

5-9-2018

# The Principal's Influence on Teacher Efficacy to Foster Student Engagement: A Case Study of Two Elementary Schools

Emily Nelson

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps\\_diss](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps_diss)

---

## Recommended Citation

Nelson, Emily, "The Principal's Influence on Teacher Efficacy to Foster Student Engagement: A Case Study of Two Elementary Schools." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2018.  
[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps\\_diss/184](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/eps_diss/184)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Educational Policy Studies at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Policy Studies Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, by EMILY NELSON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

---

Kristina Brezicha, Ph.D.  
Committee Chair

---

James Kahrs, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Kim McDermon, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

William Curlette, Ph.D.  
Chairperson, Department of Educational Policy Studies

---

Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.  
Dean  
College of Education  
and Human Development

## **AUTHOR'S STATEMENT**

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education and Human Development's Director of Graduate Studies, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

---

Emily W. Nelson

## **NOTICE TO BORROWERS**

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Emily Wallace Nelson  
3045 Brooks Trail  
Monroe, GA 30656

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Kristina Brezicha  
Department of Educational Policy Studies  
College of Education and Human Development  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA 30303

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Emily W. Nelson

ADDRESS: 3045 Brooks Trail  
Monroe, GA 30656

### EDUCATION:

Ed.S.	2015	Georgia State University Educational Policy Studies
Masters Degree	2008	Walden University Reading and Literacy
Bachelors Degree	2004	University of Georgia Early Childhood Education

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2013-present	Assistant Principal Gwinnett County Public Schools
2004-2013	K-5 Teacher Gwinnett County Public Schools

### PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

Nelson, E.W.. (2016, January). *Promoting Student Engagement* National SAM Conference, Tucson, Arizona.

THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

EMILY NELSON

Under the Direction of Dr. Kristina Brezicha

ABSTRACT

Student engagement has a significant impact on their school experiences and outcomes. Affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement constructs work as interconnected components shaping students' engagement. Considering the malleable nature of student engagement, possibilities exist to address this construct early thereby influencing the educational trajectory of students. Teacher efficacy, both individual and collective, impacts students' engagement within schools. School leadership facilitates teacher efficacy through avenues such as instructional feedback, opportunities for collaboration, and shared decision making. This study's purpose was to understand how the interactions between teachers and leaders facilitate teachers' strong efficacy beliefs and how teacher's influence students' engagement in the classroom. This qualitative case study examined the engagement construct within two high-achieving elementary schools.

Using distributed, transformational, and instructional leadership theories, this study examined practices of principals that support teacher efficacy and foster an environment that strengthens student engagement. Participants included teachers with strong efficacy as well as school leaders. Interviews with teachers and leaders, observations, and a review of artifacts identified school practices perceived to positively influence teacher efficacy as well as practices that promoted student engagement. Findings revealed participants demonstrated zeal through positive interactions with stakeholders. Secondly, perceptions confirmed the value of affirming and precise feedback from principals to promote strong efficacy beliefs. Thirdly, findings determined the importance of implementing customized supports for students' emotional and academic needs to foster engagement. Implications exist for principals to consider how they demonstrate zeal through positive interactions within the school environment. Additionally, school leaders should consider their practices for providing feedback as well as promoting a focus on customized supports for each student. This study highlighted these considerations for leadership practices that promote efficacy and thereby improve student engagement.

**INDEX WORDS:** Student Engagement, Teacher Efficacy, Collective Efficacy, Distributed Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership

THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

EMILY NELSON

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

in

Educational Policy Studies

in

the College of Education and Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
2017

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my three, beautiful children. I entered the field of education long ago with the passion to make a difference in children's lives. I never anticipated how much children would make a difference in mine. I am blessed to work with children each day as I play a small part in helping them discover the world and the role they want to play in it. But, most importantly, I have the extreme joy and proud honor of spending each day with three very special children in my life. While it's not always easy and we've encountered our fair share of bumps, scrapes, and skinned knees, it is my hope that I have shown my children what it means to persevere by establishing a goal and seeing it through. I hope that they have seen the importance of remaining positive and taking life one step at a time. Through this experience, I hope they see that laughter is the best cure for stress and nothing can replace a simple, heartfelt hug. Their hugs, laughter, and love got me through this journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I must acknowledge my family. I could not have completed this work without my unwavering support system. My husband, Danny, is my rock and my constant beam of positive light. Thank you for your supportive presence on this journey. To my three children, thank you for always showing graciousness as my time was pulled in different directions over the past few years. To my parents, giving me the gift of time to work helped me to finish this race. Your love and encouragement pushed me to stay the course.

Secondly, I acknowledge the constant support that I felt from Anne Marie Keskonis, my current principal. You believe in me. Your support to reach my goals and stretch myself professionally has contributed greatly to the leader I am today. To my colleagues, thank you for your continual kindness and encouragement. Additionally, I have a special word of acknowledgement for my leadership mentor, Dr. Kim McDermon. My leadership journey began because of your encouragement and belief in my abilities. Thank you for cheering for me along this process as well.

I acknowledge the many participants of this study. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to share your perceptions as well as the opportunity to observe you in your work.

Finally, I acknowledge Dr. Brezicha, my dissertation chair for all of your valuable feedback and consultation throughout this process. Additionally, many thanks to Dr. Berry, Dr. Hendricks, Dr. Kahrs, and Dr. McDermon for your constructive feedback and support. Finally, a word of gratitude to my cohort colleagues. I have learned so much from each of you and greatly appreciate the time we spent together throughout this journey.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>		<b>V</b>
<b>1 THE PRINCIPAL’S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ....</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Guiding Questions.....</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Review .....</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>References .....</b>		<b>35</b>
<b>2 THE PRINCIPAL’S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ..</b>		<b>44</b>
<b>Methods.....</b>		<b>45</b>
<b>Findings.....</b>		<b>64</b>
<b>Discussion.....</b>		<b>97</b>
<b>References .....</b>		<b>112</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>		<b>118</b>

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Student Demographics of Lincoln Elementary.....	49
Table 2. Student Achievement at Lincoln Elementary .....	49
Table 3. Teacher Experience and Preparation at Lincoln Elementary.....	50
Table 4. Student Demographics of Washington Elementary.....	51
Table 5. Student Achievement at Washington Elementary .....	51
Table 6. Teacher Experience and Preparation at Washington Elementary.....	52
Table 7. Demographic Information of the Lincoln Elementary Participants.....	54
Table 8. Demographic Information of the Washington Elementary Participants.....	54
Table 9. Average Years of Experience Among All Respondents.....	55
Table 10. Average Individual and Collective Efficacy Scores Among All Respondents .....	55
Table 11. Principal Experience.....	56

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework ..... 27

## THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

When considering factors that lead to successful school outcomes, student engagement is a construct that can potentially alter a student's educational trajectory (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair & Lehr, 2004; Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Withdrawal from school is an epidemic among secondary school students, yet schools have the ability to change this path, especially through early interventions that improve engagement (Appleton et al. 2008; Furlong & Christenson, 2008). As a multidimensional construct, student engagement is complex and incorporates emotional, behavioral, and cognitive factors (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Contextual factors in schools serve as facilitators of engagement for students and are a place for intervention to occur (Furlong & Christenson, 2008). This study intends to examine teacher efficacy and the role school leadership plays in supporting efficacy as it subsequently impacts student engagement. Disengagement in school can be changed, thus researching experiences of teachers and school leaders within the elementary setting provides insight for how schools can support student engagement and achievement.

Disengagement at an early age can determine a path for a student's educational outcomes (Appleton, et al., 2008). The conceptual inconsistency between what schools should be doing to promote engagement and what schools are actually doing to address engagement is a problem worth exploring. The literature reveals a significant gap exists because the majority of research is focused on student engagement at the secondary level (Appleton et al., 2008), often with studies that identify contextual factors for engagement through surveys, but lack the thick description to understand in-depth the relationship between these factors and engagement outcomes

(Fredricks et al., 2004). This gap in knowledge at the elementary level presents a problem in need of study to determine how schools can increase student engagement early and improve student outcomes. Teacher efficacy is at the heart of how schools create engaging learning experiences for students (Bandura, 1993). Therefore, understanding how leaders influence teacher efficacy to foster student engagement is a problem that can potentially inform the ways leaders do business.

### **Guiding Questions**

The purpose of this dissertation study is to examine how school leaders support and develop teacher efficacy to indirectly influence student engagement and achievement. The following overarching question guides this research study: What are the perceptions of teachers and leaders regarding how school leadership facilitates teacher efficacy to foster student engagement within two high-achieving urban elementary schools in the Southeastern United States? Specifically, the study uses the following guiding questions:

1. How do school leaders describe their perceptions of the administrative practices that support teacher efficacy?
2. How do teachers with strong efficacy describe the perceived impact of their efficacy on student engagement?
3. How do teachers and leaders describe the practices that promote student engagement?

### **Review**

#### **Introduction**

A plague of disengagement affects many students in school that may lead to withdrawal and possible dropout (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn, 1989; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Students do not simply decide in an instantaneous moment to drop out of high school; instead, a gradual pro-

cess of disengagement occurs over time as students become academically frustrated and uninvolved in the school experience (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn 1989; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 83% of public high school students in the United States graduated during the 2014-2015 school year; albeit an improvement from previous years, 17% of American students still fail to graduate with a regular diploma within four years of starting ninth grade (NCES, 2017). For those in school, disengagement often results in a lack of participation, diminished sense of belonging, and little cognitive investment in learning, thus reducing the likelihood of school success (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). The globalization, competitiveness, and competency demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce requires more and puts these dropouts at a significant financial disadvantage (Kortering & Braziel, 2008; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Empirical research has concluded that a range of factors, both institutional and individual, contribute to whether students drop out or graduate from high school (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). A review of research literature contends that potential exists to target engagement as a malleable factor that could influence the educational trajectories for students at risk of withdrawal (Frawley, McCoy, Banks, & Thornton, 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). “Conceptualizing student engagement as a malleable construct enables researchers to identify features of the environment that can be altered to increase student engagement and learning” (Wang & Degol, 2014, p.138). Specifically, interventions implemented early to promote positive engagement constructs have the potential to influence long-term student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Different contexts (i.e. peers, family involvement, schools) are considered alterable variables that can enhance student engagement through direct intervention (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). This review will focus solely on the school context as a variable that can be changed to improve

engagement. To interpret the research on student engagement a summary of the prevalent engagement constructs is necessary.

### **Student Engagement**

Student engagement as a concept has been a focus of educational researchers for only the last few decades (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Lam et al., 2014). Within the literature, student engagement is a multidimensional construct that has varied definitions among researchers (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Frawley et al., 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004). Its broad definition can cloud its contribution within the research; however, defining it carefully and clearly can improve its application within schools (Eccles & Wang, 2012). Most studies support student engagement as a three-part typology consisting of affective, behavioral, and cognitive constructs (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Law et al., 2014; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). This review uses the majority consensus surrounding the three construct composition of student engagement.

#### **Affective engagement.**

Affective engagement encompasses a student's emotional connection to school that manifests in a sense of belonging perpetuated by positive interactions (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Voelkl, 2012). Within research, affective engagement is often assessed through external measures, yet it reflects an internal state (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Students' feelings about school are alterable and significantly influenced by relationships in school (Anderson et al., 2004; Frawley et al., 2014; Furlong & Christenson, 2008). Affect develops over time through interactions and experiences of students and is indirectly related to academic achievement due to its close relationship with behavior (Voelkl, 2012). While motivation plays a

factor in the early development of affective engagement, over time this construct becomes more internalized and fueled by routine interactions with others (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

### **Behavioral engagement.**

The behavioral construct is a more external component of student engagement. Participation in school defines this construct fueled by a student's connectedness with the classroom and school contexts (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). The participation-identification model developed by Finn (1989) explains a cycle that begins with behavioral participation, which enhances identification or affective engagement with the school, leading to further participation. While the course of a student's educational career will likely have some positive and negative experiences, the participation-identification cycle "serves a protective function", but the model also acknowledges "behavior in the early grades is considered an important ingredient of school success" (Finn & Zimmer, 2012, p. 101). Successful performance influences identification and thus triggers increased participation, all of which bode well for early interventions that can project students into this positive cyclical pattern of behavioral engagement (Appleton et al., 2008).

### **Cognitive engagement.**

The third component of engagement encompasses internal factors related to cognition including self-regulation, value of learning, and a willingness to exert effort on difficult tasks (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004). Cognitive engagement is considered an investment of cognitive energy that pushes individuals to go beyond minimal understanding and engage in more complex learning activities and goal setting (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). When cognitively engaged, students recognize the relevance of learning for their future goals and exhibit self-regulation strategies (Bandura, 1993; Furlong & Christenson, 2008). The

distinction between motivation and engagement is a lingering debate among researchers. While these concepts share similarities, a method for noting distinction is considering “engagement being action” and “motivation as intent” (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p.14). Although motivation is linked to engagement within research, this review focuses on the actions that result from cognitive and affective engagement rather than the underlying motivation. While each of these dimensions have distinct qualities, they cannot be addressed in isolation, but rather as complex interwoven threads that significantly contribute to a student’s school experience (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004).

An understanding of the definitions of student engagement constructed in the literature is needed to address the possibilities that exist for schools to tap into potential student outcomes. Furlong and Christenson (2008) contend that the degree or state of engagement for a student can be influenced by contextual factors. A review of current research intends to identify school and classroom conditions that are positively associated with student engagement.

Teachers are a powerful catalyst for positive student engagement through their daily interactions with students. Relevant literature on the teacher-student relationship will be examined specifically focusing on the factors within the classroom environment and teacher actions as antecedents of student engagement. Furthermore, an individual teacher’s efficacy deserves attention due to the strong connection to effective practices in the classroom (Zakeri, Rahmany, & Labone, 2016). While individual classrooms each contribute to the success of a school, organizational interdependence generates collective efficacy, which fosters school culture (Bandura, 1993). This review of literature identifies the role of school culture in supporting student engagement, specifically examining how leadership behaviors affect the culture by supporting the efficacy of teachers. The significance of collective teacher efficacy for student outcomes will be

reviewed to identify the leader's role in promoting an efficacious culture. Student engagement is a complex, dynamic concept. As a malleable factor in a child's education (Frawley et al., 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Wang & Degol, 2014), engagement deserves careful attention to determine how the actions of leaders and teachers as well as the culture within a school can positively influence the educational experience for each student.

### **Teacher Influence of Student Engagement**

The educational experience is greatly influenced by teachers. Relationships between teachers and students contribute to educational outcomes, specifically engagement with school (Anderson et al., 2004; Cadima, Doumen, Verschueren, & Buyse, 2015; Frawley et al., 2014). Disengagement leads to withdrawal (Finn, 1989); therefore, a review of the literature on the teacher influence of student engagement sheds light on implications for classroom practices and teacher dispositions. "Youth who are engaged with school feel more academically competent, are more connected to the institution, and elicit more positive reactions from their teachers and parents" (Wang & Fredricks, 2014, p. 732). Identifying factors of teachers' work is valid for promoting student engagement. Thus, the review examines teachers' effects on affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of student engagement.

#### **Teacher influence of affective student engagement.**

School provides more than an academic foundation; a student's well-being must also be addressed. Affective engagement concerns a child's attitude towards school (Frawley et al., 2014); moreover, a sense of belonging generated through a teacher's interactions with students influences the emotional connection to school (Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2014). A study that asked students to describe the ideal school that promoted their well-being found the teacher's role, relationships, and environment were significant factors that students perceived neces-

sary for their well-being (Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015). Another study that measured the validity of a student engagement measure revealed that teacher support had the highest correlation to student engagement (Lam et al., 2014). Teachers are a significant factor in the support students feel and the subsequent engagement students have (Anderson et al., 2004; Frawley et al., 2014; Lam et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015). Affective engagement encompasses a student's sense of relatedness and belonging (Appleton et al., 2008); therefore, classroom environments that foster positive relationships build a greater sense of belonging (Garza et al., 2014), and increase the likelihood that students can maintain healthy friendships that influence better choices (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDCP], 2010). Thus, the classroom organizational structure developed by the teacher has the potential to influence positive peer networks that improve affective engagement (Lynch, Lerner, & Leventhal, 2013).

Embedded within a teacher's interactions with students is a sense of caring that influences affective engagement in the classroom. Research that has analyzed students' perceptions of teacher interactions demonstrates that students desire school relationships that provide emotional support, such as feeling safe, loved, and cared for (CDCP, 2010; Lam et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015; Smart, 2014). Likewise, a study on teacher perceptions of what teacher behaviors foster a caring learning environment found positive dispositions and an effort to get to know students personally were acts of caring that were valued (Garza et al., 2014). Acts of caring manifest in developing relationships with students that are built on trust (Simmons et al., 2015), support physiological and safety needs (Garza et al., 2014), and embrace diversity (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Cultivating an emotionally supportive environment constructs "closer high quality relationships that are associated with improved engagement in school" (Anderson et al., 2004, p.108).

An influential factor of the quality of relationships built in the classroom is the teacher's specific dispositions. Smart (2014) found in a study of student motivation in middle grades science that teachers' cooperative behaviors of helpfulness and understanding led to increased motivation and efficacy. Conversely, oppositional interactions between teachers and students can have just as significant negative outcomes as cooperative relationships can promote positive results (Cadima et al., 2015; Smart, 2014). A teacher's positive affect plays a valuable part in impacting students' engagement (Smart, 2014), particularly as closeness is built in relationships through authentic interactions (Cadima et al., 2015). A study that involved teachers in action research to promote student engagement found:

The ways in which teachers express care and respect toward students, the multiple ways in which they provide feedback, and how they respond to emotional and academic needs influences the development of a classroom culture that can facilitate or hinder students' motivation to engage in learning (Strambler, & McKown, 2013, p.91).

Teacher interactions and efforts to build relationships with students are paramount to fostering student identification with school (Voelkl, 2012).

### **Teacher influence of behavioral student engagement.**

Behavioral engagement as a construct is more easily observed in students due to its external identifiers, including involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular aspects of school (Fredricks et al., 2004). Often identified through a student's participation in the classroom and school, behavioral engagement builds as connectedness to school increases (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Participation in school strengthens behavioral engagement, and as students feel success their identification with school increases and leads to further participation (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn, 1989). Teachers support engagement through the

approaches they take with students. A study conducted by Hughes, Wu, & West (2011) examined how teachers' goal practices influenced students' behavioral engagement from grades two through five. They found that as students went up in grade, teachers became more performance goal oriented in their instruction, which coincided with a decline in student engagement. Teachers with a mastery goal orientation facilitate engagement in students by rewarding effort and providing feedback on performance. When teachers emphasize performance-oriented goals, students' motivation stems from a desire to outperform others and receive recognition rather than wanting to learn for mastery (Hughes et al., 2011). While motivation is not synonymous with engagement, their relationship should be considered as engagement can change through contextual factors (Appleton et al., 2008).

Beyond a teacher's instructional goal practices, strong classroom organization creates a setting that helps students establish meaningful interpersonal skills that support peer relationships (Cadima et al., 2015; Cappella, Kim, Neal, & Jackson, 2013). A study of low-income elementary students found that classroom organization (i.e. behavior management, productivity, and learning formats) was responsible for increasing behavioral engagement as well as creating an environment that fostered positive peer relationships –another contributor to engagement (Cappella et al., 2013). Specifically, Cadima et al. (2015) found that when these antecedents to behavioral engagement were in place in the primary years, students' early exposure to the benefits of classroom contextual factors provided “implications for their positive adaption to the classroom demands from very young ages” (p.9). A study comparing efficacy beliefs of elementary and middle school teachers found that those teachers with strong efficacy for managing peer relations were observed to also provide better instructional supports in the way of feedback to students and facilitation of interpersonal skills among peers (Ryan, Kuusinen, & Bedoya-Skoog,

2015). A study on the influence of school-wide peer culture on individual student outcomes found that the unique peer culture of a school, including friendship quality and perceptions of a positive peer culture significantly related to school engagement (Lynch et al., 2013). Students are positively affected by a peer culture, both academically and emotionally.

Structures that foster positive relationships promote social network equity, in other words, “equitably distributed and interconnected social ties” (Cappella et al., 2013, p.375). Peer groups influence school connectedness, which has proven ties to choices that lead to school completion (CDCP, 2010; Finn, 1989; Lynch et al., 2013). Teachers who establish positive relationships with students by developing classroom communities and closeness enrich student engagement (Cadima et al., 2015). In their study on the importance of teacher relationships, Klem and Connell (2004) found:

Students who perceive teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear, and fair are more likely to report engagement in school. In turn, high levels of engagement are associated with higher attendance and test scores (p. 270).

Additionally, classrooms with structured positive behavior management systems encourage appropriate peer interactions that affect engagement (Cappella et al., 2013; Garza et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2015). A study on positive behavior interventions found that consistent praise notes not only encouraged appropriate behavior, but also built stronger teacher-student relationships (Howell, Caldarella, Korth, & Young, 2014).

### **Teacher influence of cognitive student engagement.**

The learning environment that is fostered through the teacher’s work in the classroom has the potential to positively or negatively influence engagement (Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens,

& Slegers, 2012; Smart, 2014). Efficacy among students is a considerable factor for building cognitive engagement. According to Bandura (1993), “learning environments that construe ability as an acquirable skill, deemphasize competitive social comparison, and highlight self-comparison of progress and personal accomplishments are well suited for building a sense of efficacy that promotes academic achievement” (p.125). An environment rich in positive feedback and encouragement nurtures student motivation and engagement (Garza et al., 2014; Smart, 2014; Strambler & McKown, 2013).

The investment in learning, ability to self-regulate and willingness to accept challenges encompasses cognitive aspects of engagement (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004). Cognitive engagement is more challenging for researchers to investigate due to its internal nature (Fredricks et al., 2004; Furlong & Christenson, 2008); however, students who are more cognitively committed to education are more connected to school (CDCP, 2010). Many variables that affect student engagement are beyond the scope of control of the school, but an area that can be a determinant is instruction (Furlong & Christenson, 2008). Wang and Fredricks (2014) found in their study of the correlation between problem behaviors and engagement that cognitive engagement was not a predictor of dropout compared to the other engagement constructs; yet, cognitive engagement encompasses investment in learning, self-regulation, and competence, which do play a role in student success (Appleton et al., 2008). Students become motivated with opportunities to have voice in the curriculum, experiences with relevant and cooperative learning, as well as participation in decision-making (Damiani, 2014; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Simmons et al., 2015). Furthermore, teachers who verbalize high expectations and positive feedback demonstrate care for students’ academic success while also building efficacy in students (Garza et al., 2014). Teachers’ devel-

opment of a supportive environment facilitates student efficacy (Smart, 2014) while decreasing the chances of academic frustration or lack of participation that lead to school withdrawal (Finn, 1989). Academic paths are established early in a student's career making teacher instruction in elementary school a critical factor in laying the foundation for positive academic outcomes (Appleton et al., 2008; Guo, Sun, Breit-Smith, Morrison, & Connor, 2015).

The actions of the teacher matter with regard to student engagement. Effective teacher feedback and instructional strategies that build student interdependence promote motivation –an important factor that connects to cognitive engagement (Strambler & McKown, 2013). Klem and Connell (2004) confirmed in their study of teacher influence on student engagement, a lack of teacher support had the largest effect on the engagement of elementary students. While individual teachers influence student engagement, the literature contends that school leadership also plays a significant role in fostering a culture that supports the individual and collective work of teachers, thus ultimately impacting students (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). In fact, Pianta et al. (2012) contend a priority of school reform efforts should be the support teachers receive to form relationships with students that promote learning opportunities rather than such areas as curriculum and assessment. As a multi-dimensional construct, it is evident that student engagement is supported through a variety of factors. To further explore these factors that support student engagement, the review examines the role of teacher efficacy as it relates to not only individual efficacy, but also the collective efficacy of teachers as a factor influencing students' experiences in school.

### **Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher efficacy is integral to a school culture that fosters engagement and achievement (Demir, 2008; Pierce, 2014). “Efficacy beliefs influence how people feel, act, think, and moti-

vate themselves” (Pierce, 2014, p. 315). Efficacy supports the perspective teachers have for education and specific instructional practices (Bandura, 1993). More importantly, efficacy beliefs about the capability of an individual or group affect the implementation of actions and attainment of future goals (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Strong efficacy beliefs cause teachers to invest more energy and time into creating meaningful learning experiences for students whereas teachers with weak efficacy can easily give up on students if they do not achieve desired results and blame students for their failures (Bandura, 1993). This review considers both self-efficacy and collective efficacy of teachers.

### **Individual teacher efficacy.**

Individual teacher’s self-efficacy is defined as one’s belief in instructional efficacy, thus influencing a classroom atmosphere that prioritizes and promotes mastery learning experiences (Bandura, 1993). Teacher self-efficacy has an impact on teacher-student interactions and achievement (Bandura, 1993; Stipek, 2012), and students’ experiences with teachers directly relates to their engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004). High efficacy motivates individuals to set goals, take on challenges, and maintain high aspirations (Bandura, 1997). Interestingly, teachers with low efficacy beliefs often impact the efficacy of their students by creating environments that cause students to doubt their academic capabilities (Bandura, 1993). With regard to teacher emotions in the classroom, self-efficacy beliefs were found to be positive predictors of joy, but were not found to be predictors of negative emotions, which more closely linked to contextual factors (Hagenauer, Hascher, & Volet, 2015). Additionally, teachers with high efficacy are more likely to visualize successful scenarios and permeate the belief systems of other teachers due to the interpersonal nature of schools (Bandura, 1993). Teachers with higher efficacy demonstrate greater resilience in the classroom and foster innovative teaching (Goddard et al., 2004).

Principals have an indirect effect on student engagement by implementing practices that encourage the teachers' efficacy (Bruggencate et al., 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Leadership habits of providing teachers with descriptive feedback, encouragement, and recognition for efforts are considered effective for growing teacher efficacy (Stipek, 2012; Zakeri et al., 2016). Moreover, efficacy is found to be subject to social persuasion where if people are persuaded to believe in themselves, their efficacy is likely to increase (Bandura, 1997). Research has also found that as leaders build supportive environments for novice teachers through mentoring and frequent interactions with experienced colleagues, self-efficacy beliefs strengthen as trust and relationships form (Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014). As evidenced in the research, the teacher's efficacy beliefs not only affect students, but also play a larger role in the collective efficacy among the whole staff.

#### **Collective teacher efficacy.**

Teachers' individual efficacy is based on perceptions of their performance; however, collective teacher efficacy is generated from an organization's beliefs in the capability of the whole staff to support student learning (Bandura, 1993; Demir, 2008; Zakeri et al., 2016). The concept of collective teacher efficacy is an important consideration for the work of schools. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) contend that collective teacher efficacy is associated with student achievement, thus there is a "strong reason to lead schools in a direction that will systematically develop teacher efficacy" (p.483). Teachers' perceptions of not only themselves, but also the organization influence their actions (Bandura, 1993; Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Kilinc, 2012; Pierce, 2014; Zakeri et al., 2016). Similar to individual efficacy, researchers define collective teacher efficacy 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 et al., 2000, p. 480).

Strong perceptions of collective efficacy promote student achievement through a culture that demonstrates resiliency and a committed effort to meet school goals (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). Moller, Mickelson, Stearns, Banerjee, and Bottia (2013) refer to this as a collective pedagogical teacher culture where a strong professional community and norms for collaboration exist. Common beliefs about effective pedagogy contribute to an inclusive school community that values collaboration (Hazel & Allen, 2013); while collective norms within a school can influence a teacher's actions and perceptions of efficacy (Zakeri et al., 2016). Additionally, a leader's influence on the collective pedagogical culture can establish beliefs that all within the school help to produce positive student outcomes (Pierce, 2014). In their study of collective pedagogical culture on mathematics achievement Moller et al. (2013) found that schools could improve scores and reduce achievement gaps in math by transforming the organizational culture because teachers who perceive stronger collective pedagogical teacher cultures actually invest more time working with individual children. A study on the relationship between elementary principals' emotional intelligence and collective teacher efficacy highlights the significance of a leader's relationship management skills, specifically as it relates to connecting positively with others and conflict management for fostering a culture that promotes collective teacher efficacy (Pierce, 2014).

Most studies focus on the outcomes of collective efficacy, whereas less research has been conducted on the factors within an organization that influence perceptions of collective efficacy (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). In a study focused on the association between collective teacher efficacy and school socioeconomic status, Belfi, Gielen, De Fraine, Verschueren and Meredith (2015) determined efficacy beliefs can be increased by improving school-based social capital, where trusting relationships and shared norms among stakeholders are present. Further investi-

gation into how collective teacher efficacy can be increased, especially in schools with a lower socioeconomic status, can contribute additional understanding for school leaders needed to influence student achievement (Belfi et al., 2015). Additional inquiry to examine teachers' perceptions of principal behaviors that influence the growth of collective teacher efficacy can also add to current research (Pierce, 2014). While teacher self-efficacy and a collaborative school culture serve as antecedents for collective teacher efficacy (Demir, 2008), the principal has a direct effect on the collective efficacy among teachers.

### **School Leadership and Teacher Efficacy**

School leaders have direct and indirect effects on student outcomes (Bruggencate, et al., 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2010); therefore, identifying aspects of leadership that promote teacher efficacy is essential. Research evidences a compelling correlation between teacher efficacy, both individual and collective, and positive student outcomes (Bandura, 1993; Calik et al., 2012; Demir, 2008; Stipek, 2012; Zakeri et al., 2016). School leadership bolsters teachers' efficacy beliefs by establishing a strong sense of purpose among staff members to work together to transcend obstacles and reach achievement goals. (Bandura, 1993). However, the variability in leadership practices and the subsequent effects on student engagement deserve further investigation.

Leaders have a strong influence on the development of a positive climate, effective instructional practices, and organizational structures, such as professional learning communities, that directly and indirectly affect both individual and collective teacher efficacy (Calik et al., 2012; Hazel & Allen, 2013; Ross & Gray, 2006; Zakeri et al., 2016). As a result, leadership behaviors have an indirect effect on student engagement (Bruggencate et al., 2012). Investigating the leader's role in developing teacher efficacy that improves student engagement is an area in need of further study. Principals help establish a tone for initiatives within a school (Daniels &

Steres, 2011); therefore, the leader's influence cannot be overlooked. This review will examine leadership through the lenses of distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and instructional leadership to explore the role each play in strengthening teacher efficacy.

### **Distributed leadership and teacher efficacy.**

Distributed leadership influences teacher efficacy through interactions and organizational decisions. By definition, distributed leadership spreads administrative functions among those within the organization whereby multiple leaders create ownership and sustainability of practices (Stronge, Richard & Catano, 2008). The principal plays a pivotal role in establishing trust in the school environment for all stakeholders and developing organizational structures and processes that are conducive for collaboration (Price, 2012). Heck and Hallinger (2010) found in a longitudinal study that distributed leadership practices, specifically a focus on school improvement, shared decision-making, and participation of teacher leaders, had an indirect positive effect on student growth over time. In another study on principal-teacher interactions, Price (2012) found that distributed leadership that encourages shared school decision-making improved the quality of the work environment and principal-teacher relationships, which significantly improved teacher satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment. Moreover, teachers demonstrate greater trustworthiness of superiors when they are included in decision-making (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). The extent of perceived teacher leadership strengthens collective efficacy as teachers believe their colleagues are capable of supporting students at a high level of learning while also taking on leadership roles (Angelle & Teague, 2014).

### **Transformational leadership and teacher efficacy.**

While distributed leadership practices characterized by shared decision making and shared leadership support collective efficacy, there is also research supporting a direct link be-

tween collective efficacy and transformational leadership behaviors (Demir, 2008). Transformational leadership focuses on fostering the growth of individuals within the organization by building their capacity (Ross & Gray, 2006). By definition, transformational leaders engage and empower teachers in collaborative processes aligned to a common vision (Stronge et al., 2008). Transformational leadership has direct influence on collective efficacy, but also indirectly through individual teacher efficacy (Demir, 2008). Ross and Gray (2006) found that collective efficacy was only a partial mediator between transformational leadership and teacher commitment to the organization. However, transformational leadership practices did influence collective efficacy through the principal's work in providing the staff with feedback about instruction. Conversely, in their study on the effects of transformational leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) concluded that transformational leadership practices make a weak contribution to student engagement, yet they do have an effect on the organizational conditions in the school which can relate to stronger student engagement.

The crux of transformational leadership is fostering the growth of those within an organization and strengthening their commitment by motivating toward organizational goals (Ross & Gray, 2006). There is research on the elements of collective efficacy that suggest it is strengthened through vicarious experiences where teachers are affirmed in their practices by modeling, observing others and sharing successes (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard et al., 2004; Ross & Gray, 2006; Zakeri et al., 2016). In some cases, the vicarious experience involves observing at another school which may present instruction that is perceived below the standards of the observing school, yet collective efficacy still builds as those observing confirm beliefs that they are more capable (Zakeri et al., 2016). In a study about transformational leadership's effect on collective efficacy, Demir (2008) found, "collective efficacy beliefs might develop when there are

opportunities for teachers to interact and share knowledge. A principal who encourages teachers to collaborate is likely to increase collective teacher efficacy" (p.105). Collaboration grants support to teachers which stimulates a professional culture where teachers exhibit more effort for their organization (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011). The leader's role in coordinating, supporting, and nurturing the development of a collaborative teacher culture further perpetuates collective efficacy (Pierce, 2014). Research defines a collaborative teacher culture as having a strong professional community that focuses on student needs through an expectation of collaboration (Moller et al., 2013). Thus, social persuasion through avenues such as professional development and feedback encourages teachers to believe in their capabilities and those of others (Goddard et al., 2000; Ross & Gray, 2006; Zakeri et al., 2016).

#### **Instructional leadership and teacher efficacy.**

Instructional leadership incorporates a focus on teaching and learning where school leaders are able to support teacher effectiveness through frequent observations and conversations with teachers (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Stronge et al., 2008). Instructional leadership practices influence collective efficacy indirectly as teachers' self-efficacy grows from evaluative feedback about their instructional strategies (Calik et al., 2012). Importantly, though, the credibility and expertise of the one giving performance feedback affects whether or not the feedback increases efficacy beliefs of teachers (Zakeri et al., 2016). With regard to professional development, principals need to become skilled in identifying the specific actions of teachers that achieve desired results to more effectively influence efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006). However, in one study of New Jersey high schools, Fancera and Bliss (2011) found that while collective teacher efficacy and instructional leadership related to student achievement, there was not a significant relationship between the principal instructional leadership functions found in Hallinger's Principal In-

structional Management Rating Scale (an instrument used to measure instructional leadership) and collective teacher efficacy. Instead, they found a stronger correlation between collective efficacy and a school's socioeconomic status. Goddard & Skrla (2006) previously studied the ways in which school composition is related to collective efficacy and found while a history of achievement, socioeconomic status, and race are factors; a school's collective efficacy is not always dependent on the composition of the student body. The empirical research focused on collective efficacy demonstrates differences exist among schools studied, thus revealing the need for further research on leadership's relationship with teacher efficacy. Research posits collective teacher efficacy has an association with achievement differences between schools (Goddard et al., 2000). The reciprocal relationship that exists between individual and collective efficacy among teachers demonstrates the importance of leadership behaviors that promote each because as one grows stronger, so does the other (Bandura, 1993; Calik et al., 2012; Demir, 2008; Zakeri et al., 2016).

Principals directly influence school processes that can enhance instructional practices such as professional learning communities (Price 2012) as well as the structure and expected frameworks for routines within school that promote an inclusive community (Hazel & Allen, 2013). Instructional leaders generating opportunities for teachers to routinely discuss instruction and student learning are increasingly prevalent in schools (Kirtman, 2014). These professional learning communities help erase teacher isolation by promoting a communal commitment to improving student learning (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Leclerc, Moreau, Dumouchel, & Sal-lafranque-St-Louis, 2012). When instructional leaders build opportunities for collaboration about the curriculum, a shared pedagogy builds into the culture that influences the daily work of teaching and learning (Hazel & Allen, 2013). A school leader contributes to collective teacher

efficacy by using collaboration to send the message that the whole school plays a part in student outcomes (Pierce, 2014). Perceived collective efficacy creates diligence among the members of the organization to put forth extra effort and reach school improvement goals (Goddard et al., 2004).

In research examining the relationships between the variables of self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and instructional leadership, Calik et al. (2012) found a strong relationship between the evaluation of the teaching process and students and teacher efficacy for implementing instructional strategies. More recently, the evolution of evaluation processes in schools to include cycles of observation and dialogue that provide teachers with feedback for their professional growth created a shift in culture to focus more on the observation and feedback process (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). In a study conducted to examine teacher's efficacy beliefs in low income schools, Stipek (2012) found that teachers' perceived administrative support significantly influenced their efficacy beliefs regardless of student ethnicity; thus supporting the notion principals can strengthen teacher efficacy through encouragement and recognition of good work. Thus, the direct work of principals with teacher evaluation and feedback supports teacher efficacy and subsequently affects student outcomes (Calik et al., 2012; Stipek, 2012).

### **School Culture and Student Engagement**

The literature contends that a relationship exists between school culture and student engagement (CDCP, 2010; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). School leadership plays a key role in fostering a culture that shares a common belief system to engage students (Stronge, et al., 2008). Principals often set the tone for instructional initiatives, which can prioritize the work of a school and establish a potential shift in culture (Daniels & Steres, 2011). However, teachers are also an integral component of a sustainable organizational culture (Moller et al., 2013). In fact, norms for

extra effort and resiliency develop among teachers with perceived collective efficacy causing individuals new to the culture to quickly learn these organizational expectations (Goddard et al., 2004). Efforts to create an inclusive community that has shared beliefs about pedagogy greatly contribute to the culture (Hazel & Allen, 2013). In a study on novice teachers' perceptions of school climate and self-efficacy, Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) found that efforts to improve school climate through trust, cooperation, teamwork, and consistent interaction among colleagues contributes to increasing the efficacy beliefs of teachers. Furthermore, a culture that promotes connectedness benefits students and increases the likelihood of school completion (Finn, 1989; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

School culture has a direct effect on students through not only how instruction occurs, but also how relationships are valued (Cadima et al., 2015; Daniels & Steres, 2011). A school culture that promotes connectedness and a sense of belonging supports students' behavioral engagement or emotional connection to school, resulting in improved academics and a decrease in problem behaviors (CDCP, 2010; Lynch et al., 2013; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). School connectedness relates to a student's connection with the institution, which is fed through participation and a sense of belonging (Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Failure to identify with school influences behaviors that depress academic achievement, often creating barriers too large to overcome (Voelkl, 2012). Studies of adolescent problem behaviors concluded that a decline in behavioral engagement correlated with an increased likelihood of problem behaviors over time (CDCP, 2010; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). A culture that promotes school connectedness affords greater opportunities for students to connect emotionally through positive interactions among staff and students (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Identifying students at risk early is possible since engagement behaviors exist in parallel forms between early grades and high

school (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Furthermore, research endorses that early interventions to encourage behavioral engagement have a reciprocal effect on lessening problem behaviors in youth while improving school completion (Appleton et al., 2008; CDCP, 2010; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Students who feel strong bonds with their school community are less likely to engage in behaviors that contradict the values of those in the community (Lynch et al., 2013). Awareness of the culture and efforts to strengthen these bonds is important for any school. In a case study of three pedagogically different elementary schools that each had an inclusive community, Hazel & Allen (2013) found an emphasis on community building and conscious attention to the culture universal at each setting. The influence of school culture on student outcomes is acknowledged throughout research and valid for future research. According to Appleton et al., (2008) an opportunity in education exists because “the cyclical nature of engagement implies that both early efforts to engage students, as well as the failure to do so, may have led to drastically different outcomes later in a student's educational career" (p.382).

High quality relationships are an imperative component to a school environment that promotes engagement (Cappella et al., 2013). According to Anderson et al. (2004) dropouts average sixteen absences in first grade while graduates average ten days; moreover, each subsequent year with more than ten absences increases the chance of dropping out by five percent (p.97). Interventions to combat factors such as low attendance, problem behaviors, or academic frustration use high quality relationships as a means of engaging students (Anderson et al., 2004; Garza et al., 2014; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). A study of one mentoring program designed to address low attendance, academic frustration, and problem behaviors demonstrated increased student engagement through routine communication to increase accountability (Anderson et al., 2004). A school's commitment to developing positive relationships with students is rooted in the

culture and sustained by the individuals that value that culture (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Programs to promote engagement are often designed for at-risk populations; however, interventions that can be applied universally for all students need to be considered to create more long-range effects especially since engagement is inextricably linked to improved student outcomes (Wang & Degol, 2014). Li & Lerner (2011) suggest, “it might be worthwhile to design interventions to help form bonding, positive affects, and a sense of belonging and connectedness among all students, instead of narrowing the target audience to at-risk students” (p. 244). The culture of a school guides what is valued, prioritized, and implemented in the teacher-student relationships as well as professional collaboration that occurs.

Early intervention as a valued component of a school’s culture has a contingent relationship with academic factors and engagement (Appleton et al., 2008). A review of the literature would be remiss to discount the role that academics play in students’ educational trajectories. While poor academic performance is a likely factor for why students drop out of school, academics alone do not explain why students leave school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997). A longitudinal study of kindergarten through fifth grade students found that reading achievement was a predictor of behavioral engagement, but the converse was not supported that behavioral engagement predicted later reading success (Guo et al., 2015). Early literacy skills are a key ingredient for establishing a path for students that leads to sustainable engagement in school (Guo et al., 2015); however, a school-wide culture committed to reading has also been found to promote engagement as students embrace what it prioritized by school (Daniels & Steres, 2011). Academic success is closely linked to engagement, thus early academic intervention plays an integral part in building students’ abilities to avoid frustration and lower self-esteem that occurs as the achievement gap grows wider throughout the schooling years (Appleton et al., 2008; Moller

et al., 2014; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). In fact, “how children comport themselves at the beginning of the schooling process anticipates how they fare toward the end –a sobering realization” (Alexander et al., 1997, p.95).

A school’s culture influences academic priorities (Daniels & Steres, 2011) and the collaboration among educators (Pierce, 2014), but it also comprises the involvement of students. Student engagement is positively impacted by a school culture that promotes student voice in decision-making (Simmons et al., 2015). A study on health-promoting school structures found mutual reciprocity was developed through whole-school interactions, especially leading to students who perceived themselves as valued and needed in the school community because of their involvement (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). A school environment where students feel opportunities to have a voice in decisions as well as meaningful relationships builds school connectedness and perpetuates engagement (CDCP, 2010).

School culture cultivates engagement through various avenues that promote connectedness and ownership. The values and beliefs of a school must be integral to the core business of supporting students, both academically and emotionally. School connectedness is one of the most protective factors against problem behaviors (CDCP, 2010). Teachers help create the culture of the school through their interactions with students and the norms that guide their professional work. Therefore, it is necessary to account for the teachers’ direct influence on antecedents of student engagement in the literature.

A comprehensive review of current literature demonstrates a relationship exists between schools, specifically the actions of school leadership and teachers, and student engagement. Specifically, the review notes the leadership and culture of a school influence individual and col-

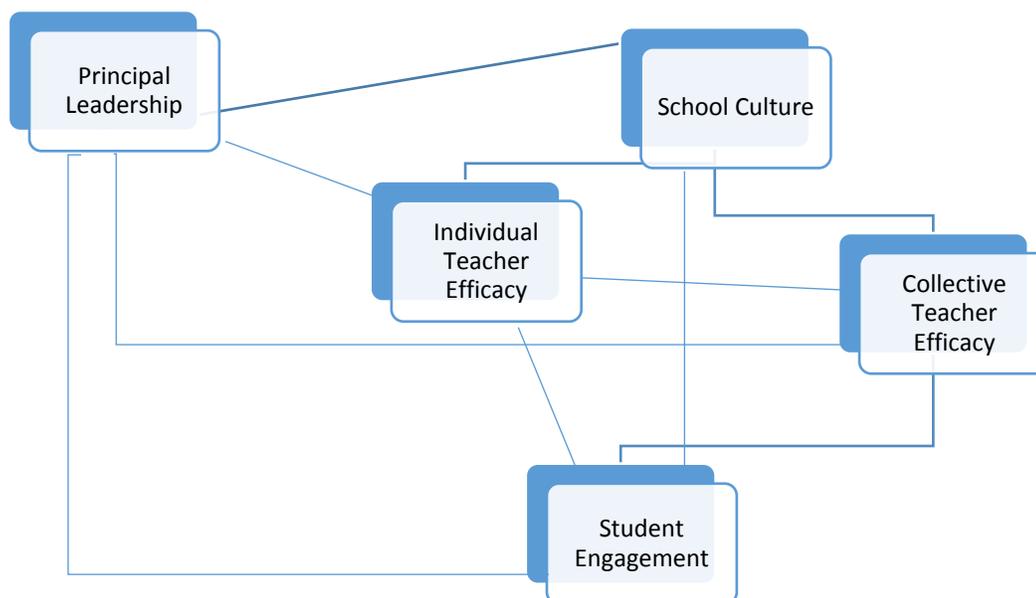
lective teacher efficacy to support student engagement. A detailed synthesis of the literature established a conceptual framework to guide this research study.

### Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework developed from the research organizes the relationships between school leadership, culture, teacher efficacy, and student engagement. Figure 1 outlines the relationship among the different factors within this study.

*Figure 1*

*Conceptual Framework*



Considering the role of human interaction within a school serves as a basis for this study. First developed by Herbert Blumer in 1969, symbolic interactionism theory emphasizes that each individual creates meaning, is influenced by, and acts as a result of continuous interactions with the world (Potts, 2015). Symbolic interactionists assert that human behavior, whether it is individual or group, is a result of communication (Abrell & Hanna, 1978). The different variables in the conceptual model are a result of interactions between school leaders, teachers,

and students. Teachers fulfill their role in a manner consistent with their perceptions of their leaders as well as their students and the school environment (Abrell & Hanna, 1978). Thus, symbolic interactionism serves as a foundational theory for this study.

School leadership has direct and indirect influences on student outcomes through organizational structures and supervisory practices (Bruggencate et al., 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2010). A conceptual model for this study constructs around the theories of instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership, specifically focusing on using these theories to influence teacher efficacy. Instructional leadership practices create a path for fostering a culture of collective teacher efficacy, specifically by providing instructional feedback to teachers and promoting collaboration throughout the organization (Calik et al., 2012; Price, 2012). Additionally, distributed leadership practices indirectly affect student growth especially through the practices of shared decision-making and teacher leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Principals can leverage relational trust by sharing power and positively influence teacher attitudes resulting in a stronger school climate (Price, 2012). Building the capacity of individuals within the organization through transformational leadership practices are also linked to teacher efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006). Transformational leaders create opportunities for teachers interact and share knowledge, thus creating avenues for teacher efficacy to develop (Demir, 2008).

Research supports that teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy within the organization influences their individual actions, which ultimately supports student engagement (Bandura, 1993; Pierce, 2014). Therefore, the conceptual framework focuses on school leadership practices as it relates to individual and collective teacher efficacy. Through a constructionism epistemology, meaning is made both by observing how leaders influence other people and by defining

these actions they utilize; thus, these theories serve as the basis for the lens in which to view school leadership in this study.

Organizational culture is defined as a pattern of shared assumptions that are integrated deeply among those in the group to provide stability and influence the beliefs and actions of the individuals (Schein, 2010). School leaders are a primary influence on the culture within an organization; but teachers are also an integral component (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Culture is often described through the norms and values that stabilize the organization (Schein 2010); however, it is also noted that a malleable target for intervention is school climate (Wang & Degol, 2015). This study's conceptual model is built on the interactions between school leadership and stakeholders to develop an efficacious school culture that promotes student engagement. Specifically, literature supports that an association between school culture and student engagement exists by promoting school connectedness through relationships (Cadima et al., 2015; Daniels & Steres, 2011). School connectedness encourages positive emotions with school through meaningful relationships (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Additionally, school culture can create an inclusive community that has shared beliefs regarding pedagogy (Hazel & Allen, 2013) as well as a communal commitment to improve student learning through professional learning communities (Dufour & Mattos, 2013). This framework develops a bridge between leadership, school culture, and teacher efficacy resulting in positive student outcomes.

An additional component for the conceptual model guiding this study includes classroom conditions and interactions between students and teachers. The ability of a teacher to build positive relationships with students promotes increased student well-being and engagement with school (Garza et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015). Research concludes that students value and desire teacher relationships characterized by a sense of feeling safe, cared for, and loved (CDCP,

2010; Lam et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015; Smart, 2014). Influenced by a teacher's efficacy, the classroom environment and a teacher's organization can provide appropriate avenues for developing interpersonal skills among students that connect to stronger engagement (Cadima et al., 2015; Cappella et al., 2013). Teachers foster engagement in a variety of ways, including the structure of their classrooms and their interactions with students. From the constructionist perspective, this study will create meaning from understanding the influence of leadership and teacher efficacy on classroom conditions that strengthen student engagement.

The conceptual framework of this study hinges on the indirect effects that school leadership has on student outcomes. The model defines the role of leaders in fostering a positive school culture and strengthening teacher efficacy through interactions. These interactions guide classroom conditions and practices resulting in a direct influence on student engagement and achievement. Teacher efficacy supports interactions with students that promote higher engagement (Demir, 2008; Stipek, 2012). A leader's ability to facilitate teacher efficacy plays a role in the resulting culture and learning environment for students (Pierce, 2014). School leaders have a responsibility to foster a school culture that promotes effective student outcomes; however, variability in leadership practices across schools causes cultures to differ. Guided by this conceptual framework, this study will use case study methods to research what aspects and actions of school leadership promote teacher efficacy to influence school and classroom conditions resulting in positive student engagement. Identification of early interventions at the classroom or school level can change the engagement construct for students and produce more desirable long-range outcomes (Anderson et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Student engagement as a factor in school outcomes requires the attention of education professionals. While challenging as a construct to define due to the multifaceted and interconnected aspects of engagement (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004), the implications for addressing how schools foster engagement are exponentially beneficial to students. Positive student engagement is a protective factor against school withdrawal (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn, 1989; Wang & Degol, 2014; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Engaged students feel a sense of belonging (Rowe & Stewart, 2011), feel greater motivation and efficacy for learning (Smart, 2014), and maintain positive relationships that influence choices to persist in their schooling (CDCP, 2010). As supported by Fredricks et al. (2004), “the study of engagement as multidimensional and as an interaction between the individual and the environment promises to help us to better understand the complexity of children's experiences in school and to design more specifically targeted and nuanced interventions” (p.61). The result in understanding the school influences for positive affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement can potentially alter long-term trajectories for students. While compelling research exists surrounding the potential of the engagement construct, there is a lack of literature regarding school and classroom conditions that strengthen engagement at the elementary level.

This review of current literature demonstrates a correlation exists between school culture and student engagement. Relationships, specifically between teachers and students, significantly contribute to a student’s sense of belonging –a key ingredient for a willingness to participate in school (Anderson et al., 2004; Cadima et al., 2015; CDCP, 2010; Finn, 1989; Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Conversely, negative or oppositional interactions in the classroom can reduce school connectedness (Cadima et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2011; Smart, 2014). Additionally, a positive school environment that addresses the emotional needs of students provides a learning context

that encourages engagement (Cappella et al., 2013; CDCP, 2010; Frawley et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015). Building on this literature by examining factors within the classroom and school that promote high achievement in an elementary setting will add a missing element to the current context of the literature on the topic. The malleable nature of student engagement (Wang & Degol, 2014) and the potential of early interventions (Appleton et al., 2008) create a significant opportunity for this study to identify factors that positively influence student engagement. Recognizing through research what elementary schools can do early to promote engagement and achievement for students is needed to potentially influence the actions of those within schools.

Leadership's central role in organizational change posits an opportunity to affect student outcomes through methods of leadership that support individual and collective teacher efficacy (Calik et al., 2012; Demir, 2008; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Pierce, 2014; Price, 2012; Zakeri et al., 2016). Bandura (1993) suggests, "strong principals excel in their ability to get their staff to work together with a strong sense of purpose and to believe in their capabilities to surmount obstacles to educational attainments" (p. 141). Teachers and leaders cultivate the school culture, and thus, employing beliefs and interventions to build the capacity and beliefs of teachers while strengthening student engagement yields valuable implications for improved student outcomes. This study contributes to the existing literature by examining specific actions of school leaders and teachers that foster student engagement in elementary school. The correlations between achievement and engagement are prevalent throughout the literature, yet a depth of understanding for how schools can affect engagement at the elementary level is needed in the research. Specifically, this research study asked the following guiding questions:

1. How do school leaders describe their perceptions of the administrative practices that support teacher efficacy?

2. How do teachers with strong efficacy describe the perceived impact of their efficacy on student engagement?
3. How do teachers and leaders describe the practices that promote student engagement?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is aligned with current research about the significance of student engagement in schools (Anderson et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Past studies have shown that student engagement is a malleable factor, and schools have the potential to alter the trajectory of students' educational experiences by paying attention to this construct (Frawley et al., 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Wang & Degol, 2014). School leadership indirectly influences student engagement through teacher efficacy; however, research predominantly focuses on student engagement at the secondary level resulting in a lack of research regarding facilitators of student engagement within the elementary setting (Appleton et al., 2008). What happens in a classroom each day directly influences students' learning. The aim of this study was to determine how elementary school leaders could positively support student engagement by strengthening teacher efficacy. The collaborative nature of schools encourages a teaching culture that enhances achievement and engagement (Moller et al., 2013; Moller, Stearns, Mickelson, Bottia, & Banerjee, 2014; Pierce, 2014). Likewise, the vision set forth by school leadership can promote a collaborative culture (Moller et al., 2013). An organization's culture influences the actions of its members (Hazel & Allen, 2013; Moller et al., 2013; Schein, 2010), thus identifying how school leadership fosters individual and collective teacher efficacy to impact the culture is essential to the greater work of student engagement. Early intervention practices alter the trajectory of student outcomes by building strong engagement constructs earlier in a student's educational career (Anderson et al., 2004;

Appleton et al, 2008; Furlong & Christenson, 2008; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Considering the malleable nature of student engagement, this problem was significant.

School leadership has the potential to foster teacher efficacy that promotes positive student engagement. By collecting evidence of specific practices of school leaders through the perspectives of teachers in high-achieving elementary schools, this study intended to identify ways school principals foster teacher efficacy. The selection of two schools with different socioeconomic compositions was significant for this study because it examined factors that were perceived to foster teacher efficacy regardless of the school's socioeconomic status. Knowledge of leader characteristics and actions that promoted efficacy could influence positive changes in leadership practices.

This study additionally supported the importance of student engagement on achievement. A teacher's sense of efficacy influences the instruction that happens each day in the classroom (Bandura, 1993). Classroom environments that cultivate positive relationships and build contextual learning experiences facilitate student engagement (Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015). Therefore, this study investigated how student engagement improves with teacher efficacy.

## References

- Abrell, R. L., & Hanna, C. (1978). Symbolic interactionism and supervisor-teacher relationships. *The Clearing House*, 51(9), 439-443.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of Education*, 70(2), 87-107.
- Anderson, A. R., Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., & Lehr, C. A. (2004). Check and connect: The importance of relationships for promoting engagement with school. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42(2), 95-113.
- Angelle, P., & Teague, G. M. (2014). Teacher leadership and collective efficacy: Teacher perceptions in three US school districts. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(6), 738-753.
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369-386.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148.
- Bandura, A. (1997). Insights. Self-efficacy. *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, 13(9), 4-6.
- Belfi, B., Gielen, S., De Fraine, B., Verschueren, K., & Meredith, C. (2015). School-based social capital: The missing link between schools' socioeconomic composition and collective teacher efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 45, 33-44.
- Bruggencate, G., Luyten, H., Scheerens, J., & Slegers, P. (2012). Modeling the influence of school leaders on student achievement: How can school leaders make a difference? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 699-732.

- Cadima, J., Doumen, S., Verschueren, K., & Buyse, E. (2015). Child engagement in the transition to school: Contributions of self-regulation, teacher-child relationships, and classroom climate. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 32*, 1-12.
- Calik, T., Sezgin, F., Kavgaci, H., & Kilinc, A. C. (2012). Examination of relationships between instructional leadership of school principals and self-efficacy of teachers and collective teacher efficacy. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 12*(4), 2498-2504.
- Cappella, E., Kim, H. Y., Neal, J. W., & Jackson, D. R. (2013). Classroom peer relationships and behavioral engagement in elementary school: The role of social network equity. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 52*(3-4), 367-379.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). School connectedness: Strategies for increasing protective factors among youth. *Reclaiming Children & Youth, 19*(3), 21-24.
- Damiani, J. (2014). Unlocking elementary students' perspectives of leadership. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 6*(2), 229-256.
- Daniels, E., & Steres, M. (2011). Examining the effects of a school-wide reading culture on the engagement of middle school students. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 35*(2), 1-13.
- Demir, K. (2008). Transformational leadership and collective efficacy: The moderating roles of collaborative culture and teachers' self-efficacy. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 33*, 93-112.
- DuFour, R., & Mattos, M. (2013). How do principals really improve schools? *Educational Leadership, 70*(7), 34-40.

- Eccles, J., & Wang, M. (2012). Part I commentary: So what is student engagement anyway? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 133-145). New York, NY: Springer.
- Fancera, S. F., & Bliss, J. R. (2011). Instructional leadership influence on collective teacher efficacy to improve school achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 10*(3), 349-370.
- Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59*(2), 117-142.
- Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 97-131). New York, NY: Springer.
- Frawley, D., McCoy, S., Banks, J., & Thornton, M. (2014). Affective school engagement and self-concept: How are Irish boys and girls faring? *Child Indicators Research, 7*(4), 843-859.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109.
- Furlong, M. J., & Christenson, S. L. (2008). Engaging students at school and with learning: A relevant construct for all students. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 365-368.
- Garza, R., Alejandro, E. A., Blythe, T., & Fite, K. (2014). Caring for students: What teachers have to say. *IRSN Education, 2014*, 1-7. doi: 10.1155/2014/425856
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Education Research Journal, 37*(2), 479-507.

- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2004). Collective efficacy beliefs: Theoretical developments, empirical evidence, and future directions. *Educational Researcher*, 33(3), 3-13.
- Goddard, R. D., & Skrla, L. (2006). The influence of school social composition on teachers' collective efficacy beliefs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(2), 216-235.
- Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. ASCD: Alexandria, VA.
- Guo, Y., Sun, S., Breit-Smith, A., Morrison, F. J., & Connor, C. M. (2015). Behavioral engagement and reading achievement in elementary-school-age children: A longitudinal cross-lagged analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(2), 332-347.
- Hagenauer, G., Hascher, T., & Volet, S. E. (2015). Teacher emotions in the classroom: Associations with students' engagement, classroom discipline, and the interpersonal teacher-student relationship. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 30(4), 385-403.
- Hazel, C. E., & Allen, W. B. (2013). Creating inclusive communities through pedagogy at three elementary schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice*, 24(3), 336-356.
- Heck, R. H., & Hallinger, P. (2010). Testing a longitudinal model of distributed leadership effects on school improvement. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(5), 867-885.
- Heck, R. H., & Hallinger, P. (2014). Modeling the longitudinal effects of school leadership on teaching and learning. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(5), 653-681.

- Howell, A., Caldarella, P., Korth, B., & Young, K. R. (2014). Exploring the social validity of teacher praise notes in elementary school. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 49*(2), 22-32.
- Hughes, J. N., Wu, W., & West, S. G. (2011). Teacher performance goal practices and elementary students' behavioral engagement: A developmental perspective. *Journal of School Psychology, 49*(1), 1-23.
- Kirtman, L. (2014). *Leadership and teams*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262-273.
- Kortering, L., & Brazier, P. (2008). Engaging youth in school and learning: The emerging key to school success and completion. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 461-465.
- Kraft, M. A., & Gilmour, A. F. (2016). Can principals promote teacher development as evaluators? A case study of principals' views and experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 52*(5), 711-753.
- Lam, S., Jimerson, S., Wong, B. P. H., Kikas, E., Shin, H., Veiga, F. H...Zollneritsch, J. (2014). Understanding and measuring student engagement in school: The results of an international study from 12 countries. *School Psychology Quarterly, 29*(2), 213-232.
- Leclerc, M., Moreau, A. C., Dumouchel, C., & Sallafranque-St-Louis, F. (2012). Factors that promote progression in schools functioning as professional learning community. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership, 7*(7), 1-14.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 112-129.

- Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Trajectories of school engagement during adolescence: Implications for grades, depression, delinquency, and substance use. *Developmental Psychology, 47*(1), 233-247.
- Lynch, A. D., Lerner, R. M., & Leventhal, T. (2013). Adolescent academic achievement and school engagement: An examination of the role of school-wide peer culture. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42*(1), 6-19.
- Meristo, M., & Eisenschmidt, E. (2014). Novice teachers' perceptions of school climate and self-efficacy. *International Journal of Educational Research, 67*, 1-10.
- Moller, S., Mickelson, R. A., Stearns, E., Banerjee, N., & Bottia, M. C. (2013). Collective pedagogical teacher culture and mathematics achievement: Differences by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. *Sociology of Education, 86*(2), 174-194.
- Moller, S., Stearns, E., Mickelson, R. A., Bottia, M. C., & Banerjee, N. (2014). Is academic engagement the panacea for achievement in mathematics across racial/ethnic groups? Assessing the role of teacher culture. *Social Forces, 92*(4), 1513-1544.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 365-386). New York, NY: Springer.
- Pierce, S. (2014). Examining the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and the emotional intelligence of elementary school principals. *Journal of School Leadership, 24*(2), 311-335.
- Potts, A. (2015). A theory for educational research: Socialisation theory and symbolic interaction. *Education Research and Perspectives, 42*(1), 633-654.

- Price, H. E. (2012). Principal-teacher interactions: How affective relationships shape principal and teacher attitudes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(1), 39-85.
- Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2012). Jingle, jangle, and conceptual haziness: Evolution and future directions of the engagement construct. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: Springer.
- Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). Transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values: The mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, 17(2), 179-199.
- Rowe, F., & Stewart, D. (2011). Promoting connectedness through whole-school approaches: Key elements and pathways of influence. *Health Education*, 111(1), 49-65.
- Rumberger, R. W., & Rotermund, S. (2012). The relationship between engagement and high school dropout. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 491-514). New York, NY: Springer.
- Ryan, A. M., Kuusinen, C. M., & Bedoya-Skoog, A. (2015). Managing peer relations: A dimension of teacher self-efficacy that varies between elementary and middle school teachers and is associated with observed classroom quality. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 41, 147-156.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Simmons, C., Graham, A., & Thomas, N. (2015). Imagining an ideal school for wellbeing: Locating student voice. *Journal of Educational Change*, 16(2), 129-144.

- Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21-44). New York, NY: Springer.
- Smart, J. B. (2014). A mixed methods study of the relationship between student perceptions of teacher-student interactions and motivation in middle level science. *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, 38(4), 1-19.
- Stipek, D. (2012). Effects of student characteristics and perceived administrative and parental support on teacher self-efficacy. *The Elementary School Journal*, 112(4), 590-606.
- Strambler, M. J., & McKown, C. (2013). Promoting student engagement through evidence-based action research with teachers. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 23(2), 87-114.
- Stronge, J. H., Richard H. B., & Catano, N. (2008). *Qualities of effective principals*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Thoonen, E. E. J., Slegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. D., & Geijsel, F. P. (2011). How to improve teaching practices : The role of teacher motivation, organizational factors, and leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(3), 496-536.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 547-593.
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The condition of education* (NCES Publication No. 2017144). Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_coi.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp)

- Voelkl, K. E. (2012). School identification. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 193-218). New York, NY: Springer.
- Wang, M. & Degol, J. (2014). Staying engaged: Knowledge and research needs in student engagement. *Child Development Perspectives*, 8(3), 137-143.
- Wang, M., & Degol, J. L. (2015). School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychological Review*, 28(2), 315-352.
- Wang, M., & Fredricks, J. A. (2014). The reciprocal links between school engagement, youth problem behaviors, and school dropout during adolescence. *Child Development*, 85(2), 722-737.
- Zakeri, A., Rahmany, R., & Labone, E. (2016). Teachers' self and collective efficacy: The case of novice English language teachers. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(1), 158-167.

## THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON TEACHER EFFICACY TO FOSTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The objective of this study was to learn about practices of school leaders that influence teacher efficacy and promote a positive culture that subsequently increases student engagement. Studies demonstrate a correlation between student engagement and positive learning outcomes (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair & Lehr, 2004; Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Finn, 1989; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Furthermore, early interventions have the potential to alter the school experience for young students leading to improved outcomes later in school (Furlong & Christenson, 2008). Therefore, the researcher examined two elementary schools with documented academic success through a qualitative case study to allow for an exploration of the actions of the school leadership that positively affect teacher efficacy and student engagement.

When considering the influence of teacher efficacy on student outcomes, the principal's role is important to this dynamic (Pierce, 2014). Both individual teachers' efficacy beliefs as well as belief in the collective efficacy of the organization influence the actions of teachers (Bandura, 1993; Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Kilinc, 2012; Pierce, 2014; Zakeri, Rahmany, & Labone, 2016). Leaders play an integral role in developing the culture within an organization (Moller, Mickelson, Stearns, Banerjee, & Bottia, 2013; Schein, 2010). The culture can influence collaboration and academic initiatives leading to collective teacher efficacy (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Demir, 2008). Collective belief that the efforts of those within the school generates positive outcomes for students stems from a committed teaching culture (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Goddard & Skrla, 2006). Thus, collective teacher efficacy influences effective instruction in the classroom (Pierce, 2014), and teachers have a direct effect on student learning and en-

agement (Stipek, 2012). This case study contributed an understanding of what leaders do to promote teacher efficacy resulting in positive student outcomes.

### **Guiding Questions**

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perceptions of teachers and leaders regarding how school leadership facilitated teacher efficacy to influence student engagement.

Specifically, the study used the following guiding questions:

1. How do school leaders describe their perceptions of the administrative practices that support teacher efficacy?
2. How do teachers with strong efficacy describe the perceived impact of their efficacy on student engagement?
3. How do teachers and leaders describe the practices that promote student engagement?

### **Methods**

#### **Research Design**

This study followed qualitative methods in order to develop an analysis rooted in understanding the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers seek to develop a complex picture by gathering multiple perspectives to understand the context surrounding the issue to build themes and assertions from the ground up (Creswell, 2013). An instrumental case study addressed the research questions by examining these specific cases to gain greater insight into the broader issue of student engagement (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995). The intent of the instrumental case study was to analyze the perceptions of teachers and leaders within two high-achieving schools of different socioeconomic compositions as it related to leader practices that supported teacher efficacy to influence student engagement. Specifically, this case study fit within a system bounded by time and place,

and approached the inquiry from the strategy of identifying and analyzing the unique culture and practices present at each school. Defining the bounded system of the case prevented a study that was too broad in scope (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The experiences of the participants were bound to the unique school culture in each setting.

The researcher selected a purposeful sample to gain insight and information to learn as much as possible from those studied (Merriam, 2001). Qualitative case study provided the researcher the opportunity to develop particularization, which emphasized understanding what occurred in the case that made it unique (Stake, 1995). Through this method, this study contributed understanding of perceived leadership practices present within this case that positively influenced teacher efficacy and student engagement. According to Stake (1995), qualitative research used “narratives to optimize the opportunity of the reader to gain an experiential understanding of the case” (p. 40). This study conveyed through thick description the experiences of the case so that assertions could be refined.

### **Appropriateness of the Research Design**

The student engagement construct presents a valuable opportunity for educators to improve student outcomes in school. The purpose of this study warranted a qualitative design to gather perceptions regarding how elementary school principals influenced teacher efficacy to promote student engagement. The goal of the research was to understand the experiences within the case schools. The researcher’s focus was to gain deeper understanding of the specific schools rather than developing generalizations that might actually impede the researcher’s full understanding of the context (Lodico et al., 2010; Stake, 1995). Aligned with symbolic interactionist theory, this study sought to learn how individuals’ interactions shape their perspectives and interpretations of the world (Carter & Fuller, 2015). As quantitative methods would not al-

low for the in-depth interpretation of the human experience, qualitative measures aligned with the researcher's purpose for the study.

### **Setting**

Qualitative paradigms develop themes and interpretations from the perspectives and observations of those involved in research studies (Pole, 2007). The cases selected for this study were two urban elementary schools within the same district in the Southeastern United States. Both schools had high achievement scores according to state reported data. Research confirmed a correlation exists between academic achievement and positive student engagement (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004); therefore, it was justified to investigate the perceived factors of leader influence that foster engagement within a school with a documented record of high achievement. A second qualifier for determining the case schools was identifying schools with high student engagement. The district used the Student Engagement Instrument –Elementary Version (Carter, Reschly, Lovelace, Appleton, & Thompson, 2012), which was a student engagement survey given to third through fifth grade students. Both schools had an average score higher than the district average on the student completed survey.

Finally, an additional variable of school poverty was considered with one school documented as moderate to high poverty and the other school documented as lower poverty according to free-reduced lunch percentages. By addressing this variable in the school selection, the study investigated perceptions and identified common themes regarding school leadership, teacher efficacy, and student engagement regardless of the poverty within the school population. Furthermore, a case study at the elementary level had the potential for insight regarding early interventions, which research supported as a positive contributor for school completion (Appleton et al. 2008; Finn, 1989; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).

Both schools for this study were situated within the same district and were only separated by three miles. A non-Title 1 school, Lincoln Elementary School had approximately 1,200 students. Washington Elementary, a Title 1 school with approximately 850 students, had 64% of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch. Both of these schools were selected due to their documented achievement within the state as well as a mean score above the district average on its student engagement survey.

### **Lincoln Elementary School.**

According to the researcher's field notes, situated in suburban area not far from major roadways, Lincoln Elementary had neighborhoods surrounding the school. The school opened its doors in the fall of 1989. Within the open atrium at the front of the school, tall windows allowed natural light to stream in and four round picnic tables with multi-colored striped umbrellas sat next to the main hallway. A painted mural stretched down the sides of the atrium walls (observation, December 7, 2017).

Table 1 provided an overview of the student demographics at Lincoln Elementary. Lincoln Elementary consisted of a diverse student population, with no race constituting the majority of the demographic makeup of the school. While it was a non-Title 1 school, almost half of the student population received free or reduced lunch. Additionally, about one-fifth of the student population received support from a special program, such as special education or English as a Second Language.

Table 1

*Student Demographics of Lincoln Elementary*

Enrollment	% of Student Population
Race	
Asian	16%
Black/African American	32%
Hispanic or Latino	22%
White	23%
Multiracial, <i>two or more races</i>	7%
Special Education	14%
ESOL	19%
Free/Reduced Lunch	48%

As a high-achieving school, Lincoln Elementary had more students score at a proficient level or above when compared to the district and state on the prior year's state achievement test. Table 2 provided an overview of the school's student achievement data in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Table 2

*Student Achievement at Lincoln Elementary*

Subtest	Lincoln Elementary*	District*	State*
ELA – Grade 3	48.1	43.2	36.1
Math – Grade 3	56.6	52.3	42.5
ELA – Grade 4	61.3	50.5	41.6
Math – Grade 4	68.2	57.1	44.7
ELA – Grade 5	58.6	46.3	38.2
Math – Grade 5	56.0	47.2	37.1

*\*Represents percentage of students who achieved at the level of Proficient or higher*

Additionally, Table 3 showed an overview of the teacher preparation and experience at Lincoln Elementary School, including years of experience and highest degree earned. Lincoln Elementary had a veteran teaching staff since the majority of the teaching population had more

than five years of experience. Additionally, approximately three-fourths of the teachers had a graduate degree.

Table 3

*Teacher Experience & Preparation at Lincoln Elementary*

Experience & Preparation	% of Staff Population
<b>Years of Experience</b>	
0-5 years	6%
6-15 years	37%
16-25 years	38%
26 + years	19%
<b>Certification Level</b>	
Bachelor's Degree	26%
Master's Degree	43%
Specialist's Degree	28%
Doctorate Degree	3%

**Washington Elementary School.**

Nestled into a neighborhood, Washington Elementary School was housed in an older building with an addition built off to one side. Opened in 1966, Washington Elementary had been a landmark within the surrounding community for more than fifty years. Documented in the researcher's field notes, the entrance to the school led to a quaint main hallway with the front office off to one side surrounded by a wall of windows (observation, November 30, 2017).

Table 4 provided an overview of the student demographics at Washington Elementary. This school also had a diverse student population. As a Title 1 school, almost two-thirds of the student population received free or reduced lunch. Furthermore, two-fifths of the students were learning English as a Second Language and one-fifth of the students were served through a special education program.

Table 4

*Student Demographics of Washington Elementary*

Enrollment	% of Student Population
Race	
Asian	19%
Black/African American	22%
Hispanic or Latino	34%
White	22%
Multiracial, <i>two or more races</i>	3%
Special Education	19%
ESOL	41%
Free/Reduced Lunch	64%

As a high-achieving Title 1 school, Washington Elementary had more students score as a proficient learner or higher compared to the state on the prior year's state achievement test. Table 5 provided an overview of the school's student achievement data in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Table 5

*Student Achievement at Washington Elementary*

Subtest	Washington Elementary*	District*	State*
ELA – Grade 3	40.3	43.2	36.1
Math – Grade 3	50.7	52.3	42.5
ELA – Grade 4	49.6	50.5	41.6
Math – Grade 4	60.8	57.1	44.7
ELA – Grade 5	53.7	46.3	38.2
Math – Grade 5	47.1	47.2	37.1

*\*Represents percentage of students who achieved at the level of Proficient or higher*

Additionally, Table 6 provided an overview of the teachers' preparation and experience at Washington Elementary School, including years of experience and highest degree earned. The

majority of teachers have six or more years of experience. Additionally, approximately three-fourths of the teachers at Washington Elementary held a graduate degree.

Table 6

*Teacher Experience & Preparation at Washington Elementary*

Experience & Preparation	% of Staff Population
<b>Years of Experience</b>	
0-5 years	11%
6-15 years	50%
16-25 years	29%
26 + years	10%
<b>Certification Level</b>	
Bachelor's Degree	26%
Master's Degree	50%
Specialist's Degree	21%
Doctorate Degree	3%

## **Participants**

Participants for this study included the school principals and a purposeful sample of teachers at each school. Determining selection criteria for the purposeful sample was necessary to choose the participants that could provide the most understanding for the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2001). The researcher used the Collective Efficacy Scale –Short Form (Goddard & Hoy, 2003) to gather perceptions of the collective efficacy of all teachers at the school. This 12-item scale had reliability and validity to measure collective efficacy (Goddard, 2002). This data provided information regarding the range of collective teacher efficacy beliefs. Additionally, the researcher gathered demographic information to gain more knowledge of the experiences of teachers within the schools. Finally, the researcher had teacher participants complete Hoy & Woolfolk's (1993) Teacher Efficacy Scale –Short Form. From this 10 question scale, the researcher identified the teachers with the strongest sense of individual efficacy as indicated by the

scale. The researcher selected two primary (K-2) grades and two intermediate (3-5) grades teachers with the strongest efficacy scores at each school for the purposeful sample. Teachers' experiences of efficacy related to the grade level taught, therefore the study included both primary and intermediate teachers to gather perceptions from a variety of individuals within each school.

All certified teachers at each school were invited to participate in the study by first completing a demographic survey and individual and collective efficacy scales (Goddard & Hoy, 2003, Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). From these responses, the researcher determined a purposeful sample of teacher participants to be interviewed and observed. 14 out of 73 teachers at Lincoln Elementary School and 13 out of 58 teachers at Washington Elementary School returned the documents to the researcher. Tables 7 and 8 provided information from the purposeful sample, specifically the participant's gender, grade level taught, highest degree earned, total years of teaching experience, total years of experience at their respective school, and whether or not they held a leadership position within the school. The majority of participants from both schools had ten to sixteen years of teaching experience and most had at least five years at their respective school. Interestingly, the study's participants from Washington Elementary all held leadership positions within the school, which was not the case for the participants at Lincoln Elementary.

Table 7

*Demographic Information of the Lincoln Elementary Participants*

Name (Pseudonym)	Grade Level(s)	Highest Degree Earned	Totally Yrs. Experience	Total Yrs. at School	Leadership Position within School
Ms. Rivers	Kindergarten	MS/MA	12	11	No
Ms. Holt	Instructional Coach (K-5)	MS/MA	11	5	Yes
Ms. Lawrence	Second Grade	BA/BS	15	15	No
Ms. Walker	Special Education (3-5)	BA/BS	10	7	No

Table 8

*Demographic Information of the Washington Elementary Participants*

Name (Pseudonym)	Grade Level(s)	Highest Degree Earned	Totally Yrs. Experience	Total Years at School	Leadership Position within School
Ms. Thomas	Kindergarten	MS/MA	5	5	Yes
Ms. Carter	First Grade	PhD.	15	10	Yes
Ms. Bell	Special Education (3-5)	BA/BS	4	4	Yes
Ms. Harrington	Special Education (3-5)	BA/BS	16	6	Yes

Additionally, Table 9 provided the average years of teaching experience among all respondents of the surveys. Between both schools, the survey respondents had similar average years of teaching experience.

Table 9

*Average years of experience among all respondents*

School (Pseudonym)	Average Years of Teaching Experience	Average Years of Experience at School
Lincoln Elementary	14 years	10 years
Washington Elementary	12 years	8 years

Participants completed the Teacher Efficacy Scale-Short Form and Collective Efficacy Scale-Short Form (Goddard & Hoy, 2003, Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Table 10 provides the average individual and collective efficacy scores calculated for each school based on the completed surveys.

Table 10

*Average individual and collective efficacy scores among all respondents*

School (Pseudonym)	Individual Teacher Efficacy (highest score = 60)	Collective Teacher Efficacy (highest score = 72)
Lincoln Elementary	43	60
Washington Elementary	48	51

Additionally, the school principals participated in the case study to collect leader perceptions of teacher efficacy as it related to student engagement. It was necessary to include these different participants in the study to develop a deeper understanding of the case. Solely collecting teacher perceptions about the school leader's influence on efficacy and student engagement would not yield a detailed view of the case. Including the school principals in the sample provided meaningful data for the study by examining the leader's own perceptions regarding their influence on teacher efficacy to subsequently support student engagement.

Table 11 showed the number of years each principal has led their respective school as well as their total years working in education.

Table 11

*Principal Experience*

Principal (Pseudonym)	Total Years as School's Principal	Total Years in Education
K. Williams (Lincoln Elementary)	10 years	24 years
S. Hunt (Washington Elementary)	3 years	23 years

Meaningful case study research involved a clear description of the case (Stake, 1995). Identification of the unique cases for the study was paramount to the research. While the schools selected for this study had documented high achievement, the socio-economic status of each school varied. Research had determined that while the composition of the student body and socioeconomic status were factors that related to efficacy, collective efficacy was not dependent on these factors (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). It was anticipated that an in-depth analysis of the data collected would tell an important story of how these particular schools promoted high student engagement regardless of socioeconomic status by specifically looking at the leader's influence on the teachers' efficacy. Analysis of the teacher and leader influence of this study identified aspects of these schools that contributed to successful outcomes of high achievement and strong student engagement.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation for this case study included individual interviews with a purposeful sample of teachers and the school principals, researcher observations within each school, and a

review of artifacts and surveys. Interviews provided an optimal method of collecting personal perceptions regarding the research questions (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Furthermore, the design allowed for opportunities to encounter the case schools through classroom observation, artifacts, and surveys to create a more in-depth description with regards to the study.

A semi-structured interview protocol used a list of questions that elicited open-ended responses from participants, but allowed the researcher flexibility in wording of questions and the opportunity to ask for more detail if clarification was needed (Merriam, 2001). The researcher formulated the interview protocol using the research questions prior to the interviews, but did not share questions in advance with participants.

Additionally, the researcher conducted observations in the natural school settings. The study included observation as a means of collecting data to provide a firsthand representation of the phenomenon explored in the case study (Merriam, 2001). The observations gathered a thick description of the school setting and documented the interactions among the principal, teachers, and students within each school. Observations occurred while shadowing the principal as well as in the classrooms of the teacher participants. The researcher used observation notes to substantiate the data revealed in interviews. The researcher shadowed the principal for three hours and spent between thirty minutes and one hour in each teacher participant's classroom.

A third piece of information to address the research questions involved artifacts of the school relevant to the study. Artifacts, including written documents, found within the school setting provided another source of information to support greater understanding of the case study (Merriam, 2001). Specifically, the researcher asked for artifacts that evidenced the different

leadership theories within the conceptual framework. The principals provided the researcher artifacts used consistently throughout their work within the school.

Data source triangulation determined if observations and description conveyed similar meaning across the different components of data (Stake, 1995). Using methodological triangulation, this case study used multiple methods to explore the research questions. Interviews provided the researcher with unique perceptions of the participants while observation created a firsthand descriptive encounter and artifacts provided further historical and authentic examples pertaining to the study (Merriam, 2001). The researcher compared the different data sources for alignment or conflict to enhance the credibility of the study (Lodico et al., 2010). Triangulation allowed the researcher to determine if the perceptions revealed through interviews were observed within the case school and evidenced in the artifacts. The study needed multiple methods of data to confirm how aligned the research findings were with the reality of the school (Merriam, 2001).

This study used member checking to allow each participant the opportunity to review interview transcripts for accuracy. The researcher encouraged participants to provide alternative language or interpretation following this review as the researcher acknowledged the participants in the case study played a role in determining accurate description of those within the case (Stake, 1995). The researcher accounted for this information to construct findings for the study. By member checking, it was ensured that the researcher's own biases did not influence the description of participants' perspectives (Lodico et al., 2010).

## **Ethics**

This study acknowledged the consideration of ethics during the planning, conducting, and analysis of this research. The researcher submitted an Institutional Review Board application for

approval prior to the start of the research study. Participants found minimal risk in this study with the likelihood of harm or discomfort to not exceed that which an individual experiences in daily life. The researcher took care to ensure that participants understood the purpose of the study and knew their participation was voluntary. The researcher provided informed consent to each participant prior to beginning research, and participants had the ability to discontinue their participation at any point during the study. Individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Names were masked within the data to protect the anonymity of participants. Following transcription each participant received a copy of the interview via e-mail for review. The researcher stored audio files and transcription data on a password protected private computer as well as on a password protected external storage device. Data will be kept for three years and destroyed after that time.

### **Trustworthiness**

This study made an effort to find trustworthiness in the data collected. The careful design of the study and processes for collecting data from different sources supported the trustworthiness of the research (Merriam, 2001). The researcher nurtured the relationship with participants by approaching interviews and observations in a respectful, nonjudgmental manner (Merriam, 2001). Additionally, the researcher maintained confidentiality and secured protection of all data collected during the course of the study. Dependability constructed from detailed explanation of data collection and analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). The ethical considerations for the multiple methods of data collection as well as member checking with participants provided credibility and trustworthiness for the study.

The intent of the case study research was to create a rich description of the unique phenomenon by reporting detailed findings that emerged through quotes, images, and artifacts (Mer-

riam, 2001). The researcher did not approach this study to construct generalizations from the data, but rather to provide a rich description of the experiences and interactions within the schools that influenced teacher efficacy and student engagement. Readers must make their own judgments from the thick descriptions provided in the study for transferability to other contexts (Lodico et al., 2010). The extensive description of the perceptions of participants and detail provided about the context of the study contributed to the transferability for readers.

### **Procedures**

Gathering multiple perceptions regarding the research questions strengthened the description of the case study. Teachers at the case study schools received a demographic survey to gather descriptive information about potential participants (see Appendix A). Additionally, teachers completed the Collective Efficacy Scale –Short Form (Goddard & Hoy, 2003) (see Appendix B) and the Teacher Efficacy Scale –Short Form (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) (see Appendix C). The researcher selected the purposeful sample for individual interviews from the teacher participants with the strongest efficacy scores. All interviews took place at the school sites outside of the workday hours. Each individual teacher and principal participated in one face-to-face interview which took no more than one hour and followed an interview guide comprised of open-ended questions that could be followed up on based on participants' responses (see Appendices D & E). The researcher assumed neutrality with regard to the content of the questions and approached the interview with a clear interest in the respondent's thoughts, thus increasing comfort during the interview time (Merriam, 2001).

Following individual interviews, the researcher conducted observations within each school setting for one day. Observations guided the researcher toward a greater understanding of the case for analysis (Stake, 1995). Observation allowed the researcher to see practices firsthand

and record behavior in context (Merriam, 2001). Guided by the conceptual framework, the researcher collected further information on leadership behaviors and organizational norms that were evident through the actions of those within the school. The researcher specifically observed the interactions between the school principal and teachers as well as teachers and students by documenting conversations and activities that occurred (See Appendices F & G). Additionally, observations looked for collaborative practices that contributed to the collective efficacy within the schools. Context was important to the instrumental case study (Stake, 1995); therefore, the researcher watched the physical setting, interactions of participants, activities within the school, and conversations. For the purposes of collecting detailed field notes, the researcher was a nonparticipant observer recording notes at a distance without direct involvement with those in the school. In observation, the qualitative researcher had a goal of observing the ordinary within the case in order to understand what ordinary means and interpret data from it (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the researcher focused on recording a detailed description of the context to allow for greater understanding of the case.

A third method used in this case study was a review of artifacts from the schools. The conceptual framework guided the researcher to collect artifacts that provided additional information pertaining to the research focus. Analyzing the artifacts produced and used by the participants in the study fostered further descriptive information, provided greater historical understanding, or deepened knowledge about the development of a practice over time (Merriam, 2001). Specifically, studying documents provided useful data in the form of records of activity beyond what the researcher could personally observe (Stake, 1995). The researcher examined documents for the purpose they were created, what parties within the school used them, and how they were used. This data collection found correspondence between perceptions revealed in in-

interviews and what was put into practice through artifacts of the schools. As a product of the context, artifacts provided valuable insight for the case study (Merriam, 2001). Following these procedures for data collection, a detailed analysis was conducted to understand the phenomenon studied within the schools.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Analysis was the deconstruction of data to give meaning to its parts (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995). For detailed analysis to occur, data management was put in place. The researcher prepared the data by typing observation notes and transcribing interviews using word processing software. While preliminary data analysis was done in conjunction with data collection, the researcher engaged in more detailed analysis once all data were organized (Merriam, 2001). Creating categories from data is at the heart of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the nature of this instrumental case study warranted the need for categorical data since the case serves to understand the phenomena and the relationships within it (Stake, 1995). The researcher constructed categories by notating the data to determine recurring patterns, thus identifying themes within the study (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 1995).

Each interview transcription, observation field note, and artifact was electronically coded using the online CAQDAS program, Dedoose. The researcher determined two coding methods used for first cycle coding aligned with the goals of the research study by capturing the complexity in the data (Saldaña, 2016). In Vivo coding honored the voices of participants while drawing the researcher's attention to salient words or phrases used often in the data (Saldaña, 2016). The research questions served as a guide for coding as the study sought to understand the beliefs and values that influenced participants' perceptions. Therefore, the researcher incorporated Values

Coding as an additional method for first cycle coding to explore values and belief systems along with participants experiences and actions within the case study (Saldaña, 2016).

Following first cycle coding the researcher grouped the various codes into categories (Lodico et al., 2010). This process of coding guided the researcher toward categories that described common ideas and caused reflection about their collective meaning (Saldaña, 2016). The frequency with which a code emerged in the data indicated importance for this study (Merriam, 2001). The literature as well as the researcher and participants served as sources for determining the names for the categories as they reflected the purpose of the research (Merriam, 2001). The frequency of codes within each case was determined first, and then synthesis of the code frequencies in a cross-case analysis yielded themes with regards to the practices that influenced teacher efficacy to positively foster student engagement within both case study schools (Saldaña, 2016). The study linked the researcher's findings to the larger research literature regarding the student engagement construct as a malleable factor in schools.

### **Limitations**

This qualitative case study was limited to the perceptions shared by teachers and principals within the two schools. The purposeful sample only included teachers who reported high efficacy. A possible source of bias or error existed in the sample criteria as it was assumed that the greatest understanding derived from participants meeting the criteria. However, the intent of this study was to examine how the school leader supported individual and collective teacher efficacy. Therefore, using these criteria to select a purposeful sample provided the researcher with the participants that were likely to bring the most insight to the study (Merriam, 2001). However, this study recognized this as a limitation as it may not provide a complete picture of the context of each school. While the researcher understood the range of individual and collective effi-

cacy beliefs within the schools, an in-depth approach from the perspective of those who lacked efficacy was not included, thus leading to potential insights being overlooked.

An interesting finding within both schools is the longevity of the staff and how that may play a role in teacher efficacy. Most participants in the purposeful sample had been at their respective schools for many years. Interviewing newer staff members in the schools may provide a different perspective that was not included in this study. Perceptions of new teachers as it related to the school culture and leadership practices as well as teacher efficacy are a limitation of this case study. Although the results of this study should not be generalized, those wanting to influence teacher efficacy and student engagement in the elementary setting may benefit from the findings.

### **Summary**

Qualitative design guided the instrumentation, data collection, and analysis methods within the study. Perceptions of teachers and leaders within the case school gathered through individual interviews, observations, and document analysis resulted in a thick description of the case. Data analysis coded for themes and examined particularizations of the unique case study. The triangulated data collection increased the trustworthiness of the findings by addressing the research questions from multiple perspectives. The study concluded with the findings and implications for practice.

### **Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop a better understanding of the practices of school leaders. Specifically, this study examined leadership practices that promote teacher efficacy as well as identify school and classroom practices perceived to increase student engagement. Furthermore, it was the intent of the researcher to examine the perceptions of high-

ly efficacious teachers and school principals in both a Title I and a non-Title I elementary school that have documented high student engagement within the same district. During in-depth interviews, study participants described their perceptions of practices that supported their own efficacy and strengthened student engagement. The results in this section were based on analysis of the following data sources: semi-structured interviews, a review of school artifacts, and the researcher's observations within each school. The purpose of this section was to provide a thick description of the case through analyzed results that show emergent themes.

### **Findings of the Cross-Case Analysis**

By conducting the study in two schools, the researcher developed a thorough description of each context to develop a greater understanding of the case. The researcher first conducted within-case analysis to learn about the contextual variables within each school in order to build patterned themes across cases (Merriam, 2001). A detailed cross-case analysis revealed the following themes that existed in both schools: zeal for the school community, affirming and precise commentary, and customized supports for each student.

#### **Zeal for the school community.**

Data analysis revealed frequent patterning of codes related to the participants' zeal for the school community. Within both cases, participants' descriptions of their schools conveyed excitement and passion about the school community. Findings indicated that school leadership modeled this zeal for teachers, thus setting a tone that encouraged even greater zeal for the school community. Led by the school principals' examples, teachers too felt and demonstrated zeal for the school community. Perceptions indicated that zeal for the school community then positively affected student engagement within each school.

*School leadership creates zeal for the school community.*

Perceptions by the teachers and principals of both elementary schools focused strongly on the positive interactions school leadership modeled with students and the school community. At Lincoln Elementary, Principal Kyle Williams explained that he believed in the importance of setting a positive tone in his school community. He stated, “If we can make school inviting and welcoming and a place where they want to be, then they are going to want to be here every day and they’re going to want to achieve” (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017). Now in his tenth year as principal, his focus on developing a positive school climate began at the onset of his time as he described his focus that first year:

I think being present is a huge part of it. Being present at everything. Being present in the atrium in the morning. Being present in the atrium in the afternoons, so that kids see me both times. Being present in the classrooms. Every event that we had, I was there welcoming people and thanking people. A lot of open door perception. Literally it’s open because it’s right here on the front hall. People, parents, kids, and teachers feel that they can come in. So, it’s a literal open door, but it’s also a figurative open door...people could just come in and talk with me and share their information and share their stories. I think just listening to people’s stories goes really far with people knowing and feeling that I care about their family, their background, and what they want for their child. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Perceptions gathered through teacher and principal interviews as well as observations made by the researcher showed zeal for the school community as school leadership embraced the ideas of others to continually improve. Specifically, Ms. Sarah Hunt, the third year principal of Washington Elementary School, explained her belief in the input of others by stating:

I am very much a leader that believes that I cannot do this job alone nor should I. I need input from people who have been doing this longer than I've been doing this...they know the culture and climate here. I'm the new kid. If there's something that's been done here, I need to understand why it's been done for fifteen years before I come in and change it. And, so that's really important to me. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

She went on to describe the conversations that she engages in to help her make decisions and gather input:

I have some key teachers that have been here a really long time and I kind of use them as my pulse people. Because I know that they will come and tell me what's going on. And I read them. You know, if they're not happy, I am intentional to say, "Hey, what's going on? Did I make a decision that's not going well? Tell me what's happening in the building" (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017).

When referencing Ms. Hunt's leadership, special education teacher, Ms. Harrington explained:

When she [Ms. Hunt] got here and started implementing these changes, really great changes...it gave teachers a voice, their voice back. We've been here a while, all of us. We know the staff and you can read you know and pick up on things. We're able to take in what teachers are telling us and discuss it either with administration...or through ILT [Instructional Leadership Team]. And so that gives teachers a voice, but also, it's a very open environment here. (C. Harrington, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Likewise, at Lincoln Elementary, Ms. Holt explained how her leadership desires the input of others before making decisions. She explained:

Teachers are involved in almost every decision. Leadership, the administrators, asks for feedback from the coaches, [and] from the model classrooms. They really kind of involve every teacher on almost every [decision]. They ask for feedback. They do needs assessments. And they may go with some and not others, but they kind of involve the feedback and think through before making big decisions. (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

Whether through modeling positive interactions or valuing the input of others to build positive rapport, perceptions of teachers at both schools identified the essential role school leadership had in creating and sustaining zeal for the school community. Ms. Rivers, kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary school, credited administration for creating a positive work environment. She shared:

This is a great place to be. Very supportive. Administration is incredible supportive. I feel that we have what we need to do our job, which hearing some other people talk who have been to other schools that may not be so much the case, but I feel that we definitely have the materials that we need. We have the support. We have all those things. (L. Rivers, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Her passion for her school continued as she described the longevity of the staff. She shared that even though she had 12 years of experience, she had the shortest amount of years among the teachers on her grade level. When asked what she thought kept people at her school, she explained:

Because they love it here. People are trying to get here. It's one of those schools. People are trying to leave their schools to come here because they know it's great...and you know if I ever had to leave I think I would go do something else. You know? It's that

much. I mean it means that much staying here. It's an awesome place. (L. Rivers, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Likewise, Ms. Walker, who teaches special education at Lincoln Elementary, also credited administration for establishing a positive culture within the school. She shared:

From the get go our administration is very hands on and very one on one with the kids. You don't go down the hall and see them passing without greeting a child or without reaching over to hug a child. They are very hands on with the kids. That was my first impression. That's why I took the job here. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

When describing the strengths of her principal, Ms. Lawrence, a second grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary, recognized Mr. Williams' ability to use his positive rapport to support stakeholders. She stated, "His relationship with parents is the same....he tackles some of the toughest problems. And he'll be point blank, but they love him as our principal. They adore him, but he doesn't shy away from tough problems" (L. Lawrence, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

Ms. Holt, an instructional coach at Lincoln Elementary also described how Mr. Williams sets the tone for happiness and positivity throughout the school:

Always speaking to kids respectfully. He makes it a priority to kind of model that and then the teacher, that expectation is that you will do that as well. And then he always says our focus is not on making us happy necessarily. Our focus is on making sure that what we're doing is purposeful for the kids. (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

Teachers at Washington Elementary School shared similar sentiments about their school community demonstrating positivity and zeal. A kindergarten teacher at Washington, Ms.

Thomas, explained:

When kids are getting off the bus, there's a teacher there. When they're walking down the hallway, there's some kind of adult there. And they're saying, "Good morning." So from the time the kid is getting off the bus to the time they are getting in their classroom, they've had at least seven people say good morning to them. (J. Thomas, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

The zeal, enthusiasm, and positivity for their respective schools showed in the field notes collected during observations. During the holiday luncheon at Lincoln Elementary, the researcher documented 56 positive interactions Mr. Williams had with families, including hugs, handshakes, conversations, and taking pictures during a 20-minute period of time (observation, December 7, 2017). Moreover, field notes from observing Ms. Hunt, principal at Washington Elementary, documented the same positive interactions with students as she greeted them by name in the hallway. In one fourth grade classroom, Ms. Hunt pulled a chair up beside an English Language Learner to listen to her read a leveled text aloud. She asked her questions about the book and provided encouragement to continue reading. While visiting a lunch bunch with special needs students, Ms. Hunt made a concerted effort to get down eye level with each student seated at the table and asked about their day (observation, November 30, 2017). Both school leaders capitalized on each interaction with stakeholders as a way to interact positively and show their zeal for their school community.

***Teachers demonstrate zeal for the school community.***

Participants continually mentioned positive interactions among stakeholders at Washington Elementary School. The school was often referred to as a family and a tight community.

Ms. Thomas, a kindergarten teacher described it as:

We like to call our school the great melting pot around here. I am a firm believer that if it is ...in the United States we have some family members from that ethnicity or that country or nationality here. We just treat everybody the same. We're all family. Nobody is any different from anybody else. It's just the school. The kids are kids. The teachers are teachers. And we love on the kids and the kids love on us. It's just what we do. (J. Thomas, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Speaking further to the familial aspect of her school, Ms. Thomas shared:

We're just a small, big happy family. We're a small school, but we're still big. So we have big heart. We have big expectations of our students. Our staff has big expectations, so we're small compared to other [district] schools, but we're still big. (J. Thomas, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Ms. Harrington, a special education teacher at Washington Elementary echoed a similar description:

It's like a little family. It truly is...most of us have been here for quite some time, so we're very familiar with one another and we love each other no matter what. So, we work through differences that we may have, but we have a very strong working relationship. We are all about kids. I mean if a kid needs pants somebody goes [to the store] and buys pants. Somebody doesn't have socks; someone jumps in and buys socks. It really is like a family. (C. Harrington, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

The leaders of each school noted the zeal for the school community that existed within their buildings. They both described the commitment of their teachers and the positivity embedded within the work in classrooms. Ms. Hunt, principal of Washington Elementary expressed how the collective efficacy beliefs among teachers were influenced by the zeal of teachers:

This is a very tight community of teachers. People don't leave here, and it's because of the community and the camaraderie and companionship that they have together...they're happy to work here. They're happy to work with each other. And when I interview people I always say, you know, this is a family, and it really is. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Mr. Williams, principal of Lincoln Elementary, described his school:

We have a school that is welcoming and I have talked to teachers about that. I believe happy kids are going to do well on a test and do well in school...so we just try to make the climate a one that parents and kids and people are excited about and engaged about when they get to school. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Although Ms. Lawrence, a second grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary touted her principal's ability to demonstrate zeal, she also explained how she builds relationships with students:

I think getting to know them one on one. Spending a little extra love and time with them...so if a kid knows that you're coming from a good place and you really love them, I think for the most part you've got a relationship. (L. Lawrence, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

Ms. Rivers, a kindergarten teacher, described the impact of a positive environment in her classroom:

When everyone is positive around them, or most people anyway, that helps them [students] and that helps them learn. And I know a lot of these kids come from places that aren't happy places and this should be a happy place. And that's important to me that it is. (L. Rivers, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

A concerted effort to build a positive rapport, especially between students and teachers was echoed by Ms. Holt, an instructional coach, "There's a focus on the kids more than anything, just the kids overall. They'll work harder if they're happy. They have to work hard, but they're happy" (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

All the teachers within the purposeful sample at Washington Elementary held leadership roles within the school, demonstrating a devotion to the school community. When asked about teacher leadership, Ms. Carter, a first grade teacher, expressed, "It's encouraged mostly because it's respected that you step forward. So everyone likes to take a part of something so they are equally sharing in the tasks of the school" (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017). Ms. Carter went on to explain how supported she felt by her colleagues when she led a large task the previous school year. She explained:

You can just send out an e-mail and say I need help with this and you'll have four or five people like immediately within ten minutes that are willing to help. So, I think everyone is willing to support each other. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017).

Teachers demonstrate zeal for the school community through the positive rapport they value with stakeholders and their investment and shared responsibility in the work. Findings also showed how this zeal teachers demonstrated for the school community influenced student engagement.

***Zeal affects student engagement.***

Principal and teacher perceptions revealed beliefs that positive interactions within the school community promoted student engagement. Teachers reported their purposeful, positive interactions fostered student engagement in the classroom. In her co-taught classrooms, Ms. Bell shared:

I make sure that they know that I noticed and that I know they're trying their hardest. With either verbal cues or if it's visual and I'm across the room and just giving them a thumbs up, looking at them making sure that they know that I saw what they did. That's a big thing. (P. Bell, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Likewise, Ms. Carter expressed that school and classroom practices where students were praised built engagement:

Mostly just a lot of recognizing who, like if I taught something, who actually followed through and did it the way it was taught or who participated. And again, it's just saying their name and acknowledging that they did a good job. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017)

Similarly, a teacher at Lincoln Elementary described the motivation that teachers provide for learning through the zeal they demonstrate. Ms. Walker shared her perceptions of her colleagues' practices that promote engagement:

Our teachers are really motivating, I think, at least in the halls that I walk up and down most. I'm not upstairs a lot, but I do know some fabulous teachers up there that I would sit in their class and listen because they're just that exciting. You walk by their doors and they might not be the cleanest class, but you can see all the activities and the projects that they're doing, the hands-on stuff. I think they know that not only through the technology,

but getting the kids hands on the objects is key to their engagement too. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Ms. Rivers, a kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary shared her enthusiasm for science during her individual interview, which translated into her classroom. Her positive energy for hands-on learning influenced her instruction. During time in her classroom, her young students worked in pairs using flashlights and an Earth made from clay to represent day and night. A lively energy could be felt in the classroom as students used science vocabulary to discuss their models (observation, December 7, 2017).

Ms. Harrington, one of the special education teachers at Washington, explained that the zeal for the school community extended to the students' families through school practices that increased engagement. Washington Elementary, a Title-1 school, provided opportunities for numerous extracurricular clubs for students. She described the impact of those clubs on student engagement:

More than half our school population participates [in clubs]. And that's really significant because their parents have to bring them to school early. So, that's big for our parents to be willing to commit to that and them be willing to get up early to come here. A lot of our parents don't have a car, so sometimes they'll carpool with someone else. Some parents walk. But for them to get their kids here and their kids want to be here...sometimes that could be difficult for a family, but the fact that they're doing it says a lot. (C. Harrington, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Ms. Walker at Lincoln Elementary also noted how school practices that provide extracurricular opportunities affected student engagement. She shared:

Our science teacher is phenomenal. She does a great job building activities, doing stuff inside the school and outside the school. So, I think that is great for our connections program. Our music teacher runs a lot of clubs with different programs. Chorus. I think she does one with ukuleles too. She does a lot of stuff with those groups. So I think a lot of that builds student engagement too. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Data collected from field notes confirmed the positive rapport described during interviews. At Lincoln Elementary, two children walking down the hallway stopped to greet the principal with hugs. Mr. Williams asked one, “Are you have a better day today than yesterday?” and then asked the other, “Hey, how is your mom doing?” Upon entering one classroom, fifth grade students were in a lively discussion about the chapter they had just finished in the book, *Wonder*. The teacher shared how forty families joined the fifth grade team at the movies to watch the premiere of the movie together. Mr. Williams joined in the conversation by stating, “When you finish the last chapter, let me know so I can join you in a discussion comparing the movie and the book, okay?” (observation, December 7, 2017).

Mr. Williams explained why he values positive interactions and rapport with students and the greater school community by stating:

I want them to have a positive, happy impression of Lincoln Elementary School, of each one of us individually, of what they learned, so that as they matriculate through, that they’re going to at least have a positive time in elementary school that will hopefully overcome some of the negativity that happens when they’re in middle school and high school. I hated middle school. I felt like it was one of the most depressing times of my life because I didn’t have any good healthy relationships with friends. I felt like a total

outcast. If they feel that they at least know that elementary school was a happy place and they have some of those strategies to maybe get through those years of that negative, those negative relationships and start working toward more healthy, positive relationships when they get to high school. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Observation field notes from Washington Elementary denoted a similar zeal for positive interactions to affect student engagement. As the bell rang, teachers emerged into the hallway and stood near their doorways greeting students as they walked into classrooms. Students gave Ms. Hunt, principal of Washington Elementary, hugs as they passed, and she greeted each by first name. Displayed on several walls throughout the building were “I Believe in You” signs. The trophy the staff won from the district’s staff volleyball league sat on the table in the front hall and students congratulated one of the team members as they passed by. While walking by two older students, Ms. Hunt stated, “Be brilliant today!” Findings revealed that principals and teachers alike shared a passion for their work and described an energetic commitment to building a positive school community for all stakeholders (observation, November 30, 2017).

#### **Affirming and precise feedback.**

A second recurring theme among the coded data within both cases was affirming and precise feedback provided to teachers. Teachers at both schools shared the importance of receiving positive feedback from their administrators. Likewise, school leadership shared how they valued feedback as a means of building teacher capacity to influence student learning. The value of feedback presented as a pivotal factor within both schools by teachers with strong efficacy as well as school leaders.

*School leadership values feedback.*

Principals of both schools spoke about specific and intentional practices they engaged in to provide affirming and precise instructional feedback to teachers. As the principal of Lincoln Elementary, Mr. Williams shared how he had approached feedback differently this school year. He explained:

This year I started asking a lot of questions...the things that we want them to continue doing, if you talk about that and you ask questions about it...I feel like the questions have led to more of them thinking and talking about the feedback more than any other year. So it's at least causing the conversation to happen. And I don't write questions like, why on Earth did you do that? It's more of a coaching of how did you know to do that and hopefully they will then use that strategy again. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Likewise, Ms. Hunt, principal of Washington Elementary, implemented a new practice with her teachers to engage in conversations about their practice. She shared:

At the end of the year I had a data talk with each teacher. That was probably one of my favorite moments...and said okay, here's how your kids performed on the pre-test and here's how they ended the year. What do you think that you did that contributed to that and what would you want to do differently as we move into next year? So it was a great conversation point. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Ms. Hunt also referenced walkthroughs as a means of giving instructional feedback to teachers. She explained that the walkthrough form was based on the school's instructional framework. A review of the document showed it contained five criteria areas to look for in classrooms: standards/instructional focus, workshop model, instructional practice, classroom en-

vironment, and student engagement (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017).

Thus, providing precise feedback on instruction as well as the environment through the walkthrough form communicated the focus of the school on creating engaging classrooms for students. Ms. Hunt described using the form:

When I got here teachers wanted to know what was in my head. Right? They wanted to know what I was looking for...it just outlines kind of what we want to see instructionally in the classroom. It's very much aligned to the workshop model...they get a copy and we keep a copy, so as an admin team we can come back around to the conversation. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Researcher field notes captured Ms. Hunt's visits to two fifth grade classrooms. In the first classroom, she spent approximately ten minutes observing and left specific feedback to the teacher at the bottom of the form. During the visit in a fifth grade language arts classroom, Ms. Hunt checked several boxes on the walkthrough form and wrote specific, positive feedback on the form. The teacher encouraged her to stay longer to see where his students were with their writing (observation, November 30, 2017). During walkthroughs, Ms. Hunt identified the standard being taught as her first step on the feedback form for teachers, which aligned with the intentional focus on the standards she had established during teacher collaboration and planning:

We've been much more intentional around really digging into the standard and analyzing the standard, and making sure we create common "I Can" statements. "I Can" statements are posted across the building and they're very similar and that's one of the things I look for when I do my walkthroughs. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

She continued by describing how collaboration among teachers was intentional by using data to support decisions. She shared:

We spend a lot of time looking at data, reviewing data, and then making a plan accordingly. I think one of the proudest moments, plural, I've had this year is different grade levels have come up with different courses of action based on the data. And they're really thinking outside of the box. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Teacher perceptions praised the explicit feedback from the principal as well as showed the value they placed on his knowledge as an instructional leader. Mr. Williams confirmed with his own self-perceptions on the instructional feedback he provides to teachers. He stated, "I feel like that's probably part of my strength because I love teaching and I love being in the classroom...we have to take those opportunities to model good instruction and to share good instruction" (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017). He then expressed:

I think my job as an instructional leader is modeling those effective strategies, talking about effective strategies, being constantly updated about effective strategies in the classroom and then what does the data show to support those effective strategies. So, helping teachers to see that some of the strategies we use don't always pan out the way that we thought, and we have to come up with something different. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

School artifacts from Lincoln Elementary supported a focus on explicit feedback to improve instruction. Components of the school's implementation design focused on conversations about best practices in literacy instruction, including observations, monitoring of data, and examining instructional alignment. Documents identified professional learning developed either on an individual or grade level basis depending on conversations and feedback during weekly collaborative planning. For example, an artifact from a school improvement team agenda showed a request for teams to provide input for collaborative planning topics based on their priorities and

alignment to the school's improvement goals (personal communication, November 16, 2017).

Findings supported that not only leaders, but also teachers valued positive and precise feedback about instructional practice.

***Teachers value affirming and precise feedback.***

Beyond the intentional instructional decisions that study participants described, explicit feedback about teachers' instruction supported their work in classrooms. Ms. Bell, a special education teacher at Washington Elementary, shared how she valued feedback from her principal:

Whatever it is, she's always being positive with us. But specifically on instruction and things like that, she'll do walkthroughs. She does leave little notes for us...they help me know what she's looking for and what she wants me to work on to improve. I know that she has made it so clear that she wants us to be the best that we can be. So, it helps me know, okay, you know she said I'm doing this great, but maybe I could do this better. So that's where I've really applied it...She's [Ms. Hunt's] the best about giving us positive feedback...whatever it is, she's always being positive with us. (P. Bell, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Teacher efficacy strengthened as the leader's positive feedback confirmed practices and encouraged improvement. The focus on positive feedback created an environment where teachers felt valued for their work. Ms. Carter, a first grade teacher at the same school echoed her appreciation for positive feedback by stating:

My favorite thing is just to get a nice, positive Post-it note. I like that more than anything. I like...anything positive feedback. That's one thing I said to the principal when she first came is that the whole school is so dedicated and works so hard that you just need to kind of congratulate and pat people on the back because they're already working

so hard and so dedicated. You just have to recognize and acknowledge it. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017)

The positive feedback she received connected to the support she needed as a teacher to continue propelling her efficacy beliefs by being recognized for her hard work.

Ms. Walker at Lincoln Elementary shared the need for precise feedback from her administrators. She explained:

[My assistant principal] is super knowledgeable too about autism which is great for us because she may see an issue we are having in the classroom with a child, a behavior, or something and she may say hey I tried this, have you ever thought about using this? And really give us some of those ideas to work from. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

In comparison, Ms. Rivers, a kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary noted the helpfulness of the feedback she received from her administrators on her formal evaluations. She stated:

He's [Mr. Williams] pretty good about...popping in every now and then and giving feedback. Hey great job on that...that type of thing. Really most of them are very thorough too when you get your assessments. So, they're not just giving you proficient with nothing. They give you verbiage to go with it [teacher evaluation standards], which it helps. (L. Rivers, personal communication, December 4, 2017)

Review of documents from both schools verified a focus on providing explicit, precise feedback to teachers. Both schools use different methods for written feedback through informal walkthrough forms, simple complimentary feedback notes, and formal observation tools (personal communication, November 30, 2017). At Lincoln Elementary, Mr. Williams shared how he

specifically looks for the number of students engaged in a task when he observes in classrooms.

He explained:

During my observations in the classroom I will often say, this is how many kids were engaged. This is how many kids that seemed off task. But, during workshop model the teacher is able to work individually with each kid. And then during the time that they're not working individually with each kid, they're working, they're engaged in something else that's productive work toward what that mini-lesson was about. If we're doing workshop in the effective way, that it [workshop model] is happening in all subjects and that it is happening all day long, so that they [students] are engaged. (K. Williams, November 16, 2017)

The walkthrough form used by Washington Elementary specifically had a section where leaders checked for how students were engaged (i.e. collaboration, constructive conversations around instructional tasks, small group, technology, hands-on activity), thus giving specific feedback about practices for building student engagement (personal communication, November 30, 2017). By providing precise feedback on student engagement during instruction, both school leaders were purposeful in their observations to reinforce practices that strengthen student engagement in the classroom.

Additionally, the formats for feedback looked for evidence of the standards or learning targets within instruction. Providing specific feedback to teachers about how their instruction addressed the standards built their efficacy beliefs for effectively aligned instruction. As part of collaborative discussions with teachers, Mr. Williams shared how he maintains a focus on the standards and data as a way to promote instructional strategies that more effectively align with a

standard. Guiding teachers to use feedback from not only leadership, but also colleagues was a focus of teacher collaboration. He explained:

In a collaborative planning meeting and we are looking at district assessment data, what worked in one classroom may not have worked in another classroom. And that has taken a long time too so that teachers don't feel like a slap in the face of, oh my gosh, of my kids only 25 % were proficient and everybody else had 70%. Okay. Let's accept that as that strategy for that particular standard didn't work that we used so accepting feedback from others on what did work in other classrooms. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Effects of routine teacher collaboration about the standards, data, and effective strategies showed in classrooms where a clear focus existed on aligning the standards to the instruction happening in classrooms. For example, it was evident that using standards to deliver instruction was common practice at Lincoln Elementary as, Ms. Lawrence, a second-grade teacher had learning targets written in student-friendly language posted next to where she worked with students. On the walkthrough form at Washington Elementary, school leaders look for alignment to the instructional standards and document evidence of seeing that in classrooms as a method of giving specific feedback to teachers. Observation of a fourth grade teacher showed how this feedback influences practice as she began her lesson by explaining to students the purpose of their learning regarding using a map to gain information. She posed the question, "Does the information on this map support or contradict the text we read?" (observation, November 30, 2017).

Another prominent category emerged from the perceptions of teachers and the principal focused on explicit feedback about instruction. Ms. Walker, a self-contained special education

teacher described her frustration with former supervisors' lack of ability to give her meaningful feedback. Conversely, she stated about her administration at Lincoln Elementary:

Our principal really seems to see what's going on. A lot of principals can walk in a room and not really see all the differentiation or see all the visuals we have in place...but our crew is pretty good about coming in and being able to spot...so they can give us better feedback about what's going on in our classes. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Second grade teacher, Ms. Lawrence from Lincoln Elementary shared an example of how Mr. Williams provided her with specific ideas to support an individual student.

I consider him a mentor, and I feel completely comfortable going to him. Here's a perfect example. He knows the problems I'm having motivating [a student]. I go check my e-mail...and it's [an email about] how to motivate kids. You know, that's great. (L. Lawrence, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

As the instructional coach, Ms. Holt described working closely with Mr. Williams and constantly talking about the work of the school. She stated, "He gives you feedback on a daily basis through meetings. We almost have every other day...unofficial updates and then his feedback is mostly positive and then he asks for my feedback a lot...we're constantly talking" (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Findings from the cross-case analysis confirmed that both school leaders and teacher participants highly valued affirming and precise feedback about instructional practices. As an integral practice of school leaders, teachers with strong efficacy confirmed that the positivity as well as the precise instructional commentary fueled their classroom practices. As a result, the feed-

back recognized the hard work of teachers and encouraged instructional strategies that influenced positive student outcomes, including better engagement.

**Customized supports for each student.**

Cross-case analysis developed a final theme among both case schools where a noticeable focus on supporting each individual student existed. Findings revealed that school leadership and teachers alike valued customizing supports for each student dependent on their needs, whether those needs were academically related or not. First, data revealed school leadership exhibited a focus on each student individually. Next, customized supports extended beyond academics to include the whole child. Finally, the customized supports put in place focused on increasing student engagement.

***Leadership values students individually.***

Data revealed intentionality at Washington Elementary School. The principal perceived her actions to be intentional and in the best interest of students. When describing her leadership approach, Ms. Hunt shared:

I try to be the leader that removes any barrier for them. So, if something is presented to me that is best for kids, I try to make my answer yes. What can I do to help you make that happen...I try to present a consistent message so you know we're all working for kids. And people say that all the time. I read an article that said, teachers don't want you to harp on the fact that you're there for the kids because obviously you're there for the kids. That's why they're there too. But, when you look at our teachers and how they support kids, they're here for the kids. And when I can keep that message consistent and we can keep the focus consistent, it makes a huge difference. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Mr. Williams, principal at Lincoln Elementary, demonstrated an interest in supporting students individually and valued getting to know students personally to help them. He described a recent situation:

I have some notes right now on my desk from kids who are having some issues in their class. These four girls who are having issues and they brought them to me. And I feel like...that's the coolest thing in the world that they feel like I'm going to help them. That is how it starts...there's a problem and we need your help. So, I'm like okay, we're going to do it and I'm going to help them. I'm not going to ask the counselor to do this. I'm not going to ask the teacher to do it. I'm going to do this because they came to me with the problem and I'm going to try to help them solve it. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Additionally, Ms. Rivers, who taught kindergarten at Lincoln Elementary, explained how her principal showed support for each student. Ms. Rivers shared, "I think he [Mr. Williams] genuinely cares about people. Cares about each child in this school, every single one of them...He really has a way of lifting up not only students, but teachers" (L. Rivers, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

Observation field notes documented several interactions between Mr. Williams and students that demonstrated a focus on students individually. While walking down the hall, he complimented a student that he passed on going back into the Advanced Content math class and gave him a hug. On another hall while walking back to his office, he passed a younger student who was crying about having to leave her snack on her desk. He bent down at her level to talk with her, and then he took her on a walk to calm down and asked her questions to help her work through her problem (observation, December 7, 2017).

The principal of Washington Elementary summed up our interview by reiterating what she believed made her school so strong. Ms. Hunt expressed:

I think our teachers know the kids better than others. I think that's the secret. Because they take the time to get to know them and care about them and their families. What happens is the teachers have been here so long and so many of the kids have come through here. Families have come through. I have parents that were students here and now their kids are students here. And they know the teachers. So, I think that it's because...our teachers know the kids and what they need to be successful. And we take a lot of data and do a lot of assessment to make sure that we understand and know where our kids are academically, but also the fact that our teachers know them and their families. I think that makes a huge difference. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Ms. Carter, as the grade chair for first grade at Washington Elementary, shared how collaborative teacher meetings use a framework provided by her principal that follows the plan, do, check, act, act cycle, which had been adapted from the continuous improvement cycle developed by Edward Deming in 1950 (Moen & Norman, 2010). During her interview, Ms. Hunt discussed why she structured the collaborative planning framework in the way that she did:

I have renamed it the plan, do, check, act, act cycle because you act for kids who have mastered the standard and you act for kids that have not. And so I want to make sure that we're intentional around both those pieces. (S. Hunt, personal communication, November 8, 2017)

Thus, the principal demonstrated a commitment to supporting each individual student's needs. As these school practices occur, leaders and teachers promoted student engagement by

creating remediating or enriching action steps aligned to student progress. A review of the artifact showed that the framework used data and a deconstruction of the standards to develop an action plan. The document had teachers examine student work and act if students did not know it, but also act if they already knew it (personal communication, November 8, 2017). As a teacher using the framework, Ms. Carter commended the focus on acting for each student:

Well, that's one of the things why I picked this school. Because I really respected everyone and everyone's so open to learning and changing and figuring things out like what we need to do as a grade level and what they need to do in the classroom. I think everybody understands how we have to teach so that we reach all the students here. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017)

Data collected also described a belief among the teacher participants that a clear focus on individual students existed beyond just academics.

***Customized supports for the whole child.***

First, participants described customized supports for students that centered on the whole child. Participants shared how they invested time to get to know their student population and be sensitive to their individual needs. Ms. Bell, a special education teacher at Washington Elementary shared why approaching students in this way was so important to her:

I first look at students as a human, as the whole. So I make a point to make sure that these kiddos know that I'm here for them regardless of bad times, good times. I don't care if you're in trouble. You can talk to me. Once you gain their trust, they're going to want to learn from you. My personal mission as a teacher is to make sure that these kids know that they are loved and that they are important. What we do here goes far beyond school. (P. Bell, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

She also shared an example to highlight how she approaches students beyond just their learning needs.

We love our kids and we love our kids well and we put our kids first. So, whatever their need is that's what we're going to focus on...I had a friend who came back from Thanksgiving break with hair that she does not like. She got her braids out, and she was really upset, so she had her hoodie over her head all day long. She would not go into the classroom. So, we were able to find her a headband to make her feel better. We were able to go ahead and say, "Hey tomorrow, we'll bring you a hat." She'll get her hair done on Friday, so until then we allowed her to wear a hat in class. (P. Bell, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

By creating flexibility in the school rules, the student felt supported which built relationships and maintained her engagement with the school.

Ms. Harrington, who also teaches at Washington Elementary, communicated a similar focus on individual student needs. She declared:

I just care...If I see someone crying, I go offer a hug. I mean if somebody's hungry, I go give them food...You do good and then they [the children] sense that, I think. That you're open and you're there for them, no matter what, and then they start to trust you. They will perform for you. They don't want to let you down. (C. Harrington, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Similar perceptions existed at Lincoln Elementary where teachers discussed the importance of supporting the whole child. Ms. Holt, who works with struggling literacy students, shared how she builds engagement in her students. She explained:

Giving them choices in what they're going to do. Giving them the opportunity to work together. And then letting them know I am the person you can go to if you're having trouble...come to me and we'll figure out what the problem is. (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

As the researcher joined Lincoln Elementary second grade teacher, Ms. Lawrence, after school one day for her individual interview, a student was with her. Ms. Lawrence explained that she had certain students that she kept after school to love on them and provide additional support that they may not have the opportunity to receive at home. Ms. Lawrence took change out of her wallet to get her student a snack from the vending machine and got her settled in another teacher's classroom with some books before beginning her interview (observation, December 7, 2017).

An element of administrative support that Ms. Lawrence described focused on the individual support that students need in her classroom. She shared that the support she needs as a teacher was focused on the learning about the needs of her students so that she can better support them in the classroom. She described how much she valued the ability to talk with her administration:

I'm worried about this kid and this kid and this kid. What can you tell me about this kid? And they'll say, well this is the background. Well, where can I go with this? I need some help with this kid. This year I have had a lot of that. And they are outstanding with it. (L. Lawrence, personal communication, December 7, 2017)

Likewise, Ms. Rivers, a kindergarten teacher at Lincoln Elementary, shared her focus on the individual students in her classroom:

I think they [students] know. I think when you know you're important amongst grownups, that I think kids feel that. That's a big thing for me. You know I'm a hugger. And I tell every one of my kids every day that I love them. (L. Rivers, personal communication, December 4, 2017)

Findings established participants valued customized supports that met the needs of the whole child. Additionally, participants shared how an individual focus on students' academic needs also promoted student engagement in the classroom.

***Customized supports promote student engagement.***

While study participants described their focus on each child's well-being, they also noted the customized academic supports provided to individual students. The instructional coach at Lincoln Elementary explained the expectation that Mr. Williams set for student engagement.

Ms. Holt expressed:

That is a major expectation that everything is differentiated...if you're challenged, you're going to be engaged. But if it's frustrational, you're not going to be engaged and if it's too easy, you're not going to be engaged. So I think that's our biggest goal and the thing that we do here the most. It's an expectation. (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

Additionally, Mr. Williams explained his expectation for instructional approaches in the classroom to promote engagement. He stated:

One of the main things is the workshop model because we can't just stand up in front of the class and teach and hope that they get it. They are not going to be engaged...but, during workshop model the teacher is able to work individually with each kid...We have to check in with them [students] to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be

doing and engaged in that work and then we have to meet with them to get them the proper understanding so that they're getting to the next level in whatever subject they're in. I think the workshop model is the only real way to do that. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

He went on to explain that customized supports for students also included getting students engaged with their data. He detailed personal work he did with struggling learners during an extended learning time to help them improve their performance. He described those conversations:

Helping them [students] to look at the data or the feedback that we're giving them and have some ownership of it...how are you going to use this to be a better student and do better on the next test? When I'm having those conversations during my extended learning time with those kids that is what we do every time. We start with a conversation. We end with a conversation. (K. Williams, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

While asking Ms. Walker, special education teacher at Lincoln Elementary, about her classroom practices that promote student engagement, she explained how she built relevancy for her special needs students by focusing on what they particularly need. She noted:

When we were talking about forces and motion, we were outside...For my kids it's important that things are real to them because abstract things don't mean a lot to my kids...So I want it to be important to their lives, their daily lives. And a push and pull on the playground, those are important things. (J. Walker, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Field notes written during observations at Washington Elementary identified similar practices among teachers. In a third grade co-taught writing classroom, Ms. Bell worked individually with a student supporting him to generate synonyms for a word in his writing. She wrote ideas

on the table with a dry erase marker to aide his idea development. She then transitioned to a writing conference with another student where her level of support was drastically less as she had the student use a different color pen to revise her writing for additional details (observation, November 30, 2017).

Ms. Harrington, a special education teacher at Washington Elementary, explained how she supported the learning of all students in her classroom. She shared, “Really getting to know every kid and knowing what they need, that’s what I do. It can be exhausting, but it’s very good. It’s just good teaching” (C. Harrington, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

When asked what supported student engagement, Ms. Holt, the instructional coach at Lincoln Elementary shared, “It’s knowing the kids and knowing their needs and knowing their interests. And kind of working and choosing things that are going to fit into that” (C. Holt, personal communication, November 30, 2017). While observing a one-on-one reading lesson in her classroom rather than telling a student what he was doing wrong, Ms. Holt provided wait time and guided him to take a second look to try to solve it himself. She approached his struggles with positivity, but remained focused on the literacy support he needed to decode unfamiliar words (observation, December 7, 2017).

The value of knowing students personally was reiterated by Ms. Carter who shared that she forgoes eating with her colleagues to sit amongst her students and get to know them personally to then use those interactions purposefully in the classroom to increase student engagement. For example, she shared:

When students have family issues...being sensitive to that. I have one right now that is very sensitive and emotional because there’s a new addition to the family. So just being understanding that it affects their learning. And kind of tailoring what their strengths and

weaknesses are because it changes throughout the year and changes cause of circumstances. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017)

While observing in Ms. Carter's classroom at Washington Elementary, researcher field notes captured another example of using her interactions purposefully to support students. While conducting a book introduction in a guided reading group, Ms. Carter asked one student if he had the type of mountains in the book in the Philippines. She mentioned to him that she knew he had beautiful beaches in his home country because she had talked to his mom about them (observation, November 30, 2017). Observation notes concurred what participants described in that teachers sought ways to build connections and relevancy for students to support engagement.

With her young kindergarten students, Ms. Rivers at Lincoln Elementary described the many ways she supported the individual learning needs of her students:

Small flexible groups...a lot of technology in my class. A lot of hands on things and a lot of STEM activities. I'm big on that. I'm a big science person so I love the science part of it. So those things and then of course making sure that I'm helping these low babies and getting them the help they need. Remediation activities, but also enrichment activities for those higher kids...making sure you're staying on top of the needs for everybody. (L. Rivers, personal communication, December 4, 2017)

She went on to explain that her focus on students individually was not exclusive to her classroom. She described her colleagues' abilities as, "I think the one thing that I do like about the school is I do think that everybody tries very hard to support all students...everyone here really ultimately that's their goal. We're all here for the same reason" (L. Rivers, personal communication, December 4, 2017). When asked a similar question about her belief in her colleagues' abilities, Ms. Lawrence from Lincoln Elementary simply stated, "They're all top notch

or they wouldn't be here. That's what I believe" (L. Lawrence, personal communication, December 7, 2017). Strong collective teacher efficacy reinforced individual efficacy beliefs to help each individual student to succeed by implementing practices for positive student engagement.

Likewise, teachers from Washington Elementary commented on the beliefs they had in their colleagues to support student learning. Ms. Carter, who teaches first grade at Washington shared how she and her colleagues support each student to build their engagement:

We talked about each individual student and what, how their circumstances were so either difficult because of poverty or difficult because you know there were ten people in the house. Different circumstances. Just understanding those kids and then we'd try to figure out ways to approach them, just talk it out and figure out which activities would be good for them or which learning style they had. (M. Carter, personal communication, November 28, 2017)

Similarly, Ms. Thomas from Washington Elementary spoke strongly of her colleagues' abilities to support students. She expressed:

I believe that they all work hard. They work hard. They do what they love. This is what they were meant to do. They're all supportive. They love their students. They all have high expectation of their students. They don't give up on them. (J. Thomas, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

Collective teacher efficacy existed among both schools as evidenced by the way teacher participants described their beliefs about their colleagues' abilities to support students. As teacher efficacy influenced the work of participants they believed in not only their ability, but the abilities of their colleagues to customize supports for students and influence engagement.

## **Discussion**

This research study aligns with existing research concerning the role of student engagement in schools (Anderson et al., 2004; Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Notably, as a malleable factor, strong student engagement can potentially change students' experiences in school (Frawley, McCoy, Banks, & Thornton, 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Wang & Degol, 2014). How school leadership influences teacher efficacy to strengthen student engagement is a legitimate concern for schools, especially early in a student's educational career. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand leadership practices that support teacher efficacy as well as practices highly efficacious teachers use to foster student engagement. In order to accomplish this, the researcher completed interviews and observations with four teachers with strong efficacy at each school along with the school principals. The findings are a result of cross-case analysis. Discussion of each theme as it relates to the research questions follows as well as implications of the study.

### **Theme One: Zeal for the School Community**

The principal's tone established an expectation of positivity throughout the school building. Teachers within both schools highlight the positive example set forth by each principal for interactions within the school community. Leadership practices include visibility around the school building and approachability by stakeholders. By demonstrating zeal for the school community, principals establish an expectation that teachers emulate and use in their interactions throughout the school. Specifically, school leaders describe their active involvement with students to increase happiness and connectedness to school as a way they fuel a positive school culture. As the principal creates positive energy in the work environment, teachers feel supported and empowered to do their best with students. Influencing the teachers' commitment to the or-

ganization and communicating a clear mission and vision is a key aspect of transformational leadership (Ross & Gray, 2006). Within the data, teachers articulated a commitment to their respective schools that was invigorated further by the principal's active involvement. Connected to the research, leadership establishes a strong sense of purpose among teachers to work together to reach achievement goals (Bandura, 1993).

Additionally, school leaders support the collective efficacy beliefs of teachers by valuing the input of others to create a culture of shared responsibility and support. Interestingly, participants at both schools describe their workplace as a family, which speaks to their connection and belonging. Zeal for the school community among participants fuels a desire to actively participate in improving the work of the school. Specifically, distributed leadership practices described by participants within both schools encourage teachers to share ideas which increases their passion for the work because they feel invested in the decisions made. Distributed leadership improves the principal-teacher relationship resulting in greater teacher satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment (Price, 2012). This commitment translates to greater zeal for the school community through passionate educators who are devoted to the students because they have a voice in decisions made by leadership.

Surprisingly, an unexpected finding in the data is that the longevity of the teaching staff at both case study schools contributes to the zeal that principals and teachers demonstrate in the school environment. The constancy of teachers influences the culture by increasing camaraderie and support which in turn increases efficacy beliefs. Teachers express trust with one another to facilitate student achievement. An interesting difference among the leadership at the two schools was the number of years of experience for each principal. One principal had ten years of experience while the other only had three years as principal. However, in both schools, the teacher par-

participants allude to the positive change the principal brought in comparison to the former administration. Even though the years of experience as principal of each school are significantly different, participants express the positive effects leadership has on the school.

Importantly, without the support teachers received from administration, teachers may not feel as efficacious in their abilities to support their students. Thus, teachers perceive their efficacy strengthened by the surrounding positive school culture, thus influencing student engagement. Research confirms that the commitment of school members to build positive relationships with students is entrenched in the culture and sustained by those that value the culture (Rowe & Stewart, 2011). Energetic passion describes the tone of teacher interviews as they describe their respective schools. Perceived collective efficacy sustains norms for additional effort and resiliency within the school culture (Goddard et al., 2004). Teacher efficacy fosters student engagement as teachers build excitement for learning objectives through hands-on, relevant learning experiences.

Stakeholders describe practices that reflect zeal for the school community and promote student engagement. Positive, warm interactions are highly valued by teachers and principals alike as they describe affirmations for building relationships with students and families. Consistent with current research that finds affective engagement derives from interactions that build personal relationships to provide emotional support and a sense of caring (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDCP], 2010; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2014; Lam et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015; Smart, 2014), stakeholders in this study engage in practices that attend to the well-being of children so that they can be more engaged during instructional time. The teachers in this study demonstrate a zeal for their school community which translates to welcoming and caring actions above and beyond what may be expected of a teacher. In fact according to

existing research on student perceptions, teacher relationships and the environment influences a students' sense of belonging, which students perceive as necessary for their well-being (Garza et al., 2014; Simmons et al., 2015). Findings reveal the zeal for the school community portrayed through participants' perceptions affects their actions and interpersonal relationships in a positive manner that promotes the engagement of students.

### **Theme Two: Affirming and Precise Feedback**

Participants spoke of the value of affirming and precise feedback for their work. First, teacher and principal participants alike confirm the power of positive feedback. Feeding teachers with positive feedback impacts the school climate and guides teachers toward expectations of the school leader. Specifically, the findings show that teachers not only appreciate positive feedback from their principal, but routinely desire affirmation and acknowledgement of their work. Principal perceptions concur that providing positive, affirming feedback energizes teachers to continue utilizing effective strategies in the classroom. Consistent with research that finds credibility and instructional expertise of the school leader affects the ability of feedback to influence efficacy beliefs of teachers (Zakeri et al., 2016), participants in this study respect their leaders for the instructional knowledge they use when providing explicit feedback. Teachers in the study perceive that both principals possess strong instructional knowledge which translates into valuable and credible feedback to teachers. Specifically, principals describe administrative practices of asking questions as well as identifying and naming specific instructional moves of teachers that bolster student achievement, which aligns with current research about necessary instructional leadership skills principals need (Ross & Gray, 2006). Additionally, principals demonstrate knowledge of strategies to support struggling learners, thus they also provide individualized feedback to teachers based on the needs of specific students. Findings align with current re-

search that shows that efficacy beliefs of teachers become stronger as they receive precise evaluative feedback about their instructional strategies in the classroom (Calik et al., 2012).

Both case study schools utilize a workshop model approach in classrooms. The workshop model provides a targeted mini-lesson using gradual release strategies and then time for independent and small group differentiated instruction with students (Calkins, 1994). Highly efficacious teachers feel capable of meeting the needs of all learners through the workshop model. The principals in each school are active participants in collaborative planning and establish expectations through the explicit feedback they provide to teachers, which aligns with existing literature on the power of collaborative frameworks to build a shared pedagogy within the school culture to communicate the collective responsibility among the entire school to influence student outcomes (Hazel & Allen, 2013, Pierce, 2014). As a result, teachers express a confidence in their abilities to address individual student needs. Therefore, when teachers are differentiating instruction, they increase student engagement. Additionally, the principals' affirming and precise feedback about instructional strategies during collaborative meetings fosters collective efficacy. Research postulates that collective teacher efficacy corresponds to achievement differences among schools (Goddard et al., 2000). The principals exercise distributed leadership as they share the responsibilities of leadership with others to exchange ideas during collaboration and give peer feedback. As teachers receive feedback about their work from not just their principal, but also their colleagues, they gain more affirmation about effective instructional practices. Teacher participants of both high-achieving schools express a positive belief in their colleagues' abilities. Accordant with current research, while school composition is a factor for collective efficacy, it is not dependent on the make-up of the student body (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). Regardless of the socioeconomic status of the case study school, teachers demonstrate collective

efficacy beliefs that are further cultivated by the conversations and feedback during collaborative planning opportunities.

Affirming and precise feedback from school leadership indirectly promotes student engagement. Principals describe giving feedback to raise awareness to the number of students who demonstrate active participation and engagement during instruction. By asking specific questions and observing for student engagement, school leaders provide teachers with precise feedback through walkthrough checklists, observation notes, or debriefing conversations. In turn, teachers use the feedback to improve their practices which can affect student engagement. Teacher participants describe two specific types of feedback that they perceive provide the most support. First, affirming feedback acknowledges effective strategies and encourages teachers to continue implementing those practices. Concurrent with research, teachers' perceptions of administrative support through encouragement and recognition of good work significantly influences their efficacy beliefs (Stipek, 2012). Secondly, precise feedback identifies essential instructional actions that should either continue or change in order to reach desired achievement outcomes, which correlates to research which found a strong relationship exists between the evaluation of the teaching process and teachers' efficacy for implementing instructional strategies (Calik et al., 2012). Therefore, findings conclude that instructional strategies that foster student engagement are reinforced as teachers receive affirming and precise feedback on their teaching practices.

### **Theme Three: Customized Supports for Each Student**

A final key finding from the case study is the heightened importance participants express for customizing support for each student at their respective schools. School leadership exhibits a devotion to every child in their school and evidences actions throughout the school day of build-

ing personal connections with students. These leadership practices reciprocate the ongoing research on affective engagement, which shows relationships significantly influence students' feelings about school and routine interactions with others can strengthen this construct over time (Anderson et al., 2004; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Frawley et al., 2014; Furlong & Christenson, 2008). Administrative practices of recognizing students by name, talking with students about their lives, and staying in tune with changes in students that might affect their learning are ways principals in both schools provide customized supports for each student. In turn, their actions promote a school culture that acknowledges the individual needs of students and responds accordingly. The presence of this culture in the case study schools reinforces the teachers' efficacy beliefs to positively impact student outcomes.

Teacher participants explain how they prioritize a commitment to each individual student. Findings reveal teachers exhibit a robust belief in their ability to support each student by first getting to know them individually. Consistent with aligning research, building high quality relationships and an emotionally supportive environment associates with improved student engagement in school (Anderson et al., 2004). Building personal relationships with students and their families is a priority of these efficacious teachers. In turn, teachers perceive students and their families feel connected to the school resulting in a greater commitment to learning as well as participating in events and clubs outside of the regular school day. Within these schools, the principal distributes responsibilities to teacher leaders to organize and engage students in different opportunities. By distributing leadership, many within the school feel responsible for creating valuable experiences for students beyond the expected curriculum. Interestingly, while both schools offer extracurricular opportunities for students, the school with a lower socioeconomic status demonstrates a greater variety of opportunities for students to build connectedness with the

school, which aligns with research that finds behavioral engagement increases as students participate in the academic, social, and extracurricular aspects of school (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Findings reveal that teachers with strong efficacy often become involved in these activities which correspond to their beliefs to go above and beyond to engage students. The commitment of teachers to respond to student needs in a supportive manner facilitates student engagement.

Teacher participants also describe intentionality with regards to their instruction in the classroom. They exhibit a focus on implementing instructional practices that are customized to the learning needs of their students which are further reinforced by the feedback of their principals. As a result, teachers perceive student engagement to increase as they differentiate instruction, build relevancy for students, and provide opportunities for hands-on experiences, which connects to existing research that finds students are motivated with opportunities in the classroom to have choice in learning, opportunities to work cooperatively with others, and relevant learning experiences (Damiani, 2014; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Simmons et al., 2015). Notably though, when teachers with strong efficacy describe their impact on student engagement, they primarily relate it to the personal connection they establish with each student. They perceive the relationship as the essential factor for student engagement before instructional strategies. Thus, customized supports for each student address not only academic needs, but also the personal needs of a students' well-being.

Findings show student engagement strengthens through school and classroom practices alike that customize support for each student. All participants within the study value getting to know students personally to foster relationships that extend into academics as well as beyond the school walls. As students feel cared for and loved, teachers and principals believe their engage-

ment increases and translate to greater achievement outcomes. By changing and reacting to needs of individual students, teachers describe their ability to find what engages different students as well as supporting their well-being which in turn supports academic progress. Additionally, school practices of offering clubs and family events promote engagement with the school community. Concurrent with existing literature, as connectedness grows through participation and students feel success, their identification with school improves and leads to greater participation (Appleton et al., 2008; Finn, 1989). Authentic interactions with students and a genuine desire to ensure students know they are loved describe the practices of participants in both case study schools. Participants perceive student engagement to be impacted by the interactions and closeness they strive to develop through relationships, which is in keeping with current research that finds the specific dispositions of the teacher increases engagement of students (Smart, 2014). Regardless of the type of customized support, this study ascertains the intentional focus of teachers and principals on each individual student directly correlates to stronger engagement and ultimately stronger student achievement.

### **Implications**

Findings from this study confirm that the actions of school leadership influence the individual efficacy of teachers as well as collective teacher efficacy. More specifically, the perceptions of those within the case study reveal instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership practices influence teacher efficacy. Implications exist for school principals to consider specific practices that can foster student engagement through an influence on teacher efficacy.

#### **Implications for zeal for the school community.**

The study finds the power of positive interactions among different stakeholders within the school creates a strong school environment that fosters student engagement. First, positive

interactions among teacher colleagues as well as principals and teachers reinforce positive interactions with students. Rowe and Stewart (2011) found that a caring school ethos contributed to characteristics of mutual reciprocal relationships that promoted school connectedness. Principals should consider how they model positive interactions with students, parents, and colleagues to foster a strong school culture. Demonstrating zeal and happiness in their work translates to teachers and students, which filters into classrooms to affect student engagement. Perceptions reveal positive interactions create an environment where stakeholders (i.e. teachers, students, parents) want to be invested. For example, Damiani (2014) found that students desired more academic and socioemotional support through interactions with their principals. This study contributes to existing research that as school leaders maintain visibility throughout the school and demonstrate approachability through positive interactions with students, they continue to fuel a positive culture that promotes student engagement.

Passionate zeal for the school community grows as the teacher population feels a voice in school decisions. Specifically, distributed leadership practices strengthen the trust among colleagues and ownership of school practices as teachers feel their input counts. Shared expectations among principals and teachers contribute to a successful trusting relationship (Price, 2012). Teachers want to grow their practices or commit to school goals when they feel they are active participants in improvement decisions. As principals extend trust to teachers through shared decision-making, they receive greater trust in return (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). A passion for continuous improvement was found in teachers with strong efficacy within this study. Findings indicate the need for school leaders to consider the avenues available for teacher input to increase the investment and enthusiasm of teachers for school goals.

Finally, principals should consider how they show zeal for the school community. Through transformational leadership practices, principals can energize a strong sense of purpose among teachers to carry out the school's goals. This study contributes to the meta-analytic review of unpublished research by Leithwood and Sun (2012) which found transformational leadership strategies that empower teachers and build a professional community influences stronger working relationships and student engagement. A teacher's internalization of the school's goals into their own personal goals influences their professional learning and work with students (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011). Found within this study, the school leaders exhibit a passionate zeal for their school's purpose and the goals they have for supporting student growth. Findings suggest school leaders can motivate their teachers by setting a positive, happy tone within the school and continuously encouraging students' well-being and academic growth, to influence student engagement. By making their positive energy visible, others within the school will want to emulate that same zeal for the school as shown in the contexts of the schools within this study.

### **Implications for feedback.**

A second implication for school leadership is principals should consider the feedback provided to teachers. First, teacher perceptions reveal their efficacy strengthens as they receive frequent affirming feedback about their work. Adding to the work of Bandura (1997), as people are persuaded to belief in themselves, they are more likely to increase their efficacy. Findings confirm from the perceptions of highly efficacious teachers that they benefit and need frequent positive feedback from school leaders. This study also contributes to findings from a study conducted by Stipek (2012), which found the demographics of the student population does not have as much of an impact on teacher efficacy beliefs as perceived administrative support. Regardless

of the differences in school demographics within this study, principals and teachers from both schools acknowledged the power of positive feedback for their efficacy beliefs. This study recommends that school leaders should consider how often they provide affirming written or verbal feedback to teachers. Teachers with strong efficacy confirm that this type of feedback propels them to continue using effective instructional strategies in the classroom.

Secondly, findings reveal teachers with strong efficacy value precise feedback from their instructional leaders. Principals need to possess a deep instructional knowledge about effective strategies in the classroom in order to give specific feedback that each teacher values and uses to improve classroom practices. For example, Ross and Gray (2006) found a vital leadership task is helping teachers recognize the cause-and-effect relationships between their instructional actions and student outcomes. Perceptions reveal that teachers know when feedback is general and lacks context-specific information that could inform their teaching. An implication for school leaders is to continually grow knowledge of best practices in instructional strategies in order to provide precise feedback to teachers that can improve practice and ultimately influence student engagement.

Thirdly, affirming and precise feedback occurs beyond classroom observations. Both principals in this study are active participants in teacher collaboration to analyze curricular standards and develop instructional action steps. Research on the principal's emotional intelligence, especially in the area of relationship management found significant influence on collective teacher efficacy through factors of instructional strategies and student discipline (Pierce, 2014). This study's findings contribute to this research as principals create this collaborative arena for instructional feedback, which also provides the opportunity for teachers to push each other's practices forward, and strengthen collective teacher efficacy. The principals use their

emotional intelligence within these collaborative working relationships to provide precise feedback on instructional strategies and develop actionable steps for work in classrooms. Likewise, this study adds to existing research that norms of collective responsibility lead to collective efficacy because the more a teacher believes in his or her ability to do collective work, the more he or she believes in her teaching colleagues (Demir, 2008). School leaders should consider the various opportunities, including during teacher collaboration, where giving affirming and precise feedback focuses teacher attention on effective instructional strategies for increased student engagement and learning outcomes.

### **Implications for customized supports for students.**

Regardless of a school's socioeconomic status, the focus of teachers and school leadership should be on the individual student and their well-being. First of all, developing an intentional focus on the needs of each student and constructing customized supports to address those needs has a direct influence on affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement of students. For example, Klem and Connell (2004) concluded that more personalized educational environments for students specifically influenced by experiences of teacher support led to improved engagement. Teacher perceptions at both schools reveal a priority to support the whole child in the classroom. Ensuring that students feel loved and cared for translates to strong student engagement at both schools. Implications exist for schools to consider how they care for the various academic and non-academic needs of students. Students are more likely to have positive health and educational outcomes when they feel connected to school (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDCP], 2010). Within these schools, a commitment to providing students what they need, either physically or emotionally, led to a better learning environment and increased school connectedness where academic needs could also be met.

Secondly, a goal of customizing supports for individual students was not only evident in teacher perceptions, but also in the actions of school leadership. Within both schools, principals directly interact with students to build relationships and increase students' connectedness with school. Anderson et al. (2004) identified the significance of students' high-quality, supportive relationships with adults in schools. Findings suggest principals can model this type of focus by getting to know students personally and placing intense value on how school staff builds relationships with students. Moreover, schools should consider the opportunities that exist for students to become involved through extracurricular activities and after school events to promote school connectedness. Participation in extracurricular activities, especially those that are academically oriented is significantly related to student achievement; and as students participate in more opportunities, their belonging to school increases as well (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). This study confirms that these occasions increase student participation and engagement with school.

Furthermore, becoming personally invested to interact with students is an essential way school leadership can promote engagement. Simply knowing students by name and demonstrating a desire to get to know their life story fosters engagement. The actions of these school principals to garner relationships with students and develop supports for their individual needs played a role in improving student outcomes. As principals use transformational leadership to model their commitment to customizing supports for students, teachers share a stronger sense of purpose to adjust their actions for individual students as well. The value of the presence of a caring and nurturing teacher in the classroom cannot be underestimated (Garza et al., 2014). Implications arise for school leaders to consider how teachers effectively address the individual needs of each student and develop customized supports to help each student grow. An intentional fo-

cus on customizing supports for each student strongly relates to greater student engagement which positively affects the success of each school in this study.

## **Conclusion**

These key practices found to effectively foster strong student engagement in the schools within this study provide meaningful implications for other schools. While each school possesses its own culture and demographics, it is evident that certain findings transcend across school contexts to support student engagement. As school leaders foster teacher efficacy through distributed, transformational, and instructional practices, teachers engage positively with colleagues and students while demonstrating a greater commitment to improving school outcomes. Therefore, as principals strengthen teacher efficacy through feedback while also modeling zeal for the school community and focusing on each individual student, student engagement can be improved.

Student withdrawal and disengagement in school during early schooling years can influence a student's educational trajectory (Appleton, et al., 2008; Wang & Fredricks, 2014). Student engagement is a malleable factor that can positively alter student outcomes and prevent withdrawal from school (Frawley et al., 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Teacher efficacy influences how schools create experiences for students that build engagement and positive school outcomes (Bandura, 1993). The findings captured within this study provide distinct practices of leaders and teachers perceived to influence student engagement. Indeed, elementary school leaders can address the malleable factor of student engagement by influencing teacher efficacy through zeal, feedback, and a focus on customized supports for students to promote positive schooling outcomes.

## References

- Anderson, A. R., Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., & Lehr, C. A. (2004). Check and connect: The importance of relationships for promoting engagement with school. *Journal of School Psychology, 42*(2), 95-113.
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 369-386.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist, 28*(2), 117-148.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544-559.
- Cadima, J., Doumen, S., Verschueren, K., & Buyse, E. (2015). Child engagement in the transition to school: Contributions of self-regulation, teacher-child relationships, and classroom climate. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 32*, 1-12.
- Calik, T., Sezgin, F., Kavgaci, H., & Kilinc, A. C. (2012). Examination of relationships between instructional leadership of school principals and self-efficacy of teachers and collective teacher efficacy. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 12*(4), 2498-2504.
- Calkins, L. (1994). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Carter, M. J., & Fuller, C. (2015). Symbolic interactionism. *Sociopedia.isa*. doi 10.1177/205684601561.
- Carter, C. P., Reschly, A. L., Lovelace, M. D., Appleton, J. J., & Thompson, D. (2012). Measuring student engagement among elementary students: Pilot of the student engagement instrument-elementary version. *School Psychology Quarterly, 27*(2), 61-73.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). School connectedness: Strategies for increasing protective factors among youth. *Reclaiming Children & Youth, 19*(3), 21-24.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Damiani, J. (2014). Unlocking elementary students' perspectives of leadership. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 6*(2), 229-256.
- Daniels, E., & Steres, M. (2011). Examining the effects of a school-wide reading culture on the engagement of middle school students. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 35*(2), 1-13.
- Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59*(2), 117-142.
- Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 97-131). New York, NY: Springer.
- Frawley, D., McCoy, S., Banks, J., & Thornton, M. (2014). Affective school engagement and self-concept: How are Irish boys and girls faring? *Child Indicators Research, 7*(4), 843-859.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109.
- Furlong, M. J., & Christenson, S. L. (2008). Engaging students at school and with learning: A relevant construct for all students. *Psychology in the Schools, 45*(5), 365-368.
- Garza, R., Alejandro, E. A., Blythe, T., & Fite, K. (2014). Caring for students: What teachers have to say. *IRSN Education, 2014*, 1-7. doi: 10.1155/2014/425856

- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Education Research Journal*, 37(2), 479-507.
- Goddard, R. (2002). A theoretical and empirical analysis of the measurement of collective efficacy: The development of a short form. *Educational & Psychological Management*, 62(1), 97-110.
- Goddard, R. D., & Skrla, L. (2006). The influence of school social composition on teachers' collective efficacy beliefs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(2), 216-235.
- Hazel, C. E., & Allen, W. B. (2013). Creating inclusive communities through pedagogy at three elementary schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice*, 24(3), 336-356.
- Hoy, W. K., & Woolfolk, A. E. (1993). Teachers' sense of efficacy and the organizational health of schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 93(4), 355-372.
- Lam, S., Jimerson, S., Wong, B. P. H., Kikas, E., Shin, H., Veiga, F. H...Zollneritsch, J. (2014). Understanding and measuring student engagement in school: The results of an international study from 12 countries. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 29(2), 213-232.
- Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtler, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, M. C., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Moen, R. D., & Norman, C. L. (2010). Circling back: Clearing up myths about the Deming cycle and seeing how it keeps evolving. *Quality Progress*, 43(11), 22-28.
- Moller, S., Mickelson, R. A., Stearns, E., Banerjee, N., & Bottia, M. C. (2013). Collective pedagogical teacher culture and mathematics achievement: Differences by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. *Sociology of Education*, 86(2), 174-194.
- Moller, S., Stearns, E., Mickelson, R. A., Bottia, M. C., & Banerjee, N. (2014). Is academic engagement the panacea for achievement in mathematics across racial/ethnic groups? Assessing the role of teacher culture. *Social Forces*, 92(4), 1513-1544.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 365-386). New York, NY: Springer.
- Pierce, S. (2014). Examining the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and the emotional intelligence of elementary school principals. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24(2), 311-335.
- Pole, K. (2007). Mixed methods designs: A review of strategies for blending quantitative and qualitative methodologies. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 20(4), 35-38.
- Price, H. E. (2012). Principal-teacher interactions: How affective relationships shape principal and teacher attitudes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(1), 39-85.
- Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). Transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values: The mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, 17(2), 179-199.

- Rowe, F., & Stewart, D. (2011). Promoting connectedness through whole-school approaches: Key elements and pathways of influence. *Health Education, 111*(1), 49-65.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Simmons, C., Graham, A., & Thomas, N. (2015). Imagining an ideal school for wellbeing: Locating student voice. *Journal of Educational Change, 16*(2), 129-144.
- Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21-44). New York, NY: Springer.
- Smart, J. B. (2014). A mixed methods study of the relationship between student perceptions of teacher-student interactions and motivation in middle level science. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 38*(4), 1-19.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stipek, D. (2012). Effects of student characteristics and perceived administrative and parental support on teacher self-efficacy. *The Elementary School Journal, 112*(4), 590-606.
- Thoonen, E. E. J., Slegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. D., & Geijsel, F. P. (2011). How to improve teaching practices : The role of teacher motivation, organizational factors, and leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 47*(3), 496-536.
- Wang, M., & Degol, J. (2014). Staying engaged: Knowledge and research needs in student engagement. *Child Development Perspectives, 8*(3), 137-143.

Wang, M., & Fredricks, J. A. (2014). The reciprocal links between school engagement, youth problem behaviors, and school dropout during adolescence. *Child Development, 85*(2), 722-737.

Zakeri, A., Rahmany, R., & Labone, E. (2016). Teachers' self and collective efficacy: The case of novice English language teachers. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 7*(1), 158-167.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Demographic Survey

1. What grade level are you currently teaching?

K-2                       3-5

2. What is your gender?

Female                       Male

3. What is your highest degree earned?

BA/BS                       MS/MA                       Specialist                       Doctorate

4. What university provided your teacher preparation training?

---

5. How many different student teaching opportunities did you have as part of your teacher preparation training?

---

6. How many years of teaching experience at the elementary level?

years

7. How many years of teaching experience at your current school?

years

8. Do you hold any teacher leadership positions at your current school?

Yes                       No

If yes, please list below:

---

## Appendix B: Collective Efficacy Scale –Short Form (Goddard & Hoy, 2003)

### DIRECTIONS:

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Your answers are confidential.

**KEY: 6=Strongly Agree 5=Agree 4=Somewhat Agree  
3=Somewhat Disagree 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree**

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1. Teachers in the school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. These students come to school ready to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Home life provides so many advantages that students here are bound to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.	1	2	3	4	5	6

### Appendix C: Teacher Efficacy Scale (Short Form)\*

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of educators concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We are interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

**KEY:** 1=Strongly Agree 2=Moderately Agree 3=Agree slightly more than disagree  
4=Disagree slightly more than agree 5=Moderately Disagree 6=Strongly Disagree

1. The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6

\*In Hoy, W.K. & Woolfolk, A.E. (1993). Teachers' sense of efficacy and the organizational health of schools. *The Elementary School Journal* 93, 356-372.

**Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Teachers**

1. If you were to describe your school to someone, how would you describe it?
2. How does collaboration among teachers occur at your school?  
Probe: PLCs?
3. What opportunities for teacher leadership are present at your school?  
Probe: How is teacher leadership encouraged?
4. Describe how teachers participate in decision making at your school.
5. In what ways do you receive instructional feedback from your principal?
6. Describe the support you need as a teacher.
7. In what ways do you support the learning of all students in your classroom?
8. What is your belief of your colleagues' abilities to support student learning?
9. How do you build relationships with students?
10. How does your school's culture encourage positive interactions with students?
11. What are your school's practices that you believe promote student engagement?
12. What are your classroom practices to promote student engagement?

## **Appendix E: Interview Protocol for School Principal**

1. If you were to describe your school to someone, how would you describe it?
2. How does collaboration among teachers occur at your school?  
Probe: PLCs?
3. What opportunities for teacher leadership are present at your school?  
Probe: How is teacher leadership encouraged?
4. Describe how teachers participate in decision making at your school.
5. In what ways do you provide instructional feedback to teachers?
6. How do you believe your leadership practices influence the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs?
7. In what ways do your teachers demonstrate collective teacher efficacy (i.e. collective beliefs in each other's abilities to support student learning)?
8. How do you believe your leadership practices foster collective efficacy beliefs?
9. How do you build relationships with students?
10. How does your school's culture encourage positive interactions with students?
11. What are your school's practices that you believe promote student engagement?
12. What do you observe as classroom practices to promote student engagement?

## Appendix F: Classroom Observation Protocol

Time of Observation:

Length of Observation:

Date:

Teacher Code:

Grade Level:

School Code:

### Observation Record:

<b>Description of classroom environment:</b>
<b>Description of instructional activities:</b>
<b>Description of teacher's interactions with students:</b>
<b>Description of student's interactions with other students:</b>
<b>Description of teacher collaboration or interactions with colleagues:</b>
<b>Researcher's Reflective Content:</b>

## Appendix G: School and Principal Observation Protocol

Time of Observation:

Length of Observation:

Date:

School Code:

### Observation Record:

<b>Description of school environment:</b>
<b>Description of principal's interactions with teachers:</b>
<b>Description of principal's interactions with students:</b>
<b>Description of collaboration among colleagues in the school:</b>
<b>Researcher's Reflective Content:</b>

