

**TEACHER EFFICACY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Teacher Efficacy and its Effects on the Academic Achievement of African American Students.**

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This study focuses on 12 efficacious teachers from three middle schools in the Midwest. The researcher interviewed them, observed them in their classrooms and took field notes of the observations. The purpose of this study was to determine if African American students perform better in school when their teachers are highly efficacious. African American students were chosen, as opposed to other ethnic groups, because they have been the target of many social and academic stereotypes. The premise of this study is that if efficacious teachers are capable of bringing about changes in student behavior, motivation, and learning, then African American students should perform well academically in their classrooms.

This study is a qualitative study that interviewed teachers, audiotaped them, and observed them in their classrooms. The data were triangulated to give validity and reliability to the study. The findings of this study confirm what the literature says about teacher efficacy and their pedagogy. African American students were seen to participate in subjects that they related to most and showed lack of involvement in

others that they didn't. The lack of involvement of African American parents was found to be frustrating to teachers when they could not contact the parents, as well as their lack of involvement in following up in the education process of their child.

Parental involvement is a vital part of the education process. It must start from early childhood and carry all the way to high school and beyond. However, lack of parental involvement will have great implications for their child, the teachers, and the community at large. This study recommends training for African American parents so they can better keep their children informed about the benefits of education. It also recommends measures that can help African American students stay in school, work hard, graduate from high school, and go on to college. By so doing, they can change the perception about African American students and their performance at school.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved wife Renneth, our son Michael, his wife

Allison, and our twin daughters

Michelle, and Melissa.

I love you all.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **Overview and Introduction**

I was born and raised on Anguilla, a tiny British island in the Caribbean, with a population of about ten thousand (10,000) people. The majority of the people who live on the island are Black, a mixture of Arawak Indians and descendents of African slaves. Slaves were brought to the island during the slave trade. The majority of the faces in government, business, and education are also Black. Some White families live on the island as well, but they migrated from Great Britain and the United States.

On this island paradise, there were very few social problems. Occasionally, some students from The Valley (the capital) would tease the other students from rural areas of the island, claiming that they had to come to the capital to do their shopping and go to school. This was done in a teasing, lighthearted manner, not indicating superiority or inferiority of either group. No stereotypical effect was meant by it; nor did it make any of the children feel that they were incapable of succeeding socially or academically.

The education system on Anguilla was traditionally British, comprising of rote memorization, corporal punishment, and an entrance examination to get into high school. The Anguillan government provided a public education for all children, five to

seventeen years of age. A high school education was optional. To get into the only high school on the island every student had to take a high school entrance examination. This motivated every student at the elementary level to do their best to avoid any embarrassment of failing the high school entrance examination. Those who could not pass the high school entrance examination had to choose a vocational trade, or become a laborer at whichever job they could get. Those who were fortunate to go to high school got an education but did not get a diploma. At the end of high school, another examination was taken. Those who passed that examination were placed on an advanced, college placement track. During that final year of high school, those advanced students took the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination. Those who successfully passed were considered finished with high school and were awarded the General Certificate of Education diploma (GCE). Recipients of this high achievement diploma were qualified to go to college if they had the financial means to do so. Others were employed by the government to teach at the elementary-school level. Those who showed academic promise had their college expenses paid by the government with a commitment that upon completion they would return to work on the island.

My education experience in the United States began in 1972, when I came to this country as a college student. Upon my arrival, I was amazed at the abundance of educational opportunities available to students in this country. Unlike on Anguilla, in the United States if a student dropped out of school or missed the opportunity to graduate from high school there were always opportunities for that student to go back

to school and complete high school. Numerous alternative schools enabled students to attend and earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (United States Department of Education /Consumer Guide, 1996). Even students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were offered these opportunities. There were many programs that provided tutors and resources like the federally funded Title 1 program that provided school funding to help low performing students become academically successful. There were also opportunities for grants, scholarships, and other resources to help disadvantaged students go to college. Those who chose not to attend a four-year college could attend a two-year community college where the tuition is cheaper, while living at home. It seemed that anyone who wanted to get a high school education or attend college could do so easily in the United States.

As I thought about the numerous opportunities for education in the United States, I was surprised that so many African American students drop out of high school and fail to graduate. Of those who do go on to high school, 50 percent of them graduate within four years, compared to 75 percent of White male students (Toldson, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education Consumer Guide (1996), dropout rates are about the same for males and females. The rates differed significantly for students from different ethnic groups or different income levels. The U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that the 1993 dropout rate was 7.9 percent for White students as compared to 13.6 percent for African American students. When high-income families were compared with low-income families, the percentages were 2.7 percent to 23.9 percent

respectively (www.ed.gov). These statistics are alarming as many jobs anymore require a college degree for employment. It is necessary that young people go on to college after high school if they are to get good jobs and experience economic success. Darling-Hammond (2010) states, "While how more than half of young people are becoming college graduates in many European and Asian nations, fewer than 40 percent of American young people – and fewer than 20 percent of African American and Hispanic youth – receive a college degree."

(<http://www.thenation.com/article/restoring-our-schools>).

There may be more underlying factors that contribute to high dropout numbers among low-income students. Some researchers propose that part of the problem may be due to teacher fear of disruptive students who are sometimes labeled as "dangerous" or "troublesome." Fenning and Rose (2007) state,

Students of color are unfortunately tagged as part of this fear and anxiety and subsequently are more likely to be on the receiving end of our most punitive discipline consequences. Sadly, those who are not perceived to fit into the norm of school because of race, academic problems, socioeconomic status (SES), are unjustly targeted for removal. (p.357)

### **Statement of the Problem**

The high dropout rate among African American students is troubling to me as a Black male who has earned several advanced degrees. My interest in doing this study is to find out why more African American students do not do the same. I am naturally interested in knowing and exploring why such high dropout rates exist among African

American students. What contributes to the widening achievement gap between African American students and their White peers? What responsibilities rest with the teachers of African American students in motivating and shaping their ability to be successful at school? What role do parents of African American students have in motivating their children to stay in school and become academically successful? All of these questions have piqued my interest in this topic; it is for this reason that I am doing this phenomenological study.

### **Research Question**

In my quest to find answers to this problem, I have chosen to do a qualitative method of inquiry that explores this question: What effect does teacher efficacy have on academic achievement of African American students?

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore this phenomenon to see what relationship (if any) teacher efficacy has on the academic achievement of African American students. My goal is to gain insights that can be used to better inform and educate African American students about the importance of education, and to provide resources for educators that will result in strategies to better inform and educate African American students. The reason African American students are chosen to be part of this study as opposed to another ethnic group centers around the fact that most African American students come from homes with single parents and struggle

economically. Many live in urban settings and attend inner-city schools that are deteriorating and are staffed with teachers who would rather not teach in that environment due to many classroom disruptions, absenteeism, and failure to get assignments done in a timely fashion (Leak, 2003). African American students are recipients of stereotypes, social slander, and discrimination, which can affect how they feel about themselves and how they do academically (Gutman & Midgley 2000; Steele, 2004). In addition, there has been much conjecture about the ability of African American students to learn, their disruptive conduct and behavior at school, their high dropout rates, and more obviously, the achievement gap that exists between White and African American students.

It is important to note, however, that many African American students who live in these difficult circumstances still manage to do very well at school. These are so called “resilient” students who are able to overcome these adverse conditions and go on to become focused learners. They attend school regularly, do well academically, and never seem to get into any trouble. These are highly motivated students who are goal oriented, focus-driven, and are influenced either by their parents or by a teacher who has impressed on them the value of education (Leak, 2003). But, many African American students do struggle at school, rank lower on standardized tests, and are the recipients of discipline referrals more often than any other ethnic group (Cagle, 1998; 2005; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Skiba & Leone, 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003). Therefore, it is in this context that this study is directed.

### **Statement of Potential Significance**

My aim in doing this study is to consider what research says about efficacious teachers and to explore what relationship their pedagogical influence has on African American students. Research shows that efficacious teachers are prone to try various teaching strategies with struggling students. They are less critical of students when they make mistakes. They are more likely to implement positive classroom management strategies; are not quick to refer students to special education classes, and they maintain a positive outlook when teaching difficult students (Henson, 2001; Pinkston-Miles, 2003; Scharlach, 2008).

The findings from this study could have great implications for struggling African American students, as far as how they learn and the quality of teacher under whom they achieve academic success. Since efficacious teachers are capable of changing students' attitudes about school, increasing student motivation to learn, and boosting academic achievement; then it would seem highly likely that significant changes could occur with African American students in this kind of classroom setting. Further, attendance problems could be impacted as a result of this study. Research shows that when students enjoy school they will attend school regularly (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Leak, 2003). The long-term implications will be that when African American students stay in school, learning will take place and test scores will increase. This ultimately will result in more African American student graduating from high school, and hopefully going on to college, and thus have the opportunity to experience an economic quality of life that is better than that of their parents.

## Conceptual Framework

The structure of this dissertation is organized around the conceptual framework. In Chapter 2, the literature on the topic of teacher efficacy is reviewed. Chapter 3 explains the Methodology in detail. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 is a summary and discussion of the findings, as well as specific recommendations to parents.

In looking at teacher efficacy and student achievement, I explored what the literature says about the background and the developmental aspects of teacher efficacy, giving some definitions of efficacy and the specific context in which the term is being used in this study. Several studies that discuss the impact of teacher efficacy on student learning are discussed in the Literature Review. The current study does not involve African American student participants, although it does focus on, and draw attention to African American students. Because African American students are generally clustered in lower socioeconomic urban areas, are recipients of negative stereotypes, myths, and are generally served by new or inexperienced teachers, or by teachers who may not be highly qualified in their area of specialty, African Americans are part of an increasing achievement gap that exists between White and African American students, (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Ross, 1998; Skiba & Leone, 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003). Therefore, this study explores how a relationship between efficacious teachers and African American students impacts student learning and contributes to their academic success.

## **Summary of the Methodology**

### **Participants**

Participants in the study were limited only to teachers who were purposefully selected from a pool of teachers who completed a self-efficacy survey. The participants were selected on a voluntary basis and were guaranteed anonymity by withholding their real names from all parts of this study. Pseudonyms were used to represent each teacher participant. Furthermore, a letter of informed consent was signed by participants indicating their understanding that they would be interviewed, audiotaped, and observed in their classrooms. The contents of the interviews, audiotapes, and field notes were used for data collection purposes only. All participants were also notified of their right to withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason, without penalty.

### **Interview Process:**

Twelve (12) participants were purposefully selected from three (3) middle schools in the Midwest. Teachers whose survey scores indicated high self-efficacy characteristics were selected for this study. This mode of selection provided information-rich responses that helped to develop the participant's story (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2002). These participants were interviewed by asking them a series of open-ended questions to capture their true feelings, and to insure that their story is told uninterrupted.

According to Patton (2002), “The purpose of interviewing is to allow (the researcher) to enter into the other person’s perspective.” Patton further explains that “qualitative interviewing begins with the assumptions that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 341). Thus, by interviewing participants, the interviewer is able to gather the individual’s personal thoughts and thereby come away with a story.

In addition, each teacher participated in one audiotaped 45-minutes interview; during one classroom observation the researcher took field notes. The interviews were transcribed allowing the researcher to look for codes and themes. The classroom observation was done allowing careful attention to the teachers’ interactions, conversations, and management of students, especially African American students. Field notes were recorded documenting the evidence seen and heard in the classroom setting. The interviews, observations, and field notes served to triangulate the data. In so doing, it was hoped that a story would emerge to give deeper insight into this phenomenon.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited in that the participants were purposefully selected rather than randomly selected. With purposeful selection of participants, there is always the chance that the participants may not reflect the opinions and views of the greater population (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2002). This study is limited because the participants comprised a very small group of twelve teachers whose stories may not

reflect the true opinions of the general population. Researcher bias may be another limitation to this study. Because this researcher has some strong opinions about this topic and is also Black, it may be difficult to obscure certain biases and opinions. Therefore, this study was open to outside scrutiny to avoid subjectivity. This study is limited to one of many variables that could be contributing factors –teacher efficacy.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Efficacy* has to do with how a teacher feels about his or her ability to do their job. Gordon (2001) says that, “Teacher efficacy is sometimes considered to be an indicator or prediction of teaching effectiveness” (p. 5). A more contemporary word for efficacy could be *confidence*. If a teacher feels confident that he or she can teach all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, learning ability, or background, and achieve their objective, then that teacher would be described as being highly efficacious (Cubukcu, 2008).

*Self-efficacy* will be manifested in a teacher’s esteem and ability to effect positive change in the classroom (Osborne, Walker, & Rausch, 2002). Self-efficacy is evident by the response a person gives when asked, “How well can you perform that task?” Highly efficacious teachers face their tasks with a great degree of optimism and are very confident in their ability to do that job well. They have the ability to persist in the most difficult situations, remain level headed, and turn those difficult situations around with successful results (Gordon, 2001; Scharlach, 2008).

When *teacher efficacy* is used in this study, the confidence of a teacher to gain the respect of each student and effectively teach them, even under difficult circumstance, is what will be intended (Cubukcu, 2008; Gordon, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004; Scharlach, 2008). This goes contrary to the thinking that a teacher cannot do much to change the thinking and behavior of students because a student's ability to be successful at school depends on his home environment (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

This study explores the effects that teacher efficacy has on the academic achievement of African American students. This topic was chosen to find answers why such disparities exist in student achievement between African American students and their White counterparts. Research shows that efficacious teachers are capable of bringing about changes in student behavior, motivation, and learning (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Based on this information, my aim was to find out *if* African American students were taught by highly efficacious teachers, would that have implications on greater learning, a positive attitude about school, improved attendance, and greater academic gains; or would it have no impact on these things at all.

#### **Purpose and Research Questions**

My purpose for embarking upon this study was to get a broad overview of what the literature says about the education process of African American students, and to understand their conduct and attitudes about school and education, as well as to learn about which teachers are most effective in the learning process of African American students.

This study follows the qualitative design of inquiry. It is a phenomenological study that will address the question, “What Effect does Teacher Efficacy have on Academic Achievement of African American Students?” The study involved interviewing twelve (12) teacher participants from the results of a survey instrument. The participants were purposefully selected so that their stories would reflect the opinions of the greater teaching population. Open-ended questions were asked so the participants could tell their stories uninterrupted.

### **Description and Critique of Scholarly Literature**

In today’s education society, student motivation and academic performance are assumed to be the result of the teacher’s diligence and hard work. Rotter (1966) proposed that teachers who motivate students and boost academic achievement even among difficult students were considered highly efficacious. Albert Bandura’s theory identified teacher efficacy as a type of “self- efficacy” –the product of a social cognitive process in which people form beliefs about their own capacity to perform at a given level of competence (Henson, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). The works of both these theorist have developed into various viewpoints about teacher abilities and effectiveness in educating students. Many of those views will be mentioned in this study as the conceptual framework and background details.

According to research, the characteristics of efficacious teachers are:

- better organization
- a willingness to try new ideas to meet students’ needs.

- being less critical of students whenever they make mistakes,
- more positive about teaching,
- a reluctance to refer students to special education services,
- more likely to implement positive classroom management strategies

(Henson, 2001; Pinkston-Miles, 2003; Scharlach, 2008).

Therefore, teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are linked to high student achievement; these teachers have the ability to work hard under difficult circumstances and to motivate students to attend school and do well (Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002).

### **Definition of Teacher Efficacy**

Feryal Cubukcu (2008) studied self-efficacy theory and developed the following definition of self-efficacy. He states, “Self-efficacy is a person’s judgment of his or her capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 149). Simply put, self-efficacy is the response of a person to the question, “Can I do this task well?” Research shows that people who are highly efficacious have the ability to show higher levels of effort and are resilient in their efforts, even in difficult and challenging situations (Gordon, 2001; Roberts, Henson, Tharp, & Morenzo, 2000; Scharlach, 2008). Henson (2001) defines teacher self-efficacy as a teacher’s “judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p. 7).

The literature supports that the teacher who possesses high efficacy characteristics will be able to step into challenging roles with the confidence and ability to change the student's opinion about school and learning, while at the same time cultivating a strong desire within the student to learn. These types of pedagogical strategies help students to become motivated, focused on learning, and succeed academically (Henson, 2001). This definition of teacher-efficacy, which the literature supports, will be used in this study.

### **Philosophical Camps of Teacher Efficacy**

Two levels of teachers' efficacy are mentioned in the literature: a humanistic level, and a custodial level. According to Gordon (2001), a highly efficacious teacher with "a humanistic approach towards control is more likely to possess beliefs that emphasize an accepting, trustful view of students" (p.13), and empower student to work harder as well as take more responsibility for their action; whereas, a teacher with a custodial approach is "more like to express beliefs that emphasize the maintenance of order, distrust of students, and a moralistic stance toward deviant behavior. Students are considered to be irresponsible and untrustworthy, lacking in respect and obedience, and in need of firmness, strictness, and punishment" (p.13) (Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999).

**Internal and External Efficacy:**

Another dimension of teacher efficacy has to do with *internal efficacy*, which is concerned with the degree to which a teacher believes he or she has the influence, will, and ability to affect students learning; or whether student learning is the end result of forces put in place outside the classroom setting. The internal efficacy view takes into consideration the personality, confidence level, and teaching strategies embraced by the teacher. Teachers with internal efficacy believe strongly in their ability to teach all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or social background, and that they can help them to be successful academically. On the other hand, *external efficacy* is the view that a student's background, family status, and social upbringing are key factors that influence student learning in the classroom (Gooddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Both views seem to be present in the average classroom. However, the view that will be considered in this study is the internal efficacy view where teachers will be expected to assume most of the responsibility for student learning.

**Benefits of Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher efficacy has been linked to student outcomes in a number of studies. In each case, they have shown that students whose teachers scored high on efficacy did better on standardized tests than their peers who were taught by teachers with lower efficacy scores (Henson, 2001; Gordon, 2001; Lin, 1999; Muijs & Reynolds,

2002). A Rand study, done in 1976, supports the notion of a direct connection between student academic achievement and a teacher's sense of efficacy (Goodwin, 2010/2011). Teachers who lacked high efficacy qualities had low expectations of students, cast blame on students when things don't go as planned, and had a negative outlook about student learning and their behavior (Ferguson, 2003; Gordon, 2001; Scharlach, 2008). Therefore, literature seems to support the idea that efficacious teachers have more positive and effective results in the classroom.

### **Subject Specific Efficacy**

A teacher's academic skills can have considerable impact on student achievement also (Peske & Haycock, 2006). High efficacy teachers are more likely to support positive student attitudes in the classroom (Henson, 2001; Rimm-Kaufman, & Sawyer, 2004). According to Roberts, et al. (2000), a teacher may feel very comfortable in his or her ability to achieve student learning in one subject area and may not have the same degree of confidence to do so in another. Teachers may feel efficacious in delivering certain curriculum to certain students in specific settings, and they may feel more or less efficacious doing so under different circumstances (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Teacher efficacy may grow with time and experience (Ross, 1994). Teacher efficacy is constantly changing. Most often, it improves with time and experience, but sometimes it diminishes and gets worse, especially with teachers who may be disillusioned with their jobs or may be getting ready to retire.

## **Teacher Beliefs and Efficacy**

Although pre-service teachers will not have a role in this study, it is important for comparison reasons to mention them briefly. Researchers have reported that pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs influence their teaching behaviors (Cagle, 1998; George & Aaronson, 2003; Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999; Henson, 2001; Maxton, 1996; Scharlach, 2008). Beliefs about children who are prone to struggle academically can influence the decisions and practices of new teachers (Lin & Tsai, 1999; Scharlach, 2008). New teachers may not have the experience in dealing effectively with struggling or difficult students. They may not have high expectations or the degree of stamina required to develop them. As a result, the teacher's actions and expectations may prohibit the students from rising above their expectations. The student may achieve no more than what was expected by the teacher. This negative aspect is what Cagle (1998) described as the "self fulfilling prophecy." This happens when students give back to their teachers what they perceive is expected of them. This approach can have positive as well as negative implications for students in the classroom.

Hill, Phelps, and Friedland (2007) demonstrated in their study how new teachers' beliefs affect their expectations for students. A lesson on the historical event of the *Amistad* uprising revealed the assumptions that pre-service teachers held about cultural diversity in urban middle schools. What the pre-service teachers encountered in this educational setting was very different from what they expected to find. The pre-service teachers found that in the urban schools, students were knowledgeable, hard

working, enthusiastic, and well behaved. Teacher beliefs can also have adverse effects on students and on their ability to learn in an environment where they may not feel comfortable. Because these particular students were studying a topic to which they could relate and become immersed, they demonstrated engagement and productivity. As in this case, for students to become engaged in meaningful learning, they must see the relevance of the material to their lives and their surroundings (Fry & DeWit, 2010/2011). Teachers have to be sensitive to students' culture and learning styles when developing lessons or the signal of boredom given by the students can be misconstrued as being lazy, or the inability to learn. Hills, Phelps, and Friedland, (2007) quoted Ladson-Billings by saying, "The ability to incorporate culturally relevant topics in the curriculum is often cited as a necessary ingredient for successful teaching in urban schools" (p. 36). To add to this, it can also make the difference between classroom success and classroom disruptions.

James Rhem, executive editor for an online National Teaching and Learning Forum ([www.ntlf.com](http://www.ntlf.com)), emphasized the importance of making positive connections with students through relationship building to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy. He explained that when teachers expect students to do well and show intellectual growth, they generally do. When teachers have no expectations for students, and where performance and growth are not encouraged, students fall into a pattern where they do what is negatively expected of them. He emphasized that, "How we believe the world is and what we honestly think it can become, has a powerful effect on how things turn

out,” (p.4). This is a direct reference to, and is consistent with the “self fulfilling prophecy” which has been proposed by Cagle (1998).

Another well-documented study is the *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. In this study, some teachers were made to believe that certain students in their classrooms were gifted, when they really were not. As a result, the students were treated as if they were gifted by their teachers, and the students rose to their teachers’ expectations and performed like gifted students (Cagle, 1998; Cooper, 1979; Jacobson, 2007; Maxton, 1996; Skiba & Leone, 2002). In this study, the teachers’ misconceptions about the students’ abilities were based on teacher-formed beliefs rather than on internal efficacy and expectations.

Daniel Schugurensky (1968), in commenting about that classic study, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, confirms this theory by stating,

This influence, also known as self-fulfilling prophecy... can have a positive or negative impact on student achievement. If a teacher expects that certain students will do well, they are likely to do well; if a teacher expects other students to fail, they will be more likely to fail. (p.1)

### **Building Relationships and Student Achievement**

Several studies have shown that when teachers made connections with students and dispel negative opinions about them, those students did well academically (Cagle, 1998; Cooper, 1979; Jacobson, 2007). Cooper, Baturo, Warren, and Doig (2004) cite two studies that support the contention that when teachers form relationships with their students they do well. One study conducted in 1982 involved a group of White

teachers (15) from classrooms where the Aboriginal students varied from 5-60 percent. The teachers' opinions of the Aboriginal students were that of having some form of "insufficiency" that caused them to be low academic performers. None of the students were expected to do well because of their cultural deficiencies. However, in another study that was conducted in 1998, the teachers of Aboriginal students were caring, knowledgeable of their culture, formed meaningful relationships with students, and had high expectations of them. The results in this study were significantly greater, showing remarkable success in student achievement (Cooper et al., 2004; Cronin, 2001).

This study has implications for teachers who push aside cultural barriers and form meaningful relationships with their students. The result of such relationships will be greater student motivation and academic achievement. As literature supports, a student's academic success in the classroom depends largely upon the quality of the teacher (Henson, 2001; Holley, 2008; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004); high expectations on the part of the teacher, and the confidence that he or she can effectively teach those students (Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai 1999; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002; Henson, 2001; Holley, 2008; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004).

Trust is another component that must accompany building meaningful relationships. Arletta Bauman-Knight explains that *trustworthiness* has to do with whether or not the teacher has the students' best interests at heart. She proposed that a

teacher who exhibits trustworthiness would promote positive teacher/student relationships (Bauman-Knight, 2006).

Students, (as do teachers) form opinions of their teachers by observing how they speak to, and respond to other students in the classroom. A student's perception of his or her teacher can be positive or negative. Therefore, teachers must develop positive relationships with their students so that students can build on that initial trust, value learning, and grow academically.

### **Foundational Concepts**

Efficacious teachers have strong beliefs that they can bring about a change in student learning and attitude (Cubukcu, 2008; Ross, 1998; Scharlach, 2008). If a teacher believes that all students in that classroom are capable of learning, then the teaching style will involve rich standards, quality, and sensitivity to students' learning styles, regardless of the population the teacher serves (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). When a teacher believes that all students can learn, they will have high expectations for every student (Ferguson, 2003; Scharlach, 2008). A teacher with these qualities and beliefs is highly efficacious and can be successful in teaching any student regardless of race or ethnic background. The key to students becoming successful in the classroom is the effectiveness of the teacher and her or his ability to teach all students effectively (a high efficacy quality) regardless of the quality or social background of the students that make up the classroom (Cagle, 1998; Cooper, 1979).

In a study done in Australia, Green (cited in Cooper et al., 2004) addressed how newly graduated, young, White pre-service teachers' perceptions of mathematics learning of Aboriginal students differed from that of Non-Aboriginal students. Green examined the influence of classroom teachers on the performance of Aboriginal students. Fifteen (15) White teachers were asked to list the major differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The sample of teachers was drawn from schools where the Aboriginal population varied from 5-60%. Of the 80 respondents, 48 of them felt that the students themselves were deficient, lacking interest and language skills, and not having proper behavioral skills, adequate nutrition and proper school socialization skills. Eleven (11) of the respondents blamed the problem on family difficulties, including low parental expectations, little parent support, and a transient lifestyle. Six (6) respondents felt that it was a cultural gap between the Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal students. Green explained that none of the teachers appeared to expect Aboriginal students to do well (Cooper et al., 2004; Lowell & Devlin, 1998). These results are typical of teachers with low self-efficacy characteristics, whose beliefs about children's abilities are shaped by their personal beliefs rather than by the student's ability.

### **Expectations and Interactions**

There are numerous studies that confirm that when teachers have high expectations for their students, those students buy into the teachers' belief systems and

deliver successfully (Ferguson, 2003; Gordon, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Schugurensky, 2002).

Sometimes, low expectations can guide students in the wrong direction, and may encourage them to perform below their true ability. Low expectations, or no expectations at all on the part of teachers, may cause students not to put forth enough effort into their schoolwork. It may cause them to become bored and disruptive in class, thus becoming unsuccessful at school, which could result in truancy and eventually lead to them dropping out of school (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004; Wald & Losen, 2003).

Research shows that African American students are sometimes the recipients of low expectations in the classroom (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). Evidence of low expectations may result when students are tracked into vocational and technical classes called “low-ability” groups (Cagle, 1998; Skiba & Leone, 2002). Such decisions often are based on teachers’ beliefs and expectations about students. Teachers who have tendencies to prejudge a student based on his or her socioeconomic status, fall into a category that Cowley (1999) described as “general teaching efficacy.” Teachers in this category ascribe to the belief that their ability to bring about change in the classroom is limited by factors beyond their control (Cowley 1999). Ross, (1998) states, “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” (p. 5). This view matches Cowley’s (1999) external efficacy concept which proposes that a

teacher's influence to effect change inside the classroom is contingent on factors outside the classroom and beyond the teacher's control.

Even the critics of Rosenthal and Jacobson accept the notion that teacher expectation does affect learning. Research shows that a teacher's distribution of behavioral interactions among individual students often is associated with student achievement level, or the teacher's expectations for the student's future achievement level (Cagle, 1998; Goodwin, 2010/2011; Skiba & Leone, 2002). Unbiased teachers have the same expectations for African American students that they do for White, Hispanic, or Asian students. However, teachers' opinions of a student may change based on the information they receive about that student, or on beliefs they may have previously formed about the ethnic group to which the student belongs. That information may come in the form of written descriptions, photographs, or videotapes, which combine to confirm the teacher's pre-established beliefs. In addition, if the student's behavior is consistent with prior established stereotypes and beliefs established by that teacher about that student, (or students of that racial group) those beliefs can influence teacher expectations for those students (Ferguson, 2003).

Another case of teacher expectation interactions is evident in Jane Elliott's blue-eyed versus brown-eyed discrimination exercise which was carried out in her classroom in 1968. In this study, third graders were divided into groups based on eye color. One group was given preferential treatment and was regarded as superior, while the other group was considered inferior in intelligence and learning ability. Elliott proved the damaging effects of "in classroom discrimination" when a spelling test was

given to both groups on each day of the experiment. The students scored very low on the days they were considered socially “inferior,” and very high on the days they were considered socially “superior.” This study has significant implications for the “good” that positive teacher perception has in the classroom; and the dreadful harm that “negative teacher perception” can have on at-risk and minority students (Cooper et al. 2004; Skiba & Leone, 2002).

### **Inferences for the Current Study**

The benefit of high teacher efficacy is important for all students, but especially for African American students. African American students have been the target of many racial and stereotypical myths over the years (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Steele, 2004). Stereotypes have made African American students sensitive to social issues; but especially as they relate to education. As a result, many African American students have experienced what is referred to as the “stereotype threat.” Claude Steele, a social psychologist and professor at Stanford University, first proposed the idea of a “stereotype threat.” Steele’s stereotype threat hypothesis argues that negative stereotypes about the intellectual or academic ability of certain populations (i.e., African Americans, Native American, Hispanic students, and women) can lead to high levels of anxiety for members of those groups (Steele, 2004). But stereotypes do not affect only African Americans, they can affect other groups as well.

The implication for Steele’s argument is that students who are recipients of a stereotype may experience some fallout from that stereotype, such as anxiety, which

can affect their performance. For some students that anxiety could become chronic to the point that it prompts the targeted students to escape from the situation completely (Begley, 2007; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Helms, 2005; Steele, 2004; Whaley, 1998).

A stereotype could adversely impact student academic performance. For example, one stereotype alleged that girls are not good at math. The idea of a stereotype threat may have implications for girls in a math class, as well as African American student on standardized tests. Steele's findings concluded that when a person's social identity is attached to a negative belief or stereotype, that person has a tendency to imitate the belief and follow into the path of the stereotype (Begley, 2007; Steele, 2004).

However, the opposite can also take place when stereotypes are dispelled by teachers and students. Begley (2007), in an article in the Wall Street Journal told of a study that scientists conducted in a college calculus test to dispel the myth that women do not do well in math. The women in that class were told that the test was gender-neutral. According to this study, the women who were told that the test was gender-neutral got an average of 3.6 right answers compared to 2.6 for men. This study is a good reminder that when the perceived stereotyped are dispelled by the teacher and the student, students can be successful.

Osborne et al. (2006) confirm the stereotype threat theory by pointing out that any anxiety associated with a stereotypical concept has a way of impairing peak performance by the individual. Because escape is one way to avoid stereotype anxiety,

it can result in some students' not attending school, not participating in the lesson, not excelling academically, and possibly dropping out of school completely.

### **Student Discipline**

In the early 1990s when many school districts adopted a zero-tolerance approach, a disturbing trend involving African American students emerged. Overall, the number of students annually suspended from schools rose from 1.7 million to 3.1 million in 1994 (Wald & Losen, 2003). Police presence became a daily occurrence at middle and high schools. New laws were enacted mandating referral of students guilty of violating the rules of the zero-tolerance code. African American students were among those students most heavily sanctioned by this mandate. Nationally, African American students are 2.6 times more likely to be suspended than their White peers (Fenning & Rose, 2007). In 2000, African American students represented 17 percent of the national student population, but represented 34 percent of those who were suspended (Wald & Losen, 2003). An article in the *Chicago Tribune* stated that in Iowa African American students made up five (5) percent of the state's public school enrollment and yet they accounted for 22 percent of the suspension (Witt, 2007). According to Witt (2007), African American students are recipients of more severe punishment for the same offenses than their counterparts.

As the number of suspensions increased over the years, so have racial disparities. Research shows that between 1972 and 2000 the percentage of White students suspended annually rose from 3.1 percent to 5.09 percent; while during the

same period the percentage for African American students rose from 6.0 percent to 13.2 percent (Wald & Losen, 2003), an increase of 45 percent.

When African American students find themselves in trouble at school due to failing grades, suspensions, or expulsions, they might get involved with the wrong people, such as gangs, drugs, sex, and alcohol. Involvement in these activities often contributes to students dropping out of school. In addition, when students drop out of school they may get involved in daytime crimes such as burglary and shoplifting. When this pattern of crime continues, it may lead to a cycle that is known as the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004; Wald & Losen, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Soldz, 2007). Numerous studies about the school-to-prison pipeline have shown that the tendency to criminalize school behavior is associated with increased school dropout, higher levels of incarceration, and minority over-representation in juvenile detention (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004; Wald & Losen, 2003).

The “school-to-prison pipeline” concept has empirical support. Approximately 68 percent of state prison inmates in 1997 had not completed high school; 75 percent of those under age eighteen sentenced to adult prisons did not pass tenth grade. An estimated 70 percent of the juvenile justice population suffers from learning disabilities, and an estimated 33 percent reads below the fourth-grade level (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004). Between 1980 and 2000, state spending on correctional institutions nationwide grew at six times the rate of state spending on higher education (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Wald & Losen (2004).

The federal government has made a conscious effort to address student deficiencies in high poverty schools. Title 1 programs, which use federal funds, put a large amount of resources -- \$7 Billion each year (Green, 2009) into low-income, low-performing schools. Some of those resources are used to support programs like free and reduced lunch programs and tutoring programs, which help low-performing students to catch up on skills they are deficient in. In addition, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* has mandated guidelines that insist on every student being successful academically. Low socioeconomic status issues have been addressed by these federally funded initiatives.

This study will explore how highly efficacious teachers respond to African American students in the classroom as it relates to academic achievement. It will seek to validate whether efficacious teachers, with their nurturing and supportive abilities, can captivate African American students and motivate them to work hard, stay in school, focus on learning, and raise student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Henson, 2001; Pinkston-Miles, 2003; Scahrach, 2008). Therefore, the premise of this study is to see if efficacious teachers are capable of producing the same positive results with African American students in their classrooms.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework for the Study**

The notion that teachers do bring certain beliefs and biases into their classrooms which can affect their feelings about students, or how students are treated in their presence, is supported by research (Cagle, 1998; George & Aaronson, 2003;

Jacobson, 2007; Maxton, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). Teacher beliefs and self-efficacy orientations guide and influence what teachers do in the classroom (Henson, 2001; Gordon, 2001). Teachers' plans and actions are generally filtered through their belief system, which can affect their practice, especially with students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. External factors, such as the content that is taught, the students who are taught (at-risk), state and local guidelines, as well as administrators, can affect teacher beliefs (Cagle, 1998; George & Aaronson, 2003; Jacobson, 2007; Maxton, 1996; Scharlach, 2008).

African American students fall into this category where teachers may prejudge them and form opinions about them based on their perceptions. In this study, my intention was to find out if efficacious teachers are influenced by their belief system, stereotypes, or if they can lay aside prior beliefs and treat all students fairly and objectively regardless of their race, color, or socioeconomic status (SES) background.

In addition, based on the disparities in the education process of African American students in general, compared to my own educational background and experiences, I'm concerned that there may be other factors contributing to the educational disconnect of African American students resulting in low academic performance and increasing achievement gaps.

This study chose not to make a blanket statement claiming that all African American students have trouble at school and perform poorly, or that they do not have positive experiences at school; but, rather to the contrary. Literature supports that many African American students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds have

very positive experiences at school and do very well academically. There are so-called “resilient students” who have demonstrated that regardless of social status, background, or limitations; and because of an innate drive to do well they remain in school, continue to work hard, and have been very successful academically (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Huang & Waxman, 1996; Leak, 2003).

On the other hand, empirical evidence confirms that low-income students in urban education settings generally do not do well in school (Yeung & Conley, 2008). Some of the conditions that may contribute to that academic decline could be poverty, lack of qualified teachers, teacher biases, poor learning conditions, and low teachers’ expectations (Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999; Skiba, Raush, & Ritter, 2004; Wald & Losen, 2003). Therefore, because so many variables abound, I limited this study to *teacher efficacy* and how it effects academic achievement of African American students.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview of Methodology**

With all the educational resources that are available in the United States to assist students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, such as Head Start, early childhood programs, tutoring services, Title 1 funding, mentoring programs, after school programs, special education resources and others, I am curious to know why such disparities exist in academic achievement gap between African American students and White students. In seeking answers to this question, I decided to do a study that explores what factors may contribute to the lack of academic achievement among African American students. In doing so, I have narrowed my focus on teacher efficacy.

#### **Research Questions**

My research question is, “What effect does teacher efficacy have on the academic achievement of African American students?” I am also hopeful that information gained from this study will provide meaningful answers and data that can be applied to the general public. And as a result, the following questions will be

answered: What factors contribute to the high rate of African American student dropout from school? What factors contribute to the widening achievement gap between African American students and their White peers? What responsibility rests with the teachers of African American students? And, what role must the parents of African American students have in closing the achievements gap? Finally, I endeavored to learn if efficacious teachers can have a positive effect in motivating African American students to attend school regularly, to work harder at school, have a positive attitude about school, and be successful academically, as literature claims (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Henson, 2001; Pinkston-Miles, 2003; Scharlach, 2008).

### **Research Procedures**

In my attempt to identify efficacious teachers, I used the Teacher Efficacy survey instrument (Hoy & Woolfork, 1993). This instrument consists of twenty-four (24) short questions ranging from 1 to 9 in answer choices (Appendix I). This Teacher Efficacy Survey was sent to the principals of three urban middle schools in the Midwest seeking permission to administer the survey to their school. To assure the greatest percentage of respondents, I personally distributed the survey to teachers during their regular staff meeting. An informed consent form (Appendix B) accompanied the survey assuring the participants of confidentiality, anonymity, and of any risks. Teachers were informed that the survey would have nothing to do with their evaluation, that any information given would be kept confidential, and that their principals would not see their results. As an expression of thanks, each participating

teacher received a crisp one-dollar bill in a thank you card upon completing the survey.

Teachers whose scores reflect high self-efficacy characteristics (scores of 7, 8, and 9 on the Likert scale, Appendix J), were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix C) assuring them of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The teachers who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed, audiotaped and observed in their classrooms. The interview process was audiotaped and lasted about forty-five (45) minutes. Each participant was asked twelve (12) open-ended questions (Appendix A), designed to allow the teachers' stories to flow uninterrupted. In conducting these interviews, it was hoped that their responses would be information rich. The audio interviews were transcribed and coded with the hope that themes would emerge. From these themes, a story unfolded thus allowing educators to better understanding the phenomenon of teacher efficacy and its effects on the academic process of African American students.

In addition to the audiotaped interviews, one (1) classroom observation of each teacher was done with the hope of shedding more light on my questions. During this process, I looked at teachers' interactions with their students in their classroom. I observed teachers' classroom management styles, their interactions and expectations for students, and their relationships with African American students. I also observed what accommodations were made to differentiate instruction for the various learning styles represented in the classroom. I inquired if students are attending school

regularly, if they are doing their assignments, their conduct in class, seeking to get a sense of their general feelings about school. These findings were recorded in my field notes and the information gathered from these sources served to triangulate the data, which gave the findings of this study validity and reliability.

The reason that I chose to look at African American students at the middle school level is according to research, middle school is a transitional phase in a student's educational experience as they move from a more sheltered environment in elementary school to a more complex, independent, and dynamic middle school environment with fewer teachers' nurturing them at this level (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). Students at the middle school level are expected to be focused and independent thinkers. This academic environment could present many challenges for students from a low socioeconomic background. Gutman and Midgley, 2000 state, "Our results support previous research indicating that African American students, on average, experience significant decline in school performance during the transition from elementary to middle level schools" (p. 241).

The literature I read supports the view that teachers with high self-efficacy characteristics tend to possess humanistic characteristics. That is, they possess beliefs that emphasize an accepting, trustful view of students, and an optimistic perspective toward student self-responsibility and cooperation (Gordon, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999).

As I studied teacher efficacy, I looked for the following characteristics listed below during the interview and observation process:

- positive, friendly exchanges between teacher and students

- classroom climate
- trust for teachers and students
- high expectations for all students
- patience in dealing with students
- not accepting failure or a lack of productivity from any students
- persistence with difficult circumstances
- the ability to cultivate positive student behaviors
- positive feelings about learning and school
- good student work ethic

(Gordon, 2001; Henson, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 1999).

### **Researcher Bias**

To control researcher bias, strict adherence to the rules of triangulation of data was followed. The data gained from the coded interviews, observations, and field notes formed the basis for the story. This researcher was open to objectivity by allowing a third party to look at the findings from an objective, non-biased point of view. This researcher was cognitive not to allow sensitive racial issues to filter into the study, since the researcher is also Black. The findings of this study were compared with empirical evidence about the topic. Following these procedures helped to control researcher bias.

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions were that teachers will disclose their true experiences and will be honest in responding to the open-ended questions. It is assumed that teachers are ethical and will treat students fairly by not allowing their personal biases to influence their conduct and practices in the classroom. Another assumption is that researcher bias would have a minimum role in the findings of this study.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited in that the participants were purposefully selected rather than randomly selected. With “purposeful selection” of participants, there is always the chance that the participants may not reflect the opinions and views of the greater population. The study was limited because the participants were chosen from a very small group of twelve (12) teachers. Another limitation that could affect this study is that teachers at middle school were all White and have a caseload of 150 students that they see each day; thus, they may not be able to make meaningful connections with each individual student. Therefore, some students could be missed with that personal attention. This study may also be limited by researcher-bias. Because this researcher has some strong opinions about this topic, it may be difficult to obscure certain biases and opinions about this subject. Again, the study may be limited in that no African American students are asked for their views and opinions about the topic. Therefore,

as a way of controlling for limitations, this study will be open to outside scrutiny to avoid any subjectivity.

### **Delimitations**

This study is delimited to teacher efficacy and African American students. Conclusions are not to be extended beyond teacher efficacy and African American students in this study.

### **Human Participants and Ethical Precautions**

To ensure the protection of the participants in this study, I have carefully followed the guidelines as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The first consideration involved collecting signed informed consent statements (Appendix B) from all participants. The following safeguards have been outlined in the informed consent statement:

- Participants' real names will not be used in the data collection or in the written report. Instead, pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants in all verbal and written records and reports.
- All materials will be locked in file cabinet to safeguard confidentiality.
- No audiotapes, transcription notes, field notes, or observation notes will be used for any purpose other than for the purpose of this study. When this study is completed, all related materials will be destroyed.

- Participation in this study will be strictly on a voluntary basis. No children will be spoken to, or questioned. Participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Along with the above listed safeguards, proper permission was secured from the data collection sites (Appendix G) giving permission to do the study in the school. In addition, a timeline was provided indicating the projected times when each phase of this study would take place (Appendix D). Therefore, it is hoped that the information gained from this study would be helpful in learning more about the phenomenon, and its findings beneficial to the education process of all students, including African American students, and to the educational field at large.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE FINDINGS**

#### **Text**

Looking over the transcripts of teacher interviews, the participants' statements echoed many common themes and sentiments which I found to be significant to the study. Generally, I found that the teacher participants' interview statements were supported by their behaviors, their practice, and their interactions with students during my classroom observations. I have listed some of those common themes and excerpts from interviews which formed the basis of my findings.

What efficacious teachers stated about having difficult students in their classrooms:

- Would rather keep difficult students in the classroom as opposed to sending them to the office. This sentiment was expressed by 75 percent of the teachers interviewed in this study. Their reasoning was that they believed that they could eventually get the student to settle down, and get them engaged in meaningful learning.
- Seldom wrote discipline referrals. Their reasoning was that referrals result in taking students away from instructional time when they sit in the office or placed in In-School-Suspension.

- Preferred dealing with classroom problems themselves rather than to sending students to the office. This sentiment was expressed by 65 percent of the teachers interviewed. They felt that when students were sent to the office, they were placed in In-School-Suspension, or suspended thus resulting in them losing valuable instruction time.

Here are some excerpts from the participants' interviews supporting these claims:

Teacher A: I try to keep them in the classroom and I try not to send kids out unless you just can't function with that person in the classroom. I try to keep them inside the best I can. Even if they don't put anything down on paper they're at least here and listening. They're watching other people doing their work and so they should be picking up something.

Teacher F: Having to remove a student out of my room ruins my day. I feel that I have a good grasp on behavior in the classroom. I don't write referrals very often. I would much rather conference individually with those students to try to get them on my side to work with me and to want to work in the classroom. I don't believe the removal of students is always a good thing; not for the teacher and not for the student.

- Frustrated by students' refusal to do work which they were capable of doing.

Here are some findings that efficacious teachers said about building relationships and trust with students.

- Established trustful relationships with their students.

The participants felt that when teachers establish relationships with students and form trustful bonds with them, those students generally felt better about school, attend classes, and worked harder.

Here are some comments from teacher participants about building trustful relationships with students:

Teacher C: Part of when you gain the student's respect is for them to know who you are and where you came from. But I think it's good for kids to know something about you. Like in my life everything hasn't been perfect along the way, and when they see that I've struggled with some of the things that they might struggle with or have struggled with, that's going to make a bond there and they're going to realize that hey, this person isn't that different from me.

Teacher H: I like to think of myself as being able to make connections with some of these kids and being able to bridge the gap between the knowledge, between the lesson, and daily life and make some application of what we're doing to daily life. To show them that what we're doing here matters and it will affect you in your life.

Here are some findings that efficacious teachers said about their belief in their ability to help all students learn:

- Expressed a strong belief that it was in their power to help students who were struggling.

Not only did teachers express it, but they also took time from their duty-free lunch to work with their students on a daily basis. Some teachers spoke about how they met with students during their duty-free lunch break and after school, to help them with missing assignments and homework. Because there was no adult at home to assist the student with these assignments, the teachers felt the need to fill this void by assisting the students themselves. Others told how they gave students extra assignments because they either failed to do them, or failed to turn them in. Rather than giving the students a zero, the teachers gave them extra make-up assignments and helped them with it.

Here is what one teacher stated about helping students with late assignments:

Teacher F: I'll gather the missing work for them. I'll put a packet together for them. I'll give them some alternatives so they can get the work done. If we were doing some grammar assignments and it was sort of repetitious or tedious, "Complete this much or modify it." I just keep encouraging them.

Teacher J: To an extent, of course, but in my world it doesn't get to *assignments*. If you don't turn in one assignment I'm at your house. And yeah, it takes time. I think my co-teacher and I went to 86 houses this last year and it takes time. That's not including the special education home visits. My thing is, if I let a kid repeatedly not turn things in then I'm setting precedence. I'm saying, "It's okay for you not to turn things in," and then suddenly one day, I change the precedence and suddenly it's not acceptable anymore.... Either it's acceptable or it's not acceptable.

Here are some frustrations that efficacious teachers experienced in the classroom:

- Frustrated by students' refusal to do work which they were capable of doing.

Another area of frustration was when teachers observed students neglecting to do work they were capable of doing. What was frustrating for the participants was the fact that they knew the students could do the work. The teachers knew that the students were capable of doing quality work based on past experiences with those students, yet they chose not to do the work. In each case, the participants responded by going into a "search and rescue mode" in which they negotiated with the students by finding ways to provide more help to those who exhibited these characteristics. One teacher participants described his approach in dealing with such students as "walking students through their struggles until I got them back to their senses". Many teachers

gave up their lunch period to work with students trying to help them get caught up, and some even stayed after school to assist them.

- Frustrated when parents could not be contacted when needed.

Teacher J: I have one of seven phone numbers maybe that work. For a student seven phone numbers were listed and none of them worked. The address of the student wasn't right. I don't understand how someone sends their baby away and he doesn't have a way to get in contact with you. What if something happened? I have a two and a half year old and I can't imagine somebody not being able to get in touch with me....I think that our society has become so busy that we become lax in areas that should matter like family. They're just babies: they're 12 years old. That's why I go to peoples' houses rather than fussing with the phone because you call half a dozen phone numbers and none of them work. Parents do tend to support you when they get tired of seeing you.

Here are some comments about their commitments to helping students:

Teacher A: Here in this school we have an afterschool program where students can come in and there are teachers who volunteer each night of the week where they can come in and do the missing homework. They can get extra help. Then I'm always available if students want to make an appointment or if they want to stay after I'm here almost every night to help them with their work.

Here are some statements about how teachers motivated students to learn:

Teacher J: You know what; honestly, at this age (inaudible) philosophy is the way to go. I'm not sure –there are a few students that you can motivate intrinsically. They have something to prove, they have a neigh sayer in their life that tells them they will never be successful and they want to prove them wrong. At age 12, really the reason they're doing most things is because they're being told they have to. You can say, "Oh you'll be glad when you're 18, but for them 18 is a long ways away." So how about, "you'll be glad because you'll be able to go to the dance." Sadly, that works.

Teacher L: You have to motivate them. The teacher is the motivator. Why would you do it if your teacher doesn't want to do it? I treat my kids like all

other kids. I have this on kid he is very funny. When its math time he acts like a drama boy and he's..."No, I don't want to, no..." He's kind of laughing and I'm like, "Come on."

(This comment came from a special education teacher who was a participant in the study).

Here are some findings from teacher classroom observations:

In addition to interviewing each participant, I also spent ten (10) hours observing teachers in their classrooms and taking notes documenting teachers' pedagogy, teachers' management and expectations of students, and student participation and behaviors.

The first class I observed was a sixth grade social studies class. The students were seated in four rows with six desks in each row. Almost every desk was occupied by a student except for a couple in the back of the class. The room was heated by metal radiators which generated a lot of heat. A window in the rear of the room was kept open to regulate the heat in the room. The floor was wood and showed the results of the many students who had sat in that classroom.

As the lesson began, the students seemed ready to hear what the teacher had to teach them. The teacher reviewed some graphic organizers which the students had worked on the lesson before. As the teacher talked about China, one student sitting at the front of the classroom kept talking to his friends. I found this to be extremely distracting to me, and wondered when the teacher would address it. But she never did and continued teaching over the disruptions.

As a teacher who scored high on the efficacy survey, I wondered why she chose to ignore the constant chatter by the students. I never asked her about that, but at

the end of the period, when I went up to thank her, she said to me, “I guess I’m a little laid back in here.” That teacher did seem very relaxed and comfortable with the students. It seemed from my observation that she could have gently stopped the lesson and wait for a few seconds till they got the message, or she could have used a little subtle proximity by going over to the area of distraction and teaching from that vantage point. Whatever her reason for allowing the disruption to continue, it may have conveyed to those talkative students that this teacher doesn’t care and they can do whatever they want in her classroom.

As I observed second hour and subsequent classes, I found those experiences with teachers to be more positive and consistent with the characteristics of efficacious teachers. I observed the seventh and eight grade classes which consisted of content reading, language arts, and algebra. The teachers of these classes exemplified good management skills, excellent preparation and delivery of content, great knowledge of content, enthusiasm for their craft, and high expectations for their students. In these classes, I observed that the students were focused and very respectful to each other and to their teachers. The students worked hard, participated in the lesson, and diligently worked on their assignment. I saw skillful teachers who knew how to hook the students into the lesson and keep their attention and focus throughout the lesson. I saw that the teachers had great respect for their student and students who reciprocated the same respect to their teachers.

In an eight grade algebra class, I saw some quality student involvement by several African American male students. This was certainly refreshing to see, as in the

other classes most African American students (male and female) were relatively passive learners. They would not volunteer any information unless asked directly by the teacher to do so. However, in this algebra class where the demographics were 28 percent White, 28 percent African American, and 44 percent Hispanic, that was not the case. I saw three African American boys sitting in their desks at the front of the classroom, books opened and participating in the lesson. They were bright students who obviously enjoyed math. Their hands were raised for every question the teacher asked. They knew the terms, and formulas, and the procedures. I saw other students involved as well, but these three students certainly dominated with discussion and participation in this classroom.

Another part of this wonderful mix was the teacher, Teacher G. He was very personable, passionate, confident, and exceptional. He had high expectations for each student. Teacher G had taught for close to thirty years. He knew each student's name and wanted every one to succeed. I know because I heard him tell them so. As a passive observer, I also took a liking to this teacher and wished I had a teacher like him when I was in eighth grade. He was enthusiastic about what he was doing, and the students were awake and involved in his class. The other variable to this successful story was the fact that the students were engaged because they liked algebra. I wonder what kind of response might come from these students if they were in a classroom listening to a lesson that was not one their favorites, or to a teacher that never cared to make meaningful connections with the students.

Another classroom where these qualities were seen in abundance was in Teacher F's Third Hour Reading class. This class was all eighth graders, and consisted of 52 percent White, 33 percent African American, and 15 percent Hispanic. The classroom atmosphere was quiet but focused. The students were assigned a passage to read silently while the teacher did some one-to-one conferencing with a number of students. During the conferencing, I heard Teacher F ask questions of each student about their reading assignment. I heard her asked several "why" questions as she probed for meaningful answers. As I observed, I was impressed that eighth graders were so focused and well behaved. There was no chatter among the students, just focused concentration on doing what they were asked. After a while, the teacher went back to whole group instruction. She had the students turn to page 1038 in the text. Here she explained terms used in the passage such as *fable*, *myth*, *personification*, and *dilemma*. I heard her explain to the students that they would be looking at a fable story during that lesson. I saw this teacher access the computer to show a video of the fable Brer Possum, by Jackie Terrance. In this story Brer Possum encounters a snake who asked for help. Brer Possum knew that the snake was a dangerous animal and certainly one to stay away from. But the snake persisted in asking simple favors of Brer Possum which resulted in Brer Possum giving in by putting the snake in his pocket. Of course Brer Possum was bitten by the snake just as he expected. The moral of this story is, "When you're minding your own business and you spot trouble, don't trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you."

I heard Teacher F make connections and applications of this story to her students. She told them, “I like this story because some middle school students do this. When you go in the hall -you know that there are some ‘snakes’ out there. You need to avoid them at all cost.”

I recognized that not only was Teacher F teaching her eighth graders the fundamentals of reading, but she was also teaching them the fundamentals of making good choices and how to avoid the pitfalls that lure innocent and well meaning young people into danger. I was impressed with this teacher’s counsel to the eighth graders. Undoubtedly, some of her students may have heard this warning before from their parents, but for those who had not, this teacher became their resource of instruction and guidance.

These are some of the findings that I observed and encountered during this study. These findings confirmed some statements that were said to me by the teacher participants during the interview process as well as what I had read in the literature about efficacious teachers. When put together, these results have given more validity to this study.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Opening**

In exploring this study, I saw that efficacious teachers are truly compassionate and understanding of their students. I observed that they genuinely cared about their students' social and academic success and sought ways to make connections to gain their trust. In the time I spent interviewing and observing the participants, I detected that they were not influenced by any personal biases or stereotypes. I inferred that they believed that all their students could learn and be successful in spite of the students' backgrounds. I found that the teachers I observed had well prepared lessons, good supplemental materials, and were knowledgeable of their subject matter. They also made the lessons interesting and that no effort was too much for them to expend on students needs in order to motivate them to work hard and be successful academically. I observed the participants providing students with extra help when they had difficulty understanding a concept. I saw one teacher in particular who knelt at a student's desk for several minutes explaining information and assisting that student. I saw the teacher moving around the class, never sitting at the desk; engaging student in rich discussions

and meaningful learning conversation. I heard several teacher participants explain the relevance of learning the content and how it would come into play later in life.

There was a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for their students' learning that came out in this study. Teachers spoke about taking personal responsibility if a student did not understand a concept, or if that student did not do well on an assignment. These were the strong characteristics that I anticipated from these participants as a result of the literature, and that is exactly what I saw during my observations.

### **Summary of Findings**

As this study did not target academic achievement of African American student in terms of test scores and academic grades, in that sense there was a null hypothesis. However, being reflective, a better title for this study could have been, "*Teacher Efficacy and How it Engages African American Student in the Learning Process.*" Several instances of teachers addressing the learning process of African American students were cited in this study.

While my hypothesis was not confirmed in this study, the study yielded a great deal of valuable information that should not be overlooked. Empirical evidence supports that the achievement gap existing between White and African American students is overwhelming (Cagle, 1998; Johnson, 2005; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Skiba & Leone, 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003). In the findings of this study are significant as it relates to African American students and academic performance.

First, the findings are convincing and support the notion that efficacious teachers are dedicated and committed to student learning (Gordon, 2001; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Henson, 2001; Holley, 2008; Lin & Tsai 1999; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). I saw those strong characteristics in these teacher participants that I observed, as are also validated by literature.

Second, the findings indicated that efficacious teachers do not allow racial or ethnic stereotypes, or personal biases to interfere with educating students. These teachers believed that all their students can learn, and held that expectation for all their students. As I observed teacher interactions with their students, I saw caring, nurturing interactions with all students, including African American students. I saw teachers who exerted a great deal of effort in helping African American students and wanted them to do well in their classrooms (some examples were cited in Chapter 4) I believe that efficacious teachers can significantly impact the academic achievement of all students, including African American students. I believe that with the quality, dedication, and commitment to the students they serve, African American students should do extremely well in this environment. Students have a tendency to thrive in a nurturing, caring, learning atmosphere where no one is singled out or targeted. Such was the atmosphere in the classrooms I observed.

Third, I learned that even in the classrooms of efficacious teachers students can still be under-performers academically. This lack of academic performance was not due to poor teacher quality, or a lack of pedagogy; but rather the lack of student

motivation, drive, and involvement. The data from this study show how efficacious teachers were relentless in their attempts to get African American students to get their homework assignments completed and turned in on time, even giving up their duty free lunches, meeting after school, and visiting their homes; yet students who were capable of doing the work chose not to do so. Teachers also told how they tried incentives to motivate students to work hard by giving reward tickets and candy. Here is a comment from a teacher I interviewed who uses rewards to motivate students:

Teacher J: I do a lot of rewards. They get tickets for right answers. They get tickets for expected behavior. If somebody shouts out answers, I don't say, "Don't shout out answers," I'll say, "Thank you for raising your hand." The psychological expectation of rewarding the good instead of criticizing the bad. The whole ticket thing and lottery thing, it is still a good motivator.

Fourth, I found that a lack of parent involvement and accessibility posed a big frustration for efficacious teachers. When teachers needed to contact parents either with positive or negative comments about student learning, they could not get in contact with them after repeated attempts. Teachers expressed that if parents could give them just a little support in following through and talking to students about school work, they could get the students to where they should be academically. Here is what another teacher said about the difficulty in contacting parents:

Teacher E: Some of the kids (parents) that we really want to try reach are unavailable because we have five phone numbers and none of them work. We resort to using the nurse to see if we can get a phone number. Sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. There was one night I called three phone numbers that I had for one family. Another child who was related to another student, I called that student. I had two

phone numbers that I went through and finally I did leave a message on the sixth phone number. At times trying to reach the parents is frustrating without phone numbers. We've also been dealing with something called Privacy Manager, so you call home and they have Privacy Manager and they decide whether they want to pick up or not – and that's a frustration.

Last, I found that African American student learning and class participation was based on the content that they related to and enjoyed learning about. In two eighth grade reading classes that I visited, I saw more participation and involvement on the part of the White students than African American and Hispanic students. Even when the teachers attempted to engage African American students by pulling them into the lesson; they were still very hesitant and reluctant. However, when I visited an eighth grade algebra class during fifth hour, just the opposite was true. In this class, there was more participation by African American students than White students or Hispanic students. It was as if these students had found their area of interest and dominated it with good discussions and involvement. In my notes I wrote, "Students will be engaged in learning if they are taught what is of interest to them."

When African American students were reluctant to participate in the reading lesson that I observed, I was reminded of Claude Steele's "stereotype threat" hypothesis which pointed out that any anxiety associated with a threat (or stereotype) may impact student performance (Osborne, 2006; Steele, 2004). In this case, African American students may not have been comfortable expressing their interpretations in this reading lesson for fear that their view, or interpretation may have been different

form that of the majority; or for fear that some racial stereotype may be attributed to them.

### **Contributing Factors to Low Academic Performance**

Some possible causes for African American students exhibiting low academic achievement at school could range from a lack of basic needs being met at home, (such as no money to buy food) to not seeing the importance of education because no one in the home may have graduated from high school but had to go to work at an early age to help supplement family income. Sometimes, African American students do not do well in school because they think it's not cool to get good grades. African American students sometimes seem more concerned about fitting into their social group than getting good grades. This may not be the sentiment of all African American students, but it is generally true of African American males who want to appear socially acceptable to their friends and social groups. This reason could also fit under peer pressure. If they act smart, they may be cast out of their group and labeled as a "sell out."

Another reason that some African American students may perform low academically is because they don't want to be perceived by the peers in their social network as "acting white." Social identity and acceptance are very importance to African American students, but especially so for males (Toldson, 2008). If an African American boy were to wear a nice shirt and a necktie to school, he would undoubtedly be teased all day and would be called a "nerd" or accused of "acting White."

Therefore, many bright African American students impose pressure upon themselves, settling to stay within the norms of African American social culture where it's "safe." This same thinking occurs at school where some African American students would rather sacrifice their education to be socially acceptable by their peers. This was evidenced during an interview with Teacher E where she expressed her frustration with students not getting their assignments done. Teacher E expressed that these students were capable of doing good work and yet they were not getting the work done.

Lack of motivation is another cause for low academic performance among African American students, especially males. According to the finding of this study, many African American Students are motivated by their teachers, counselors, or someone at school. Generally, this motivation is usually extrinsic and comes in the form of tangible rewards, like candy, store bucks, a free pass, or the opportunity to participate in an extra-curricular activity. These intentions are good and are noteworthy; however, they are usually temporary.

### **Interpretations and Conclusions:**

It seems that a number of aspects must come into play, if African American students are to show academic growth and make progress in closing the achievement gap.

First, African American students must attend school regularly. They must do assignments and turn them in on time. Parents of African American students must take

a more active part in the education process of their children at home and at school. There must be less disruptive behavior in the learning environment. And last, there must be an innate desire on the part of African American students to want to learn and be successful. This motivation cannot be handed to students in the form of rewards, but to be lasting and effective, it must come intrinsically.

Although efficacious teachers have demonstrated that they are committed to helping all students achieve academic success, including African American students, yet teachers alone cannot fix all the academic woes by themselves. Even so, teachers are not supposed to. Parents and community have a role to play as well. The parent of African American students are too silent and often absent from the institutions of education. For things to change in the education process of African American students parent must become more involved. Parents should not sit back and depend on the school system to take care of it because it's their responsibility. This misconception on the part of any parent will only result in a lack of motivation on the part of the student. All parents must instill within their children the value and importance of education. This is the case with middle class and affluent parents, and needs to be the case with low-income families as well.

In addition, it's not sufficient just to tell kids that education is important. Parents must demonstrate an interest in what is going on at school also. They must visit their child's classroom and talk to the teacher about the child's progress. When their child is not doing well academically, they must not leave the decision up to the teacher and the school administrator. They must become active in the decision making

process as to what alternatives are in the best interest of the child. Without parental involvement, African American students can easily find themselves in a behavior disorder self-contained classroom, or with special education eligibility. In a study done by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (2008), an important finding was that when parents are involved with their children's education and help them with homework, talk to them about valuing education, and express high goals for them, children did significantly better in school (Toldson, 2008). This part of the education process is sadly missing in the education of African American students. If this were to change as early as kindergarten, and were consistently followed through, by the time they got to fifth grade there would be a significant academic difference.

### **Recommendations**

Here are some recommendations that I propose. First of all, in order to break this cycle of low academic performance among African American students, parents of lower socioeconomic status need to make sure their children get off to a solid academic start at an early age. Every effort should be made to take advantage of the many early childhood programs that are available to them. Research shows that children from moderate-income families come to kindergarten already knowing their letters and letter sounds, colors, how to hold a pencil correctly, print awareness, and some come already reading. When children from low-income families come to kindergarten and have not taken advantage of the early childhood resources, they are already at a tremendous disadvantage from the first day of kindergarten. And although

some kindergarteners do make significant gains, if their parents fail to work with them at home they may still continue to lag behind their classmates and may have to try harder to catch up for several grades.

As an educator, I have seen this very scenario unfold in my own school where I am the principal. We know that early intervention programs (Head Start and pre-K programs) boost academic achievement. Pre-school studies such as the Perry Preschool study (1954) and the Abecedarian program study (1972) confirm that early childhood programs can have great impact on student learning and the quality of life for poor children (Duncan, Ludwig, & Magnuson, 2007). Failure to take advantage of these early interventions are setting African American student up to continue the cycle for another generation. This cycle must be broken. The only way that can happen is to have a rigorous parent training program implemented by the school those children attend, and by the churches to which they belong.

I strongly recommend that low-income parents enroll their children in early childhood programs as early as possible. Some of these programs are federally funded and are available to minority and low-income families. Many times these early childhood centers have room to accommodate more preschoolers. It's just a matter of making that phone call and registering them. It is one of the greatest investments parents can make for the academic success of their child. If that is not possible, then at the very least a parent can do is work with their children at home, teaching letter recognition and letter sounds, colors, counting to 10, and reading to them often. These things don't cost very much other than a little time. If low-income parents do not see

the need for these early interventions, then there will continue to be a great divide between academic achievement of White students and African American students. And not only that, African Americans youths will miss out on other educational opportunities at the college level, and that can make the difference in getting good jobs that are adequate to live on comfortably.

Second, African American parents must take a more active role in their children's education. One frustration the participants in this study expressed was the inability to reach and communicate with parents of their African American students. This study found that efficacious teachers go over and beyond their duty in helping to educate all students, especially African American students who lack support at home. However, the influence of a parent in the education process of a child has far more significant and profound implications (Christenson, & Peterson, 2010). It is said that a child's first teacher is the parent. Unfortunately, among low-income parents, that stops when the child enters school. Their thinking is that now it's the teacher's responsibility to educate their child. In part, it is the teacher's responsibility, but why entrust that task to the teacher alone when the parent can have the same influence and more upon the child's learning. It is when parents make this costly mistake, that their children are labeled as slow learners and are assigned to special education classes or placed in behavior disorder self-contained classes. Parents can safeguard against these things by staying involved in their child's education process from pre-school to high school.

Parents of African American students must talk to their children about the importance of school and give them plenty of feedback. They must check their child's book bag, (at the elementary level), homework, and make sure assignments are turned in consistently. They must have high goals and aspirations for their children, and must talk to them about those goals and best career options (Leak, 2003). They must model the importance of school and education by being visible at school. They must want their children to have a better life (and education) than they did. Parents of African American students must also help their children get past the hurdles of peer-pressure which tend to trip and topple many capable and smart young students from achieving their best at school. Parents must safe guard their children from teenage pregnancy, gangs, and drugs which can make void the best academic goals and intentions. When these steps are taken consistently and followed through, then students of low-income families will break out of the cycle and will soar academically (Christenson, & Peterson, 2010).

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that no matter how meaningful and capable the teacher, no one can motivate a student to be successful at school like the child's parent. Someone has wisely said, "The child's first teacher is his mother." That care and interest in the child's education should not stop because the child is now attending school; but rather it should increase and complement what is happening at school.

Because the parent's role is so vital in the education of the child, it is important that school and community members alike take steps in setting up training workshop

for parents teaching them how to be more active in the education process of their children. If African American children are going to pull themselves up socially, economically, and academically, they will have to do so by getting a quality education. Schools must be held accountable for making sure students have textbooks and learning tools for providing a quality education. Teachers and school administrators must be held responsible for making sure early interventions are in place for students who are falling behind academically. Students should be assessed quarterly and each trimester for growth. Where red flags appear, interventions and re-teach strategies should be put in place.

Parents must also be held accountable for taking a greater role in the education process of their child. This responsibility should take place early in the child's life. Parents need to enroll their children in early childhood classes, such as Head Start, Day care, and such learning institutions. When these steps are taken, children—especially African American children—will begin with a fair start. This responsibility falls on the shoulders of the parents, since children don't know or understand the full ramifications of education until they are older and then it may be too late for some.

In addition, African American students must cultivate a deep desire to succeed at every undertaking. In order to do so, they will need to be constantly reminded by their parents, teachers, civic leaders, as well as church leaders that education is the key to success. They must be reminded that if they drop out of school they will encounter more hardships. They must be taught how to motivate themselves to achieve what ever they want. They must be driven by the same kind of motivation that “resilient

students” have in spite of their poor status and background. In the United States, that kind of achievement is always a possibility, and it is always available for those who dream it and have the will to pursue it. This message must be heralded throughout the halls and classrooms of schools, in the home of every African American parent, in the car as they drive to events, at churches, and in the conversations of role models and mentors. These are some of the recommendations that can change the focus of African American students, and help them to work harder in school in order to achieve not only a good education, but also a piece of the American dream.

### **Implications for Further study**

This study could be expanded upon more with a detailed study that looks at grades and Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) scores of African American students who were taught by efficacious teachers. Such a study would give rich data of their true academic progress, which was not addressed in this study. Another needed study relative to this topic would be to see if African American student do better academically with efficacious teachers who are African American compared to White efficacious teachers. Such a study might unearth some interesting indicators about how African American students respond and learn from teachers who look like them and come from the same cultural background.

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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Tell me about the highlights of your student teaching experience.
2. How do you think your upbringing has influenced your teaching?
3. What determines a good day for you at school? And a bad day?
4. What are some things you are most proud of as a teacher?
5. Tell me about the student make-up of your classroom.
6. Tell me about some difficulties you've experienced with your students.
7. What happens when students don't turn in their assignments?
8. Tell me about your level of comfort with students who don't follow your directions?
9. What form of discipline have you found to be most effective in dealing with difficult students in your classroom?
10. How do you motivate students to learn? Do you have some "tricks" that you use with them?
11. Tell me about some steps that you take to get students to learn?
12. What makes one student more successful academically over another?

**APPENDIX B**

**TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Dear Teacher,

My name is George E. Richardson. I am a doctoral student at Greenleaf University and I am doing a qualitative study on **The Effects of Teacher Efficacy on the Academic Achievement of African American Students.**

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The study seeks to examine how highly efficacious classroom teachers interact with their students, and what effects their interactions have on student behavior, student motivation and learning, student attitudes about school, their teacher, and student commitment to stay in school and graduate. This information is valuable in preparing teachers for effective classroom instruction, management, and student achievement.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I am asking you to participate in this survey. There are 24 short questions with responses ranging from “nothing,” “very little,” “some influence,” “quite a bit,” and “a great deal.” The survey takes about five minutes to complete. The information gained will be kept highly confidential. No reference will be made in either oral or written reports that could link you (the participant) to this study. The contents of the survey will not be discussed with your principal nor will it be part of the teacher evaluation process.

#### **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this survey is strictly voluntary. You may decline to participate at any time without penalty. Please understand that this survey will be used strictly for my dissertation purposes only. Some of you may be chosen to participate for the second phase of my research which will involve a forty-five minute interview. You may choose not to participate in either part of this study. You may choose to stop participating in this study at any time, and for any reason without any penalty.

#### **RISKS**

There are no known risks associated with this study.

Your participation would be much appreciated. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at 815-637-2535.

Thank you.

George E. Richardson

**APPENDIX C**

**INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Class/Subject \_\_\_\_\_

My name is George E. Richardson. I am a doctoral student at Greenleaf University and I am doing a qualitative study on **The Effects of Teacher Efficacy on Academic Achievement of African American Students**. I will be interviewing 12 teachers whose scores on the Teacher Efficacy Survey were very high. You were one of those teachers. I believe that as a highly efficacious teacher, your knowledge and experience would contribute much to my study.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

If you are interested, I would like to set a time to set up an interview with you.

The interview questions will be open ended questions. You would be allowed to tell your story freely. The information collected in this study will be kept confidential. I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:

1. Your real name will not be used in the data collection or in the written report. Instead, you will be assigned a pseudonym to be used in all verbal and written records and reports.
2. All materials, such as transcription notes, field notes, or observation notes will be kept secured until the completion of the study then they will be destroyed.
3. Your participation is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point in this study with any penalty to you.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me at:

George Richardson  
3016 Carriage Lane  
Rockford IL 61101  
Phone: 815-637-2535

**Appendix C (con't)****CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form.

Do you grant permission to be interviewed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give permission to be audiotaped? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give permission to be observed in you classroom? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to the terms:**

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**

**PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

**Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.**

**Professor**  
Psychological Studies in Education

January 12, 2010

Dear George Richardson,

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy of both the long and short forms of the instrument as well as scoring instructions can be found at:

<http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/researchinstruments.htm>

Best wishes in your work,

QuickTime™ and a  
PDF viewer are required to see this picture.

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.  
Professor

**APPENDIX E**

**TIME LINE FOR THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

**Research Topic:** The Effects Teacher Efficacy on African American Students?**January 2010:**

- IRB Approval

**March- September 2010:**

- Data Collection Process
- Administer the /survey
- Set up Interviews
- Observations
- Field Notes

**Fall 2010:**

- Data Analysis and Findings
- Complete Writing

**December 2010:**

- Graduation

**APPENDIX F**  
**RESEARCHER VITAE**

**GEORGE E. RICHARDSON**

3016 Carriage Lane, Rockford, IL 61101

Ph: 815-637-2535

Email:geeren@comcast.net

OBJECTIVE

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To pursue leadership positions that facilitate academic, social, personal growth and development of all students and staff.

EDUCATION

---

GREENLEAF UNIVERSITY St. Louis, Missouri 2010

- Doctoral Dissertation (Educational Administration)

AURORA UNIVERSITY Aurora, Illinois 2006 - 2009

- Doctoral Program (Educational Administration) 70 Hours;  
GPA: 4.00
- Superintendent Certificate
- Administrative Leadership Type 75 Certification 2005

ROCKFORD COLLEGE Rockford, Illinois May 1995

- Master of Arts in Teaching
- Illinois Teacher Certification Type 3 (K-9)
- Highly Qualified in Language Arts & Social Studies

MARANATHA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY May 1985

- Master of Arts in Theology

TENNESSEE TEMPLE UNIVERSITY May 1976

- Bachelor of Biblical Studies

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

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STILES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2008 -

- Principal and Educational Leader

FLINN MIDDLE SCHOOL 2005-2008

- Assistant Principal
- Dean of Students
- Pro-Active Committee Coordinator

RESA MIDDLE SCHOOL Fall 2005

- Student Support Specialist


- CONKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2000-2005
- Third Grade Teacher
  - Supervising Teacher to a Student Teacher
- ROCKFORD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY 1995-2000
- Third Grade Teacher (3 years)
  - Fifth Grade Teacher (2 years)

### **OTHER EXPERIENCE**

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- WORKSHOP PRESENTER
- Educational Leadership 2010-
- AUTHOR OF TWO CHILDREN'S BOOKS
- The Mysterious Pumpkin Patch (AuthorHouse Publisher, February 2008)
  - Brogee's Giant Bicycle (AuthorHouse Publisher, October 2009)
- WOODWARD GOVERNOR COMPANY Rockford, Illinois 1988-1993
- Product Assembler/Assistant Supervisor
  - Management Training
- BIBLE OUTREACH BAPTIST CHURCH Rockford, Illinois 1985-1993
- Pastor
  - Conference and Revival Speaker
  - Marriage Seminar Speaker
- VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1980-1985
- Pastor

**APPENDIX G**  
**COMPLETION CERTIFICATE**



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**Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams**

## Completion Certificate

Please verify that

**George Richardson**

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 03/17/2007.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health  
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**APPENDIX H**  
**SUPERINTENDENT LETTER**

**George Richardson**3016 Carriage Lane Rockford IL 61101 Ph: 815-637-253

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February 24, 2009

Superintendent Linda Hernandez  
201 South Madison  
Rockford, IL 61102

Dear Superintendent Hernandez,


I am in the process of finishing up the requirements for the doctoral program I'm in at Aurora University. My topic of study is, **What is the relationship between teacher efficacy and the academic achievement of African American student?**

I am writing to you requesting your permission to do a Qualitative Research survey in three (3) middle schools in the Rockford Public School District. Those schools are: Lincoln Middle School, West Middle School, and Kennedy Middle School. I have a single page Likert scale questionnaire with 15 questions. This survey will be confidential and will uphold the strictest standards of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I now await your permission to contact the principals of these schools and arrange to administer this survey.

Thank you for your continued assistance with this endeavor.

Sincerely,

George Richardson

I  give permission to George Richardson to do this study in the schools of District 205.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date 3/3/09

**APPENDIX I**

**TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY SCALE**

## Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale<sup>1</sup> (long form)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students ?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)