked, particularly by that one colleague. I ended up getting really emotional about it because I felt like I couldn't explain myself very well. Just when I am trying to get myself together, another colleague called administration into the room to explain and answer any questions. It was really bad and in the end I had to submit to what everyone else was doing even though I disagreed with it...my opinion was not even heard or welcomed.

This dilemma reveals the participant's lack of confidence in voicing ideas and opinions to teammates due to feelings of inadequacy experienced in many novice and more experienced teachers in diverse school settings. Adverse situations with teammates can have a particularly negative effect on teacher efficacy.

In addition to working with teammates, collaborating with resource teachers also can be challenging as Grayson, a male first-year fourth grade teacher, explained:

My dilemma is trying to modify for him [student]...I am also expecting her [EC teacher] to do some of the work and be more than just a body...Those students with the Individualized Education Plan's (IEP)—they are not growing the way I expect them to, and the EC teacher won't collaborate or talk with me...My expectations of her are not being met...I don't know what is best...I feel like she is an expert and she is the head of the EC department...What can I do to be more effective as a colleague?

This teacher felt both an internal and external locus of control as he struggled with who is ultimately responsible for student learning and collaboration. As he described his responsibility to be a more effective colleague, he exhibited an internal locus of control. However, as he felt the EC teacher should carry some responsibility for collaboration and student learning, this reflected a more external locus of control.

In summary, the presence of negative school cultures including unsupportive principals, school environments, intimidation and lack of collaboration among colleagues, can affect a teacher's efficacy. Whether first-year or more experienced, teachers in diverse settings can benefit from a positive school culture, which has the potential to heighten efficacy. Furthermore, the principal plays a crucial role in effectively guiding the direction of the school in a supportive way for all. Thus, school culture has the potential to positively affect teachers' efficacy. In addition to administrative and collegial support, teacher efficacy is affected by mandatory school policies and procedures.

**School policies and procedures.** Participant dilemmas related to school policies and procedures have the potential to impact teacher efficacy since these issues focus on uncontrollable factors in teaching and student learning, which ultimately affect teacher effectiveness. Many of these dilemmas reflect an external locus of control as participants feel mandatory policies and procedures are not in their control. Dilemmas participants shared included lack of opportunity for developmentally appropriate practice, scripted curricula, and testing and teacher evaluation procedures. The following examples describe these issues related to school policies and procedures.

***Curricula and the “ideal” in teaching.*** Due to the constant demand to move forward in the curriculum, Amya, an eleventh-year African-American K-3 reading specialist in a predominantly African-American school, described her difficulty with having a scripted curriculum: “...I know they haven’t mastered any of the concepts we’ve taught and we just keep moving, and it worries me quite a bit. I don’t know what to do at this point...it’s so structured that I don’t know when is the time that we can catch them up. When do they get what they missed?” She went on to discuss how uncomfortable and unsure she was teaching this way and with the pacing, but tried to make the best of it since it was out of her control: “...my comfort zone has been pushed a little bit...I feel like this is a punishment...I make the best out of this situation, because you have to do it the way they [district] want you to do it to let them know that it’s not working.” This teacher’s dilemma reflects how mandatory curricula impacts differentiation and can make teachers feel uncomfortable, which can influence their efficacy.

Conversely, Irene, a first-year first grade teacher in a predominantly African-American school, discussed the difficulty she was having with planning and her school’s lack of curriculum. She was unsure what her curriculum should look like to be developmentally

appropriate practice; thus, exhibiting a lack of competence. This impacted her teaching, and possibly her efficacy:

I have pacing guides given to me by the school, but they tell me not to use them. It's pretty frustrating to me because I am a first year teacher...I am always trying to feel my way through and find what is the correct thing to do. I don't always know if I am doing the right things and trying to make sure if my kids are where they should be by the end of the year...I guess everyone else has found a way to make it through, but with me being a first year teacher and not knowing without guidance, it is difficult...the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is coming because we didn't meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals and I am getting nervous because I don't have things in place...I just want to be prepared...

Upon hearing this first grade teacher's dilemma, other participants were appalled at how isolated she was in having to create her own curriculum. They strongly agreed with her decision to possibly teach elsewhere the following year. They sympathized with her in the following responses: "I would feel so lost. I don't know how you make it through" and "Please don't let this year affect your feelings about teachers. What you are going through is rough. And we have all had it rough at some point, but I have never had to build my own curriculum..." These dilemmas suggest that many teachers in high-needs minority schools encounter mandated curricula, or a lack of curricula, which interferes with teachers' effectiveness and sense of efficacy.

Teachers are often faced with the difficulties of transitioning from preservice teachers to the realities of teaching as beginning teachers. They believe upholding the "ideal" of their teacher preparation program—practicing what was taught in teacher preparation programs, such as best practices—is necessary for effective teaching, but a constant struggle. Natalie, a third-year kindergarten teacher questioned, "...how do you keep teaching when you've been to a [teacher preparation] program where you know its [scripted curriculum] not appropriate, and how do you continue to do what you're supposed to do and not get bogged down?" Khloe, a

fifth-year K-5 ESL teacher responded, "...it's the sacrifice you make. You can go to another school system and not have to deal with it [mandated curricula], but then you don't get to teach the kind of kids that you might want to—kids of color, kids of poverty." As a first-year first grade teacher, Kathryn's personal experience allowed her to see this dilemma from a different perspective:

The difficulty is, when you're a first year teacher you don't get to say, 'this isn't right'...I had student taught where I got hired and I felt safe to say, 'I'm going to do this because it's being mandated, but I don't think it's right for kids,' but I was let go...I wish that at least one person [in teacher preparation program] had said, 'By the way, when you go out in the real world, it's not going to be perfect.'

This teacher goes on to express how she tried to uphold her preparation program's "ideal" and think outside of the box: "...you're taught to try what you want to, be creative, don't think inside the box. However, in reality, if you're outside the box you're going to be in trouble. That was a big adjustment—to go into teaching really excited about how you can be individually creative and then you can't be." These examples show that beginning teachers, regardless of experience, want to be as effective as possible, since that is what their program's "ideal" taught; however they find they struggle with upholding the ideal because of the reality of teaching. According to Bandura, this type of emotional stress can lead to low efficacy.

***Teacher expectations and accountability.*** In addition to being expected to juggle many roles and responsibilities, teachers are solely held accountable for student achievement, even when certain factors, such as home environment, cannot be changed. Such factors can make teachers feel helpless in meeting students' needs, thus, lowering their efficacy. For example, Kathryn, a second-year first grade teacher in a low SES school explained how,

There is definitely an unchangeable factor in teaching where we are expected to be and do everything. Is it possible? I don't care what kind of population you are working with; it is just too much to think that one person can be all that for 19 children...with factors that you cannot change...I cannot change where my children live or whether they get

sleep at night. And yet, we are expected to teach them given these circumstances and it is frustrating. I think it is unreasonable.

Also discussing how teachers are held accountable even when there are uncontrollable factors at play, Heather, a first-year fourth grade teacher from a middle to upper class school said, “As teachers we are held accountable for student success, but I see a lot of her [student] issues to be related to family issues...it’s so difficult when the parent is not supporting the child.” These issues are considered uncontrollable factors in teaching, or, what teachers cannot control. They have the potential to impact teacher efficacy as teachers can feel helpless in meeting students’ needs. Also, these teachers exhibit a more external locus of control as they blame outside factors, such as parents and home environment, for lack of student achievement.

In terms of being held accountable for student achievement and students passing EOG tests, Grayson, a first-year fourth grade male teacher from a rural school, expressed his lack of efficacy due to his students’ lack of achievement on the EOGs. He felt he personally had done a bad job of teaching and had failed his students since most of them failed the EOGs. Thus, he exhibited an internal locus of control since he felt he was to blame. His reflection was indicative of how mandated testing can have a profound effect on a teacher’s efficacy.

Not only do teachers have to deal with the pressure of getting their students to pass EOGs as the above dilemma describes, teachers themselves are constantly evaluated on their performance impacting job stability and influencing their sense of efficacy. For example, London, a third-year kindergarten teacher from a middle-class suburban school, animatedly talked about the pressures of teaching and teacher evaluations:

...there is a lot of pressure on the teachers because of this evaluation and all these new standards you have to meet, it’s not about the kids anymore. You have to spend all your time making sure that you have this bullet, under Standard 1, 2, 3, 4...It is so easy to lose sight of why you are doing this. Instead of it being about you, it should be about the kids,

but you want to meet all the standards so your kids are prepared to move to the next grade.

Related to this teacher's issue of teacher evaluations, Kourtney, a first-year PreK teacher was stressed about having to be 'distinguished' on her evaluation in order for her to have a job the following year. She felt it was inappropriate that her principal expected her to be held at such high standards when she was still learning and developing as a new teacher. Further discussion on the stresses of the teacher evaluation instrument included how it can be biased and subjective, it forces teachers to teach to the test, and a teacher's career is based on their performance. Moreover, teacher evaluations can ultimately impact teacher efficacy. Since teachers are measured based on their effectiveness, this affects teachers' self-esteem and confidence. All teachers, regardless of experience and school setting, face the stresses of testing and teacher evaluations. However, most teachers exhibit an external locus of control since they believe outside forces can be to blame for lack of student success, and therefore, teacher accountability and performance.

In summary, most teachers, regardless of experience and school context, are constantly trying to balance mandated school policies and procedures with creative teaching practices as they try to uphold their teacher education program's "ideal." As explained in their dilemmas, most teachers are mandated to use scripted curricula impeding them from using developmentally appropriate practices. Conversely, some teachers prefer this type of curricula to provide them with the confidence to know what they are doing is, in fact, appropriate, since 'this is what the school mandated.' Furthermore, unreasonable expectations of managing numerous roles while being held accountable for all students can have an extremely negative effect on teacher efficacy. Teacher evaluations can negatively impact teacher efficacy as teachers are evaluated based on both their and student performance. New teachers might not necessarily have the opportunities

to become ‘distinguished,’ or students might not perform well on mandated tests. This can lower teachers’ self-esteem and confidence. When it comes to teacher expectations and accountability, teachers frequently exhibit an external locus of control as they feel measures of student success are out of their control. The pressure of testing is a common example of how beginning teachers feel about standards and the emotional investment teachers have in their jobs, and how this can lower a teacher’s efficacy.

**Parents.** In addition to issues related to school culture, policies and procedures, parents can compromise teachers’ efficacy as teachers feel apprehensive working with parents who are intimidating and disrespectful. Participant dilemmas related to parents included parents who were disrespectful of teachers, teachers feeling intimidated and bullied by parents, and parents who were overbearing. The following examples illustrate these parent issues.

Parents can easily diminish a teacher’s efficacy. For example, Heather, a second-year fourth grade teacher from a middle to upper class school, stated how she felt disrespected by parents just because she was a young teacher: “It frustrates me so much that parents will look at a young teacher and think, ‘I have no respect for you.’ No matter what you do, sometimes it’s not going to earn their respect.” Tara, a second-year PreK African-American teacher from a low-wealth rural school, felt her parents were mean to her and unsupportive when it came to their child. She had a more external locus of control as she believed the parents were to blame for the unstable relationship she had with them:

...my student is upset because he pulled a card. He’s crying at home, he doesn’t want to come to school, he’s painting this picture of me like I’m evil, and I’m not. I’m just trying to do my job...They sent me this really nasty e-mail...I did call them to say we needed to have a meeting. They came in and she says, ‘Oh, I never hear anything positive.’ She doesn’t acknowledge the positive things I do...I said, ‘Your son is afraid of pulling cards. He’s not afraid of me. I’m not as evil as he says.’...I’m thinking—YOU are not making this a good relationship.

After hearing these dilemmas, other participants strongly agreed with wanting to be respected by parents. Teacher comments reflected how many participants, regardless of their school's economic diversity, shared the difficulties of working with disrespectful parents. Teachers' efficacy is impacted by these parents' attitudes and behaviors toward their child's teacher.

Additional issues related to parents affecting teachers' efficacy include parents who were judgmental of the teacher and overprotective of their children. Madeline, a first-year first grade teacher from a suburban Title 1 school serving a military population, was trying to deal with a difficult student in her class and his overbearing mother. She felt his mom was bullying her because she was a new and young teacher, and thus felt a more external locus of control as she believed his mom had the power:

I have been bullied a lot this year by mom. Mom will come in and call me out because I'm not treating her child right...As a first year teacher, I look young, and I feel like that has a lot to do with it...I feel like I'm not being treated like a professional by the family. I'm really stressed out by this whole situation...We tried to make it clear at the last meeting that I am a classroom teacher and my training is for classroom teaching.

This example suggests teachers feel intimidated by overbearing parents who believe new teachers lack the abilities to teach students, which can negatively affect a teacher's sense of efficacy. Furthermore, many teachers feel an external locus of control as they believe intimidating parents are in control, which can lead to heightened emotions when working with parents.

As described in the above dilemmas, many beginning teachers in diverse school settings feel disrespected and intimidated by their classroom parents. This is due, in part, to being a young, inexperienced teacher. Even so, many times beginning teachers will exhibit an external locus of control and blame parents for difficult relationships. Because parents feel they are the expert on their child, there can be a lack of respect for teachers if what parents feel is best for

their child does not coincide with what teachers feel. As such, teachers and parents need to work together in giving their children what they need.

**Students and classroom management.** In addition to dilemmas related to working with parents, dilemmas concerning students can have a great effect on teachers' efficacy as teachers feel they lack the necessary skills to individually support and manage all students. As such, teachers can feel a more internal locus of control as they feel responsible for supporting students. Participant dilemmas related to students included working with students with high-needs, trying to meet all students' needs, and feeling inadequate in managing a classroom. The following examples depict these student issues.

Working with high-need students can cause teachers to feel inadequate in regard to their efficacy. London, a third-year kindergarten teacher from a diverse suburban school, talked about having a difficult time working with students with behavior and emotional challenges. She felt she was a failure not giving her students what they needed. Thus, she felt an internal locus of control as she believed it was in her power and control to help her students:

...it's been a really tough year. I've been discouraged and I've never been discouraged before...I know I'm not an expert, but I know that he [student with behavior challenges] needs more than that...I was making him do things that he didn't want to do, and he would talk under his breath and say, 'Why are you so mean? You just need to go away.' It was hard to hear that. Then the other student would be destroying the room and it was like, 'Oh my gosh!'...I would look down at my watch and think, 'Did I teach today?' It was really discouraging because I knew that I wanted to help these boys so badly, but I also was responsible for 18 other kids...

In addition to having difficulties working with students with behavior and emotional challenges, many teachers feel they are not giving their students enough academic support, especially those with high-needs. For example, Emma, a first-year second grade teacher in a Title 1 school, felt inadequate teaching a student with autism. She felt the pressures of being responsible in getting him ready for third grade, thus, exhibiting an internal locus of control:

I have a student in my class with autism. This is his second year in second grade. My biggest concern is that he is not going to move on to third grade because he is not going to be ready. I am afraid that I am not doing enough for him because he is EC and has special needs...I don't think I am adequate...I am not trained to deal with a child with autism. I could be doing something wrong and I don't want it to be the reason why he doesn't go to third grade...

These dilemmas reflect novice and more experienced teachers' sense of inadequacy in working with students with high-needs in diverse settings. This results in teachers feeling discouraged and hopeless as they feel responsible for not being able to support these students, thus, exhibiting an internal locus of control. This can, in turn, result in low teacher efficacy.

Not only do teachers struggle with meeting the needs of students with particular challenges, but they are confronted with the difficult task of making sure all of their students achieve. For example, Kimberly, a second-year kindergarten teacher in a mostly minority school, became emotional as she described her dilemma of feeling defeated trying to meet all of her students' needs. Her dilemma reflected an internal locus of control as she felt it was her responsibility to make sure all of her students achieved: "I have a big problem feeling like I don't do enough for my kids...It's so draining and exhausting. [Tearing up] Sometimes I'm so ready for them to leave...[starts crying]...but then I don't feel like I'm doing enough for them, either." This teacher's sensitive situation prompted several encouraging responses such as: "You do all you can. The struggle is that you can't change the factors that have affected their lives...and it's frustrating, but you've done so much for them." This statement is an example of an external locus of control, where the participant felt it was out of her control to meet all student needs because of other, uncontrollable factors.

These comments reflect how all teachers want to do what is best for all of their students. They exhibit an internal locus of control as they feel it is within their control and feel personally responsible for getting their students to where they need to be. However, the challenges of

meeting the needs of a classroom full of diverse students can be emotionally exhausting, and thus, lower a teacher's sense of efficacy.

Beginning teachers frequently have a difficult time applying necessary skills to manage students in a classroom. This can significantly affect a teacher's confidence and competence in their abilities as classroom managers. Many teachers discussed their feelings of inadequacy and self-blame due to their students' behaviors in the classroom. For example, Kathryn, a first-year kindergarten teacher from an urban school, described the power struggle in her classroom: "...Is the reason my class is like that [unmanageable classroom in case study] because of something I'm doing? Absolutely, I think so..." This statement clearly reflects an internal locus of control as this teacher believes it is her responsibility to successfully manage a classroom.

However, sometimes struggles with classroom management prove to have a positive outcome for teachers. For example, Tara, a second-year African-American PreK teacher from a Title 1 rural school, talked about how her issue of trying to manage a classroom made her a better teacher: "...I'd been in school, yet I didn't know what to do to manage my classroom! It was very scary the first day...how are you going to do it? I had a kid who was throwing a chair and I'm like, 'Whoa, dude' ...I mean, he MADE me a better teacher, because I had to figure it out!" As shown in the field notes, other participants agreed they had similar experiences of becoming better teachers because of classroom management challenges.

Clearly, teachers are in their profession because of a loyalty to their students. Most teachers become physically, mentally, and emotionally invested in their students' learning, and only want to do what is best for their students. However, teachers face many dilemmas related to the challenges of working with diverse students and their multiple needs in the classroom. Most teachers feel it is primarily their responsibility for managing a classroom conducive to student

progress and achievement, and face challenges of feeling inadequate in fulfilling this role. Conversely, some teachers feel they are limited in what they can do for students since they can only control what happens in the classroom. Teachers' comments reflected that effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. As shown in the examples above, participants have low efficacy related to students and classroom management.

**Teacher preparation.** In addition to teachers' efficacy being compromised when working with students and parents, participants frequently expressed how they felt unprepared for the teaching profession, which influenced their efficacy. Participant dilemmas related to teacher preparation included feeling unprepared to teach, and wanting to improve one's teaching skills and the teaching profession in general. The following examples depict these teacher preparation issues discussed by participants.

As she talks about feeling unprepared to be an effective teacher, Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher from a racially diverse rural school, stated: "I had feelings of unpreparedness...I'm learning more and more that putting theory into practice is a BIG jump (laughter from participants)!" As shown in the field notes, many other participants related to feeling unprepared in taking on teaching responsibilities and effectively teaching students. Irene, another first-year first grade teacher, also felt unprepared for what was thrown at her when she started teaching: "In school, you are taught how to run a good classroom, but then you get into the class, and a lot of things are thrown your way that you may never have read in the textbooks." The multiple roles and tasks of a beginning teacher can be overwhelming. Emma, a first-year second grade teacher from a Title 1 rural school, also felt unprepared and overwhelmed when she started teaching, which affected her efficacy in terms of being an effective teacher:

I feel I wasn't ready in many aspects. The thing that they don't tell you in college, it is really a big juggling act (laughter and agreement from participants)...It is juggling the

paperwork, email, and the teaching, which is the fun part but the smallest part...I wasn't ready in many aspects for the teaching part.

These comments suggest that these teachers have an external locus of control as they felt it was the responsibility of their preparation program to give them all necessary skills and knowledge to be successful educators.

Even as she agreed with others on feeling unprepared, Kristen, a first-year PreK literacy coordinator, believed that teaching is not something that can be learned in coursework or internships; it is a continuous learning process: "You don't learn to teach until you're in a classroom...you just learn those things as you go. Nothing could have told me how to do it." Contrary to other participants, this teacher has an internal locus of control as she believed she had to have actual classroom experience to become a better teacher, and preparation programs should not be responsible for teaching everything about the profession. Emma, a first-year second grade teacher in a Title 1 school, understood that the first year of teaching would not be easy, and it was not unusual to have dilemmas because they come with any new job. She explained,

I don't think the first year should be easy. It should be hard. If it were any career, it is still trial-and-error...So I think that we are going to have these hardships in these first couple of years because that comes with the territory. We just have to come to these things [program], and try to figure out our situations.

These comments suggest that teaching is not something that can be learned solely in preparation programs, and that taking part in early career vicarious experiences, such as teacher support groups, has the potential to improve teacher efficacy. Even so, the majority of beginning teachers still feel unprepared to be effective teachers because of the many daily responsibilities they are faced with. This leads to a more external locus of control as most teachers believe preparation programs are responsible for fully preparing them for the teaching profession.

Also discussing feelings of unpreparedness, Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher, "...found in the first three months of teaching I would say to myself, 'I wish I had paid more attention to that when I was student teaching.'...I do wish there had been more of her [instructor] telling me the forethought in that building of what's going to come." Interestingly, this teacher had both an internal and external locus of control as she felt it was both her and her instructor's responsibility to better prepare her for teaching. This teacher also believed, "You do your best, but you just fail at it in a small way because you have never seen it done. So much of teaching is done behind the scenes when you are student teaching and you are watching." She also talked about the reality in teaching: "...what we all miss in college...They try to show you how to do things, but then, no one even told me I'd have to go and teach a scripted curriculum...Then I went in and it was, 'This is what you HAVE to do.'"

Interestingly enough, these teacher preparation dilemmas which stress feelings of unpreparedness and being overwhelmed when beginning teaching, come from first-year teacher participants. These dilemmas, in turn, affected their abilities to teach effectively, and their teacher efficacy. As conversations of 'whose job is it to prepare me' arose, participants started recognizing that teaching is not something learned solely in teacher preparation programs; hence, moving from a more external locus of control, to an internal locus of control. As stated by one participant, "You don't learn to teach until you're in a classroom."

**Teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession.** The previous issues regarding school culture, school policies and procedures, working with students and parents, and teacher preparation led teachers to feel extreme burnout and to question whether they should remain in the teaching profession. For example, Khloe, a fourth-year K-5 ESL teacher who

serves mostly Spanish students, talked about how she struggled with staying in the teaching profession:

...as a young teacher you feel like you always have to be positive. You can't say certain things or people start to doubt you...How do you make a career out of this? How do you stay in teaching forever? When do you know that it is time to shift courses and try something new?...I've hit this point where I don't know if I want to do this forever. How do you survive long enough if you are going to do it as a career?...There is not one person I see who has done it for 30 years who's not crazy, or burned out, or coasting, or super stressed.

The decision to stay in the teaching profession is not an easy one. Instead of deciding to leave education altogether, some teachers become 'movers'—they shift to a different school or field in education. Rachel, a first-year second grade African-American teacher who teaches in a middle to upper class school, contemplated a personal struggle of staying at a school where kids need good teachers but had less flexibility, or going to a school that valued autonomy: "...the group of students I really wanted to work with was at a school in [city], and I was left choosing between that school and another school where I would have more autonomy. Do I want to go where the students have my heart or what will develop me the best professionally?" Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher in a low SES school, responded, "...but the students in [city] that you're talking about are the kinds of students that need strong creative teachers like us that have the energy and motivation to want to put their all into a classroom..." When it comes to making choices about schools and teaching, Natalie, a third-year kindergarten teacher, strongly felt the power of affective states and being happy in teaching, "...happiness is key...if you're not happy and you hate getting up and going to work, even though you love the kids...I think that's a big piece in continuing to be a teacher. You have to find that place where you love what you do and what's going to make you happy." Seeing as Bandura stresses the importance of physiological states in efficacy development, and Perrachione et al. (2008) found that teachers who

experienced satisfaction at their school and/or satisfaction with the profession of teaching were more likely to remain; happiness seems to play a part in teacher efficacy.

As teachers decide to remain in the teaching profession, the importance of current best teaching practices and continuous learning and professional growth is crucial. For example, Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher, stated: “I hope I never want to stop learning. At this point in my career, I worry all the time about whether I’m doing the right thing or best practice...I constantly question myself. I wish there were somebody in my room all the time watching me, telling me if I could be doing something better.” According to Natalie, a third-year kindergarten teacher, “...good teaching is not a question of right methods or behaviors, but of problem-solving having to do with the teacher’s unique sense of self, as she finds appropriate solutions to carry out her own and society’s purposes...What’s good teaching one year may not be good teaching the next year because you are probably going to do something different.”

Beginning teachers face various internal or personal struggles daily. Surviving is a challenge as teachers try to juggle their many roles and responsibilities, all the while making sure they are doing what’s right as they try to become effective teachers. As seen in the above comments, first-year and even more experienced teachers struggle with teacher burnout, which greatly affects teacher efficacy. As increased demands are placed upon teachers, they feel the effects of burnout early on in their careers. Thus, they question whether or not they are even meant for teaching. Teacher efficacy can affect the decision of whether to stay in, leave, or move within the profession. For those that stay, they know the challenges that lie ahead, and try to make sure they are happy, have a safe place to share the myriad of dilemmas they encounter, and keep up with the knowledge and skills of best teaching practices to benefit their students.

According to Bandura, these vicarious experiences and physiological states can, in turn, improve a teacher's efficacy.

Beginning teachers struggle with various school and classroom issues that can influence teacher efficacy. These include school culture, school policies and procedures, parents, students and classroom management, teacher preparation, teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession. As shown in the previous examples, most dilemmas described reflect low teacher efficacy. Furthermore, dilemmas reveal either an internal or external locus of control. When it comes to teachers working with and managing students, the majority of teachers exhibit an internal locus of control. Teachers feel it is in their power and control to effectively teach and manage students in the classroom, and they are responsible for student achievement. However, teachers exhibit a more external locus of control when it comes to working with parents, teacher preparation, and teacher expectations. Because teachers feel parents have a large influence over their children's learning and achievement, teachers will often blame parents if students are not achieving. Also, teacher expectations such as mandated testing and scripted curricula are factors teachers feel they are not in control of, and thus, should not be held responsible for.

As new teachers enter their first teaching jobs, they can feel isolated and intimidated being the new teacher, and a positive school culture where trust and respect is prevalent is crucial to new teachers. Having the needed support systems and comfort factor in sharing ideas and voicing opinions will not only benefit a teacher's efficacy, but will also benefit student success. As teachers work with students, teachers with high efficacy will have the competence to establish and utilize necessary support systems to meet the needs of all their students in an environment that is conducive to learning. Additionally, new teachers with high efficacy will have the confidence to engage parents in appropriately supporting their children's learning.

Even though most participants feel it is the job of teacher preparation programs to fully prepare them for teaching, some realize that teaching is not something learned in coursework or internships. The reality of teaching comes as they are truly enmeshed within their own schools and classrooms, as they tackle real-life day-to-day experiences and situations. When this reality of teaching finally hits, it can greatly affect teacher efficacy. Participants stressed the important role teacher preparation programs have in preparing them to be confident and competent teachers ready for the reality of teaching. Unfortunately, many participants come out of their preparation programs feeling unprepared to be effective teachers and overwhelmed by the various demands of teaching. As they try to survive and juggle the many roles and responsibilities they have, they can feel the effects of burnout, which can negatively affect their sense of efficacy. Even so, as participants engaged in collaborative conversations of their practice dilemmas, they equally engaged in problem-solving strategies in response to these dilemmas. Participants shared strategies, offered advice and empathy, which had the potential to enhance teacher efficacy. The following are examples of problem-solving strategies provided by participants, and related dilemma updates from subsequent seminars.

### **Problem-Solving Strategies and Related Updates**

As participants discussed their dilemmas related to teacher efficacy in their collaborative conversations, participants' problem-solving strategies were evident as participants welcomed strategies from fellow teachers and looked to one another for advice. Examples of corresponding problem-solving strategies discussed by the program participants, and related updates from subsequent program seminars participants attended are presented next. These problem-solving discussions are analyzed using Bandura's four components of efficacy development and Rotter's Internal Locus of Control. Participant contextual factors are also included.

**School Culture.** Participant problem-solving strategies in response to school culture included complimenting colleagues, seeking administrative support, providing autonomy to TAs, and seeking collaboration and support from colleagues. According to Bandura, these strategies are forms of his four sources of efficacy development which have the potential to improve efficacy. The following examples portray these school culture problem-solving strategies and relevant updates from succeeding program seminars.

**School atmosphere.** As part of problem-solving strategies for improving school atmosphere, Tally, a first-year first grade teacher, wanted to make a point to admire what others were doing in their professional lives to improve staff morale. She expresses a more internal locus of control as she feels she has the power to improve staff morale: “I’m going to make an effort to point out things I admire about the adults I work with, just like with my students. There are strengths there even if they’re hard to find...” This teacher went on to say, “When you have a good idea, they are going to be more receptive when you have complimented them.” Additionally, participants’ problem-solving strategies suggest that teachers have a more internal locus of control as they place responsibility on self to contribute to a positive school atmosphere where new teachers feel more comfortable speaking out and sharing with each other. Teachers’ complementing each other’s teaching strategies as a form of Bandura’s verbal persuasion component, can, in turn, heighten teacher efficacy.

**Administration.** In the participants’ problem-solving discussions for a lack of administrative support, Taylor, a third-year kindergarten teacher stated: “If I’m going to have a meeting with someone, I make sure I go to them [administration] first and say, ‘Here’s what I need from you. Here’s how I need you to be supportive.’” This teacher reflected an internal locus of control as she felt it was her responsibility and within her control to seek administrative

support in the form of verbal persuasion. Participants stressed the importance of seeking out administrative support since affirmation from principals was quite important to teachers' feelings of efficacy.

**Colleagues.** Participants' problem-solving strategies for colleagues also reflected Banduras components for improving efficacy. In terms of working with a TA, Riley, a second-year graduate with four years previous teaching experience, who was teaching in a high-needs school suggested, "Give her [TA] a few minutes on her own to give her some autonomy, and that will give you some time to free yourself from the worry." This suggested problem-solving strategy of providing the TA with more autonomy as an example of a vicarious experience can assist teachers in working with their TA. This, in turn, can heighten teacher efficacy. For example, in a subsequent program session, Riley revisited her dilemma and provided an update of feeling uncomfortable delegating tasks to her TA: "I felt uncomfortable asking her to do things and delegating tasks to her just because she is older and has more experience. It has gotten better. I've tried to set aside very practical things I can give her to do and putting it in a way that is, 'I don't have time to do this. Can you do this?' I feel more comfortable doing it that way." This updates shows how Riley, after support and encouragement from fellow participants, and strategies shared in a previous session, became more comfortable giving her TA more autonomy. This seemed to positively influence her efficacy.

As part of problem-solving in response to feeling intimidated sharing ideas with and speaking up against teammates, Kathryn, a first-year first grade teacher, suggested, "...go to someone you feel comfortable with and that'll support your ideas so you feel like you have someone to voice those ideas with. Then, in a friendly way, the two of you can think how to take it to everyone else in PLC." Other encouraging advice offered from Kristen, another first-year

participant, was: “Perhaps you could write your ideas down and give them to the teachers before you go in [to PLC] so they have a chance to look them over beforehand...They can be read off the paper and you won’t feel the intimidation of presenting.” These problem-solving strategies such as talking to supportive colleagues and writing ideas down as forms of verbal persuasion and mastery experiences can reflect team collaboration, and hence, heighten teacher efficacy.

In terms of collaborating with resource teachers, Heather, a second-year fourth grade participant, suggested, “You can pull out your curriculum and give it to her [resource teacher], and state your expectations...” She also encouraged by saying, “One thing you need to remember is to try not to be so critical of yourself...Tell yourself that you’re a good teacher.” This strategy is a form of verbal persuasion. Also part of problem-solving, Tori, a second-year third grade teacher, exhibited an internal locus of control in the form of a mastery experience as she believed it was her responsibility to seek help and collaboration: “Last year it was more of putting myself out there. They weren’t coming to me, so I had to walk down the hall and at points felt vulnerable saying, ‘I need help and I want you to help me.’ That fostered building a relationship with another colleague and we would sit down. I had to find my own way to build that up.” These comments suggest that teachers understand the importance of collaborating with resource and other specialist teachers for the benefit of students, and feel responsibility should be placed on both the classroom teacher and resource teacher. Too often new teachers feel they lack the expertise to work with students with special learning needs, and rely on resource teachers or specialists to assist in meeting these learners’ needs. Even so, teachers can feel conflicted as to who is ultimately responsible for collaborating with these specialists. Participants’ problem-solving strategies suggest that in order to heighten efficacy, mastery experiences, such as physically seeking collaboration, are vital. Teachers can also enhance their

efficacy through verbal persuasion, such as reminding themselves that they are doing all they can to help their students. This reflects how encouragement from participants in the program seminars can help to enhance teacher efficacy.

In summary, educators can play an active role in creating a safe, comfortable atmosphere where everyone is respected, ideas and opinions are heard and valued, and constructive collaboration exists by taking personal responsibility to support others through Bandura's sources of efficacy development. These include mastery experiences, such as seeking support and collaboration, and verbal persuasion, such as talking with administration and reminding themselves that they are competent. The program seminars themselves reflect verbal persuasion as well since participants encouraged and empathized with each other.

**School Policies and Procedures.** In addition to school culture, Bandura's components can positively impact teacher efficacy when it comes to school policies and procedures. Participant problem-solving strategies in response to school policies and procedures included open communication, supplementing curricula, and collaborating with other colleagues. The following examples describe problem-solving strategies participants shared and related updates discussed in consequent seminars.

***Curricula and the "ideal" in teaching.*** In response to having to use a scripted curriculum, Irene, a second-year kindergarten teacher in a low SES school, suggested a form of verbal persuasion as a problem-solving strategy: "Maybe you need to have that conversation with her [principal] about what is developmentally appropriate." Carrie, a first-year PreK teacher stated, "My literacy coach has let me supplement a lot. I don't know how open you all are to doing that, or if you're allowed to do that at all." Demonstrating more confidence and a higher sense of teacher efficacy, Khloe, a third-year K-5 ESL teacher explained, "I feel confident

coming from a teacher education program and knowing what is right and what is wrong. I feel confident in picking and choosing from the curriculum as I want to...I feel like I know what's right." The strategies described are forms of mastery experiences as they require teachers to supplement curricula as part of teaching practices.

As part of problem-solving in response to Irene's dilemma of her school's lack of curriculum, Heather, a first-year fourth grade teacher, suggested a vicarious experience in the form of collaboration: "Is there another teacher that you work with that you could maybe talk to and collaborate with? I know as a first year teacher I do try to reach out to others and say, 'I don't know what I'm doing all the time,' so just try to reach out to others to talk to." After voicing this problem-solving strategy, this dilemma was revisited in a subsequent program session. It had taken a positive turn because of Irene voicing her concerns about a lack of curriculum to her administration and school district. She was finally able to receive guidance from the newly assigned assistant literacy coach: "Our school had its evaluation from DPI for being a low-performing school. We got our feedback and got an assistant coach for our K-2 team...Now I have been planning and have a better idea of what my curriculum should look like to get my students where they need to be..." Another teacher commended her for speaking up: "You did great speaking up and getting these things on the radar. This also speaks well for us and for our teacher preparation program that we are well prepared for so many things." Irene's follow-up suggested she had developed more confidence in speaking up about her curriculum and in her teaching practices possibly due to the strategies provided by fellow participants. This, in turn, seemed to have improved her efficacy.

Even though mandated curricula, or a lack of curricula, can interfere with teachers' effectiveness and sense of efficacy, teacher efficacy can be enhanced through mastery and

vicarious experiences, and verbal persuasion in the forms of having conversations and collaborating with colleagues, and feeling confident to supplement scripted curricula as needed.

**Parents.** In addition to school policies and procedures, Bandura's components can potentially heighten teacher efficacy when it comes to working with parents. Participant problem-solving strategies in response to working with parents included understanding where parents are coming from and collaborating with parents. The following examples illustrate problem-solving strategies discussed by participants, and relevant updates from subsequent program seminars.

Trying to help participants understand that parents' primary focus is on their child and not the teacher, Wendy, a third-year second grade teacher believed, "...you do have to remember that a lot of parents will listen to their child first, and that they take what their child says as the absolute truth, and you always hope that they'll come to you and respect what you have to say as the adult..." Paige, an African-American teacher with 34 years of experience, understood the power of emotions and affective states while teaching: "...understand that people are who they are, and the one thing we cannot do is change them. So include an administrator, include another teacher, and QTIP, which is Quit Taking It Personally." The participants' problem-solving strategies in the program seminars suggest a form of verbal persuasion, as they try to help each other understand where parents are coming from and that parents put their child first. This can positively impact teacher efficacy.

In a subsequent session, Tara revisited her dilemma and provided an update of trying to deal with her unsupportive parents. The parents seemed to have improved their attitude towards her: "...I did talk to the mom who's a little bit nicer...He's [father] trying to be nice too, but I'm not going above and beyond for those parents." This update suggests that even though Tara's

parents have improved their attitude towards her, her efficacy might have been compromised as she still did not feel positive about the situation.

These comments suggest that many teachers are learning to collaborate with parents to overcome affective states that include feelings of disrespect and lack of confidence. As parents and teachers come to respect each other's expertise and collaborate with each other for the benefit of students, this can have a positive influence on a teacher's efficacy.

**Students and classroom management.** Bandura's four components can positively impact teacher efficacy when it comes to working with students. Participant problem-solving strategies in response to working with students included communicating with parents, seeking out resources, staying positive about student progress, and knowing students. The following examples depict problem-solving strategies and related updates discussed in successive program sessions.

As part of problem-solving for working with high-need students, Kathryn, a second-year first grade teacher, stressed the importance of reaching out to parents: "One thing that I was terrible at being a first year teacher, I was too scared to call their parents when they [students] were being awful. I don't know if you have tried to reach out to parents to make sure that they know..." As shown in the field notes, other participants agreed with this strategy of consistently communicating with parents and seeking out parent support.

In a subsequent session, London revisited her dilemma and presented an update of working with her students with behavior challenges: "...what ended up happening is one of my students was moved out of my classroom...the one student that stayed in my classroom, he is doing much better...He receives EC resources...it helps to not have as many...this was just a 'slap in the face' this year. I learned a lot and I feel like I am a better teacher for it, but it has

been really hard...I have learned how I can get help from a lot of resources..." Her efficacy seemed to have improved as she was able to utilize problem-solving strategies provided by fellow participants and seek out resources for support. This resulted in her feeling better about both of her students with behavior and emotional challenges. Emma's sense of efficacy seemed to have improved as well as she provided an update on her dilemma of working with a student with autism in a subsequent program session: "My dilemma is resolved...What I did was I met with the autistic specialist in my county and she changed some things in my classroom. It wasn't so hard...I feel much better because he is getting instruction that is specific for him..." Again, problem-solving strategies provided by fellow participants in previous sessions encouraged Emma to look for additional resources for support. This seemed to have positively enhanced her efficacy as she felt better.

In response to a dilemma about meeting the needs of all students, Heather, a first-year fourth grade teacher from an ethnically diverse middle to upper class school, empathized by saying, "It's hard being a teacher because you are also a counselor and a social worker...You want to be there for all these kids and do everything for them, and it is exhausting. It's frustrating that you're trying so hard and it's still not enough for all your kids." Reflecting the power of emotions and affective states in teaching, one participant explained, "You have to look out for yourself and protect yourself too. You can never solve the problems of the world or save all these students. It's hard to find the balance of being empathetic, but also protecting yourself from being so invested in your students so that you are not upset all the time." These comments suggest that teachers need to stay positive about student progress. This can potentially heighten teacher efficacy as participants demonstrated verbal persuasion in the program sessions—empathizing and encouraging each other.

As part of problem-solving in response to classroom management, Brooke, a third-year fourth grade teacher, stated: “There are a lot of things you can do but I think it is important to not give up...” Kristen felt, “If you don’t know your kids, you’re not going to be able to manage your classroom.” This statement shows how teachers exhibit an internal locus of control, as they feel it is in their power to effectively manage a classroom.

As conversations related to students and classroom management ensued in the program sessions, teachers affirmed one another for persevering and continuing to try strategies to work with students and maintain control in their classrooms, which reflected their sense of internal locus of control and possibly heightened their efficacy.

**Teacher preparation.** Many teachers feel it is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to fully prepare them for the realities of teaching in diverse contexts. In response to feelings of unpreparedness to teach, Taylor, a third-year kindergarten teacher from a suburban school, would have liked to, “Have veteran teachers come in who were from different counties or different areas...” Avery, a first-year second grade teacher from a high SES school, believed, “...it would be good to have an awareness of what you can do and what your resources are...I think more teacher preparation about going into the field and seeing yourself as a professional is a huge confidence booster...” These strategies suggest that vicarious experiences, such as having veteran teachers talk with preservice teachers, can have an impact on teacher efficacy as preservice teachers move into the teaching profession.

**Teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession.** Teacher burnout can have a profound impact on teacher efficacy. As part of problem-solving and a form of vicarious experience, Carrie, a first-year PreK teacher in a low-income school, felt it was important to be able to come together as teachers and collaboratively talk about the personal dilemmas they

faced so as not to get burned out: “So often in our meetings with teachers we feel like we have to talk about our students and not how we are feeling as teachers...I feel that it’s so important for us to share so we don’t get bogged down with all these dilemmas. I feel really lucky to have had this [program] this year as my first year.” This comment reflects how support groups as a form of vicarious experience, such as the program seminars, can be a likely avenue to increase teacher efficacy.

Even though beginning teachers struggle with various dilemmas, a variety of problem-strategies were provided by participants that encompassed Bandura’s four sources for developing efficacy. In their collaborative conversations, efficacy seemed to improve as participants provided strategies to assist fellow participants with dilemmas, offered advice, and empathized with each other. Moreover, efficacy also seemed to heighten through the program seminars themselves as a community of new teachers was established. Examples of problem-solving strategies provided by participants included seeking support from and collaborating with colleagues, seeking support from parents, supplementing curricula, participating in teacher support groups, reminding self of student progress, and being happy. These problem-solving strategies, which relate to Bandura’s components for developing efficacy, appeared to positively influence teacher efficacy as teachers become more confident in utilizing the strategies in their practices.

### **Collaborative Conversations as a Strategy for Promoting Teacher Efficacy**

Another indication of teacher efficacy was reflected in participants’ whole group discussions and feedback comments. During the afternoon of the last program session each year, participants were involved in a whole group discussion facilitated by the project Research Assistant. These continued discussions with colleagues suggest that the program sessions are a

viable model in terms of collegial support and networking, and are important for beginning teachers' efficacy. During the whole group discussion, participants had the chance to discuss what support systems teachers needed, strengths of the sessions, and how sharing dilemmas with colleagues helped participants think about their own practices. Focusing on teacher efficacy, participants shared some insight as to how the program sessions served as a support system that validated their practice and created self-worth. A first grade teacher commented, "...it's all about validation...we came here and we would talk about our problems in the classroom...it created such a sense of empathy. Whether it was actually happening to you or not, you could relate to whatever anyone was saying...It's created a sense of self-worth." An experienced teacher reflected, "...hearing that other people had that common thread, it helped me understand that it's not personal."

Participants also expressed strengths of the program sessions in reflective feedback comments, such as having a safe space for valuable conversation and boosting confidence through validation. A kindergarten teacher stated, "...the opportunity to talk freely without any barriers or feeling confined...this is a safe environment. I felt completely comfortable to say whatever I wanted to and that I'd be respected and heard and people would offer support. I think that was really powerful." A first grade teacher described how her, "...experience in the first and second years [of the program] was very different. It helped me feel like a better teacher. This self-efficacy of being a teacher was proof. I value the conversation." Another teacher believed, "It was nice to come here and think, 'Other people are going through this at the same time as me.' It was a confidence boost." Once participant stated, "The discussion of my dilemma reinforced that I was already doing much of what I could to solve the issue. It strengthened my confidence as a professional." Other participants felt, "It helped me realize that I need to feel

good about everything I am doing.” Thus, these comments suggest that the program sessions served as a support system for new teachers to potentially enhance their efficacy through Bandura’s components, as the support groups provided a form of vicarious experience with verbal persuasion and physiological states where participants felt confident, comfortable, respected, and valued.

## **Summary**

Results indicate most beginning teachers have low teacher efficacy when it comes to their effectiveness. As shown in the dilemmas provided, beginning teachers, regardless of experience, grade level and school context, struggle with various school and classroom issues that affect their efficacy. Factors such as school culture, parents, students, and teacher burnout can positively or negatively affect teacher efficacy. Accordingly, school policies and procedures, and skills learned in teacher preparation programs can positively or negatively affect efficacy as well. When it comes to teachers feeling in or not in control over teaching practices, the majority of teachers exhibit an internal locus of control when it comes to working with and managing students. Teachers feel it is in their power and control to effectively teach and manage students in the classroom, and they are responsible for student achievement. However, teachers exhibit a more external locus of control when it comes to working with parents, teacher preparation, and teacher expectations. Because teachers feel parents have a large influence over their children’s learning and achievement, teachers expect parents to collaborate and establish positive working relationships with teachers for the benefit of their students, and will often blame parents if students are not achieving. As teachers feel they are in control when it comes to things being done solely in the classroom (internal locus of control), they believe parents have the control out of the classroom (external locus of control). Also, teacher expectations such as mandated testing

and scripted curricula are factors teachers feel they are not in control of, and thus, should not be held responsible for.

In their collaborative conversations, teachers provide problem-solving strategies encompassing Bandura's four sources for developing efficacy: mastery and vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological/affective states. Mastery and vicarious experiences included seeking support from and collaborating with colleagues, seeking support from parents, supplementing curricula, and participating in teacher support groups. According to Bandura, these experiences provide the greatest opportunity to improve efficacy as teachers are fully enmeshed in their school and classroom practices. Verbal persuasion included speaking with colleagues and administration, and reminding self of student progress. The power of voice can have a profound influence on teacher efficacy as teachers become more confident in speaking up against negative situations. Being happy and the strategy of 'Quit Taking It Personally' (QTIP) were part of physiological states in teaching. These physiological states are critical in teaching as teachers' emotions can impact behaviors, attitudes, practices, and effectiveness. Furthermore, the program seminars themselves, as a form of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, could have promoted teacher efficacy as a community of teachers was established where strategies were provided, confidence was boosted, and everyone was heard, valued and respected. Teachers' problem-solving discussions reflected that teachers who have high teacher efficacy expectations will express they are confident in their own abilities to teach, and are equally confident in how well students will achieve in their learning. These teachers believe they are competent enough to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning, and have the capacity to positively affect student performance.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This study sought to explore new early childhood and elementary teachers' perceived efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas using a model of new teacher support. The study's results indicated that teacher self-identified efficacy dilemmas and corresponding problem-solving strategies related to Teacher Efficacy integrates both Personal Teaching Efficacy and General Teaching Efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a teacher's beliefs in his or her individual capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality in a specified situation. General teaching efficacy is the belief that student learning can or cannot be influenced by effective teaching. This chapter begins with how teacher efficacy is emphasized in participants' practice dilemmas, and how personal and general teaching efficacy issues are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as issues were frequently integrated. Contextual factors influencing teacher efficacy are discussed as well as how teacher efficacy is improved through the teacher participants' problem-solving discussions. Furthermore, the chapter links the study's results with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Rotter's concept of Locus of Control. However, even though Locus of Control was used throughout the study's results, it was found that this concept was not as informative to the understanding of the data and teacher efficacy as much as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Rotter's Locus of Control was most helpful in understanding teacher efficacy relative to teachers' self-reported dilemmas, and Bandura's theory was most helpful in understanding participants' problem-solving discussions. Implications and limitations of the research, and proposed future research conclude the chapter.

## **Decreased Teacher Efficacy Highlighted in Teacher Practice Dilemmas**

Teacher participants discussed their dilemmas ranging from issues related to school culture—which includes colleagues and administration—school policies and procedures, parents, students, teacher preparation, teacher burnout and staying in the teaching profession. These teacher dilemmas demonstrated a perceived lack of skill and confidence in teacher efficacy. For example, one participant discussed her dilemma related to working with a student with behavior challenges. Her lack of teacher efficacy was emphasized as she explained how she felt overwhelmed being responsible for all of the students in her classroom. This participant discussed strategies she could use to best support students with behavior issues in her classroom, but, in turn, felt discouraged that she could not give enough attention to her other students. Another example of how a lack of teacher efficacy was highlighted was when a participant explained how she felt her students' parents were unsupportive. This participant talked about trying to collaborate with parents focusing on children's success, despite feeling disrespected by the parents. Additionally, one participant explained how lack of administrative support hindered her from effectively teaching her multi-age combination class. She looked to her administration for support and assistance in how to teach her class the best way in order to meet various age levels and learning needs, but felt she did not receive the needed support. Hence, this teacher's lack of efficacy was clear as she was felt she was being blamed for the difficulties she was experiencing in teaching. Another participant discussed a particularly negative situation when she expressed a different opinion on grading than her grade level teammates. Her dilemma of disagreeing with colleagues on grading policies turned out to have a particularly negative affect on her efficacy. Thus, teachers' practice dilemmas related to working with students, parents, administration, and colleagues demonstrated a lack of teacher efficacy. However, the

opportunity exists for teachers to heighten their efficacy by utilizing Bandura's four components of efficacy development as demonstrated in the teachers' problem-solving discussions.

### **Teacher Characteristics and Contextual Factors Influencing Teacher Efficacy**

Participants' dilemmas and problem-solving strategies were affected by a number of teacher characteristics and contextual factors. These factors included race, number of years' experience, grade level taught, and classroom/school diversity. Results indicated that most beginning teachers, regardless of race, experience, grade level and school context, struggled with various school and classroom issues, resulting in low efficacy as evidenced by their dilemmas. These issues included school culture, school policies and procedures, parents, students, and teacher burnout. For example, a first-year PreK teacher in a predominantly African-American school described how she felt uncomfortable delegating tasks to her veteran teaching assistant because she was the younger teacher. Her comments reflected a lack of confidence in confronting and challenging her veteran TA's practices, which suggested a low level of efficacy. Additionally, a second-year fourth grade teacher from a middle to upper class school stated how she was having a hard time working with her parents because she felt disrespected by them just because she was a young teacher; this resulted in her having feelings of low efficacy. Again, most teachers, regardless of their experience, grade level, and school context struggled with an array of challenges, which resulted in low teacher efficacy.

Conversely, there were instances of high teacher efficacy in participants' conversations. Participants with a higher level of teacher efficacy expressed more confidence in resolving dilemmas. High efficacy was exhibited by teachers in their first year of teaching, as well as by teachers with more years of experience. For example, a third- year K-5 ESL teacher discussed taking ownership of her classroom practices and ultimately doing things her own way since she

felt confident in choosing her curricula to best support her students. Thus, she exhibited higher teaching efficacy in the form of a mastery experience of supplementing her curricula to meet the needs of her students. Other examples of high teacher efficacy came through in the forms of verbal persuasion and mastery experiences. These included a teacher who felt it was important to constantly remind herself that she was a good teacher to build self-confidence, and a participant who would frequently seek out collegial collaboration to enhance efficacy. Hence, collaborative conversations indicated that some participants, with varying years of experience and in a variety of grade levels and diverse school contexts, exhibited high levels of teacher efficacy.

### **Inter-Relatedness of Personal and General Teaching Efficacy**

Based on participants' collaborative conversations, teacher efficacy encompasses both personal and general teaching efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a teacher's individual beliefs in his or her capabilities to perform specific teaching tasks at a specified level of quality. General teaching efficacy is the belief that student learning can or cannot be influenced by effective teaching. According to Bandura (1997), regardless of a teacher's confidence in his or her own teaching abilities (PTE), there is not always an equal confidence in how well students will achieve in their learning through effective teaching practices (GTE). Conversely, general teaching efficacy by itself overlooks the unique role played by teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform the wide variety of teaching tasks required in various teaching and learning contexts (Bleicher, 2007). Therefore, general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy beliefs produce the outcome of a teacher's actions. For example, a participant who had a child with autism in her class had great concerns about his not moving into third grade, and felt she personally did not have the skills and knowledge to teach the child in an

appropriate manner. Thus, not only was her personal teaching efficacy low, but her general teaching efficacy was low as well because she felt her lack of education regarding children with autism and ways to support them in the classroom. Another participant discussed how her own particular skills in managing a classroom were less than adequate (PTE), which hindered her from getting to know each of her students and effectively teaching with the end goal of promoting student achievement (GTE). As shown in these examples, Teacher Efficacy dilemmas included both PTE and GTE dilemmas, and how participants' PTE and GTE were affected concurrently in particular teaching situations.

### **Rotter's Internal versus External Locus of Control**

In addition to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Rotter's Locus of Control was used as a framework throughout the study's results. However, it was found that this concept was not as informative to the understanding and analysis of the data on teacher efficacy as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Rotter's Locus of Control was most helpful in understanding teacher efficacy relative to teachers' self-reported dilemmas.

According to Rotter, a person's "locus," or "place," is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes they can control their life) or external (the person believes their decisions and life are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence, or by chance or fate). Thus, teachers' efficacy dilemmas as reflected in their collaborative conversations also can be shown as either internal (teacher controls) or external (teacher cannot control, or uncontrollable). For example, a teacher might believe they are fully responsible and in control of managing their classrooms; hence, exhibiting an internal locus of control. Conversely, a teacher who feels incorporating district mandated curricula does not allow for autonomy will exhibit an external locus of control, as they feel this type of curricula is out of their control.

In regard to teachers feeling in or not in control over teaching practices, the majority of teachers, regardless of number of years' experience, exhibited an internal locus of control relative to working with students and managing their behaviors. Teachers felt it was in their power and control to effectively teach and manage students in the classroom. Thus, they felt responsible for student achievement. However, teachers, regardless of experience, exhibited a more external locus of control related to issues of working with parents, teacher preparation, and teacher accountability. Because teachers feel parents have a large influence over their children's learning and achievement, teachers expect parents to develop and maintain positive working relationships with teachers for the benefit of their students. Teachers, thus, blamed parents if students were not achieving. Teachers felt in control when it came to things being done solely in the classroom (internal locus of control), however, they believed parents had control out of the classroom (external locus of control). In regards to teacher preparation, teacher participants stressed feelings of unpreparedness and being overwhelmed when beginning teaching. These teachers exhibited a more external locus of control as they believed teacher preparation programs were responsible to educate and prepare them for the teaching profession. Also, teacher accountability through mandated testing of students was part of the uncontrollable factors teachers felt they were not in control of, and, thus, should not be held responsible for; hence, demonstrating an external locus of control.

### **Improving Teacher Efficacy through Problem-Solving**

Teacher efficacy potentially can improve if teachers are provided strategies to develop and enhance their efficacy. In fact, Yost (2006) explained that "resilient teachers can think deeply, problem-solve, and feel confident in their ability to meet the needs of their students. This leads to high levels of efficacy, which in turn leads to greater persistence and risk-taking"

(p. 74). As discussed in the literature, Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy and outcome expectations are shaped by four sources of information: (a) Mastery experiences, (b) Vicarious experiences, (c) Verbal persuasion, and (d) Physiological and affective states. In their collaborative conversations, participants' problem-solving strategies provided a number of opportunities for efficacy development utilizing these four sources. Mastery experiences included seeking assistance from other colleagues, supplementing curricula, and engaging in teacher support groups. According to Bandura, these problem-solving experiences provided through the new teacher support model have the greatest potential to positively impact new teachers' efficacy as they were practical experiences of teachers in the classroom. Vicarious experiences involve interactions and relationships between new teachers and more experienced teachers. For example, interacting in a positive and supportive manner with veteran colleagues, such as grade-level teammates and teaching assistants, were forms of vicarious experiences provided in participants' problem-solving conversations. These experiences have the potential to positively influence teacher confidence. As verbal persuasion involves developing efficacy through talk and conversation, problem-solving strategies included speaking with colleagues and administration. Emotional arousal, or affective states, relays emotive information which can influence efficacy. For example, being happy and the strategy of QTIP were part of physiological and affective states in teaching. Hence, teacher's affect related to teacher efficacy was clearly influenced by teaching experiences, collaborations with other colleagues, and the state of teachers' emotions while teaching (e.g., energized, stressed). Furthermore, the new teacher support seminars themselves, as forms of vicarious experience and verbal persuasion, could have heightened teacher efficacy as a community of teachers was established where everyone was heard, valued and respected. Teachers who had high teacher efficacy expectations

expressed their confidence in their own abilities to teach, and were equally confident in how well students learned. These teachers believed they were competent enough to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to student learning, and had the capacity to positively affect student performance.

Teachers' continued problem-solving in subsequent program sessions seemingly improved teacher efficacy of fellow participants, as participants confronted one another and felt more confident in the resolution of dilemmas from one session to another. For example, one participant provided an update of her previous discomfort of delegating tasks to her veteran TA because she was a younger teacher. However, through encouragement and problem-solving strategies from her fellow peers, she found ways to delegate particular tasks to her TA that were more comfortable for her. Another participant's actions of speaking up and having one of her extreme behavior students removed from her classroom increased her sense of efficacy as she felt more in control. Another participant appeared to have developed a greater sense of efficacy after she voiced her concerns to her administration and school district about not having any resources for curriculum planning. Partly because of her actions, her school was provided with an assistant coach to assist with curriculum planning. Since fellow program participants encouraged her to voice her concerns about planning, she felt confident in confronting her administration about needed changes. These problem-solving sessions appeared to enhance teachers' sense of efficacy, making them more confident to confront their teaching challenges in their respective schools.

Moreover, it appeared the program sessions seemed to have improved teacher efficacy as shown in whole group discussions and participants' feedback forms. For example, participants frequently commented they felt empowered and empathetic, and their dilemmas and ideas were

valued and respected. The sessions created a sense of “self-worth” and “validation” as participants shared experiences. Teachers also felt the sessions were a “confidence boost” as they felt they were doing “good things” in the classroom, and a sense of “empowerment” was established because ideas were heard and fellow participants could share helpful strategies. Thus, it can be said that teacher efficacy seemed to have improved for some teachers as they participated in collaborative conversations in the program sessions since the sessions could have influenced teachers’ affective states, confidence, and overall sense of efficacy.

In summary, results revealed teacher efficacy dilemmas were integrated to include both PTE and GTE dilemmas. Additionally, beginning teachers, regardless of experience, grade level and school context, struggled with various school and classroom issues affecting their efficacy. Unfortunately, most teacher participants indicated low levels of efficacy when describing their dilemmas, which may have made participants feel vulnerable. Even so, there were examples of teachers experiencing higher levels of efficacy, regardless of teaching experience, grade level, and school context. For example, a third year teacher felt confident to supplement her mandated curriculum in order to best meet her students’ needs. When it came to teachers’ autonomy in their teaching practices, the majority of teachers, regardless of number of years’ experience, exhibited an internal locus of control when it came to working with and managing students. These teachers felt responsible for student achievement. However, teachers exhibited a more external locus of control when it came to working with parents, teacher preparation, and teacher accountability. These teachers blamed parents if students were not achieving, believed teacher preparation programs were responsible to educate and prepare them for the teaching profession, and felt they were not in control of teacher accountability through mandated testing.

In their collaborative conversations, teachers provided problem-solving strategies encompassing Bandura's four sources for developing efficacy. Mastery and vicarious experiences participants provided included interacting with colleagues in a positive manner and supplementing scripted and mandated curricula. Verbal persuasion experiences recommended by participants included speaking with colleagues for collaborative support and speaking with administration about challenges in the classroom. Being happy and the strategy of QTIP were part of affective states in teaching that participants recommended. As problem-solving strategies provided amongst the seminar participants were significant and prevalent, it seemed their recommended strategies helped to improve teacher efficacy and instill a sense of empowerment among teachers. Participants revealed they felt safe and comfortable expressing their dilemmas, and providing problem-solving strategies that created a sense of self-worth and boosted confidence.

### **Conclusions and Future Prospects**

There are several factors affecting beginning early childhood and elementary teachers' efficacy. Teachers' self-identified dilemmas related to their efficacy produced in collaborative conversations included school culture, school policies and procedures, students' behaviors and learning differences, classroom management, overprotective and disrespectful parents, teacher preparation and accountability, and teacher burnout and the resulting dilemma of whether to remain in the teaching profession. Teachers' collaborative conversations reflected empathy as well as ideas and strategies to resolve dilemmas, which appeared to result in teacher empowerment and increased efficacy. Furthermore, as part of affective states, participants' updates revealed that many "felt better" about their daily practice dilemmas, and more validated and confident, which seemingly led to a higher sense of efficacy.

## Implications

**Practice.** Although teaching involves intensive interactions with children and youth, ironically the work of teachers is largely done in isolation from colleagues (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Beginning teachers require a variety of supports as they face the constant demands and challenges of teaching. They are continuously learning and developing their efficacy by actively teaching, participating in support groups and/or mentoring experiences, and working with colleagues, students, and parents. Learning communities and support groups can provide a safe place where teachers can share and reflect on their teaching through the use of collaborative conversations to heighten teacher efficacy, which, in turn, may empower teachers. Such teacher support efforts may, in fact, improve the teaching and learning process leading to better student outcomes and, perhaps, a reduction in teacher attrition.

A Critical Friends Group model (National School Reform Faculty [NSRF], 2000), such as the new teacher support program discussed, is an example of a learning community which supports teacher efficacy. Designed to build collaboration with colleagues through the use of conversation, this arrangement purports to develop supportive environments for teachers while they develop and improve their teaching strategies, and thus, enhance their efficacy. A CFG is a professional learning community consisting of a small group of educators who come together and are committed to improving their practice through collaborative learning. Critical Friends Groups are designed to create a professional learning community, make teaching practice explicit and public by “talking about teaching,” help people involved in schools to work collaboratively in reflective communities (Bambino, 2002), and establish a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry (Silva, 2002). Furthermore, CFGs provide a context for teachers to build relationships with peers, so thoughts and beliefs

about teaching and learning can help educators improve their teaching and learning. Teachers should have the opportunity to regularly participate in these types of communities, or have the opportunity to create their own with trusted and supportive colleagues. Likewise, mentorship programs where novice teachers learn through mastery and vicarious experiences from expert teachers should be a necessity. Learning communities and support groups can likely be an avenue to increase teacher efficacy by engaging in what Florio-Ruane and Clark (1993) describe as “authentic conversation.” The program seminars provided a forum for the beginning teachers in this study to engage in authentic conversations of their practice dilemmas.

### **Policy.**

***Teacher preparation programs.*** This study provided some information about novice teacher evaluations of their preservice teacher education experiences relative to their becoming confident and successful educators. According to Chang (2009), studies during the last 40 years (e.g., Hermanowicz, 1966; Benz, Bradley, Alderman, & Flowers, 1992; Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001) indicated that teachers have revealed their teacher training did not prepare them to be effective teachers. Lack of relevant training could contribute to beginning teachers’ low levels of efficacy and teachers who lack confidence in their capabilities and are uncertain about their future teaching tasks, as evidenced in the participant dilemmas from this study. For example, many participants felt unprepared and overwhelmed when they began teaching. As such, teacher preparation programs could play an important role in fostering the resiliency and persistence novice teachers need to ensure high levels of efficacy and success during their initial years of teaching. For instance, shadowing and interviewing teachers regarding their multiple tasks and roles at the beginning of their teacher education curriculum

could be expanded as students engage in more in-depth field-based work integrated with teacher education courses.

In fact, according to Marshall & Marshall (2003), changes in teacher preparation programs should include increasing the amount of time education students spend in field-based classroom activities while also starting students in field-based activities earlier than their teacher preparation program. In addition, beginning teachers stressed the importance of courses and experiences focused on classroom management and working with diverse students and their families (Marshall & Marshall, 2003). Cantrell et al. (2003) believe teacher education courses in particular need to focus on Bandura's strategies for increasing efficacy. They suggest teacher preparation programs need to provide: (a) early vicarious experiences for preservice teachers in the form of field experiences; (b) many opportunities for mastery experiences; and (c) a community of learners within methods classes leading to a safe climate for risk-taking and positive physiological and emotional arousal.

In terms of field experiences, a study done by Rushton (2000) disconfirmed earlier findings (Lantz, 1964) that interns need to be placed in nonthreatening classrooms to foster the development of their personal teaching efficacy. He found that the intensity of practice teaching in inner-city schools actually increased the development of teacher efficacy. Haberman (1995) also argued that teachers should practice teaching in the most challenging settings, so they will be prepared to teach in those settings. Furthermore, teachers need to be prepared for the obstacles they face in the reality of teaching. Some clear obstacles for the beginning teachers in this study is related to scripted curricula and collaborating with colleagues. Thus, teacher preparation programs should include courses focusing on Bandura's sources of efficacy development to include mastery and vicarious experiences in overcoming these obstacles to

teaching, complete with practice teaching in challenging settings, so as to prepare teachers for the reality of teaching in diverse areas.

***Teacher induction programs.*** In addition to quality and relevant preservice teacher education, new teachers also need strong and consistent mentoring and support during their early years of teaching to develop and enhance their efficacy. Research documents that new teachers struggle in their first few years in the classroom with both environmental and people related issues (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). These issues often include classroom management, differentiated teaching and assessment strategies to accommodate for diverse student learning styles and abilities, student motivation, and collaboration with other colleagues and parents (Veenman, 1984). New teachers' behaviors and teacher efficacy are strongly influenced and affected by these variables as evidenced by participant dilemmas related to working with colleagues, students, and parents.

Teacher induction refers to support and orientation programs for beginning teachers. The theory behind induction holds that teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skills necessary to successful teaching and a significant portion can be acquired only while on the job (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ganser, 2002; Gold, 1999). Hence, there is a necessary role for schools in providing an environment where novices are able to learn the craft of teaching and survive and succeed as teachers. Teacher retention has clear benefits and is supported through induction; however, the mere presence of induction programs is not enough to ensure competence (Fry, 2007). Thus, professional development as part of induction may enhance beginning teachers' efficacy (Fry, 2009).

According to Lopez, Lash, Schaffner, Shields, & Wagner (2004), key components of an effective induction program include: (a) building relationships; (b) providing a supportive,

collegial work environment; (c) intensive and ongoing professional development; and (d) an external network of teachers. Thus, support groups like the program seminars can likely be an avenue to increase teacher efficacy by engaging a network of like-minded teachers in collaborative conversations of challenges they face as beginning teachers. As a campus-community collaboration model including university personnel and teacher alumni, this model can serve as part of necessary induction efforts to support teachers and improve efficacy. Participants unanimously agreed the program sessions were useful in terms of giving and receiving empathy, encouragement, support, ideas and strategies, and outside and unbiased opinions. It was a place to “feel safe” and have an “open discussion without being punished” since a sense of camaraderie and understanding among participants was established. Participants realized they were not alone when it came to issues in the school or classroom, and they were, “...encouraged by having the opportunity to talk with other ‘young’ teachers.” Sharing dilemmas made participants “feel better” and helped to boost confidence as well. Hence, because new teachers struggle in the first few years with various issues such as working with colleagues and parents, support and induction efforts are necessary to assist teachers through these challenges and develop high teacher efficacy. The program model can serve as a support system for new teachers to enhance their efficacy.

***Current political context.*** Current federal and state political contexts are critical in attracting and retaining good teachers. Unfortunately, there have recently been a number of circumstances and initiatives contributing to the state’s possible ‘mass teacher exodus.’ According to the state’s Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession (2013), the number of teachers leaving the classroom in the state reached a five-year high during the 2012-2013 school year. The report stated school systems throughout the state had an average teacher

turnover rate of 14.33 percent last year. The report comes after the state legislature passed a new budget that gutted many teacher benefits including teacher tenure and pay increases for teachers with masters degrees (Klein, 2013) and national board certification. To make matters worse, the state's educators are already some of the lowest paid in the nation, an appalling 46<sup>th</sup>-place ranking.

Clearly these courses of action do not positively affect teacher efficacy, as they will likely hinder a teacher's self-worth. Voicing her concerns in her blog (Mgongolwa, 2014), a teacher education graduate discusses her personal struggle of continuing to teach within the current political context:

Not only does this plan continue to attempt to place a divide and hierarchy in schools, but it also follows outdated beliefs that the sole measure of success of a student is in how teachers perform. And if you constantly tell teachers they are unworthy, or that they should be competitors, rather than coworkers, everyone will suffer. It puts energy into correcting teachers and demeaning them while ignoring the myriad of problems we are facing: too much testing, too thin of budgets, etc. [State] is already one of the worst states to become a teacher. I have many friends who'd like to move back but do not feel comfortable doing so. I may be part of the 14.33 percent who might leave the teaching profession in [state], but I clearly do not want to. I simply want to have a profession that is spiritually enriching and also in which I make a difference.

Clearly this teacher seems to feel valueless in a valuable profession as she states she might leave teaching because she feels she is not being respected and appreciated.

## **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. First, because five participants from year two did not consent to the larger project, these participants had to be excluded from this study. Therefore, 37 instead of 42 participants were studied. Second, participant demographic data is incomplete. This is due to not obtaining complete data from each participant from the larger project. Third, missing data was not included as part of analysis. Missing data includes a whole group discussion transcript from year three of the project. Fourth, inter-rater agreement was

established using approximately one-third of transcript data, not all data. Additionally, inter-rater agreement was established with the researcher and an informally trained Research Assistant with no previous qualitative coding experience. Fifth, since feedback forms were given and received anonymously, it is unknown whether this data came specifically from early childhood and/or elementary education participants, as opposed to middle grades or secondary participants from the program sessions. Sixth, final analysis and interpretation of results were conducted by the researcher and are subjective, since researcher role and positionality can create bias in analyzing and interpreting data. Lastly, results are not generalizable to other populations. Hence, this study could have been improved by seeking consistent demographic data from participants across the multiple years, ensuring complete transcripts of all sessions, establishing inter-rater agreement using all data with an experienced researcher, and utilizing feedback data reflecting only early childhood and elementary education participants.

### **Future Research**

Possibilities for future research include additional data sources and participants, and participant follow-up. Additional data sources would consist of teacher efficacy instruments, such as Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES) or Gibson and Dembo's (1984) *Teacher Efficacy Scale*. These instruments are designed to better understand the circumstances causing difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Questions such as, "How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?" and "How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?" are measured on a scale of 1-9 in terms of teacher efficacy. In addition to utilizing the current data, these questionnaires could be given to participants to further determine their sense of teacher efficacy; thus, adding value as a mixed design study. These instruments could also supply substantial

information on teacher efficacy if given to preservice teachers at the end of their teacher preparation programs, beginning inservice teachers, and more experienced teachers.

Furthermore, systematic research to determine the most effective support programs for novice teachers toward developing a strong sense of teacher efficacy should be conducted. Including additional participants from various schools communities and backgrounds would serve to obtain further information regarding teacher efficacy. Moreover, participant follow-up could inform research on teacher retention; specifically if teacher participants remained in their professions, shifted to a different education profession, or left education altogether as part of teacher efficacy.

The transition from teacher education student to beginning teacher is a challenging period where conflicts between new teacher beliefs and the reality of teaching are prevalent. It is during this vital career stage, when new teachers are constructing their sense of professional self and beliefs about teaching, that they are most vulnerable and prone to leave the teaching profession. Teacher efficacy is a high priority for teacher preparation programs, school districts and new teachers, given that many new teachers feel they lack the confidence and competence to be effective teachers. Furthermore, our educational system is at a critically low level of retaining new teachers. Thus, there has to be a collective effort on the part of universities and school systems to provide and maintain effective support systems for new teachers to enhance their efficacy. These support systems start at the preservice level and extend well beyond the first few years of teaching.

All too often beginning teachers begin their careers with enthusiasm and a creative mind only to find they cannot implement the creative strategies they were taught. As they become involved in their own classrooms, they find that they do not have the autonomy to do their jobs. Furthermore, they easily can be isolated if they do not have the support needed to face the

challenges of working with students, parents, and colleagues. Participating in the program sessions boosted confidence as beginning early childhood and elementary teachers had the opportunity to share their teaching challenges with peers in a space where they were respected and their opinions were heard and valued. As thoughts were validated, teachers felt a sense of self-worth and competence. Additionally, teachers felt empowered as they provided problem-solving strategies, empathy, and encouragement. Even though many beginning teachers have low teacher efficacy, results indicate that schools have the power to raise teacher efficacy by ensuring beginning teachers receive adequate support and have autonomy in an atmosphere of trust and respect. The ultimate goal is teacher retention, however, for new teachers, it is the shift from novice to effective teachers with an empowered sense of teacher efficacy that will ultimately make a difference in teaching effectiveness and positive student outcomes.

# APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Pseudonym	Year/Sessions attended	Program	Grade	School
Khloe	Y1S2, Y1S3, Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	MAT	K-5 ESL	Yellow Elementary (public,urban)
Carrie	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y1S3	CDFS	PreK (More at Four)	Mann's Baptist (public school in private setting)
Kathryn	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y2S4, Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	K-1; 1 (school change after first session)	Heights Elem; Purple Elem (public,urban; public,rural)
Natalie	Y1S2, Y1S3	Elem Ed	K	Blue Elementary (public,suburban)
Tara	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y1S3	CDFS	PreK-K	Jar Elementary (rural)
Taylor	Y1S1, Y1S2	CDFS	K	Farm Elementary (public,suburban)
Kristen	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y1S3	CDFS	Early Learning Coordinator (PreK literacy)	KP Partnership
Rachel	Y1S1, Y1S2	Elem Ed	2	Collins Elementary (public,suburban)
Brooke	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y1S3	Elem Ed	4	Red Elementary
Amya	Y1S2	MEDX K-12	K-3 Reading Specialist; 5 Math	Heights Elementary (public,urban)
Paige	Y1S1, Y1S2, Y1S3	MEDX K-12	K-5 Technology	McGregor Elementary
Wendy	Y1S2	Elem Ed	2	Stations Elementary
Irene	Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y2S4, Y3S1	CDFS	1; K	Bird Elementary; Creek Elementary
Emma	Y2S1, Y2S2, Y3S2, Y3S3	Elem Ed	2	Purple Elementary (public,rural)
Heather	Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y2S4, Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	4	Mountain Elementary (public, suburban)

School system	Graduation year/Year teaching	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Students in classroom
Harperville	2007/3	White	F	60T 5-10 plans
Tyler	2009/1	White	F	9M 9F 18T 1 plan
Harperville; Manoa	2009/1	White	F	10M 15F 25T 15 1st gr 10 K 1 plan; 8M 11F 19T 2 plans
Harperville	2007/3	White	F	12M 11F 23T 0 plans
Jar	2008/2	Black	F	9M 8F 17T 0 plans
Apple	2007/3	White	F	12M 10F 22T 0 plans
Miller	2009/1	White	F	
Ridgeview	2009/1	Black	F	11M 11F 22T 2 plans
Apple	2007/3	White	F	12M 13F 25T 3 plans
Harperville	2008/11	Black	F	96T 3 referrals
Ridgeview	2009/34	Black	F	201M 234F 435T
Manoa	2007/3	White	F	9M 9F 18T 2 plans
Burrow; Apple	2010/1		F	9M 11F 20T 2 plans; 24T 0 plans
Manoa	2010/1		F	9M 11F 20T 0 plans
Apple	2009/1 (Dec Graduate)		F	12M 13F 25T 1 plan

Classroom diversity	Students in school	School diversity	Support level (1-5, 5 very high)
serves mostly spanish speaking students	617T	7% Cau; 40% Hisp; 47% Afr Am; 74% F/R lunch	1
low income; large Afr Am pop	80T	middle to upper class Cau	2
19 racially diverse (all F/R lunch); most low SES	650T; small	Cannot approximate b/c new school; 52% F/R lunch; 40% Afr Am; 40% Cau	2.5; 4
7 ELL Hisp; 4 Afr Am; 11 Cau; 1 multi	870T	35% F/R lunch; high Cau & Afr Am pop	4
5 racially diverse; low SES	450T	Title I; low SES; 85% Cau; 7% Hisp; 7% Afr Am	3
not very racially diverse; low to middle income	775T	some racial diversity; low pop of F/R lunch; ELL	4
5 racially diverse; majority upper-middle class		majority Cau; wide range economic	5
10 racially diverse; majority upper middle class	671T	306 Cau; 180 Afr Am; 131 Hisp; 18 Asian	4
majority Afr Am and ESL	500T	majority Afr Am	4
very diverse economically; high Asian pop	201M 234F 435T	very diverse economically; high Asian pop	
all white	400T	mostly white; very few on F/R lunch	4
majority Afr Am, 5 bi-racial, 6 Hisp, 1 Cau; low income-almost all F/R lunch; Mostly Afr Am and Hisp; low SES-majority F/R lunch	389T; 920 T	66% Afr Am, 28% Hisp, 6% Cau; Mostly Afr Am and low SES	3
5 Afr Am, 7 Hisp, 1 Asian, 7 Cau	450T	Title I, most F/R lunch	5
Very diverse ethnicity, middle/upper class	970T	57% Cau, 23% Asian, 15% Afr Am, 5% Hisp; wealthy area, students are bussed	4

Kimberly	Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y2S4; Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S4	Elem Ed	K; 1	Purple Elementary (public,rural)
Tori	Y2S1	Elem Ed	3	Wuthering Elementary
Deborah	Y2S1, Y2S2, Y2S3, Y2S4	Elem Ed	1	Bellview Elementary
Alice	Y2S1	Elem Ed	4	Fountain Elementary
Kourtney	Y3S1, Y3S3	CDFS	PreK	Penny Elementary (public,rural)
Tally	Y3S1, Y3S2	Elem Ed	1	Trout Elementary (public)
Jasmine	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	4	King Elementary (public,urban)
Avery	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	2	Trout Elementary (public,suburban)
London	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	K	Morgan Elementary (public,suburban)
Grayson	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	4	Purple Elementary (public,rural)
Madeline	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	1	Rock Elementary
Violet	Y3S1, Y3S2, Y3S3, Y3S4	Elem Ed	2	Trout Elementary (public suburban)
Anna	Y3S2	CDFS	1,2,3	Gates Montessori (public, urban, Title I)
Riley	Y3S1, Y3S3	MEDX K- 12	5	Creek Elementary

Manoa	2009/2	White	F	10M 10F 20T 4 plans; 19T 4 plans
Ridgeview	2009/2		F	12M 12F 24T 6 plans
Bud	2009/2		F	10M 12F 23T 2 plans
Harperville	2010/1		F	12M 13F 25M 4 plans
Apple	2011/1		F	18T 0 plans
Manoa	2011/1		F	21T 0 plans
Harperville	2008/4 (Teaching Fellow)		F	24T 5 plans
Manoa	2011/1		F	22T 2 plans
Tyler	2009/3		F	19T 0 plans
Manoa	2011/1		M	23T 5 or 6 plans
Grey	2011/1		F	20T 1 plan
Manoa	2010/2		F	22T 5 plans
Harperville	2007/5		F	25T 2 plans
Apple	2010/6		F	50T 11 plans

60% F/R lunch, 15% Hisp, 35% Afr Am, 45% Cau, 5% Asian; 59% F/R lunch; 1 Asian, 3 Hisp, 1 multiracial, 8 Afr Am, 6 Cau	480T; 400T	60% F&R lunch, 15% Hisp, 35% Afr Am, 45% Cau, 5% Asian; 40% Afr Am, 40% Cau, 15% Hisp, 5% Other, 59% F/R lunch	4; 3
very diverse; Korean, Japanese, Hisp, Chinese, Afr Am, Greek Am, 2 F/R lunch	500T	majority Cau or Asian, 17% F/R lunch	
74% F/R lunch; 35% Afr Am, 22% Hisp, 30% Cau, 13% Other	650T	78% F/R lunch; 36% Afr Am, 34% Cau, 27% Hisp, 2% Asian	4
very diverse ethnically (7 languages spoken in classroom) and economically	530T	Urban, very diverse	3
1 Cau; 12 Afr Am; 1 Asian; 4 Hisp; 13/18 F/R lunch	700T	Mostly Afr Am; Hisp 80% F/R lunch	3
Diverse; 12 Cau, Afr Am, Hisp, Mixed, Asian	600-650T	Diverse; 12 Cau, Afr Am, Hisp, Mixed, Asian	5
8 Hisp; 8 Afr Am; 7 Cau; 1 Middle Eastern; 50% F/R lunch	700T	Title I; split evenly Cau, Afr Am, Hisp; 54% F/R lunch	3
15 Cau; 6 Hisp; 1 Afr Am; economic diversity	600T	Fair amount of diversity; Hisp population growing; feeder neighborhood of affluent Cau families	5
Some middle class and Cau; Some Hisp; 2 Afr Am; 1 Taiwanese; several multi-racial	600T	Fairly evenly divided between Cau, Afr Am, and Hisp	4
16 Cau; 2 multi-racial, 3 Afr Am, 2 Hisp		58% F/R lunch; 50-60% Cau; 20% Hisp; 20-30% Afr Am	3
Very diverse; few Cau, many biracial, many Afr Am. Several F/R lunch	689T	Majority military population; very transient; 30% student turnover; many students on F/R lunch (Title I)	4
1 Afr Am, 1 Mixed Race; several F/R lunch; live in houses; 1 working parent	650T	40% F/R lunch; many others wealthy and college educated	3
3 Hisp both poverty level and middle class; all else middle and upper middle class	334T	Majority Cau; 45% Hisp, below 30% Afr Am	3
	930T	high needs, over 90% F/R lunch	2

## APPENDIX B: IRB CONSENT FOR STUDY #10-0662

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Adult Participants

Consent Form Version Date: February 15, 2012  
IRB Study # 10-0662  
Title of Study: The Impact of a Teacher Support Group: An Exploratory Study  
Principal Investigator: Jocelyn Glazier, Harriet Able, Deborah Eaker-Rich  
Principal Investigator Department: School of Education  
Principal Investigator Phone number: (919) 843-0406  
Principal Investigator Email Address: [jocelyng@email.unc.edu](mailto:jocelyng@email.unc.edu)

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of newly inducted teachers' dilemmas of practice and to explore the use of a dialogue group with practicing teachers as a potential model of teacher support and professional development.

You are being asked to be in the study because you have been a participant in the R & R seminar.

### **Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?**

You should not be in this study if you were not a participant in the Reconnect and Recharge seminars.

### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 85 educators in this research study.

### **How long will your part in this study last?**

Your participation in this study requires no more than one hour of your time for an interview to occur in July or August at a time that is convenient for you.

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

- You would participate in a one hour interview to be conducted in July or August at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will take place on the phone.

This form has been approved by the IRB for use until 06/18/2013

- You will be asked to note below your consent to use the materials gathered as part of the R & R seminar for the purposes of this research. This information includes:
  - o Audiotapes of seminar sessions;
  - o Demographic data forms;
  - o Seminar meeting notes and;
  - o Debriefing forms.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. This research will help further understanding of the practice dilemmas experienced by today's teachers and the impact of teacher discourse groups in addressing those challenges. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by having further opportunity to reflect on your first few years as a teacher and the dilemmas that you encounter during your teaching.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**

There are no known risks or discomforts involved in being in this study. We will make every effort to help you feel comfortable and at ease in the interview.

There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to Dr. Jocelyn Glazier, 919-843-0406, [jocelyng@email.unc.edu](mailto:jocelyng@email.unc.edu), Harriet Able Boone at [haboone@email.unc.edu](mailto:haboone@email.unc.edu) or Deborah Eaker-Rich at [eakeric@email.unc.edu](mailto:eakeric@email.unc.edu).

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Your privacy and confidentiality will be protected. The principal investigators listed at the top of this form are the only people who will have access to the research data. All collected data, such as interview audio recordings, will be stored in a locked office and on a secure computer. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym in all write ups of the data. Audiotaped data will be transcribed, using pseudonyms. All of the information will be destroyed within five years of data collection.

**What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?**

You can withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty. The investigators also have the right to stop your participation at any time. This could be because you have had an unexpected reaction, or have failed to follow instructions, or because the entire study has been stopped. Withdrawing from the study will in no way impact your participation in the Reconnect and Recharge seminars.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive any compensation for participating in the research study itself.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

It will not cost you anything to be in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions about the study (including payments), complaints, concerns, or if a

research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB\_subjects@unc.edu.

---

**Participant's Agreement One:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

**Participant's Agreement Two:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I have checked below my consent to use the following information gathered as part of the R & R seminar for research purposes:

- ☐ audiotapes of seminar discussions
- ☐ meeting notes of seminar discussions
- ☐ demographic data form
- ☐ debriefing sheets

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FOR AUDIOTAPING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

*Seminar*  
(corresponding date)

With your permission, we would like to audiotape the focus group seminar sessions today in order to have an accurate and complete record of your responses. You can participate in the focus group seminar without having your responses transcribed. Responses will remain anonymous on the transcriptions of these tapes, i.e., your name will not correspond with your responses. Focus group seminar tapes will be erased after the completion of the transcription of this seminar. The recorded focus group and transcripts will only be reviewed by School of Education faculty and research assistants.

If you have questions or concerns about the taping of this focus group seminar and its purposes, or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact the faculty person below.

**(name)**  
**(title)**  
**(address)**  
**(email)**  
**(telephone)**

Thank you for your consideration!

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I agree to have my comments transcribed

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I would like my comments omitted from any transcription

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D: SAMPLE CASE STUDY DILEMMAS

### Summaries

#### *Wasserman, Case Study 3.1, Grade 1*

Marilyn Ziti has just accepted her first teaching position straight out of college. She has been assigned to a first grade classroom already three weeks into the new school year. However, her expectations fall short when she finds she cannot control her students as disruptive behaviors emerge.

#### *Wasserman, Case Study 4.4, Grade 5*

Barry is a gentle and courteous boy who is the target of jokes and put-downs as he struggles with reading and is considered a math failure. His new teacher wants to see him succeed and tries whatever she can to help him out, including using primary math manipulatives for hands-on math learning. Still unsuccessful and not knowing what else to do to help him, his teacher resorts to something highly unethical.

### 3 CASES: The Teacher as Person

"Good teaching," the distinguished educator Arthur Combs (1978) once wrote, "is not a question of right methods or behaviors, but a problem-solving matter, having to do with the teacher's unique use of self as he/she finds appropriate solutions to carry out the teacher's own and society's purposes" (p. 558). The process of "personal becoming"—students' personal discoveries of how their beliefs are translated into classroom actions—is an important route in preparing effective teachers. Combs cautioned, "In a program for becoming, learning must be personal and experiential; mere acquisition of knowledge will not do. What is required is the development of a personal system of perceptions or beliefs to provide the new teacher with long-term goals and short-term guidelines for the moment-to-moment decisions of classroom interactions" (p. 559).

The cases in Chapter 3 are all centered on issues that call for examination of how teachers' own needs, values, and expectations bear on their educational decisions. These cases call for journeys into personal meanings, and careful study should allow for taking the next steps on the pathway of "personal becoming." Each case is followed by a list of questions, with an additional question for those with classroom teaching experience denoted by a dagger.

#### 3.1 I SO WANTED TO BE A GOOD TEACHER

She passed by the school board office twice before she spotted the driveway that led into the parking area. Was it nervousness that prevented her from finding the road the first time? Or was she just a klutz, dressed up in a teacher's suit? She parked her little red VW, a relic from better days, in one of the visitor's spots, gathered her papers, and pulled herself up to the full height of her newly achieved status: *certified teacher*.

As she walked down the carpeted corridor of the administrative wing of the building to the door marked Personnel, she felt like a first grader approaching the fire-breathing dragon. The knot in her stomach tightened like a fist.

Dr. Alan Marshall, Director of Personnel, greeted her warmly. "Sit down, Miss Ziti. I'm very pleased that you could meet with me this morning."

The warmth of his greeting did little to dispel her anxiety, and when she tried to respond to his greeting, her voice came from a throat so dry, the words felt like small dust motes that were blown into the air.

Alan Marshall's interview was brief. She had been told to expect complex questions on classroom management and teaching strategies, but his questions were so simple and direct that she could answer them with a minimum of sophisticated thinking. Yes, she had done her student teaching in a primary classroom, and yes, she felt she was ready to handle a class on her own. What else could she say? Certainly not the truth: "I'm terrified! I've never really handled a class for a long period on my own! I'm not sure of what a teacher has to do! I feel so . . . incompetent!"

As she searched his face for any sign that he might have picked up on her terror, her teacher-training program, every moment of it, passed through her mind, as if she were drowning. What were the key experiences? What had she actually learned about teaching? At this very moment, whatever it was she had learned had completely evaporated. She felt naked and incompetent. A fraud with a teaching certificate.

She must have said something right or else he must have been desperate for a new teacher. It was, after all, three weeks into the new school year. There was an opening at the River Road Elementary School, a primary classroom. The regular teacher had just left for maternity leave. She could begin on Monday.

"Yes, that's fine," she muttered, uncertain whether what she really wanted to do was run out of the office. She remembered thanking him for his time and for his confidence in her, and she remembered moving, like a zombie, past the desks of the secretaries and out to the safety of the parking lot.

"Whew! I've done it! I got the job! So what do I do now?"

She must have driven all the way home, because suddenly, she found herself pulling into space #63 in the underground parking garage that tunneled under the suburban high-rise. But she couldn't remember the drive, or the traffic, or even if she had stopped at the traffic light at the corner of Lonsdale and First Streets. Is this what anxiety did? Did it give you instant amnesia?

As Marilyn Ziti rode up the elevator to the ninth floor, she vowed to get a grip on herself. "This is ridiculous," she talked to herself in the empty car. "I've got to get it together here." She remembered what her mentor teacher had told her about her nervousness during the first week of her teaching practicum: Nobody dies from her first days of teaching! "Oh, yeah?" she chuckled.

That evening, she treated herself to a celebratory dinner of Caesar salad, prime ribs of beef, baked potato with lots of sour cream and butter, and apple pie, the \$12.99 take-out special from Tony's Rib House down the block. Choles-

terol City, right? What the heck. If you were sailing on the *Titanic*, you might as well go first class. But she vowed that first thing Saturday morning she would take charge and get herself ready for Monday. Enough of these wild terrors. Nobody dies from her first day of teaching, right?

Armed with her second cup of coffee, the Saturday morning sun winking at the pile of papers and books on the carpet surrounding her, she settled down for some serious planning. Like any good student preparing for a test, she read through her pile of accumulated notes from her education classes. Here were all the answers she would need about teaching. In these notebooks and in her texts lay all the secrets of the profession. If she could only remember them, she would have a clear line to a passing performance:

"It is difficult for slow learners to think in abstractions, since their low IQ's of 75 to 90 prevent them from this kind of thinking."

"There are four definitions of creativity."

"When you organize curriculum, you should not think of it as 'set in stone,' but rather as a guide in the teaching-learning process."

"Educational objectives fall into three categories: (1) school objectives; (2) content or subject-matter objectives; and (3) teacher and child objectives."

"Evaluation is the process of gathering data about student progress, both formally and informally, in order to further pupil learning."

The ideas seemed familiar to her, but she took little comfort in the fact that she had once known them and been able to repeat them on tests to win high marks. What did any of them have to do with the reality of her, in front of 25 primary children, on Monday morning? She thrust the books and notebooks from her and reached for the coffee cup, wishing it was something considerably stronger.

With the worst weekend of her life behind her, she arrived at River Road School at 7:45 A.M.—early enough to meet the principal and walk on rubbery legs down the hall to her own classroom. There had been enough time to have her name put on the door, and she felt a thrill when she saw it—her room, her class, her children. The excitement of beginning to teach was running a close second to her anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. She wrote her name on the blackboard, in large primary letters—MISS MARILYN ZITI—and sat down at the desk.

Helen Cameron, the teacher who had just gone out on maternity leave and had started with the class from the first days of the school year, had left detailed instructions for the new teacher. The class was three weeks into the fall semester, and routines had already been established. As Marilyn looked at the teacher's plan, she saw how the reading groups were to be occupied, what seatwork was to be distributed, and what assignments were to be made in arithmetic. That about covered the morning until recess. Could she survive until recess? When the schoolbell rang, she felt faint.

The children buzzed into the room, noisily and purposefully hanging up their outer garments, and proceeded to their seats. They sat quietly, looking at her. She swallowed hard, looking at them.

"Good morning, boys and girls. I'm your new teacher, Miss Ziti. There's my name on the board. I hope we are going to have a very good year."

"It would help me very much to learn your names. So as I call the roll, please stand up and let me see you. Let me know, too, if I am saying your name correctly."

In retrospect, she thought that calling the roll was the best thing she did that morning. The children were quiet and she was in full control. After that, everything began to deteriorate. She tried to get the students into their reading groups, but a thousand small problems got in the way of her carrying out those procedures effectively. The more the operations broke down, the more disruptive behavior emerged. Pretty soon, she found herself shouting.

"Sit down, Walter!"

"This is the last time I'm going to speak to you, Judy."

"No, you may *not* go to the washroom now."

"Why are you coloring when you haven't finished your arithmetic yet?"

"It's too noisy in here. Be quiet everyone!"

The more she shouted, the more she felt she was losing it. She picked up the yardstick, in fury, and smacked it down on her desk. The children were startled and lapsed into silence. She hated that she had done and hated herself.

She somehow got through the rest of the day in a nightmare of tension and conflict. Her classroom felt like a battlefield, with a terrible power struggle going on in which she felt more and more the loss of control. She had the children get ready for home 10 minutes before three o'clock and didn't care about dismissing them early. She hated every one of them and if she wasn't going to be fired for total incompetence, she would very likely resign. If this was what teaching was like, if now, after working so hard to complete her training program successfully, she still had so much to learn about teaching, she would be better off selling real estate.

### Study Questions

1. Working in your study groups, talk to one another about what each of you perceives as the important ideas in this case. Talk together about the feelings that this case provokes in you.
2. Marilyn Ziti wanted very much to be a good teacher. What, in your view, is a "good teacher"? What are some characteristics of a "good teacher"? Working together, make a list of the characteristics you believe are key.
3. As you read this case and as you draw from your own experiences, what do you believe got in the way of Ziti's performing competently in the classroom?

## 4.4 BARRY

"Are you crazy?" my father looked at me as if I had just told him I was planning to become the wife of Tarzan and live in a tree house in the jungle, dressed in leopard skin underwear. "No one goes to live in the mountains," he continued his assault. "What will you do there? It's so far from the city!"

His words stung me and I stepped back, looking for support from the oak-paneled door. "Dad," I faltered, "I really need your support here. It's not easy for me to take this job so far away, to be away from the family. But there are no jobs close by. And I do want this chance to be a teacher."

He shrugged his shoulders, for once at a loss for words. I knew he would, in the end, understand. But why was he making it so difficult for me to leave? I was a grown-up person. I was entitled to have a chance to live my own life, to make my own decisions. It would have been nicer, easier, if my decisions were not encumbered by such a family opera!

I would have preferred to find a teaching job closer to home. First year of teaching—it's got enough turmoil on the job, without being alone, in a strange place, far away from friends and loved ones. But as jobs went, this was the only one available for a new teacher in this time of budget cuts and teacher cutbacks. I felt lucky to get it. So what if it were in the mountains, in a small town about 300 miles from the coastal city where my parents lived? I might even get to like it.

Twin Pines School, nestled in a grove of conifers, served the township of San Remo, in what was becoming the most rapid-growth area in the state. Drawn by the clean mountain air, the beautiful landscapes, the low-cost housing, residents found the rural life a refreshing change from the smog, high-density and high cost life on the coast. But there was nothing about the school or the beauty of its setting that had prepared me for this first year of teaching. If the scene was serene, life as a teacher at Twin Pines was anything but!

It didn't take many days for me to discover Barry in my group of 26 combined fifth and sixth graders. He was a gentle and courteous boy, as if someone had actually taken the trouble to teach him some manners—a pleasant change from the other hell-raisers who made up the male complement of the class. On the athletic field, he excelled in virtually every sport offered. During lunch hour, or recess, I liked to watch him shoot baskets, his skill and grace an elegant counterpoint to that rumble-tumble world of unorganized play activity that teachers see twice daily, at the designated hours of recess and lunch. Off the sports field, and in the classroom, he was like a walrus out of water. The grace and skill fell from him, as he wrestled clumsily and unsuccessfully with the demands of the sixth-grade curriculum.

Ever the butt of other children's grim and devastating put-downs, Barry

struggled with reading, his pace plodding and his ability to concentrate overpowered by his fierce struggle to decode words. But at least he could achieve some marginal success. Where he succeeded in distinguishing himself as an utter failure was in math. While the other children were making headway into the wonderful world of fractions and decimals, Barry was defeated by simple, basic number facts. Computation was a puzzle to him, and even the sums given to first graders were a total mystery. He was able to make some headway with  $2 + 2 = 4$ , but he was in trouble if the amount of either numeral was increased by a single digit. Two plus three was outside his reach. Forget subtraction.

The other kids did not help. *Retard*, was a word frequently tossed in his direction, and even though I made numerous attempts to quell the flood of children's cruelties toward one another, Barry could not help but be further diminished by his classmates' low opinion of his academic performance.

Remembering what I had learned in Education 423: Teaching Strategies in Math, I studied Barry's papers, trying to make sense of the kinds of errors he was making. But the more I studied his errors, the more a pattern eluded me. There seemed to be no pattern to his errors, no consistency to what he knew or did not know. It was as if a different child was turning in the papers each day. If he knew the sum of  $2 + 3$  on Monday, there was no guarantee that he would do that sum correctly on Tuesday. His responses shifted so radically, I began to think he might just be wildly guessing. On the other hand, maybe the "math chip" in his brain had been rendered dysfunctional. I had heard in my college classes of children who had reading disabilities, but I hadn't heard about children with math disabilities. I tried to remember what I knew about learning-disabled children, but given that he could function, albeit in a marginal way, in reading, I was totally mystified as to what the problem might be.

Mrs. Newhouse, Barry's mother, lost no time in coming to school for a visit. She brought with her the diagnostic assessments made in the educational clinic of the large coastal city, where she had taken Barry for an evaluation last year. Barry had been given a battery of tests, and the clinical results seemed to me ambiguous. He was given an individual IQ test, and scored 80. I interpreted that to mean "low average." This, in itself, would not explain his math difficulty. He could read and comprehend at a fourth-grade level and he did seem to be making at least some gains in this area, although they were slow. The tests revealed that his math functioning was "poor," but there was no indication of where the problem came from. The report from the clinical psychologist suggested that Barry showed no indication of "psychological problems that might interfere with his learning." The speculation seemed to point in the direction of low IQ as the causative factor, but the professionals at the clinic were better at explaining *what* he couldn't do, rather than *why* he couldn't do those things. Since I already knew *what* he couldn't do, and needed to know more about *why*, the diagnostic assessments were not very helpful. I began to intuit that maybe there was some

physical dysfunction that was outside the scope of the clinic staff's ability to detect. Could there have been a birth defect? Might there be some genetic malfunction? Were there infant or early childhood experiences that put him at risk? Had his mother taken drugs or alcohol during pregnancy? None of these lines of inquiry had been pursued by the clinic staff. And if the educational clinic in the city struck out for me, the resources at the school district level were even less helpful. Diagnostic services at the school and in the county were few and far between. I could make a referral, but it would be months until any information would be forthcoming. And would the results be any more illuminating than what I already knew? I could try it, but in the meanwhile, Barry was still sitting there in my class, being defeated by the simplest numerical tasks.

Mrs. Newhouse wanted something different from me. She was not concerned with finding out more about Barry's difficulties with his schoolwork. She seemed to have already accepted as a given that he had these academic limitations. What she wanted was some reassurance that this new teacher (me) would be sympathetic to the learning problems of her only son. Would this new teacher work with him, to the best of his ability? Would she see any value in him as a person, outside of his limited academic performance? Would she use his academic failings to further undermine his confidence in himself? Would he, at the end of sixth grade, be more convinced than ever that he was a capital-F Failure, ready for the garbage heap? I looked out of the classroom window to the schoolyard where Barry was waiting for his mother, shooting baskets. Pity, I thought, that basketball could not substitute for math on his report card. Then he would be "gifted" instead of a "retard."

I was touched by Mrs. Newhouse's plight. She cared deeply about her son and was hoping for some magic, something that could happen in sixth grade that would not propel him further down into a sea of hopelessness as a learner. But I didn't want to build up her hopes. I wanted to tell her: "Look here, I'm only a first-year teacher! What do I know about how to help him? Even the professionals at the educational clinic bombed out when it came to pointing to what was wrong! How can I succeed where all his other teachers failed?" I wanted to tell her all of that, but I could only look into her eyes, filling with tears, and assure her that I would do whatever I could. I spent the weekend thinking about Barry. And even though I tried to get him out of my mind, he was never far from my thoughts.

Remembering what I learned in my coursework—that the use of manipulatives in math would increase comprehension as well as skills—I approached the first-grade teacher on Monday morning to ask her for some Cuisenaire rods. This seemed to me to be the right way to begin work with Barry. I sat with him, dumped the rods out on his table, and showed him how he could use the manipulatives as an aid in calculation. He took the rods from me, with a look on his face that told a story, but I could not read it.

I saw him pushing the rods around on his desk as he worked on the math worksheet I had given him, with ten simple addition facts to sum. His paper, however, was no different from those that I had seen before: the pattern of errors that made no sense persisted. I blue penciled "two correct out of ten" with a heavy heart. The next day, when I looked over to Barry's desk, I saw that the rods were nowhere in sight. "Where are your rods, Barry?" I asked when I approached him. Barry looked at me, his eyes blazing with open hostility, as he reached into the inner recesses of his desk and drew them out. Three days, three rod-instruction periods, and three worksheets later, we were still at square one. The following Monday, I decided I'd give it one more try.

"Hey, Barry. Take out the rods and let's do some math."

Slowly, as though he were swimming through glue, he began to extract the bag of rods from his desk. I pulled a chair over to him and got a good look at that cold, hard face. It didn't take many questions to find out the trouble. Cuisenaire rods were for babies. I had publicly humiliated him with my choice of hands-on materials. Never mind that we had used them in my college course in math methods. Everyone at this school knew they were only used in the primary grades. Why didn't I just put a dunce cap on his head and be done with it! Numb with shame, I took the sack of rods from Barry and retreated to a neutral corner where I could assess my losses.

After dinner, I opened a bottle of wine and had two glasses before I sat down to rethink my next moves with Barry. If rods were for babies, I had to find some other manipulatives that would be more appropriate. They needed not just to help him conceptualize numbers, but to restore his dignity. I decided on money.

I put together a bag of coins, about five dollars' worth in pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, and told Barry that this would be his bag of money. "Barry's money," the other kids called it. No one could say that these manipulatives were for babies. He began to use the money as counters. Each day, he and I would put together a group of 10 arithmetic examples requiring him to add and subtract money. At the end of the day, he'd turn his worksheet into my "in basket" for marking.

His score of correct responses was fairly consistent, usually three or four out of ten, with five correct being a major event. If there was a consistency about his low score, there still was no discernible consistency to his pattern of errors. Working with him one-on-one on a daily basis did not increase his ability to compute or to comprehend these basic numerical concepts in any significant way. In the evenings, at the dining room table where I read students' work with my after-dinner coffee, I tried to think of what I might write on Barry's paper that would not demean him further, that would not destroy the remaining vestiges of confidence that he had in himself. I could not be false and write that his paper was good work because it was not good work; that would have been a lie.

If I wrote that, why would he ever trust me again? If I wrote, "You are trying," that, too, could be seen as a reproach. It sounded too much like, "You are trying, but not succeeding." I couldn't think of something to write that would be honest as well as supportive, encouraging and validating.

In a move that no teacher in any education course ever taught me, I picked up my gum eraser and rubbed out a few incorrect digits in Barry's answers. Obviously, I selected a matching pencil, forged his handwriting, and put the correct digits under the examples. Would he know? Would he remember the answers he had put down? Would such a lying, cheating maneuver doom us both? I poured a shot of brandy into my coffee cup, picked up my blue pencil, and wrote, "Hey, Barry. Eight correct today! You are really making some big improvement in your work." I downed the coffee-brandly in a single gulp.

I played out this scenario with Barry for the next few months. Barry, despite extensive one-on-one instruction, practice with his bag of manipulatives, and math worksheets, never learned to master computation with increased accuracy. I continued each evening to erase and change his incorrect answers so that I could return his paper with a response that validated Barry-as-person. I never breathed a word of this to anyone in school.

In the early days of spring, three boys from another class came into the after-school disarray of my classroom to hang out and talk with some of my "hangers-on." I heard them talking from where I was putting together a photo display for the bulletin board.

"Who's the dumbest kid in your class?" one of them asked.

Larry looked up from what he was doing and looked over at Mark, who liked me to call him "Bob," and said, shrugging his shoulders, "I don't know."

It would be nice if Barry's story had a happy ending. But the truth is, I left the Twin Pines School at the end of that school year to take a job in the city, near my family and friends. I lost touch with Barry altogether. Did he ever get through high school with any shred of his self-worth intact, even though he could not do his numbers? Is self-worth a reasonable price to pay for the inability to add and subtract? Maybe a college coach picked him up, got him a basketball scholarship, and gave him a free ride through the academic requirements? Did I do the right thing with Barry, choosing to bolster his feeling of self-worth rather than giving him a correct and earned mark? If I teach for 100 years, I'll never know for sure.

### Study Questions

1. What do you see as the key issues in this case? Identify them.
2. What do you make of Barry's performance in math, given the data in the case? What hypotheses can you come up with that might explain his inability to add and subtract simple numbers?

## APPENDIX E: DILEMMA OF PRACTICE PLANNING SHEET

### **Dilemma of Practice Planning Sheet**

The Seminars will provide a time and space for teachers to engage in conversation with one another about their teaching. Your experiences are central to these conversations. Each of you will have an opportunity to share what we're calling a dilemma of practice. Dilemmas are your concerns about particular aspects of your educational practice about which you would like support and feedback. Examples of dilemmas might include: teaching English Language Learners to read; working with a student with autism who has been mainstreamed into your classroom; trying to initiate a curricular change; a conflict with a parent who believes his child's learning issues are your fault. Please read the attached case studies as they will provide you with some examples of what a dilemma of practice might entail. Then consider your own dilemma of practice. We don't expect a written product but please come prepared with notes on your dilemma of practice. The questions below serve as a guide.

- 1) What is the dilemma? Your dilemma should include as many specifics as possible (again, refer to attached cases). Consider too the multiple ways of viewing this dilemma. In other words, how might it be seen from the student's perspective? The parent's perspective? Etc.
  
- 2) Why is the dilemma important to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What questions might help colleagues better assist you as they consider this dilemma with you?

## APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

### Session Debrief

*Thank you for your participation today! Please take time to answer these debriefing questions and turn this into us today as it will help us plan for next time. We look forward to seeing you in April and encourage you to contact us in the meantime as you want! Please travel safely.*

- 1) What was useful about today's session in terms of supporting you as a teacher?
  
- 2) If you shared a dilemma of practice, what was that experience like for you? Did you gain new insight into the dilemma? Did the discussion about the dilemma help you in any way? Do you anticipate the discussion will influence your teaching practice or anything else (e.g. perceptions of parents, a student...)? Please explain.
  
- 3) If you participated in discussing a colleague's dilemma of practice, what was the experience like for you? Did the experience prompt you to consider anything about your own practice/school/etc.? If so, what?
  
- 4) As you consider our next session, what has today's conversation prompted you to think about how you might present your (next) dilemma of practice? Has it prompted you to consider the type of dilemma you might share or even those you would not share? Please explain.
  
- 5) What was challenging about today's session? Please refer to the structure of the day as well as the small group conversations.
  
- 6) What would you suggest we do differently next time we meet?

## APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL LETTER FOR STUDY #13-1896



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS  
Medical School Building 52  
Mason Farm Road  
CB #7097  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097  
(919) 966-3113  
Web site: [ohre.unc.edu](http://ohre.unc.edu)  
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #4801

**To:** Ritsa Mallous  
School of Education

**From:** Non-Biomedical IRB

**Approval Date:** 6/07/2013

**Expiration Date of Approval:** 6/06/2014

**RE:** Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

**Submission Type:** Initial

**Expedited Category:** 5.Existing or non-research data

**Study #:** 13-1896

**Study Title:** Exploration of New Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers' Personal Teaching Efficacy and General Teaching Efficacy Based on Collaborative Conversations of Self-Identified Practice Dilemmas

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

### **Study Description:**

**Purpose:** To explore new early childhood and elementary teachers' personal and general teaching efficacy based on collaborative conversations of their self-identified practice dilemmas in the *Reconnect and Recharge* (R&R) seminars (IRB #10-0662) from 2009-2012.

**Participants:** 43 recent UNC-CH School of Education graduates who are licensed teachers in North Carolina that were involved in a project called *Reconnect and Recharge*.

**Procedures (methods):** Secondary data analysis. Data includes transcripts, field notes, and feedback forms, and analysis will focus on new teacher efficacy.

### **Investigator's Responsibilities:**

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

Your approved consent forms and other documents are available online at [http://apps.research.unc.edu/irb/irb\\_event.cfm?actn=info&irbid=13-1896](http://apps.research.unc.edu/irb/irb_event.cfm?actn=info&irbid=13-1896)

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can

page 1 of 2

be implemented. Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events reportable under UNC-Chapel Hill policy) should be reported to the IRB using the web portal at <http://irbis.unc.edu>.

Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant "gatekeepers" to access subjects (e.g., principals, facility directors, healthcare system).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

CC:  
Harriet Able, School of Education

## REFERENCES

- Alabama State Department of Education. (2010). *Collaborative conversations*. Retrieved 3/2/13 from PowerPoint document [ti\\_sp.alsde.edu/.../Collaborative%20Conversations/...](http://ti_sp.alsde.edu/.../Collaborative%20Conversations/...)
- Ashton, P. T. & Webb, R. B. (1986). *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. New York: Longman.
- Bambino, D. (2002). Critical friends. *Educational Leadership*, 59, 25-27.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 1-26.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 117-148.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Benz, C. R., Bradley, L., Alderman, M. K., & Flowers, M. A. (1992). Personal teaching efficacy: Developmental relationships in education. *Journal of Educational Research*, 85(5), 274-285.
- Berman, P., McLaughlin, M., Bass, G., Pauly, E., & Zellman, G. (1997). *Federal programs supporting educational change: Vol. VII. Factors affecting implementation and continuation* (Report No. R-1589/7-HEW). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Bleicher, R. E. (2007). Nurturing confidence in preservice elementary science teachers. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 18(6), 841-860.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., & Richardson, V. (2005). Qualitative Studies in Special Education. *Exceptional Children*, 71(2), 195-207.

- Bursal, M. (2010). Turkish preservice elementary teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding mathematics and science teaching. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 8(4), 649-666.
- Cantrell, P., Young, S., & Moore, A. (2003). Factors affecting science teaching efficacy of preservice elementary teachers. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 14(3), 177-192.
- Carlsen, A. & Dutton, J. E. (2011). *Research alive: Exploring generative moments in doing qualitative research*. Malmö: Liber.
- Chang, Y. (2009). A case study of elementary beginning mathematics teachers' efficacy. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 8(2), 271-297.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In NK Denzin (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 509-535). Sage Publications.
- Cheung, H. Y. (2008). Teacher efficacy: A comparative study of Hong Kong and Shanghai primary in-service teachers. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 35(1), 103-123.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning communities. In A. Iran-Nejad & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of Research in Education, Vol. 24* (pp. 249-305). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1992). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (3rd Edition)*. Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Dellinger, A. B., Bobbett, J. J., Olivier, D. F., & Ellett, C. D. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Development and use of the TEBS-Self. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(3), 751-766.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Department of Public Instruction, State Board of Education. (2013). Annual report on teachers leaving the profession (G.S. 115C-12 (22)). Retrieved 3/3/14 from website: <https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=19785&MID=1107>
- Enochs, L. G., & Riggs, I. M. (1990). Further development of an elementary science teaching efficacy belief instrument: A preservice elementary scale. *School Science and Mathematics*, 90(8), 694-706.

- Evans, R. I. (1989). *Albert Bandura: The man and his ideas—A dialogue*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103, 1013–1055.
- Flores, B. B., Clark, E. R., Cleays, L., & Villarreal, A. (2007). Academy for teacher excellence: Recruiting, preparing, and retaining Latino teachers through learning communities. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(4), 53-69.
- Flores, B. B., Hernández, A., García, C. T., & Claeyes, L. (2011). Teacher academy induction learning community: Guiding teachers through their zone of proximal development. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 19(3), 365-389.
- Florio-Ruane, S., & Clark, C. M. (August, 1993). *Authentic conversation: A medium for research on teachers' knowledge and a context for professional development*. Goteborg, Sweden: Paper presented to the International Study Association on Teacher Thinking.
- Franzak, J. (2002). Developing a teacher identity: The impact of critical friends practice on the student teacher. *English Education*, 34(4), 258-280.
- Fry, S. W. (2009). Characteristics and experiences that contribute to novice elementary teachers' success and efficacy. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 36(2), 95-110.
- Fry, S. W. (2007). First-Year teachers and induction support: Ups, downs, and in-betweens. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(2), 216-237.
- Fullan, M. G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fuller, F. F. (1969). Concerns of teachers: A developmental conceptualization. *American Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 207–226.
- Ganser, T. (2002). The new teacher mentors: Four trends that are changing the look of mentoring programs for new teachers. *American School Board Journal*, 189(12), 25–27.
- Gebbie, D. H., Ceglowski, D., Taylor, L. K., & Miels, J. (2012). The role of teacher efficacy in strengthening classroom support for preschool children with disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40(1), 35-46.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibson, S. & Dembo, M. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 569–582.
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its

- meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37, 479-507.
- Goker, S. D. (2006). Impact of peer coaching on self-efficacy and instructional skills in TEFL teacher education. *System*, 34(2), 239-254.
- Gold, Y. (1999). Beginning teacher support. In J. Sikula, T. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research in teacher education* (2nd ed., pp. 548–594). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Gunning, A. M. & Mensah, F. M. (2011). Preservice elementary teachers' development of self-efficacy and confidence to teach science: A case study. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 22(2), 171-185.
- Guo, Y., Justice, L. M., Sawyer, B., & Tompkins, V. (2011). Exploring factors related to preschool teachers' self-efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(5), 961-968.
- Haberman, M. (1995). Selecting 'star' teachers for children and youth in urban poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, 777–781.
- Haverback, H. R. & Parault, S. J. (2011). High efficacy and the preservice reading teacher: A comparative study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(4), 703-711.
- Haverback, H. R. & Parault, S. J. (2008). Pre-service reading teacher efficacy and tutoring: A review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 20(3), 237-255.
- Hermanowicz, H. J. (1966). The pluralistic world of beginning teachers. In *The real world of the beginning teacher. Report of the nineteenth national TEPS conference*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Hines, S., Murphy, M., Pezone, M., Singer, A., & Stacki, S. L. (2003). New Teachers' Network: A university-based support system for educators in urban and suburban "Ethnic Minority" school districts. *Equity & Excellence In Education*, 36(4), 300-307.
- Hoy, W. K. & Woolfolk, A. H. (1990). Socialization of student teachers. *American Educational Research Journal* 27, 279-300.
- Imants, J. G. M., & DeBrabander, C. J. (1996). Teachers' and principals' sense of efficacy in elementary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12(2), 179-195.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 499-534.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Who controls teachers' work?: Power and accountability in America's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2004). Do teaching induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin*, 88(638), 28-40.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233.
- Kelly, S. (2004). An event history analysis of teacher attrition: Salary, teacher tracking, and socially disadvantaged schools. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 72(3), 195-220.
- Klein, R. (2013, December 5). Fears of mass teacher exodus stirred by new North Carolina report. Huffington Post. Retrieved 3/3/14 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/05/north-carolina-teacher-turnover\\_n\\_4393603.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/05/north-carolina-teacher-turnover_n_4393603.html)
- Knoblauch, D. & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2008). "Maybe I can teach those kids." The influence of contextual factors on student teachers' efficacy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 166-179.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Krueger, R. & M. A. Casey (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research (3rd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lantz, D. L. (1964). Changes in student teacher's concept of self and others. *Teacher Education* 15(2), 200-203.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lieberman, A. (1995). *The work of restructuring schools: Building from the ground up*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lin, H. L., Gorrell, J., & Taylor, J. (2002). Influence of culture and education on US and Taiwan preservice teachers' efficacy beliefs. *Journal of Educational Research*, 96(1), 1-16.
- Lopez, A., Lash, A. M., Shields, P., & Wagner, M. (2004). *Review of research on the impact of beginning teacher induction on teacher quality and retention*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Luekens, M. T., Lyter, D. M., & Fox, E. E. (2004). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000-01* (NCES Rep. No. 2004-301). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics.

- Maddux, J. E. (1999). Expectancies and the social-cognitive perspective: Basic principles, processes, and variables. In I. Kirsch (Ed.), *How Expectancies Shape Experience*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Marshall, R. & Marshall, I. (2003). *Texas teacher attrition rate: Why are the teachers leaving and where are they going?* Paper presented at the Southwest Educational Research Association Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas.
- Maynard, T. (2000). Learning to teach or learning to manage mentors? Experiences of school-based teacher training. *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 8(1), 17-30.
- Meyer, T. (2002). Novice teacher learning communities: An alternative to one-on-one mentoring. *American Secondary Education*, 31(1), 27-42.
- Mgongolwa, K. (2014, January 30). This is what it feels like to be a teacher in North Carolina. Retrieved 3/3/14 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katie-mgongolwa-/this-is-what-it-feels-like\\_b\\_4690751.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/katie-mgongolwa-/this-is-what-it-feels-like_b_4690751.html)
- Mihans, R. (2008). Can teachers lead teachers? *Phi Delta Kappan*, June, 762-766.
- Muijs, D. & Reynolds, D. (2001). Teachers' belief and behaviors: What really matters. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 247-258.
- Mulholland, J. & Wallace, J. (2001). Teacher induction and elementary science teaching: Enhancing self-efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 243-261.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000-01*. Jessup, MD: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). (2003). *No dream denied: A pledge to America's children*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). (2000). Critical friends group. Retrieved 6/23/12 from <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/faq.html>
- Newton, K. J., Leonard, J., Evans, B. R., & Eastburn, J. A. (2012). Preservice elementary teachers' mathematics content knowledge and teacher efficacy. *School Science and Mathematics*, 112(5), 289-299.
- Pajares, F. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(4), 543-578.
- Perrachione, B. A., Rosser, V. J., & Petersen, G. J. (2008). Why do they stay? Elementary teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction and retention. *The Professional Educator*, 32, 2.

- Pilard, D. (1992). *The socialization process of student teaching: A descriptive study*. East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Rogoff, B. (1993). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, apprenticeship. In A. Alvarez, P. del Río, and J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Perspectives on Sociocultural Research*, 139-163. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). *Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcements*. *Psychological Monographs*, 80, 609.
- Rushton, S. P. (2000). Student teacher efficacy in inner-city schools. *The Urban Review* 32(4), 365-383.
- Rust, F. (1999). Professional conversations: new teachers explore teaching through conversation, story, and narrative. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15(4), 367-380.
- Rust, F. & Orland, L. (2001). In C. M. Clark (Ed.). *Talking shop*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shavelson, R. J., & Towne, L. (Eds.). (2002). *Scientific research in education*. Washington. DC: National Academy Press.
- Silva, P. (2002). What if...*Connections: Journal of NSRF*, Spring, 6-14.
- Smith, T. & Ingersoll, R. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Education Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.
- Stanulis, R., Fallona, C. A., & Pearson, C. A. (2002). 'Am I doing what I am supposed to be doing?': Mentoring novice teachers through the uncertainties and challenges of their first year of teaching. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership In Learning*, 10(1), 71-81.
- Stotko, E. M., Ingram, R., & Beaty-O'Ferrall, M. E. (2007). Promising strategies for attracting and retaining successful urban teachers. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 30-51.
- Thies-Sprinthall, L. & Gerler, E. R. (1990). Support groups for novice teachers. *Journal of Staff Development*, 11(4), 18-22.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. & Hoy, A. W. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 944-956.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(7), 783-805.

- University of Washington Teacher Education Program (TEP). (2006). *Reconnect and Recharge*. Retrieved 6/23/12 from <http://sites.education.washington.edu/uwteach/population/elementary/andr>
- Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research*, 54(2), 143-178.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky. Volume 5. Child psychology*. New York: Plenum.
- Wasserman, S. (1993). *Getting down to cases: Learning to teach with case studies*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Woolfolk, A. E., Rosoff, B., & Hoy, W. K. (1990). Teachers' sense of efficacy and their beliefs about managing students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 6(2), 137-148.
- Yost, D. S. (2006). Reflection and self-efficacy: enhancing the retention of qualified teachers from a teacher education perspective. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(4), 59-76.
- Yost, R. (2002). "I think I can": Mentoring as a means of enhancing teaching efficacy. *The Clearing House*, 75(4), 195-197.