

“GOOD TEACHING IS GOOD TEACHING”:  
TEACHERS UNDERSTANDINGS OF EVALUATION and TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

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Teachers Understandings of Evaluation and Teacher Self-Efficacy

Dissertation Chairperson: Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.

**Background:** On August 6, 2012, the TEACH NJ Act (Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey) was signed into law, defining requirements for more rigorous evaluation systems (<http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/>). With these changes to the evaluation process, Finnegan (2013) questioned whether teachers' perceptions of their efficacy had changed significantly and how evaluations build or deflate teacher self-efficacy. A major attribute of effective teaching is a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which is a teacher's belief in their abilities to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998). To increase teaching self-efficacy, the focus should be on enhancing teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The evaluation system could provide a vehicle for improved and more closely aligned staff development that could enhance teacher self-efficacy (Finnegan, 2013). Further, increased efficacy may lead to a stronger sense of teacher effectiveness.

**Research Question:** The purpose of this phenomenological comparative case study was to examine how teachers perceive their sense of efficacy and how it relates to their effectiveness, based on their experience with their mandated evaluation process.

Guiding questions:

1. What do teachers believe to be the relationship between the evaluation process, their sense of teacher efficacy and their teacher effectiveness?

Sub-Questions:

- How do teachers define teacher efficacy?
- How do teachers define effectiveness?
- How do teachers perceive their personal efficacy and their teacher effectiveness based on the evaluation process?

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**Methods:** Using a qualitative comparative phenomenological case study approach (Creswell, 2007), this study explored how teachers perceived their own efficacy in relation to the evaluation process. Two school districts using identical evaluation models were engaged.

Participants were selected in consultation with school principals from each site. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, with questions relative to the evaluation model, school culture, district culture and students' socioeconomic status. In keeping with the qualitative method of case study, in which analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2007), a robust description of the settings of the study was provided.

**Findings:** This study was noteworthy because the results indicate that teacher efficacy is not affected by the current evaluation process. All teachers had a strong sense of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness. While the current evaluation process is more rigorous, and teachers mostly had a negative perception of the current evaluation process, teachers did not feel less efficacious or less effective. Further, negative school and district cultures did not affect teacher efficacy, but low socioeconomic status of students did have some impact on teacher efficacy. Finally, feedback and self-reflection were important aspects of the evaluation process that may positively impact teacher efficacy.

**Significance:** Using various measures to investigate the purpose of evaluation, the evaluation process and efficacy; discovering what teachers deem important aspects of the process, and if their sense of efficacy is affected by the process, should be revealed. Further, the participating school districts, as well as other school districts, may consider innovative ways to improve the evaluation process, and communicating with teachers, who may question their effectiveness.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**Background and Statement of the Problem**

This dissertation explored how teacher evaluation might shape teachers' perception of effectiveness and their sense of teacher efficacy. Traditionally, teachers have been subjected to an evaluative process that used a binary rating system which deemed them either satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern & Keeling, 2009). Recent reforms, however, have changed the evaluation process, better documenting teacher quality and performance, so that public school teachers are now subjected to more rigorous evaluation procedures (Finnegan, 2013). In New Jersey, the 2012 TEACH NJ Act (Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey), redefined the requirements for educator evaluation systems, other professional growth and development systems, and tenure decisions, requiring stronger, more rigorous evaluation systems starting in the 2013-2014 school year (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012a).

In New Jersey, scoring is now based on a 4-point scale that rates teachers as ineffective, partially effective, effective or highly effective. Some veteran teachers who were accustomed to receiving a satisfactory score based on the simpler rating system believed they would receive a default score of four or be considered highly effective, according to the newly adopted evaluation model. According to one study by Finnegan (2013), receiving less than highly effective scores, led teachers to feel a low sense of perceived teacher efficacy and challenged their belief in their effectiveness as educators.

Teacher efficacy is not the same as teacher effectiveness. Teacher efficacy affects teacher effectiveness. Teacher efficacy is a teacher's confidence in their ability to bring about wanted results in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998). It is a teacher's sense of how he/she feels about his/her self and their ability to affect change in an educational setting

(Barnes, 2000). One could think of teacher efficacy as similar to self-esteem, which is the belief a person feels about oneself when viewed as an object of evaluation (Campbell, 1990). Teacher efficacy in an educational setting has strong links to student academic achievement (Bissessar, 2014). When teachers experience a high sense of efficacy, they feel accomplished and have a high outlook for student learning, a positive attitude about teaching and also believe that they can impact student performance (Barnes, 2000). A teacher's sense of efficacy is a major characteristic of teacher success because teacher efficacy influences the level of teacher motivation and teachers perform in ways that will increase their view of themselves as capable or effective (Finnegan, 2013). Confident teachers are apt to take more risks in the classroom thus positively affecting student achievement. Thus, teacher efficacy inspires teacher effectiveness.

Evaluation can be an integral part of increasing teacher efficacy. New Jersey's evaluation system is intended to serve several purposes, such as be a tool for improving student achievement; providing stronger basis for awarding teacher tenure; and giving guidance for improving teacher practice (Firestone, Nordin, Shcherbakov, Kirova & Blitz, 2014). However, evaluation can potentially enhance teachers' belief in their efficacy beliefs by being a tool for improving staff development to increase teacher enthusiasm and teaching efficacy (Finnegan, 2013). Cultivating teacher efficacy and teachers' perception of their teaching abilities help teachers experience high levels of student learning and thus, relate it to their effectiveness (Magno & Sembrano, 2007; Weasmer & Woods, 1998). A comprehensive evaluation system should be a tool used to provide feedback on teachers' instructional strengths and weaknesses as well as support their development (Papay, 2012). When teachers receive timely feedback, they may develop a strong sense of teacher efficacy and in turn strengthen their belief that they can

affect student achievement, which will increase teachers' motivation and performance (Finnegan, 2013).

Researchers have not adequately explored teachers' experiences with evaluation and its possible influences on their sense of teacher efficacy. There has been work done to develop instruments that gauge teacher efficacy and to increase understanding of teacher efficacy (Protheroe, 2008). However, there is limited research that examines teacher connection between teacher efficacy and effectiveness as they relate to the evaluation process. Evaluation reform dictates that multiple categories such as several observations and feedback be used to assess effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2014). When an effective evaluation model is in place, teachers receive feedback that may increase teacher efficacy (Finnegan, 2013). Therefore, it was important to study the possible connection between the evaluation and the effects the evaluative experience may have on teachers' sense of efficacy.

### **Research Question**

The purpose of this phenomenological comparative case study was to examine how teachers recognize their sense of efficacy and how it relates to their perceived effectiveness, based on their experience with their mandated evaluation process. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

What do teachers believe to be the relationship between the evaluation process, their sense of teacher efficacy and their teacher effectiveness?

#### **Sub-Questions:**

- How do teachers define teacher efficacy?
- How do teachers define effectiveness?
- How do teachers perceive their personal efficacy based on the evaluation process?
- How do teachers perceive their teacher effectiveness based on the evaluation process?

The central objective of answering these questions was to explore how teacher evaluation might shape teachers' perceptions of effectiveness and efficacy.

### **Teacher Evaluation Reform and Efficacy**

According to Guskey and Passaro (1994) educational researchers classify teachers' perceived sense of efficacy in teaching and learning situations as important variables in studies of instructional effectiveness. Teachers want feedback that will inform them of their effectiveness. Evaluation models that deliver frequent and timely feedback to teachers, as well as spur discussion between teachers and administrators are considered effective and would enhance teachers' sense of efficacy (Finnegan, 2013). But, Darling-Hammond (2013) points out that current evaluation systems rarely help teachers improve. Further, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers agree that the majority of existing teacher evaluation systems do little to aid teachers in improving instruction and student achievement or to support decision making in regards to personnel (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel & Jesse 2012). Nevertheless, states, districts, and schools all across the United States are busy developing or implementing new teacher evaluation systems (Marzano, 2012).

The purpose of the TEACHNJ Act was to raise student achievement through the adoption of teacher evaluations that provide specific feedback to educators and provide them with aligned professional development (NJ DOE, 2014). However, there is more focus on raising student achievement than there is on ascertaining teachers' perception of their efficacy. As school districts explore diverse models of evaluation, they should not overlook the effect these models might have on teacher self-efficacy. The research data are clear that strong teacher efficacy increases teachers' motivation and can improve student achievement in the classroom (Finnegan,

2013). The research lacks in ascertaining the connection between evaluation and teachers' perception of their efficacy and effectiveness.

Darling-Hammond (2014) states that what teachers desire is an evaluation system that is robust and that provides valuable feedback that will enable teachers to improve their practice. An evaluation tool that provides constructive feedback could be the catalyst for teachers developing a stronger sense of teacher efficacy. These feelings of efficaciousness in turn could potentially inspire teachers to take more pedagogical risks in the classroom, ultimately affecting student achievement and making teachers feel more effective in the classroom. Teachers with high sense of teacher efficacy have confidence in their ability to successfully provide challenging instruction and perform in ways that will enhance their perception of themselves as effective teachers (Finnegan, 2013).

### **Rejection of Evaluation Reform and Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher evaluation reform, the changes to the evaluation system in the last decade, and the objectives added to the evaluation make teachers fearful of the purpose and process of evaluation (Conley & Glassman, 2008). This fear could inspire teachers to reject the reforms and have a sense of diminished teacher efficacy. For instance, when teachers believed they had no control on a dimension being evaluated, there was resistance to being evaluated (Conley & Glasman, 2008). If teachers were an integral part of evaluation reform and had a voice in the decision-making process, the fear of the more rigorous process would possibly diminish. Teachers would be more accepting of the evaluation process, viewing the evaluation process as a tool for improvement, rather than a punitive tool. Thus, a teacher's sense of efficacy may increase, and student achievement may positively be affected.

### **Summary**

The following chapter reviews the literature relative to teacher efficacy and the evaluation process. In addition, it is imperative that teacher efficacy is defined as well as a discussion of how teacher efficacy is related to teacher effectiveness. Studies show that teachers with an increased sense of instructional efficacy take more instructional risks and spend more time on student learning, which increases student achievement (Bandura, 1997). Thus, it is important to gauge teachers' perception of the evaluation process and feedback received during the process to gauge how the evaluative experience may affect their sense of teacher efficacy



## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

To better comprehend how teachers understand the evaluation process and teacher efficacy, I reviewed the literature as it relates to several connected ideas. The concepts that guided this study were derived from literature on (a) politics of education reform (b) politics of teacher evaluation, (c) teacher evaluation reform and the purpose of the evaluation process, (d) social cognitive theory and self-efficacy, (e) teacher efficacy as well as define teacher efficacy and how it is measured, (f) how school culture may affect teachers' sense of efficacy and (g) teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness.

### **Politics of Education Reform**

Over the past several years, the policy culture in education has provoked significant changes in how schools operate, making the current education policy climate to be, at times, controversial and complex (Olsen & Sexton, 2008). There is prevailing belief that improving the performance of education structures is essential to the advancement of socioeconomic development and the reduction of inequality; however, meaningful education reforms often fail to get approved or implemented, mostly for political reasons (Corrales, 1999). Currently, federal, state, and local governments are greatly shaping education policy in the United States, as local school districts exert considerable influence of public schools, leading the way to reform (Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013). The passing of the No Child Left Behind enacted widespread reform on the federal level in various states and has inspired reform on the state level with an example being the passing of the TEACH for NJ Act. System-wide educational reform in teaching and learning can come from developing consistency and alignment across the different elements and components of an educational system (Supovitz, 2005). In this sense, education reforms occur

across various components of an educational system. The purpose of systemic education reform is to introduce sets of multifaceted and balancing changes to unify the system as a fundamental approach for comprehensive scale improvement of teaching and learning (Supovitz, 2005).

Teacher evaluation process is part of education systems and has been the focal point of reform in various states.

### **Politics of Teacher Evaluation**

The evaluation process is undergoing extensive changes in nearly every state and district across the country (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Designing and executing a system-wide reform such as that involved in a new teacher evaluation system can be an emotionally laden and politically challenging task (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). Indicating what defines good teaching and choosing appropriate methods for collecting supporting data, as well as structuring the development of processes to enhance the support of various stakeholders of the new evaluation system, is an important task (Stronge & Tucker, 1999). Most importantly, the stakeholders who are significant to this task and largely affected are the teachers.

When executing changes to the teacher evaluation process, the individuals who are affected the most, the teachers, are not included in the decision-making process, inspiring teachers to fear the process (Conley & Glasman, 2008)). Teachers and school leaders should be involved in creating, executing, and monitoring the evaluation process to confirm that it imitates good instruction, when the evaluation process is done effectively, that it is tied to beneficial learning opportunities for teachers, and that it produces valid results (Darling-Hammond 2014). Teachers voice fear and resistance to the evaluation process when they feel they have no control. In the last decade, quite a few objectives that inspire fearfulness in teachers have been added to teacher evaluation process (Conley & Glasman, 2008).

In the current era of accountability, teachers may be evaluated for the purpose of being terminated from schools, based on schools' low-test scores, uneven performance on state tests, and other factors (Rice & Croninger, 2005; Conley & Glasman, 2008). The outcome is that teachers could fear the evaluation process and feel it is not about improvement of their professional growth and more of a political hurdle causing teachers to feel little sense of career accomplishment and progress from their evaluation (Conley & Glasman, 2008). This fear could ultimately result in resistance and an unwillingness to accept the more rigorous evaluation process.

### **Teacher Evaluation Reform and the Purpose of the Evaluation Process**

As a result of the federal *Race to the Top* initiative and changes to federal requirements under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), numerous states have had to reconsider traditional teacher evaluation policies (Marzano, 2012). The language and substance of teacher evaluation have changed dramatically over the last few years, mainly because of observations that have made strong claims regarding the shortfalls of the traditional teacher evaluation system (Marzano, 2013). The *No Child Left Behind Act*, as well as state legislation, public policy, and practice in every state placed importance on teacher quality and on high quality teacher evaluation systems to a degree that did not exist in the past (Stronge, 2006). This was the catalyst for the evaluation process to undergo extensive and radical changes (Darling-Hammond, 2014). A conceptually sound and properly executed evaluation system for teachers is an important factor of successful teacher evaluation reform efforts (Stronge, 2006).

Thus, on August 6, 2012, The TEACHNJ Act, a bipartisan tenure reform, was approved unanimously by the legislature and signed into law by then Governor Chris Christie (NJ DOE, 2012). The purpose of New Jersey's evaluation system is to be a major tool for improving

student achievement and allow equity by providing a stronger basis for awarding teacher tenure and giving guidance that will give teachers the opportunity to improve their practice (Firestone, Nordin, Scherbakov, Kirova, & Blitz, 2014). The former evaluation process used a bimodal system of ascertaining teacher performance. Thus, a model that follows federal requirements and includes the use of multiple categories of teacher ratings, instead of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory,” and also based on multiple observations, feedback to the teacher, and the use of student assessment data to assess effectiveness, was needed (Darling-Hammond, 2014).

Adopting an evaluation system that will help improve instruction by providing constructive feedback to educators and inform aligned professional development, will ultimately raise student achievement (NJDOE, 2014).

Several components are needed for a quality evaluation system. But the basic components of quality teacher evaluation system are for it to be a fair and effective evaluation system based on performance and intended to encourage improvement in the teacher being evaluated and the school (Stronge, 2006). A properly constructed and implemented teacher evaluation system can provide balance between a school, district-wide goals and individual teacher growth, thus facilitating the achievement of the school’s goals and support for individual teacher goals (Stronge, 2006).

The fundamental purpose of evaluation must be capitalizing on teacher development and effectiveness, not just recording poor performance as a prelude to dismissal (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulher & Keeling, 2009). Further, teacher evaluation is primarily about documenting the quality of teacher performance; then its focus changes to assisting teachers with improving their performance as well as holding them accountable for work (Stronge, 2006). A teacher evaluation system that is designed for school improvement and teacher growth can improve teaching

(Stronge, 2006). At its most central level, teacher evaluation assists teachers with identifying the need to improve and then serves as a catalyst for achieving those desired improvements (Stronge, 2006.) A productive evaluation system should take teachers' practice in the context of curriculum goals and students' needs into consideration, as well as offer complex evidence of teachers' contributions to student learning and to the school as a whole (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Such a system should enhance teacher learning and skill, while also confirming that teachers, who are retained and tenured, are supporting student learning throughout their careers (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Teachers should be evaluated based on their ability to fulfill their core responsibility as professionals, delivering instruction that helps students to learn and succeed (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulher & Keeling, 2009).

The teacher evaluation process should be positive and provide feedback to the teacher. The evaluation process serves the dual purpose of holding teachers accountable for the quality of their instruction and student learning and motivating as well as informing developments in their practice (Katz & McCombs, 2015). By doing so, teachers may gauge their effectiveness in the classroom. Weisberg et al. (2009) stated that an evaluation system should gauge a teacher's strengths and weaknesses precisely and reliably and thus, teachers will get the feedback needed to improve their practice. Good teachers not only teach but they reflect about what they plan to teach, then they teach and after, they self-reflect because reflection is a strong force for improvement (Stronge, 2006.) In essence, with this reflection, teachers' sense of efficacy, be it positive or negative, can develop as a result of self-reflection during the evaluation process.

### **Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy**

The concept of self-efficacy was derived from Social Cognitive Theory (Stone, 2001). Social cognitive theory (SCT) is defined as a set of processes that operates at the within-person

or internal level of analysis (Yeo & Neal, 2013). Bandura (1977) established the idea of social cognitive theory. One of the major constructs that emerged from his research is the theory of self-efficacy which is defined as one's perceived ability to perform in a certain situation or activity (Bandura, 1977; Czerniak & Chiarlott, 1990). Further, self-efficacy reflects ones' beliefs about whether they can be successful at a particular task and also determines how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (Bandura, 1994; 1997).

### **Teacher Efficacy**

The concept of teacher efficacy is a derivative of self-efficacy. One's belief in being able to influence their environment is strongly connected to one's belief in their ability to bring about change (Barnes, 2000). Thus, teacher efficacy is defined as teachers' belief in their judgments about their capability to influence and encourage student learning (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Barnes (2000) states that there are two dimensions of the construct relative to teaching, one being general teaching efficacy, the generally perceived belief in the power of teaching to realize results in the classroom, and the other being personal teaching efficacy which is one's belief in his/her personal ability to attain results. Personal teaching efficacy can be further explained as a teacher's individual feelings of confidence in their teaching abilities and general teaching efficacy relates to the general belief in the power of teaching in order to reach difficult children (Protheroe, 2008).

The concept of teacher self-efficacy can reinforce or weaken classroom instruction (Finnegan, 2013). Teacher self-efficacy is a significant motivational construct that helps form teacher quality and eventually classroom effectiveness, but more needs to be learned about how teacher self-efficacy develops (Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). Bandura (1977; 1997), named four sources of teacher efficacy: mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious

experiences and social persuasion. The most powerful source of efficacy is mastery experiences, because when one perceives that their performance is successful, efficacy beliefs are raised (Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). Thus, because of the evaluation process, a teacher may feel efficacious if he or she has a positive evaluation experience, reflecting mastery of teaching skills.

The feedback given to a teacher highlighting their effective teaching behaviors is termed as social persuasion (Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). According to Bandura (1977), social persuasion can contribute to successful performances because it boosts self-efficacy and leads a person to initiate a task, try new strategies, or try hard to succeed. Constructive feedback given during the evaluation process would be an example of social persuasion as teachers use feedback from the evaluation that could influence their perception of their efficacy. Teachers who feel good about themselves become more driven to deliver the classroom instruction with excellence (Adams & Bailey, 1989).

The promotion of self-efficacy and the promotion of teaching skills are not either or processes; teacher self-efficacy enhances teaching skills. Thus, teachers' perception of their efficacy and their belief in their ability may be enhanced. However, sometimes teachers are met with the challenge of teaching disparate groups, such as exceptional and struggling learner (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell & Hardin, 2014). In this instance, teacher efficacy may or may not be enhanced because teachers may not have the skills to address these varied populations, possibly impacting teacher efficacy.

### **School Culture and Teachers' Perceived Sense of Efficacy**

Organizational culture develops when there is a common set of meanings or understandings about an organization and its difficulties, goals, and practices (Dumay, 2009). More specific, school culture is the guiding principles and ideals apparent in the operation of a

school (Fullan, 2007). Informally, culture is “the way we do things around here” (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Schools with weak cultures tend to be branded as having persons or isolated groups with a leader who guides the work of others from an authoritative position; in contrast, strong cultures have members who are highly committed, motivated, and cooperative when achieving shared goals (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Tichnor-Wagnor, Harrison & Cohen-Vogel, 2016). Teachers define themselves and roles according to the norms of the school and those norms are observed in the structures and procedures of the school (Reames & Spencer, 1998).

Part of Tierney’s (2008) framework of organizational cultures seeks to ascertain how an organization defines its cultural environment and what the feelings of those in the culture are. A teacher’s perceived sense of efficacy and their feelings about the evaluation process may be related to the school’s culture. The evaluation process is one of the practices that are part of any school’s culture. School culture has a weighty effect on staff development because it influences teachers’ attitudes toward dedicating time to improving instruction, attending workshops, and other constructive activities that teachers choose to participate in (Peterson, 2002). Positive school cultures include staff members who hold optimistic beliefs about their potential to learn and grow in a professional community that uses knowledge, practice and research to improve practice (Deal & Peterson, 2002).

Toxic cultures or negative subcultures can affect a school’s staff morale (Deal & Peterson, 2002). A toxic school environment breeds mostly negative attitudes, where teacher relations can be conflictual and where the staff doesn't have faith in the ability of the students to flourish (Peterson, 2002). Schools with a toxic culture lack a clear sense of purpose, blaming students for lack of progress and eschewing collaboration fostering actively hostile relations



among staff (Peterson, 2002). Further, toxic cultures breed an environment where mediocrity and innovation are accepted (Deal & Peterson, 20002). Thus, in a negative school culture with the aforementioned adverse traits present, teachers may have a weak sense of efficacy, even if they have a positive experience with the evaluation process. Further, a negative school culture may affect teacher efficacy. Teacher isolation can make it difficult for teachers to assess their effectiveness (Conley & Glassman, 2008). However, in a positive school culture, where teachers may not be so isolated and have support, teacher efficacy may increase, whether the experience is positive or negative. Although it is important to note that Peterson and Deal (1998) stated that even good schools may have toxic subcultures with an underlying current of negativity. Thus, a positive or toxic culture could possibly affect a teacher's sense of efficacy.

### **Teachers Perception of Their Effectiveness**

A teacher's confidence in their ability to be effective is defined as efficacy. Efficacy affects teachers' feelings of their effectiveness because teachers with a high sense of their ability to affect change tend to take risks that inspire student achievement. A teacher with a high sense of efficacy will make judgments about their capacity to reach certain goals (Barnes, 2000). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy feel a personal achievement, have high expectations for students, feel accountable for student learning, have stratagems for achieving objectives, an optimistic attitude about teaching and believe they can affect student learning (Ashton, 1984). If a teacher provides rigorous instruction that ultimately yields student achievement, they experience a heightened sense of enthusiasm and satisfaction with their abilities (Finnegan, 2013). Thus, when teacher self- efficacy increases, teachers' motivation and performance in the classroom will also increase (Finnegan, 2013).

### **Teacher Autonomy**

Autonomy is defined as one's own ability and power to act in a certain environment or framework (Garland, 1997). According to Knowles (2005), adults are autonomous and self-directed, needing the freedom to direct themselves. Teachers need intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Autonomy is one aspect of teacher motivation (Khmelkov, 2000; Losos, 2000). An intrinsic motivator for teachers would be the need to help students achieve academic goals (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Teachers find being autonomous to be a valuable and desirous concept in the educational setting (Vangrieeken, Grosemans, Dochy & Kyndt, 2017). Hoyle and John (1995) stated that autonomy was related to power. Teacher autonomy is necessary in the classroom and education environment so that teachers can handle situations as they occur (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Thus, teachers who are autonomous are motivated to help students with academic achievement, and they have power in the classroom when planning and implementing the curriculum and the New Jersey Student Learning standards, in an effort to affect student achievement.

While in some instances teacher autonomy is desirable by educators, Lortie (1975) discussed the concept of the "egg crate" school and increasing serious opposition to it. The idea of "egg crate" school, or teaching in isolation, is frowned upon currently, as many are advocating for team teaching and collaboration (Lortie, 1975). Thus, while teachers are desirous of control in the classroom, school leaders would like to see collaboration and team teaching take place in the educational setting.

### **Summary**

This literature review examined and explored literature relative to how the evaluation process affects teachers' perception of their efficacy and how teachers perceive their efficacy based on how the evaluation model is used during the evaluation process. New approaches to

teacher evaluation should benefit from research on teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel & Jesse, 2012). There is robust research relating teacher efficacy to student achievement, as well as research relating teacher efficacy to a particular subject that is being taught. Furthermore, there is much research addressing teacher efficacy as it relates to teaching a particular subject, but not the evaluation process. There is little research, however, about the effects of the evaluative process on teachers' opinion of their own efficacy. With the adoption of more rigorous evaluation procedures, teacher self-efficacy may potentially be affected. Therefore, by examining the evaluation process, teachers will provide first-hand information that may address the issue of their perceived efficacy, as a result of their individual experiences with a more thorough evaluation model.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY and RESEARCH DESIGN

#### **Phenomenological Case Study Approach**

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). More specifically, a phenomenological case study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological comparative case study approach was implemented. The phenomenon is teachers' experiences with the evaluation process, using the adopted evaluation model. I interviewed and examined the responses of 12 elementary school teachers from two districts that use a specific state approved evaluation model, hoping to gauge how the teachers experience the evaluation process and how it relates to their perception of their own efficacy. Creswell (2007) notes that a case study is the exploration of a bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection and it employs the use of multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, and documents to provide a thorough case description and extract case-based themes. Because the case study presents several tools for comprehensive analysis of what teachers believe make them efficacious and how their perceived efficacy relates to the evaluation process, it was the most appropriate methodology for this qualitative research study.

#### **Teacher Evaluation Model**

The evaluation model that was used to measure teacher practice of the participants of this case study was the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model. The model is divided into four categories referred to as domains. Some districts have identified certain components, standards, or domains that they would like to weight more heavily (NJDOE, 2014). The Marzano model uses a scale to measure teacher performance by rating a teacher's use of a strategy as the

following: Beginning, Developing, Applying or Innovating. The numerical value of the scale is 1 (beginning) – 4 (innovating). The scale used for the evaluation was comparable with the ACHIEVE NJ scale used for the overall summative evaluation. At the time of data collection, tenured teachers were evaluated two times per year and non-tenured teachers were evaluated at least three times per year. The score attained from the evaluations conducted during the school year factored into a summative rating that is scored on a scale of 1-4 and defined as follows: Ineffective, Partially Effective, Effective and Highly Effective. The teacher might also take part in a reflection conference; however, the conference connected to how students respond to the lesson, and not how teachers viewed their effectiveness. The goal of self-improvement was connected to improving student outcomes, and not teacher efficacy.

### **Site Selection**

The primary objective of this study was to describe how teachers view their efficacy as it relates to the evaluation process. The two aspects of teacher efficacy are sense of personal control over their lives and teachers' sense of workplace effectiveness and how it affects student achievement. The study pursued the analysis and comprehension of the evaluation process and how teachers experienced the evaluation process using a certain evaluation model, connecting each individual's experience with the evaluation process to their perception of self-efficacy.

It was necessary to focus the research on a singular evaluation model. Further, I selected two districts that used the same model to conduct a comparative, phenomenological case study. It was important to study two school districts with similar demographics to ascertain if teachers have similar or dissimilar experience with the evaluation process using the shared model and how it affects their perception of their efficacy. Both schools selected for the case study are identified as Peer Schools based on the New Jersey School Performance Report Card for 2013-

2014. Peer Schools are defined as schools that have similar grade levels and students with similar demographic characteristics, such as the percentage of students qualifying for Free/Reduced Lunch, Limited English Proficient programs or Special Education programs (NJDOE, 2015). Although the schools are no longer identified as Peer Schools on the 2014-2015 School Performance Report Card, the population was similar enough to conduct a comparative phenomenological study.

### **The Research Sites**

To gain an understanding of the context of the study, it is important to supply an overview of the town and district of each school as well as provide a description of the climate of each school. Because the study addresses teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and effectiveness, socioeconomic status, school culture and district culture, giving a detailed portrayal of each school will provide a greater understanding of the findings relative to school culture, district culture, teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness

#### **Overview of the Edgewood School: Town and District**

The Edgewood School was part of a school district located in the central Piedmont section of New Jersey. When this study was conducted, the estimated population of the town where the Edgewood school is located was 47, 014 (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2015). The median age in the town was 41.1 years old. 91.3% of the population has reached an educational level of high school graduate or higher. The median income of residents was \$90,363, with 5.6% falling below poverty level. This is significant because during the school year 2015-2016, 87% of the students at Edgewood School were deemed economically disadvantaged (NJDOE, 2016).

The racial breakdown of the town where Edgewood School was located was as follows: The residents were 48% white; 42% black; 18% Hispanic; 7% Asian and 2% two or more races. Approximately 32.6% percent of the population spoke a language other than English. Additionally, 27 % of children in the home aged five-17 spoke a language other than English and 16% of children in the home between the ages of five-17 spoke Spanish (USCB, 2015). This information is noteworthy because at Edgewood School, 34% of the student population speaks Spanish and 9% of the student population is English language learners (NJDOE, 2016).

The school district where Edgewood School was located was composed of seven K-5 elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school. This diverse district was home to approximately 7,000 students. The school district offered instruction that is aligned with the New Jersey Common Core Standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and World Languages, as well as the Visual and Performing Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technology and 21st Century Life and Careers Programs. The district offered full day Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten programs and programs for special education students, basic skills, and bilingual/ESL to address students' specific needs. Accelerated Placement classes at the high school level as well as honors courses in the middle schools and a Gifted and Talented program at the elementary school level were other programs offered in the district (NJDOE, 2016).

### **Overview and Climate of the Edgewood School**

Edgewood School was an elementary school, located in the central Piedmont section of New Jersey. According to the New Jersey School Performance Report for 2013-2014, the school enrollment was approximately 445 students in grades kindergarten to five. The demographics were as follows: 52.6% Hispanic, 41.8% Black, 2.5% White, 1.1% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander

and 1.6% Two or More Races. Further, 11% or a total of 48 are students with a disability, 78.4% or 349 students are economically disadvantaged students and 10.3% or 46 students are Limited English Proficient.

For the school year 2014-2015, the school enrollment decreased to approximately 438 students. The demographics changed slightly for school year 2014-2015. The most recent demographics were as follows: 54.6% Hispanic, 39% Black, 2.1% White, 1.4% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander and 2.7% Two or More Races. Further, 10% or a total of 43 students are students with a disability, 84.9% or 372 students are economically disadvantaged students and 8.7% or 38 students are Limited English Proficient.

Finally, the New Jersey School Performance Report showed that for the 2015-2016 school year, the Edgewood School's enrollment was approximately 432 students in grades kindergarten to five. Of this number, 51% of the students are female and 49% of the students are male. The demographics were as follows: residents were 51.6% Hispanic, 41% Black, 2.5% White, 1.6% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander and 0.2% American Indian. Further, 10% were students with a disability, 87% are economically disadvantaged students and 9% are Limited English Proficient. Of the students, 58.8% spoke English, 34% spoke Spanish and 7.2% spoke a language other than English or Spanish. Furthermore, 39% of the students at the W School met or exceeded expectations in Language Arts Literacy and 53% of the students met or exceeded expectations in Mathematics.

The length of the school day was six hours and 38 minutes, with five hours and 43 minutes being dedicated to instruction. That said, 8.6% of the students exhibited chronic absenteeism, which was down from the previous school year, 2014-2015, when it was 8.8%



chronic absenteeism. Staff attendance rate was 97%. The student to faculty ratio was 10:1.

Finally, the student suspension rate was 1.4% and the expulsion rate was 0% (NJDOE, 2016).

At the time of this study, the school district where Edgewood School was located was in the middle of ongoing and strained contract negotiations. When data collection for the study began, teachers were without a contract for approximately 620 school days. This was important because teachers' perceptions of district culture and climate may have been affected by the ongoing contract negotiations. The school district adopted the Marzano Teacher Evaluation in 2013.

### **Overview of the Pioneer School: Town and District**

The Pioneer School was a part of school district located in the Inner Coastal Plain region of New Jersey. When this study was conducted, the estimated population of the town was 11,978 (USCB, 2015). The median age in the town was 32.7 years old, and 76.1% of the population had reached an educational level of high school graduate or higher. The median income of residents was \$54,595, with 15.6% falling below poverty level (USCB, 2015). This is significant because during the school year 2015-2016, 81% of the students at Pioneer School were deemed economically disadvantaged (NJDOE, 2015).

The racial breakdown of the town where Pioneer School was located was as follows: 39% white; 13% black; 44% Hispanic; 3% Asian and 1% two or more races. Approximately 43% percent of the population spoke a language other than English. Additionally, 44% of children in the home aged 5-17 spoke Spanish (USCB, 2015). At Pioneer School, 66.4% of the student population spoke Spanish and 30% of the student population was classified as English language learners (NJDOE, 2015).

The district, where the Pioneer School was located, was composed of three schools, one middle school and two elementary schools. Upon completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students enter high school in a neighboring district with a separate governing body. The district offered instruction that is aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and World Languages, as well as the Visual and Performing Arts, Health and Physical Education, Technology and 21st Century Life and Careers Programs. The district also offered a full day Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten program, as well as programs for special education students, basic skills, and bilingual/ESL to address students' specific needs. The district implemented a five-year Strategic Plan established in partnership with the school community, which addressed Student Achievement, Facilities/Finance and School/Community Partnerships (NJDOE, 2016).

### **Overview and Climate of The Pioneer School**

The Pioneer School was an elementary school located in the Inner Coastal Plain region of New Jersey. According to the New Jersey School Performance Report for 2013-2014, the school enrollment was approximately 599 students in grades pre-kindergarten to five. The demographics were as follows: 68.6% Hispanic, 9.3% Black, 19.9% White, 1.5% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander and 0.3% Two or More Races. Further, 18% or a total of 106 are students with a disability, 76.1% or 456 students are economically disadvantaged students and 17.4% or 104 students are Limited English Proficient.

For the school year 2014-2015, the school enrollment increased to approximately 616 students. The demographics changed slightly for school year 2014-2015. The most recent demographics were as follows: 73.1% Hispanic, 7.5% Black, 17.2% White, 1.6% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander and 0.3% Two or More Races. Further, 14% or a total of 85 students are students

with a disability, 72.7% or 448 students are economically disadvantaged students and 25.3% or 156 students are Limited English Proficient.

Finally, the New Jersey School Performance Report for 2015-2016 showed that Pioneer School's enrollment was approximately 651 students in grades kindergarten to five. The gender composition of the schools was that 47% of the students were female and 53% of the students were male. The demographics were as follows: 76% Hispanic, 7.2% Black, 14.9% White, 1.1% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander and 0.6% Multi-racial. Further, 20% were students with a disability, 81% are economically disadvantaged students and 30% are Limited English Proficient. Thirty-two percent of the students speak English and 66.4% of the students speak Spanish. Thirty-three percent of the students at Pioneer School met or exceeded expectations in Language Arts Literacy and 25% of the students met or exceeded expectations in Mathematics.

The length of the school day was six hours and 25 minutes, with five hours and 55 minutes being dedicated to instruction. Of the student population, 7.4% exhibit chronic absenteeism, which is an increase from the previous school year, 2014-2015, when it was 5.5% chronic absenteeism. Staff attendance rate was 96%. Student to faculty ration is 13:1. Finally, the student suspension rate is 2.9% and the expulsion rate is 0% (NJDOE, 2016). The school district adopted the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model in 2012.

At the time of this study, the school district where Pioneer School was located faced a budgetary deficit of approximately \$300,000. When I began data collection, the superintendent informed me that potentially nine staff positions would be cut to close the budget gap. This was important because teachers' perceptions of district culture and climate may have been affected by the impending staff cuts.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Edgewood School and Pioneer School

Site 1	School Year	Enrollment	Hispanic	Black	White	Asian	Pacific Islander	2+ Races	Students with Disability	ED**	LEP**
The Edgewood School	2013-2014	445	52.6%	42.8%	2.5%	1.1%	0.2%	1.6%	11%	78.4%	10.3%
	2014-2015	438	54.6%	39%	2.1%	1.4%	0.2%	2.7%	10%	84.9%	8.7%
	2015-2016	432	51.6%	41%	2.5%	1.6%	0.2%	2.8%	10%	87%	9%

\*Grades Kindergarten to Five

Site 2	School Year	Enrollment	Hispanic	Black	White	Asian	Pacific Islander	2+ Races	Students with Disability	ED**	LEP**
The Pioneer School	2013-2014	599	68.6%	9.3%	19.9%	1.5%	0.3%	0.3%	18%	76.1%	17.4%
	2014-2015	616	73.1%	7.5%	17.2%	1.6%	0.3%	0.3%	14%	72.7%	25.3%
	2015-2016	651	76%	7.2%	14.9%	1.1%	0.2%	0.6%	20%	81%	30%

\*Grades pre-kindergarten to five

\*\*ED: Economically Disadvantaged; LEP: Limited English Proficient

### Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in qualitative research allowing for the selection of individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I interviewed 12 teachers, six teachers from two different schools that used the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model. Further, it was important to include teachers who have been exposed to the previous bimodal evaluation process in the sample. By selecting teachers with experience with the older evaluation process, as well as the newer evaluation process, a comparison could be made about teachers' feelings about their efficacy and effectiveness as related to the evaluation process, past and present. Therefore, participants for the study were selected in consultation with the school principals from each site. To obtain a varied sample of participants for the case study (Creswell, 2007), teachers with diverse backgrounds were chosen. For example, the sample of teachers who participated in the interviews and who use the evaluation model included the following: novice teachers with less than five years previous teaching experience; veteran teachers; general education and special education teachers who teach different subject matter in

grades kindergarten through five; and special area teachers, such as art, music, physical education or world language. It is worth noting that according to Department of Education data for Staff Evaluation, 2013-2014, the Edgewood School had 37 teachers identified as Effective, according to guidelines set because of the TEACHNJ Act. The Pioneer School identified 37 teachers as effective, as well. There were no Highly Effective Teachers identified in either school.

This purposeful sample allowed me to have teachers with differing experiences and by focusing on two schools, I could gauge the implications of school culture and the use of the evaluation model on teachers' individual experiences.

### **Participant Recruitment**

Participants for the study were recruited during the 2016-2017 school year. A letter, requesting access to the site in each district, was submitted to the superintendent of schools in each district (Appendix A). Further, I supplied each superintendent with a letter granting me permission to conduct my dissertation research in each district (Appendix B). Then I contacted the principal of each site, explaining the purpose of the research as well as detailing the design of the study (Appendix C). In addition, the letter explained how research records will be stored and how participant confidentiality will be maintained. Finally, a teacher recruitment letter was disseminated to faculty members explaining the purpose of the study as well as describing the research design and explaining how participant records will be stored and confidentiality maintained (Appendix D).

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and once participants were recruited, teachers who agreed to participate in the study were given a Teacher Recruitment and Contact Information form, signifying their interest in participating in the study as well as

consenting to being interviewed and recorded during the interview (Appendix E). Contact information was also recorded on the form. An informed consent was given to each participant describing the study, the risks, cost and compensation, confidentiality and providing contact information to each participant (Appendix F). Lastly, participants were given the interview protocol prior to the interview, in order to familiarize themselves with the interview questions (Appendix G).

### **Data Collection**

Case studies can focus on programs in organizations or a group, which can entail immersion in the setting and gaining the participants views of the program (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The case study, the most complex strategy, may employ multiple methods such as interviews, observations, document analysis and even surveys. In keeping with the components of case study and to provide a rich, in-depth look at the program, two methods of data collection were used for the study.

### **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process. For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). Interviews with teachers were conducted, focusing on their individual perceptions of what they believe efficacy means and if they believe themselves to be efficacious. I discussed the evaluation process to determine what the teachers know about the evaluative tool and how it relates the evaluation process. Further, I wished to ascertain whether the participants believe the evaluation process affects their feelings of their own efficacy. An interview protocol was designed that elicited open-ended responses. Questions regarding the school's culture and how it affects teachers' sense of efficacy were included in the protocol,

using Tierney's (2008) framework of organizational culture, specifically questions regarding environment. For this study, I met with each teacher to conduct one interview.

Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants and were approximately one hour in length. Interviews were audio-taped using two separate digital recorders, to ensure accurate transcription of interview data. The recordings and notes were uploaded to the researcher's personal computer, which is password protected. Interviews were transcribed immediately following the completion of each interview. Upon completion of interview transcription, transcripts were saved on the researcher's personal password protected computer. Further, data were saved on a flash drive that was locked in a file cabinet, along with notes and documents obtained from data collection.

The participants were assured confidentiality, as stated in the consent agreement. Participants were identified using pseudonyms throughout the interview. A participant's name and the name of the school(s) in which he/she teaches were removed from interview transcripts and notes. Assigned pseudonyms were used as identifiers in the transcripts and notes. The research was stored in a locked file cabinet and remains confidential, meaning that the research records only included non-identifying information, such as participant's teaching position and years of experience. Participants were advised that all audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

I engaged in a method of multi-staged coding to analyze my transcribed interview data. After each interview, data transcription occurred immediately or as close to the day of the interview as possible. Here, the researcher built detailed descriptions, developed themes and dimensions, and provided interpretation considering their own views or views of perspectives in

the literature (Creswell, 2012). An in-depth summary of each participant's interview was written. Each teacher's data record was hand coded, according to research questions. Coding data is the formal representation of analytic thinking, in which categories and themes will be generated (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Coding scheme was applied to categories and themes, diligently and thoroughly, marking passages in the data using codes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The next step involved looking at each teacher's responses and coded data and comparing them, looking for common patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, I was looking to see what aspects of the evaluation process teachers find beneficial and related to determining their efficacy. I also looked for aspects of the evaluation process teachers believe are not beneficial in helping them gauge their efficacy. Further, I attempted to ascertain if teachers understand the value of evaluative process.

Worth noting is the possibility that because non-tenured teachers have limited experience with the evaluation process, their content knowledge may be significantly different than the content knowledge of veteran teachers. Thus, the feedback from non-tenured teachers regarding the value of the evaluative process as well as their sense of efficacy might have yielded significant data.

Finally, I organized data about self-efficacy and the evaluation process, gathered from interviews, to gain a general sense of the teachers' individual experiences, especially the content that teachers mention in their interviews. A thick, rich descriptive summary was written detailing the various aspects of the evaluation process, which includes what it is and how it is implemented, as well as how everyone experienced the evaluation process. I included a written account of the various themes that arose as a result of the coding of the data and developed naturalistic generalizations with information that people can learn from my case and apply to



other cases as well (Creswell, 2007). Ultimately, I will refer to previous research to see what has been written about efficacy, the purpose of evaluation, how the two are related and how it relates to my findings.

### **Validity**

To provide evidence of the validity of the findings, I made use of two strategies for this study. In keeping with the qualitative method of case study, in which analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2007), I provide a thick, rich description of the settings of the study. With such a detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings to determine whether the findings can be transferred (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2012). The other strategy used to determine validity is triangulation of the data, where multiple and different sources and methods, such as interviews, documents, and observations to provide corroborating evidence will be used (Creswell, 2007). By interviewing teachers at different grade levels, with differing backgrounds and teaching assignments, findings and themes that will arise because of the interviews will be supported.

Finally, member checking was used to validate the data. This approach, *writ large* in most qualitative studies involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2007). The participants were asked to examine rough drafts of the researcher's work and to provide alternative language, "critical to observations or interpretations" (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995).

### **Limitations and Significance**

All dissertations have their limitations. Because my study focused on two school districts using one evaluation model, transferability or generalizability to other school districts is

problematic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Further, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model is not used by many New Jersey school districts. Therefore, teachers in districts who use other evaluation models may have differing feelings, positive or negative, based on their individual experiences with a different evaluation model. Furthermore, I realize the limitation of focusing on one evaluation model; however, the study may provide administrators with information that may drive future evaluations.

Because the sample size was small, and participation was not certain, this may be considered a limitation. Sample size could have affected collection of data and data analysis. This research relied on documentation and the willingness of the participants to share evaluation information, as part of the research methods. Thus, the participants may not have been desirous of sharing documents or information related to previous evaluations. Therefore, if participation was low, access to documents may be restricted. This could be considered a limitation.

One off shoot of teacher efficacy that was not included in the study is the concept of collective efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy, the belief that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive outcome on students, is based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, a unified theory of behavior change (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2010). Just as individual teacher efficacy may partly clarify the effect of teachers on student achievement, from an organizational perspective, collective teacher efficacy may help to explain the different effect that teachers in schools have on student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2010). Since the researcher was looking at teacher efficacy through the lens of the individual teacher and not teachers as a collective, this may be considered a limitation.

Another limitation is that as a veteran teacher who has been exposed to the teacher evaluation model that is part of the study, the researcher may exhibit personal interest, otherwise

referred to as positionality (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Omitting personal experiences may have been difficult for the researcher to implement because interpretations of the data always incorporate assumptions that the researcher brings to the topic (Creswell, 2012; LeVasseur, 2003). Thus, the researcher needed to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study (Creswell, 2012). This was accomplished by allowing the participants to speak freely during the interview process, without the researcher providing any additional knowledge or understandings of efficacy and the evaluation process to the participant. However, during data analysis, the researcher's prior knowledge was helpful with analyzing interview data and identifying themes and codes.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological comparative case study was to examine how teachers perceive their sense of efficacy and how it relates to their effectiveness, based on their experience with their mandated evaluation process. Two school districts, that used the same teacher evaluation model, were selected for the study. The two sites had similar demographics and were identified as Peer Schools based on the New Jersey School Performance Report Card for 2013-2014. The research protocol focused on teachers' self-efficacy perception; teachers' feelings about what makes for an effective teacher and their feelings of effectiveness; teachers' thoughts on the purpose of the evaluation process; and lastly, how school culture and district culture may or may not affect teachers' feelings of efficacy and effectiveness.

By using qualitative methods to look at teachers' understandings of evaluation, the evaluation process and efficacy, I discovered what teachers deemed were important aspects of the evaluation process and if their perception of their efficacy is affected by the process. Further, the school districts that were the focus of this case study, as well as other school districts that

may use the Marzano model, may consider new ways to improve upon the evaluation process and communicating with teachers who may question their effectiveness.

In this chapter, the context of the study was discussed. The subsequent analysis of the data relied on the context of the districts and schools involved in this study. Therefore, it was important to describe the demographics and climate of each district and school that is a part of this study. Crucial to the research questions, detailing the demographics, student achievement, socioeconomic status of the students and school climate will allow the researcher to examine the participants' responses and understandings. The research protocol addresses teacher perception of efficacy and effectiveness, school culture, district culture and socioeconomic status of the student population. Thus, the researcher provided detailed information about the towns, districts and schools involved in the study, according to demographics, student achievement, socioeconomic status, district climate and school climate.

**CHAPTER 4: RESULTS and FINDINGS: EDGEWOOD SCHOOL**

In this chapter, I present the responses from the teachers at Edgewood School.

First, I discuss participants' overall feelings of teacher efficacy. Next, I share teachers' ideas of the characteristics of an effective teacher. Then, what follows is a discussion about what teachers believed to be the purpose of teacher evaluation, their experience with the evaluation process and their feelings about the evaluation process. After, I examine Edgewood School's culture, as well as Edgewood School's district culture and how they shape teacher efficacy. I also analyze the socioeconomic status of the students at Edgewood School and how it shapes teacher efficacy, as well. Lastly, I evaluate Edgewood School teachers' thoughts on what aspects of the evaluation process can help strengthen their sense of effectiveness.

**Teachers Feelings of Efficacy: Edgewood School**

Six teachers from the Edgewood School were selected to take part in the study. Overall, all the participants had a combined total of 100 years' experience. Of the six participants, there was one novice, Natalie, who has been a teacher for three years. Background and experience was mentioned significantly when participants were asked to describe their feelings of confidence in their teaching ability. Veteran teachers, at the Edgewood School, felt very confident in their teaching ability and voiced a strong sense of teacher efficacy. Teachers connected their efficaciousness to their lengthy teaching experience. Melissa, who had been a classroom teacher for 24 years stated, "I feel very confident, because I have been doing this a long time." Jane, a veteran classroom teacher for 21 years, mentioned that teaching for so many years helped her know how to modify and differentiate instruction, so she felt very confident in her teaching ability. Renee pointed out that being a teacher for so many years made her feel comfortable

“taking risks because I’m confident that what I am doing is benefiting my class and my students.”

Natalie was the teacher with the least experience, serving as a classroom teacher for 3 years at the time of the study. When asked about her feelings of confidence in her teaching ability, she stated, “I feel that it’s grown a lot. I feel like every year I see more and more that I can really handle whatever gets thrown at me....at the beginning of my career I was not confident. So, with more experience I’ve gotten, I think I have definitely grown and I feel good about my teaching ability.” Clearly, Natalie connected a strong sense of teacher efficacy with experience. Of all the participants from the Edgewood School, she was the one who mentioned having a slightly diminished sense of teacher efficacy.

Table 2: The Edgewood School Participants

Study Participants	Number of Years Teaching	Grade Assignment (at time of study)	Subjects Taught (at time of study)
Melissa (CM211)	24 years	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mathematics and Science
Renee (GR6922)	12 years	Gifted & Talented, grades 2-5	All Subjects
Melinda (MBM7203)	Over 30 years	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> grades	Orchestra/Strings
Natalie (MN9530)	3 years	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Language Arts and Social Studies
Jane (TJ8896)	21 years	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Language Arts and Social Studies
Jackie (VJ0874)	11 years	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Language Arts and Social Studies

### Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: Edgewood School

Lavy (2016) broached the subject of teachers’ personal characteristics and attributes, as well as what they do in the classroom, to gauge the most effective teaching practices or characteristics of an effective teacher. Participants were asked what an effective teacher is and what they felt are the best practices of an effective teacher. In doing so, the researcher wished to ascertain what participants believed to be the traits and teaching practices of an effective teacher. Further, the researcher wanted to know if teachers felt they embodied those characteristics and implemented effective teaching practices.

Renee offered a detailed description of what she believed is the characteristics of an effective teacher. She responded, “I think an effective teacher is a teacher who forms relationships with students, makes connections with students, can create a safe learning environment for students where they feel comfortable and respected. An effective teacher allows students to learn at their own pace, challenges students, keeps students engaged. An effective teacher listens to students, who can respond appropriately, keeps an open dialogue.” Renee believed that she was an effective teacher because she had a classroom that was student-driven and student-centered. She stated that she listened to her students and made connections with her students. Finally, she believed that her students are always engaged and challenged. Therefore, she was an effective teacher.

The importance of monitoring student progress and adjusting the lesson was mentioned as practices implemented by effective teachers. Jackie and Melinda had similar thoughts regarding monitoring and adjusting to gauge student understanding. Jackie stated, “An effective teacher is someone that plans lessons with their students in mind. Creates a caring and safe environment and always monitors and adjust.” She believed it is important for students to feel safe in the learning environment. In this way, she felt that she was an effective teacher because she made sure that she created a safe and caring learning environment. She also took time to gauge the success of the lesson to check for student understanding and made changes to meet the lesson objective. In this way she felt she was an effective teacher.

Melinda also said that being able to monitor and adjust a lesson was an important practice of an effective teacher. “You need to be able to know where your kids are and have confidence in yourself that you can get them to the point you need to go. You need to know how you have to get there sequentially, and you have to know ... You have to have your checkpoints. An effective

teacher I think in any subject, any level, would do what I'm describing, but also be able to monitor and adjust, to monitor what you have and see where your kids are at certain points, and then adjust accordingly," she revealed. By incorporating these actions into her instruction, Melinda felt that she was an effective teacher. She measured student achievement based on the results. "My kids always perform at an ability level that people find are above where they think they should be. Therefore, that tells me I am effective."

Looking at an individual student and being able to determine their needs is a practice of an effective teacher according to Melissa. She conveyed that she believed an effective teacher was one "that is able to look at every child and say that child can learn and that child can get to the next level." She asserted that you cannot put a child in a box or limit them by making the child feel that he/she cannot achieve. Melissa felt that she was an effective teacher because she did not limit the students and she had high expectations that she expressed to the students. Similar in thought to Melissa is Natalie who expressed that an effective teacher reached all students, academically and personally. She also conveyed that it was important to use different modalities and different methods to "make sure that you're reaching all of them." Natalie, who was the teacher with the least experience, "thinks" she was an effective teacher. She was always trying different things to reach the students and she depended on feedback from the students to establish her effectiveness. "I am constantly getting feedback from them and sort of picking up on what they needed from me."

Lastly, Jane connected being an effective teacher with having strong behavior management skills overall. She replied, "I think that you might have the best intentions, and you might be great at your subject and content knowledge, but if you don't have a behavior modification program or behavior control in your class, the kids will never learn as much as they



can. It will not be rigorous academics for them.” By having strong behavior management skills, Jane felt that she could instruct students effectively. She believed that she was an effective teacher in this sense because she achieved success with her students. For example, she shared, “I taught a full inclusion class and even though there were two teachers in the room. The entire class, 21 students, passed the PARCC. That was nine classified students in that class, so I feel that I do a good job.”

### **Purpose of the Evaluation Process: Edgewood School**

To gauge how teachers understood the evaluation process, it was necessary to ask participants what they believed to be the purpose of the evaluation process. Participants indicated what they believed to be the purpose of the evaluation process. Teachers from the Edgewood School had similar views and ideas about the purpose of the evaluation process. To begin, teachers responded that the purpose of evaluation was to assess teachers’ performance for several reasons.

One reason to evaluate teachers, according to Melinda, was to “see how teachers are doing based on whatever criteria the district has set forth, or the state. On a superficial level, it’s to get rid of the teachers who are not making it.” This sentiment was echoed by Jane who stated that the purpose of evaluation is to “weed out” teachers. But, Jane also noted that evaluation lets administrators and teachers know “if they need extra help or professional development in a certain are.” However, like Renee responded, evaluation was necessary so that teachers and administrators can “learn where teachers need to grow and better themselves in their profession.” Teachers learn more about areas of improvement based on feedback received from the evaluation, according to Natalie, who said that, “I think it’s more so to get feedback and kind of

see what maybe a majority of teachers need help in.” Also, teachers believed evaluation informs professional development needs for teachers.

Teachers did not view evaluation as a negative construct. One teacher said that she believed in evaluation for everybody because, “I think the concept of evaluation, looking at what your strengths and weaknesses are, is a very good thing.” However, teachers felt that the process could be simplified. In comparison to past practice, teachers believed the process was more complicated, giving teachers more criteria for assessment. For example, one teacher worried that she was not addressing required items, such as posting objectives and addressing certain elements, while being evaluated. Another teacher was concerned that while the process did have common language that is used by teachers and administrators, she worried that the supervisors and administrators are not properly trained. For instance, Melissa shared, “How well are they trained? Are they biased themselves? Are they measuring by their own experiences? I think that there needs to be more understanding as far as the training goes.” Her concerns were echoed by Melinda who said, “They have no idea how to evaluate us. I don’t think they have been properly trained to do this.”

An interesting point was that the teachers’ sense of teacher efficacy was not negatively affected by the evaluation process. Teachers shared that regardless of what evaluation tool was used, past or present, they had a high sense of teacher efficacy. For example, Renee noted that some of the current evaluation process “gets like a little bit diluted or is not always necessary and it takes away from helping me grow as a teacher.” However, she also stated that the current evaluation process did not affect her teacher efficacy because she felt confident in what she did so “I don’t allow the process to affect my belief in myself.” Another teacher, Natalie, also stated that she did not feel that her teacher efficacy was affected by the evaluation process, because her

primary concern is that the students felt good about themselves. She remarked, “As long as the students feel good about themselves at the end of the day, and I feel like I reached them, then I feel like, I still feel confident.” The evaluation process had no effect on Jane’s sense of teacher efficacy. She stated that she has always been considered highly effective, regardless of what evaluation tool was being used. She shared that she knows she is “good at what I do.” Besides receiving positive evaluations using the former and current evaluation process, other evidence that supported her sense of teacher efficacy is that the principal had her model lessons for other teachers and made her a subject area specialist. Because of this, she felt it was obvious that she was a successful teacher, thus giving her a stronger sense of teacher efficacy.

Similarly, teachers’ sense of effectiveness was not negatively impacted by the evaluation process. In fact, one teacher believed that she was a more effective teacher. Jackie felt that she took more time when completing lesson plans. She also stated, “I try to improve on past evaluations so that makes me better.” She was using the data from the evaluation to inform her planning and instruction. Natalie was another teacher who thought that she was effective because she believed the evaluation process offered many opportunities for her to demonstrate her effectiveness. Jane strongly voiced how unaffected she was about the evaluation process by stating that “I will do my job no matter what.” Because she was willing to change and try new things to help her improve as a teacher, Jane shared that her sense of efficacy and effectiveness were intact because she was an educator who was willing to change. The evaluation process did not affect her view of her efficacy or her effectiveness.

While the current evaluation was thought to be more rigorous, teachers did not feel that the current evaluation process made them feel less efficacious or less effective in comparison to the past, bimodal evaluation process. For example, one teacher believed that her feelings of

teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness were the same, regardless of what evaluation tool was used. She stated that she did not think her ability to teach had changed, nor did her confidence level change. Renee shared that the past evaluation process was just clearer, giving her a better understanding of what she could improve and what she was doing well. But she did not allow the evaluation process to affect her sense of teacher efficacy or effectiveness.

Besides the evaluation process, teachers found other ways to gauge their effectiveness. Overwhelmingly, all participants mentioned that student learning and student participation was the measures the teachers used, besides the evaluation process, to determine their effectiveness. Melissa said that the “starry look” on the students’ faces and their anticipation was how she knew that she was an effective teacher. She also mentioned that when former students come to visit, that lets her know that she was an effective teacher. Jackie also discussed that the use of academic measurements, such as formative and summative assessments, helped her gauge her effectiveness. She stated, “Student progress, like teaching reading, a lot of my students moved up on their reading level, things like that.” These tangible assessments gave her evidence of her effectiveness.

For these teachers, when they are evaluated using the current process, they are scored on a scale of one-four and defined as follows: Ineffective, Partially Effective, Effective and Highly Effective. Overall, teachers at the Edgewood School received an average score of 3.47 in school year 2014-2015 and 3.67 in school year 2015-2016. Edgewood School is considered a low performing school when compared to the other elementary schools in the district. However, the teachers received higher ratings on teacher evaluations. This supported the participants’ belief in their teacher efficacy and effectiveness.

**School Culture, District Culture & Teachers' Sense of Teacher Efficacy: Edgewood School**

School culture is important because it influences everything that happens in the school, especially the way teachers think, feel and act (Peterson & Deal, 2002). In the case of Edgewood School, teachers had a solid idea of their school's culture and how the culture of the school affected their sense of teacher efficacy, although some of the teachers at Edgewood School had differing views of the school culture. Furthermore, teachers made powerful statements about their district's culture. What follows is a discussion of the school culture of Edgewood School as well as the district culture.

**School Culture and Teacher Efficacy: Edgewood School**

Teachers from the Edgewood School had varied views about the culture of their school. Of the six participants, two responded positively when asked to describe the school's culture. However, the four remaining teachers had differing points of view about the school culture. Jackie and Melissa had positive feelings about the culture of the Edgewood School. Melissa stated that she loved the school and the principal. She felt that the work ethic of the teachers was strong and that the teachers exhibited love and compassion for the students. Melissa also appreciated the diversity of the school, saying "the diversity, I could not work in a school that is not diverse. That is something I really feel good about and that made a big difference to me." Thus, the school's culture helped her to have a strong sense of teacher efficacy. Melissa believed that the culture of the school makes her feel good about her ability to teach and reach her students.

Jackie addressed the change in the school and the school's growth as programs changed in the school. She thought that although the change was scary for people, she believed that the changes were positive. Thus, it was creating a positive school culture. Ultimately, she said that

she must do her best for the students and for the other teachers and administrators. She stated, “It makes me, I don’t know, being here makes me better.” The school’s culture inspired her to try to be a better teacher. Therefore, the school’s culture affected her sense of teacher efficacy in a positive way.

On the other hand, the other 4 teachers offered a different view of the school culture. They felt that the school culture was not positive. For example, Melinda mentioned that the school culture was difficult at Edgewood School, due to the low and varied socioeconomic status (SES) of the students. She felt that teachers used the low SES as an excuse not to push students to be academically successful. Melinda stated, “I believe that they are giving excuses and they don’t want to push as hard because they are making excuses for the kids.” Therefore, the culture of the school suffered because of the low SES of the students. Interestingly, while Melinda believed that the school culture was negative, she didn’t feel that it affected her sense of efficacy. On the contrary, Melinda had a strong sense of teacher efficacy. She believed that the environment and negative culture “makes me a better teach because I have to weigh my options and figure it out.” So, the negative culture had a positive effect on Melinda’s sense of teacher efficacy.

Another teacher, Jane, also connected the low socioeconomic status of the students and the school academically struggling to the school’s culture. Jane mentioned the fact that she had students living in a car, and another student who was in foster care. Because of the low SES of the students, she believed that the Edgewood School didn’t get the support it needed from the district. Jane said, “We have teachers who are trying and trying and we’re not getting anywhere.” She broached the idea of the district needing to differentiate based on school needs because she felt that the school didn’t receive adequate support for the students with low SES; thus, teachers

must work harder to meet the needs of the students which leads to diminished morale. This overall low morale contributed to the negative school culture. Ironically, while Jane believed that the school's culture was negative due to low morale, the negative culture did not affect her feelings of teacher efficacy. When asked if the school's culture shaped her sense of teacher efficacy, she stated "I don't think it really does. I think that we have to remember that they're kids, and the culture of the school, I don't care if you're having a bad day or if other teachers are down. You have a job to do and your job is to take care of those kids. If their home life is bad, you have a job to make them feel safe, learn and support the children and it (school culture) shouldn't." Thus, Jane's main concern was the children and she believed that the negative culture should not have any effect on her sense of teacher efficacy.

Renee also mentioned low morale as a reason for the negative school culture at the Edgewood School. Renee stated, "I would say the morale is a little bit low." She went on to say that "there's confusion regarding the roles of what teachers are expected to do and what teachers do. I think there's a lack of communication within the school that affects its culture." Teachers lacked certainty as to what they're expected to do, which led the teachers to have diminished morale. Not only were the teachers' morale diminished, but this also led to feelings of stress. Renee felt that the lack of communication and the lack of goals changed teachers' ability or sense of their ability as a teacher.

Natalie pointed out that "everybody's really stressed out it seems; everybody seems like they're trying to do their best and we try and help each other. But it does seem like everybody's really on edge a lot." Teachers were working to ensure that the students were getting an education. But without proper support, teacher morale was decreasing, and feelings of stress were increasing, which led to a negative school culture. However, even though she believed that

the stress of the teachers negatively affected the school culture, she felt confident and efficacious. Natalie said, “I know that I can count on them (colleagues) to give me advice and I don’t feel weird about asking anybody for help. I think that makes me a better teacher and I still feel confident in what I’m doing.” Thus, the negative school culture did not affect her perception of her teacher efficacy.

### **District Culture and Teacher Efficacy: The Edgewood School**

Teachers from the Edgewood School had consistent views overall when asked about the district culture. The district culture was negative. Various reasons were given for the perceived negative culture of the school district. Renee, for example, simply stated that the district culture was a “disaster.” She went on further to say that she did not believe that teachers feel respected. She further noted, “The job that we do, I don’t feel like it’s being portrayed well, and I think there’s a giant gap in communication between the district and its staff and teachers.” Natalie’s statements supported this idea when she noted “we are doing a lot of good things here and there are so many good things happening, but I feel like a lot of times it gets overshadowed by ‘we’re not doing this enough or we could do this’, so there’s stress. I wish there was more positive celebrations.”

The district culture was described as an “I got you culture” by Melinda. She explained that she felt that administrators are using the evaluation tool as a tool to punish or control teachers. She was very concerned with wondering who she could trust when speaking to an administrator. Melinda wondered, “I’ve been friends with so many people for so long and now I find myself hesitating before I say things because who else is that person talking to?” Not only was she hesitant about speaking to an administrator even about topics that were not work-related, but she was also reluctant to engage in conversation with an administrator socially. She stated



that she had no worries about her job being in jeopardy, but she was concerned about being happy in the district when its culture was so negative.

Finally, Jane had very strong feelings about the state of the district's culture. Jane believed the district culture was negative. She declared that, "there is a lot put on us for less pay than we were making. Every year something gets added and we're making less money." She said that this was one of the reasons for the overall low morale of the teaching staff in the district. She went on further to say, "that's very hard, doing your job and doing more than you ever have, but you're getting less money from it."

Despite teachers believing that the district culture is negative, they were split in their feelings on how district culture shapes their sense of teacher efficacy. Two of the participants responded positively. Jane commented that she had a job to do and that she was going to do her job, regardless of the negative district culture. In addition, when I asked Melissa how the district culture affected her sense of teacher efficacy, she answered, "It just doesn't." Melissa stated that when she closed her door, it was all about the students. Neither Jane nor Melissa felt that the negative district culture affected their feelings of teacher efficacy.

On the other hand, three of the participants felt as though the district culture did affect their feelings of teacher efficacy. For example, when asked if the district's culture affected her sense of teacher efficacy, Renee said "I feel they don't believe what I do is important, or they don't believe what I do is necessary. It affects my sense of efficacy because they don't show an interest or desire to learn more about what I even do." Thus, the district's lack of interest affected her belief in her confidence and ability to teach.

Natalie also made a strong statement about her sense of teacher efficacy and the district's negative culture when she said, "I worry that everything that I do may be incorrect and will get

magnified and things that I do correctly will get minimized which is worrisome. As a new teacher, I want to obviously be impressive. So I think that affects me a lot because I really worry a lot that I'm doing something wrong and sometimes honestly that stress I think gets carried onto the kids.....I think that feeling of stress on your chest all the time isn't good."

Thus, Natalie felt that the negative district culture affected her sense of efficacy because she believed that she may be chastised or penalized if she was doing something incorrect. Natalie's diminished sense of teacher efficacy may also be related to her lack of experience; she was the teacher with the least experience. At the time of the study, Natalie only had three years of teaching experience. Again, it is worth noting again that she mentioned that she was a new teacher, and she wanted to impress the administration.

Someone who also addressed the issue of fear and a diminished sense of teacher efficacy because of the school district's negative culture was Melinda. She stated that the district's negative culture made her very hesitant to try new things, when the new evaluation system was implemented. When referring to being evaluated in the past, Melinda shared "when I was evaluated in the past, it was, I just did my thing and then we talked about it. I enjoyed teaching for an administrator." That view changed with the implementation of the new evaluation process and how it affected the district culture. With the new evaluation process Melinda said, "It made me very, very worried and stilted when I was getting evaluated." She was concerned that she may be penalized for not "hitting every point that they wanted" when being evaluated. "The other things I had to do I had to think, 'My God, did I do this? I didn't remember. Did I do the scale? I don't know. I can't remember. Is my objective up? Am I doing this? Does it coincide with me....where is my essential question?' I was so much more concerned with the 'physicalness' of my room that my teaching felt stilted and not me." As a result, Melinda's sense of

teacher efficacy was lessened due to the negative district culture because of the new evaluation process. The fear of retribution and worrying about her performance affected her sense of teacher efficacy.

There was one additional aspect that was worth mentioning. The district, where The Edgewood School is located, was amid protracted contract negotiations. Overall, the district culture was negative as job actions took place such as boycotting any activities that occurred after contractual hours. The teachers were without a contract for over three academic years and at the time of the interviews for this study, a settlement had not been reached. Thus, teachers' feelings of teacher efficacy may have been negatively affected by the adverse district culture at the time.

#### **Socio-Economic Status and Teacher Efficacy: The Edgewood School**

According to the New Jersey School Performance Report statistics available at the time of data collection, 87% of the student population of 432 students at The Edgewood School, in grades kindergarten to five, were economically disadvantaged. To be specific, that was approximately 376 students. Teachers were asked if the socio-economic status (SES) of the students affected their sense of teacher efficacy. Participants responded that students' SES affected their sense of teacher efficacy in some way. For example, Jackie stated that low SES "makes it a little bit more difficult for me because they are a hard group of students to reach and they come to school with a whole different set of problems that are not only academic problems. So, I would say that 60% of my day is spent on academics and 40% of my day is spent being a counselor or dealing with people that are hungry or having bad home life situations." Thus, she felt as though her sense of teacher efficacy was decreased because she was unsure that she could reach students academically, because of socio-economic status.

Jane looked at the issue of SES and teacher efficacy from another point of view. Jane discussed how children with low SES did not have access to technology, such as a computer, telephone or other electronic device. Because of this, she believed “that there are certain things that I’m not able to do, or I have to carry over assignments. I feel that in that sense, sometimes we are always a day or two behind, because we’re always playing catch up, where other children don’t have to do that.” She felt that there was no fair playing field for the low SES students and because they were unable to have the proper materials to facilitate instruction in school and at home, Jane did not feel confidence in her ability to teach students with a low SES status.

Echoing similar sentiments about access to materials for low SES students was Melinda, who taught a class requiring instruments. She shared that she worried about those students who cannot afford to rent an instrument and was given one to use for instruction. “At least 80 kids, virtually all of them are on free lunch. That means they are eligible for a school instrument,” Melinda noted. Not only did she have to worry about supplying instruments to these students, but she also worried about making sure that the students had a safe place to keep their instruments, as well as a place to practice, often allowing students to practice with her after school. She shared that it is “different than other schools” because unlike the other elementary schools in the district where the Edgewood School is located, it had a high number of low SES students. Therefore, Melinda noted that the expectations were the same for all students in the elementary schools, but it was more difficult to serve the lower SES students and she questioned her teacher efficacy and ability to confidently instruct the students as a result.

Two teachers stated that their teacher efficacy was mostly unaffected by the low SES of the students they teach. Melissa specified that her teacher efficacy is not affected, and she felt confident in her ability to reach the students. However, she also added that she had more

empathy for those students. She said, “It (low SES) makes me more tender-hearted towards them, more sensitive.” She made a concerted effort to reach out to these students so that she could make connections with them. Renee was very succinct with her response, stating “I don’t think that students’ low socioeconomic status should affect how a teacher views their ability to teach.” She believed that if you are confident in your ability to teach as well as competent, a student’s socioeconomic status should not affect your sense of teacher efficacy.

### **Feedback and Self-Reflection: The Edgewood School**

Participants were asked what aspects of the evaluation process help them to strengthen their sense of effectiveness. Natalie embraced the opportunity to sit with the evaluator and discuss the evaluation. Natalie, who is the teacher with the least amount of teaching experience, found being able to ask questions about the evaluation very helpful. Natalie shared, “I think it’s really beneficial because they saw you do the lesson, they give you some advice and that’s one on one time when you can finally ask ‘Am I doing this right?’ or ‘What advice do you have on this topic?’ I think that really strengthens my effectiveness because I ask them questions that pertain to me personally.” As a novice teacher, it is important to Natalie that she hones her teaching skills and improves in areas of weakness.

When it came to feedback, Jane believed that more feedback from the evaluators was necessary. She felt that the evaluators should give more information, overall, to help assist teachers and she wanted the feedback to be more specific, and “more than just you’re highly effective.” Further, she shared that if she was told that she was highly effective, then she thought that everything was great. A teacher who is considered highly effective may not feel the need to change teaching methods. Thus, Jane felt that more specific information identifying what made a

teacher highly effective should be incorporated into the feedback teachers received from the evaluators, so that teachers can grow.

Other participants discussed feedback being an aspect of the evaluation process that helped strengthen their sense of effectiveness. Jackie stated that it was important to receive information from her supervisor such as identifying specific strategies she can use or analyzing the lesson so that the supervisor can help her recognize what she can do better the next time. Renee felt it was important for evaluators to “give a more open dialogue about the content in your teaching and the engagement of the students” instead of focusing on such things as the lesson objectives, ratings scales and goals. Dialogue and feedback was more significant.

To conclude, Melinda really emphasized the need for dialogue and feedback from the evaluator, especially those evaluators who are not familiar with the subject matter she taught. Being in the fine arts department, when dealing with her supervisor she stated she and her supervisor had a dialogue about the evaluation and brainstormed about how to improve. She finds the feedback beneficial when it was from her department supervisor. However, she did not “feel a dialogue with non-music people at all.” To continue she said, “I don’t feel like they (non-music people) really know what they’re looking at a lot of times.” Therefore, she advocated for herself by supplying those supervisors with a list of items that pertained to what she was doing in the classroom, to make the feedback and dialogue more relevant to what she was doing.

Teacher self-reflection was also an important component of the evaluation process that teachers believed helped them reinforce their effectiveness. Being able to reflect on teaching and thinking about how she could improve is something that Jackie believed was important. She mentioned that the reflection piece was a good part of the evaluation that allowed her to “write about my lessons, think back to what I could have done better during the lessons which helps me

be better.” Melissa also discussed the reflection piece that was part of the evaluation process. She stated that while completing it was extra work, “it definitely helps me look back and say ‘whoa, I could have done this differently’.” Finally, Natalie said that she was always reflecting and that she didn’t mind doing the reflection report after the evaluation. “That’s a good time to actually sit and write down your thoughts on a lesson and give yourself feedback,” noted Natalie. As a novice teacher it helped her to think about areas of improvement.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I shared the responses from the teachers at Edgewood School relating to their overall feelings of teacher efficacy and how school culture, district culture and socioeconomic status may impact teachers’ feelings of teacher efficacy. I also discussed what the participants believed are the characteristics of an effective teacher, the purpose of the teacher evaluation, their experiences with the evaluation process and their feelings about the evaluation process.

Overall, teachers from the Edgewood School shared that they had strong feelings of teacher efficacy. These feelings of efficaciousness were connected to their teacher background and teaching experience. Veteran teachers specifically stated that because they have been in the education field for such a lengthy amount of time, they felt confident in their ability to teach. Only one teacher had a diminished sense of teacher efficacy, which she connected to her lack of teaching experience.

Teachers also discussed the characteristics of an effective teacher. These characteristics and teaching practices that the participants listed were indicative of what they believed to be the characteristics that they exhibited. One thing that was mentioned consistently was the importance of student-centered activities. Participants consistently stated that making connections with

students, listening to students, monitoring student progress and looking at individual student needs were important characteristics of an effective teacher.

Participants shared their opinions of the evaluation process and what they felt was the purpose of the evaluation process. Teachers did not have a negative view of the evaluation process and they thought the evaluation process was necessary to assess teacher performance. Further, teachers' sense of teacher efficacy was not negatively affected by the evaluation process. Participants noted that neither the evaluation process nor the tool used negatively impacted their sense of teacher efficacy.

School culture also did not seem to impact teachers' sense of teacher efficacy. The school culture at Edgewood was deemed to be negative. Low morale, lack of communication and low socioeconomic factors were some of the things teachers listed as contributing factors to the negative school culture. However, teachers' sense of teacher efficacy was not negatively impacted by the negative culture. District culture was also discussed by participants. Overall, the district culture was described as negative. The culture was described as an "I got you" culture and as a "disaster". Some teachers believed their sense of teacher efficacy was impacted by the negative district culture while other teachers did not.

The issue of socioeconomic and teacher efficacy was also a topic of discussion. Some teachers questioned their sense of teacher efficacy because they found it more difficult to service low socioeconomic students. However, other study participants believed that if you are confident in your ability to teach, then the socioeconomic status of the students should not affect your sense of teacher efficacy.

Finally, teachers described several components of the evaluation process that they found useful in strengthening their sense of effectiveness. Feedback and dialogue from the evaluators



was valuable in helping teachers develop their teaching skills and improve in areas of weakness.

Also, teachers found the opportunity to reflect on their performance after an evaluation helpful as well.

**CHAPTER 5: RESULTS and FINDINGS: PIONEER SCHOOL**

In this chapter, I examine the responses from the teachers at Pioneer School. First, I discuss participants' overall feelings of teacher efficacy. Next, I share teachers' ideas of the characteristics of an effective teacher. Then, what follows is a discussion about what teachers believe to be the purpose of teacher evaluation, their experience with the evaluation process and their feelings about the evaluation process. After, I examine Pioneer School's culture, as well as Pioneer School's district culture and how they shape teacher efficacy. I also analyze the socioeconomic status of the students at Pioneer School and how it shapes teacher efficacy, as well. Lastly, I evaluate Pioneer School teachers' thoughts on what aspects of the evaluation process can help strengthen their sense of effectiveness.

**Teachers Feelings of Efficacy: Pioneer School**

Six teachers from the Pioneer School were selected to take part in the study. Overall, the participants had a combined total of 140 years' experience. Teachers from Pioneer School shared that they felt highly confident in their ability to teach. A couple of the respondents related feelings of teacher efficacy not only to their years in the profession, but also to their preparedness and the steps they have taken to implement instruction. Danielle noted that "I feel confident in the way I teach and my ability because of the background that I have, the years that I've been teaching, the trainings I've been to and the areas that I've trained in." Another teacher, Diane, attributed her feelings of teacher efficacy to "going to school for many years and I have gone to many professional developments to learn my skills. I feel like my ability is there." Their feelings about their sense of teacher efficacy were not just based on years spent teaching. For example, Tara, who is a 31-year veteran teacher pointed out that "your confidence level just improves with understanding what you're teaching." She connected teacher efficacy with being

comfortable with the content, stating “it’s okay to not always follow the book or to not follow the page; I don’t need my plans to know what I’m doing. It (confidence) just comes with experience.”

Thus, teachers equated their feelings teacher efficacy to the amount of time spent being a classroom teacher and being comfortable and knowledgeable of the content they are teaching.

Table 3: The Pioneer School Participants

Study Participants	Number of Years Teaching	Grade Assignment (at time of study)	Subjects Taught (at time of study)
<b>Diane (FD5919)</b>	18 years	Grades K, 1, 2, 5	ESL (English as a Second Language)
<b>Deborah (GD0220)</b>	16 years	Grades 3, 4, 5	BSI Reading (Basic Skills)
<b>Nancy (PN0453)</b>	18 years	Grades K-5	Reading Coach
<b>Sarah (PS3428)</b>	30 years	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science
<b>Janine (SJ5277)</b>	24 years	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	Bilingual ESL (English as a Second Language)
<b>Tara (CT7539)</b>	31 years	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science

### Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: Pioneer School

Participants were asked to share what they believed to be the characteristics of an effective teacher and what they feel are the best practices of an effective teacher. In doing so, the researcher wished to ascertain what participants believed to be the traits and teaching practices of an effective teacher. Further, the researcher wanted to know if teachers felt they embodied those characteristics and implemented effective teaching practices.

The teachers from The Pioneer School shared their ideas about the characteristics of an effective teacher and their best practices. Deborah had a list of characteristics and attributes that she believed described an effective teacher. “An effective teacher is someone who enjoys teaching, who makes a difference, creates a respectful learning environment, spreads positivity, stays organized, is well prepared, has standards and high expectations, can find a good quality in every child, creative, engaging and firm but has a sense of humor,” she shared. She believed that

she was an effective teacher who touched on several of the qualities she shared. Not only did she feel that being an effective teacher was about the connection with the students, but it was also about the connection she had with her colleagues as well.

Nancy also shared the importance of connecting with fellow teachers. She declared that an effective teacher loved their job and was a positive person who cheered on students and fellow staff members. An effective teacher also continued to learn new techniques to better their instruction. She verbalized that she was an effective teacher because she loves what she did, and she did try to be a positive cheerleader to students and staff. She also made a point of sharing that she thought it was important to stay fresh with your craft by taking classes and workshops to continue to gather new information with students and/or staff. These are characteristics and best practices that she embodied.

Sharing similar views about what was an effective teacher were Janine and Sarah. They believed that teachers who focus on making instruction student centered are effective teachers. Janine claimed that an effective teacher was “looking at the students that are sitting in your classroom, assessing how they learn and being able to deliver the information in a manner that they’re able to understand, they’re able to respond and you know they’re acquiring and mastering information. An effective teacher is going to be able to use a bag of tools to make the end goal that their students learn.” Janine focused on making instruction student centered and that made her an effective teacher. She did question if students grasped difficult concepts; however, she ensured that they receive appropriate instruction tailored to their needs.

Sarah also talked about making sure instruction was student centered and that an effective teacher was one who “has an effect on the whole student and not just the student’s ability to pass a test or do well academically.” She also thought it was important to form connections with

students by their hobbies and outside interests. She found that when she took an interest in the student, there was a positive impact on student learning and that made her an effective teacher.

According to Tara, an effective teacher would be “one who can communicate with the children and understand what it is like to walk in their shoes. An effective teacher builds trust as well as acts as an advocate for the children. What made her an effective teacher was that she made her classroom like a family environment and the students loved coming to school. She maintained that she liked to inspire the children to maintain their excitement for learning and engaging in the learning process. She thought that her students not only grew academically, but socially also.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation Process: Pioneer School**

To establish how teachers from Pioneer School comprehended the purpose of the evaluation process, it was essential that I ask participants what they believed to be the purpose of the evaluation process. Participants indicated what they believed to be the purpose of the evaluation process. Teachers from the Pioneer School shared their views and ideas about the purpose of the evaluation process.

To begin, Diane shared that she believed that the evaluation process is two-fold. “One is to document educational practices that are witnessed by administration and number two is to try to find a way to determine effectiveness,” she stated. Nancy also referenced administration in her response when she answered, “Teacher evaluation is a way for a teacher to showcase his/her teaching abilities to administration and to gain feedback from the administrator.” She further shared that it was a time to discuss ways in which her instruction can be improved. Janine added in her response that the teacher evaluation “ensures that teachers are keeping current and they’re teaching abilities are matching the curriculum and they’re basically doing what they are

supposed to be doing.” Deborah noted that the evaluation details what teachers are supposed to be doing, such as “follow through with the standards, curriculum, and making sure that they (standards and curriculum) are executed along with the district initiatives.”

Tara offered a positive outlook to the idea of evaluation. She stated that she believed “the main purpose of the evaluation process was to make sure teachers followed the Common Core.” She went on further to say that evaluation offers administrators a chance to see that “you are teaching to the objective and setting the bar high for students to meet the goal; also to reflect on your teaching style and how you could do things differently. Finally, getting feedback from your observer as well.”

Teachers from Pioneer School did not view the evaluation in a negative sense. One teacher stated, “I think that the actual purpose of the evaluation is to rate teachers which I don’t think is a bad thing.” However, she went on to further state that she didn’t believe “that the actual evaluation is used for the purpose that it was intended.” She went on to share that she believed she was on a learning curve because she gained a new understanding every time she was evaluated. Specifically, she said “I think every time I get evaluated by a different person, I get a new understanding of the evaluation. And although my evaluations are good, and highly effective no matter who’s coming into my room, everybody sees a different understanding of what highly effective is.” Thus, there was an inconsistency from the evaluators that led her to feel that she was not always certain that it was used for the purpose that it was intended.

Other participants discussed their understanding of the process. Janine described the process, specifically mentioning that there was “some sort of initial contact to let them (teachers) know that you’re (supervisors) coming in, them coming in and seeing whatever it is you’re doing, and then at some point, either there’s going to be a face-to-face post, or you’ll get your

evaluation in an email saying, ‘If you have any questions, please contact me’.” Basically, she described the pre-conference, observation and post-conference steps of the evaluation process, which other participants described in a similar manner. Nancy echoed Janine’s understanding of the evaluation process, but she also shared that tenured faculty have only two observations, one 20-minute short observation and one 40-minute long observation. While some teachers were detailed in describing their understanding of the evaluation process, Diane succinctly stated that she had a basic knowledge of the process and that “we’ve had some basic in-services and PD on the whole process.”

When asked how the evaluation process affected their sense of teacher efficacy, all participants stated that their sense of teacher efficacy was not negatively affected by the evaluation process. Teachers shared that it did not matter what evaluation tool was being used, be it the past or present tool. Teachers still had a high sense of teacher efficacy. For instance, Deborah stated that her sense of teacher efficacy did not change because “I think that good teaching is good teaching.” Further, she also believed that the evaluation process had no effect on her effectiveness. Deborah found the current evaluation process to be cumbersome stating, “the lesson plan template is lengthy and tiresome; I think there’s a lot of unnecessary things that takes a lot of the teachers’ time, which we could be using to devote to other things.” Despite this, she still felt that she was an effective teacher regardless of the evaluation tool being used. In conclusion she noted that the past and present evaluation processes had some similarities, but she thought the new evaluation process “has caused the teachers a little bit more time, effort, and a little bit more stress.

Janine shared her feelings about how her sense of teacher efficacy had been affected by the evaluation process. She did not think that her sense of teacher efficacy or confidence had

changed because of the evaluation process. Janine stated that, “I think you don’t need an evaluation system to let you know that you need to up your game or change anything.” She was aware of what she was doing or needed to do in the classroom; thus, the evaluation process did not affect her sense of teacher efficacy. She also did not think her sense of effectiveness changed because of the current process. Janine believed that she didn’t think an evaluation system will change her feelings of effectiveness because, she shared “the bottom line at the end of the day, what my end goal is, is that my kids learn, and they go up to the next level and they’re prepared.” Thus, the evaluation didn’t make her feel less effective because she believed that she adequately prepares her students. Regardless of what evaluation tool was used, past or present, neither evaluation tool and/or process negatively impacted her sense of teacher efficacy or effectiveness.

Finally, another teacher, Tara, shared that while she felt that her sense of teacher efficacy was not affected by the evaluation process, she often felt that she had to advocate for herself when being evaluated. She said, “There are times when I feel I could have scored higher or maybe they missed something. If it really bothered me, I would bring it up and say, ‘I don’t feel that that’s ok and when you left the room, I did A, B, C, and D’, because sometimes that end of the lesson, they don’t see the extension part.” Further, she believed that you must be vocal as a teacher, because while you may have a strong sense of teacher efficacy, whoever was evaluating you may not be aware of what was going on. Thus, self-advocacy was important. When asked about her effectiveness, Tara also believed that she was an effective teacher, regardless of the evaluation tool being used. However, she believed her teaching style changed. But she does not attribute her teaching style changing to the evaluation. She believed that ‘the Common Core is so intense that you have to find a lot of different avenues to teach all of them the skills they need to know.” Tara was one respondent who felt that she believed that she had a higher sense of teacher



efficacy when the past evaluation process was used. She shared that in the past many different areas was looked at by the evaluators such as, “student work, how you’re grading, things in your room and if the teacher is organized.”

Other participants also shared their feelings about whether they believed the current evaluation process made them feel efficacious or effective in comparison to the past, bimodal evaluation process. For example, Sarah stated that she did not think that she had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness when comparing the past and present evaluation process. However, she did believe that the past evaluation process made the experience more positive. She shared, “They (evaluators) were certainly more positive then, because I think they were more on a personal note.”

Besides the evaluation process, teachers also used other ways to measure their effectiveness. All the participants gave answers that were student-centered such as student learning and student engagement when asked how they measured their effectiveness. Sarah said, “I gauge my effectiveness by my ability to make a connection to my students.” She felt that making connections with the students was important because it inspired the students to engage in learning. Nancy used more specific examples of tools she used, besides the evaluation process, to gauge her effectiveness. For example, one thing she mentioned that helped her measure her effectiveness was student achievement such as student growth in their reading levels. Nancy also shared that “another great gauge is when teachers invite me into their classrooms to showcase a specific skill/lesson that we worked on.” Having her peers look to her for input made Nancy feel that she was effective.

To summarize, when teachers are evaluated using the current process, they are scored on a scale of one-four and defined as follows: Ineffective, Partially Effective, Effective and Highly

Effective. Overall, teachers at Pioneer School received an average rating of 3.33 in school year 2014-2015 and 3.37 in school year 2015-2016. Pioneer School was considered a low performing school. While the teachers note they have a high sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness, based on the data, they are considered effective and not highly effective. This seemingly did not fully support their strong sense of teacher efficacy or effectiveness.

### **School Culture, District Culture and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy: Pioneer School**

School culture is important because it influences everything that happens in the school, especially the way teachers think, feel and act (Peterson & Deal, 2002). In the case of Edgewood School, teachers had a solid idea of their school's culture and how the culture of the school affected their sense of teacher efficacy, while some of the teachers at Pioneer School also had strong views about their school culture. Furthermore, teachers at Pioneer School made powerful statements about their district's culture. What follows is a discussion of the school culture of Pioneer School as well as the district culture.

### **School Culture and Teacher Efficacy: Pioneer School**

Teachers from the Pioneer School overwhelmingly agreed about the culture of their school. Of the 6 participants, five respondents stated that the culture of their school was negative, while 1 respondent, Janine, said that the school culture was "developing." She discussed the high number of English language learners in the school and how teachers must be mindful of the fact that English was not spoken in the homes of many students. She went on to say that "I think if we look at our population in school districts where there's multi-linguistic learners and multi-cultural populations, you're going to have a diverse population in any classroom. And if we're looking at the whole picture that impacts your classroom culture, and that's going to impact your school culture." In other words, the culture of the school was developing to suit the needs of the

English language learners. While it was not a negative culture, it was one that was ever evolving as the school tries to meet the learning needs of the students. Janine had taught this population for many years. Even though she felt the school culture was developing, it did not affect her sense of teacher efficacy because she felt confident in her ability to reach those students and meet their learning needs.

As stated earlier, the remaining 5 teachers interviewed for the study described the school culture in a negative way. For example, Deborah was asked to describe the school culture, she simply replied, “Negative.” She went on to say that the morale was down in the school and that she thought the school could be a more positive environment. However, even though Deborah stated that there was a lack of leadership and follow through from the administration, as well as a lack of support and appreciation for what the teachers do, she believed that teachers, herself included, had a good sense of teacher efficacy. “We just keep plugging through. We work really hard and we’re always open to new things. We’re constantly being trained and trying new things. We sing, we dance, we jump through hoops. We’re driven. We’re always looking to try new things to educate the children because of I guess all of the deficiency or negative things that are coming at us.” Thus, despite the negative culture, teachers are dedicated to educating the students and their sense of teacher efficacy was not diminished.

Sarah felt very strongly about the state of the school’s culture, describing it as chaotic. When asked to elaborate, she mentioned the huge turnover of administration and that there was no cohesion within the administration. Sarah felt that teachers do not have the feeling that “we have people who have our backs.” She described the environment as one of people who were interested in shining the light on themselves and not focused on the greater good of the school. When it came to how the school’s culture affected her sense of teacher efficacy, Sarah said the

negative school culture did not affect her sense of teacher efficacy at all. She did not engage in the negative culture and that she “made her own way.” She closed her door and focused on educating the children in her charge.

Tara and Diane both thought the school culture was negative culture. Diane said that it was a tough time right now because the school was losing teachers and that staff members did not feel as though the administration was backing up teachers. These feelings are contributing to the negative culture of the school. Similarly, Tara believed that the culture was negative but her reasons for believing that the culture of the school was negative are there was a lack of funds in the school and there were high demands placed upon teachers. In addition, there was a lack of communication between staff members because schedules didn’t allow for teachers to be able to talk and plan. Tara said that “we do pick each other up but sometimes we do get caught up as a staff of just all of the demands how much has to be done and we lose sight of the reason why we’re here.” While both believed that there was a negative culture pervading the school, each felt differently about their feelings of teacher efficacy. Diane did not have strong feelings of teacher efficacy and she believed that the school administration negatively impacted her sense of teacher efficacy and her belief in her ability to teach. She stated, “If we are given an opportunity to help one another, we’re all gonna get better. And if we’re given the opportunity to know that administration believes in us and supports us, again, we are all gonna be good teachers.” Thus, from Diane’s point of view, the lack of support from the administration was responsible for the negative culture and affected her sense of teacher efficacy.

On the contrary, Tara based her feelings of teacher efficacy on the feedback that she received from the students and their parents. She said, “It’s feedback that I get from the kids and the parents. Basically, the kids and the parents and the feedback that you receive from them

makes you feel confident and competent in your ability to teach.” It is interesting the contrast in their feelings of teacher efficacy especially since they work in the same school. One looked to the administration for positive reinforcement and support and the other looked to the parents and students as a gauge of teacher efficacy.

### **District Culture and Teacher Efficacy: Pioneer School**

Teachers from the Pioneer School verbalized various feelings about the culture of the school district. Several reasons were given for the perceived negative culture of the school district where the Pioneer School is located. However, at least one teacher thought that the district culture was mostly positive.

Nancy believed that the district culture was negative. She mentioned that it was a negotiating year for the teachers’ contract and that teachers were notified that positions and health care may be cut. She also noted that the salaries of the teachers in the district are one of the lowest in the state. She communicated, “Many things are hitting the staff to cause low morale. Administrators try to raise morale, but with years of issues, loads of work, under pay, it is hard to raise the morale of the teachers in the district, thus leading to a negative culture. Regardless of her belief that the district culture is negative, Nancy believed that she had a strong sense of teacher efficacy. “I tend to look at everything with a positive attitude. There’s no reason to harp, obsess or stress about things we can’t control so I don’t let the culture of the district shape my efficacy,” she said. Nancy believed that thinking positive was necessary when dealing with the negative district culture.

Sarah described the district’s culture as self-centered. To be specific, she said that “I think that the culture is one in which it’s people who are for themselves, not for the group.” Because of this, she thought that the district lacked cohesion. Before she approached an

administrator for help, she will seek out a colleague because she didn't believe in administrators' ability to give a fair evaluation. "I feel like if you come to evaluate me and you've only had three or four or five years of experience and I have 30, I'm not sure I feel like you can bring anything to the table." She had a strong sense of teacher efficacy and welcomed anyone into her room to evaluate her. However, Sarah emphatically states, "But I don't have confidence in the people who come to evaluate me."

Another teacher, Deborah, discussed the negative culture of the school district. Her feelings regarding the district culture were the same as the school culture. She believed that the district culture was negative. The morale of the teachers in the district was low. However, she thought that there may be inconsistencies from school to school and she pondered the idea that some teachers in other schools may feel differently about the district culture because they have supports that she doesn't feel that she has in her school and in the district. She further sticks to the notion of lack of support from district administration as a reason why sense of teacher efficacy is lacking. "I think the culture of the district would improve teacher efficacy, I think, if we had more support and there was a shared vision amongst the leaders and the teachers and there was more collaboration," she states. Thus, she reasoned the administration was largely responsible for diminished feelings of teacher efficacy because of lack of support from district administration.

Tara was the lone wolf when it came to having a positive view of the district's culture. She shared that she believed that there were great leaders and people in the town who have been very supportive of teachers. She noted that everyone knows how hard the teachers work and they have the support of parents, the board of education and administration. "You feel that the majority of the parents support us. I would say that 90% of our administrators support us. Could

it be shown even more? Most definitely, but I guess we could all do a better job.” Her sense of teacher efficacy was largely increased because of the support she received from the administration. When she said, “I will say one thing that all the administrators do say they’re not going to get us; they want us to succeed,” it was obvious that she believed in the administration and understood that the administration was trying to be supportive of teachers in the district.

In conclusion, something worth mentioning is that the district, where The Pioneer School is located, was in a negotiating year for teacher contracts. Also affecting the district culture was the knowledge of imminent job cuts as the district was beset with budgetary concerns and several teaching positions were to be cut. Thus, teachers’ feelings of teacher efficacy may have been negatively affected by the stressful district culture at the time.

#### **Socio-Economic Status and Teacher Efficacy: Pioneer School**

As per the New Jersey School Report Card statistics available at the time of data collection for The Pioneer School, 81% of the student population of 651 students in grades kindergarten to five, were economically disadvantaged. To be specific, that was approximately 527 students. Teachers were asked if the socio-economic status of the students affected their sense of teacher efficacy. Participants responded that students’ SES affected their sense of efficacy in some way. For example, Tara discussed how the SES of the students made her feel more empathetic towards them. She worried about their needs and wondered what they may be going through. “It just makes you a little bit more sensitive,” she said. She made more of an effort to reach the students who came from a low SES background, thus reinforcing her confidence in her teaching ability because she was prepared.

Diane also mentioned her feelings of empathy for the low SES students in her charge every day. She works with English language learners, and many of them are also low SES

students. Diane discussed how hard she worked with this population, but it was difficult because many of her students do not have the support at home and it was not the fault of the parents. Many do not speak English. However, that did not stop her from working hard to educate this population of students. She stated that even with the multitude of variables, “that doesn’t mean that we don’t stop working our tails off for these kids.” She verbalized that she had a strong sense of teacher efficacy because she has worked with this population for quite some time and she felt that she was confident in her ability to reach this population, regardless of the challenges.

Empathy seems to be the general feeling of the teachers at Pioneer School. Even Sarah discussed how she was empathetic toward the students she taught. These feelings of empathy caused her to diligently prepare for instruction. She also worked hard to make connections with the students because she wanted them to succeed. “They (the students) want to do well for a person who’s invested in them and I want them to know that I am that person,” stated Sarah. Her hard work and preparation makes her feel more efficacious, especially when she saw the fruits of her labor.

### **Feedback and Self-Reflection: Pioneer School**

Participants were asked what aspects of the evaluation process help them strengthen their sense of effectiveness. Feedback was an aspect of the evaluation process that teachers from the Pioneer School believed helped them strengthen their sense of effectiveness and was overwhelmingly mentioned the most. Deborah shared that she thought that “some feedback on an evaluation system might change some things for certain teachers and make them better and give them slightly a little bit of professional development.” Nancy had similar feelings, stating “I appreciate and look forward to reading what my administrator comments and suggests.” She



used feedback to inform her instruction in the future so that she could be a more effective teacher.

One teacher, Janine, mentioned feedback; however, she believed that the evaluation process was lacking useful feedback. When sharing her experience with receiving feedback, she stated the following: “I got my paper back and I got needs to improve, needs to this, needs to that. And my question was, ‘Well, how? Tell me, how do I do that? Where should I go?’ and instead of her sitting with me and working with me individually, I was farmed out to go and observe, ‘Go see, watch how this person does it’.” Nancy wanted more direct instruction like the students receive. She believed that it shouldn’t all fall on the teacher and that the supervisors should not only provide useful feedback, but also offer more concrete guidance to help teachers improve their instruction.

According to Diane, what she valued most from the evaluation process that strengthened her sense of effectiveness are the comments and suggestions she received from the evaluators. She shared that one of her supervisors asked guiding questions and comments which she used to guide future instruction. In this way, the feedback, comments and suggestions helped to increase her sense of effectiveness. Reflection was also discussed by Diane. The feedback and comments she received from her supervisor caused her to reflect on her practice. She thought that the role of the evaluator was to “provide reflective questions, suggestions or comments.” This was what helped increase her sense of effectiveness.

On the other hand, Sarah believed the evaluation was lacking in providing opportunities for self-evaluation. Sarah alleged that, “There is no self-evaluation. There is no follow up and there is no discussion on what could be done better or resources. Have a conversation with me about education.” Further, what was very significant was when she shared, “I think the

evaluation system should be used to make us better and not make us feel bad about ourselves. Let's have a discussion first and understand and put everybody on the same playing field and let's look at what we're doing in the classrooms and offer professional development that is meaningful to us." So, while others believed that feedback was an aspect of the evaluation process that strengthened effectiveness, Sarah did not believe that to be the case.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I shared the responses from the teachers at Pioneer School relating to their overall feelings of teacher efficacy and how school culture, district culture and socioeconomic status may impact teachers' feelings of efficacy. I also discussed what the participants believed are the characteristics of an effective teacher, the purpose of the teacher evaluation, their experiences with the evaluation process and their feelings about the evaluation process. Overall, teachers at Pioneer School stated that they had strong feelings of teacher efficacy. These feelings of efficaciousness were connected to their teacher background and teaching experience. The longer one teaches, the more comfortable they become with the content and that knowledge and high level of comfort leads to a high sense of efficacy. Participants also stated that their preparedness and the steps they take to implement instruction also contributed to a strong sense of teacher efficacy.

Teachers also discussed the characteristics of an effective teacher. These characteristics and teaching practices that the participants listed were indicative of what they believed to be the characteristics that they demonstrated in the classroom. One thing that was mentioned was the importance of connecting with students. Participants stated that making connections with students, encouraging students, monitoring how students learn and making sure instruction was student-centered were important characteristics of an effective teacher. Also, worth noting is that

creating a family like environment, so the children love coming to school, was another characteristic of an effective teacher.

Participants shared their opinions of the evaluation process and what they felt was the purpose of the evaluation process. Teachers did not have a negative view of the evaluation process. They believed that the evaluation process was teacher-centered. Evaluation was an opportunity for teachers to showcase their instructional skills and for administrators to gauge whether teachers were following the standards and the Common Core, among other things. Teachers did not have a negative perception of the evaluation process, but some thought that it was not being used for the purpose that it was intended. Further, their sense of teacher efficacy was not negatively affected by the evaluation process. Participants noted that neither the evaluation process nor the tool used negatively impacted their sense of teacher efficacy.

School culture also did not seem to impact teachers' sense of efficacy. The school culture at Pioneer was considered negative. Lack of leadership from administration, lack of support and lack of appreciation were some of the things teachers listed as contributing factors to the negative school culture. The school culture was also described as chaotic. However, teachers' sense of teacher efficacy was not harmfully impacted by the negative school culture. Teachers demonstrated a sense of resiliency despite the negative school culture and did not allow it to affect their sense of teacher efficacy.

District culture was also discussed by participants. Overall, the district culture was described as negative. Contributing to the negative district culture was low teacher salary and low staff morale. Also, teachers believed that the culture was one that bred self-centeredness and thus led to a lack of cohesion among staff. While the district culture was believed to be negative, some teachers believed their sense of teacher efficacy was impacted by the unenthusiastic district

culture while other teachers did not. One respondent did believe that the district culture was positive, sharing that there were great leaders in the district and that the teachers had the support of the parents, the board of education and the administration.

The issue of SES and teacher efficacy was also a topic of discussion. Teachers stated that their sense of teacher efficacy was affected in some way by the socioeconomic student population. Teachers were empathetic towards low SES students and these feelings of empathy impacted teachers' beliefs in their teacher efficacy in some way. For example, teachers worked harder to make connections with these students. Teachers also noted that they spent a great deal of time in preparing for instruction. Thus, the preparedness and all the efforts made by teachers to assist lower socioeconomic status students inspired teachers to be comfortable with their sense of efficacy.

Finally, teachers described several components of the evaluation process that they found useful in strengthening their sense of effectiveness. Feedback from the evaluators was valuable to teachers when they receive it. Not all teachers felt that they received the appropriate feedback to help them with instruction.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS: EDGEWOOD SCHOOL & PIONEER SCHOOL

In this chapter, I provide a cross-case comparison and analysis of the data from Chapters 4 and 5. The data were evaluated to establish the similarities and differences between the two cases, Edgewood School and Pioneer School, as it pertained to the participants' feelings of teacher efficacy and effectiveness because of their experiences with the evaluation process. The responses of the participants have been grouped according to the research questions and how they were coded. The research questions that guided this study are:

What do teachers believe to be the relationship between the evaluation process, their sense of teacher efficacy and their teacher effectiveness?

### Sub-Questions:

- How do teachers define teacher efficacy?
- How do teachers define effectiveness?
- How do teachers perceive their personal teacher efficacy based on the evaluation process?
- How do teachers perceive their teacher effectiveness based on the evaluation process?

Data tables are used to organize noteworthy responses according questions about the evaluation process, teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness. After each table, an analysis of the participants' statements in relation to each of these questions is provided.

### Teachers Feelings of Efficacy

Table 4: Summary of Teachers' Feelings of Efficacy

Participant	How would you describe your feelings of confidence in your teaching ability? (Efficacy)
Jackie, ES	"I'm very confident in my ability to teach." <b>(Confident)</b>
Jane, ES	"I'm very confident. I think I have a very good background." "I feel that what I'm thrown, I can teach." <b>(Confident)</b>
Melinda, ES	"I am very confident in my teaching ability." "I am very confident that I can assess where my group is, where we have to be by the end of the year and how to get there." <b>(Confident)</b>
Melissa, ES	"I am very confident because I have been doing this a long time and learning every step of the way." <b>(Confident)</b>
Natalie, ES	"With more experience I've gotten....it's definitely grown a lot."
Renee, ES	"I am very confident in my ability as a teacher because I consider myself willing to try new strategies and techniques. I'm willing to take risks inside my classroom." <b>(Confident)</b>
Deborah, PS	"I feel confident about the way I teach and my ability because of the background that I have, the years I have been teaching, the trainings....." <b>(Confident)</b>
Diane, PS	"I feel very confident in my teaching ability." "I feel that I have gone to school for many years and have gone to many professional developments to learn my skills." (preparation) <b>(Confident)</b>
Janine, PS	"I feel confident in that my students learn from what I am teaching.....there's always going that one student in your classroom that's not going to benefit from what you're teaching and the style that you're teaching. So I think being able to sit there and say that I'm 100% confident would not be true." <b>(Confident)</b>
Nancy, PS	"I feel confident in my teaching ability. "I'm confident because I have been able to learn new effective programs and brought them to my district which allows me to assist staff." <b>(Confident)</b>
Sarah, PS	"I feel very confident in my ability. I make a difference in my students' lives, not just academically but socially and emotionally as well." <b>(Confident)</b>
Tara, PS	"Over the years, your confidence level, I just think, improves with understanding what you're teaching." "I don't need to really, my plans, to know what I'm doing. It just comes from experience." <b>(Confident)</b>

To gain an understanding of how participants perceived their overall feelings of teacher efficacy without relating their sense of efficacy to the evaluation process, teachers from Edgewood School and Pioneer School were asked to describe their feelings of confidence in their teaching ability. All 12 participants stated that they were confident in their teaching ability (Figure 4). Several explanations were given by the participants, explaining their feelings of efficacy. It was worth noting that teachers from Edgewood School have a combined total of 101 years of teaching experience, while teachers from Pioneer School have a combined total of 137 years of teaching experience. Altogether, that was 238 years of teaching experience. This was significant because experience has been considered an important factor in teachers determining their sense of efficacy (Hoy 1977; Protheroe, 2008). For example, several participants mentioned experience as a reason for having an increased sense of teacher efficacy. Melissa from Edgewood School who has taught for 24 years stated, "I am very confident because I have been doing this a long time and learning every step of the way." Echoing what Melissa shared, Tara

from Pioneer School declared, “Over the years, your confidence level, I just think, improves with understanding what you’re teaching.” The research literature states that mastery experiences are a source of increased teacher efficacy (Finnegan, 2013; Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). Teachers with several years of teaching experience exemplified a mastery of their craft, thus positively affecting their teacher efficacy.

Teachers’ behaviors in the classroom, such as the goals they set for students and the energies they devote to teaching, was also related to teachers’ sense of efficacy (Chan, 2005). For instance, goal setting and meeting those goals was one thing that Melinda from Edgewood School connected to her teacher efficacy. Melinda declared, “I am very confident that I can assess where my group is, where we have to be by the end of the year and how to get there.” She set goals for her students and was confident in her ability to have students reach those goals.

Ashton (1984) asserted that teachers with a high sense of efficacy feel accomplished, have high expectations for students, feel accountable for student learning, have teaching strategies, are positive and believe they can influence student learning. Renee from Edgewood School mentioned that she was “willing to try new strategies and techniques” which can be attributed to her confidence in her teaching ability. Further, Nancy from Pioneer School echoed similar statements as Renee when she said, “I’m confident because I have been able to learn new effective programs and brought them to my district which allows me to assist staff.” She was so confident in her teaching ability that she accessed and adopted new teaching strategies to implement in the classroom as well as share with her colleagues. Thus, teacher evaluation is not the only instrument that developed teachers’ sense of efficacy.

### Characteristics of an Effective Teacher

Table 5: Summary of Characteristics of an Effective Teacher

What is an effective teacher?	
Form relationships with students.	Forms connections with parents.
Make connections with students.	Organized and well prepared.
Creates a safe, respectful learning environment.	Creative and engaging.
Monitors and adjusts instruction.	Loves what they do and are positive.
Use different modalities to address student needs.	Instruction is student-centered, not teacher centered.
Assess student needs and implement a plan of action.	Strong behavior management skills.

Table 6: Summary of Teacher Effectiveness

	Do you think you're an effective teacher? How so?	How else do you gauge your effectiveness (besides the evaluation process)?
<b>Jackie, ES</b>	"Yes." "I create a caring environment." (Yes)	"Student progress, more anything."
<b>Jane, ES</b>	"Yes." "I taught a full inclusion class....the entire classed passed the NJ PARCC." (Yes)	"On my students' learning."
<b>Melinda, ES</b>	"Yes, because my kids always perform at an ability level that people find above where they think they should be." (Yes)	"I gauge it by the skills that my kids are learning."
<b>Melissa, ES</b>	"I better be, yes." "Because I'm not a quitter and I don't limit students and I have high expectations...." (Yes)	"The students. They're my gauge for sure."
<b>Natalie, ES</b>	"I think so. I try." "I am always trying to do different things and trying to get their feedback." (Yes)	"I gauge it through student feedback, their behaviors."
<b>Renee, ES</b>	"Yes." "My classroom is student-driven, student centered, "I'm always listening and making those connections." (Yes)	"I gauge my effectiveness based on student participation, based on assessments given within my classroom, based on their drive, how engaged they are in what I'm doing, their feedback."
<b>Deborah, PS</b>	"I do" "I think I touch upon all of the qualities that I told you." (Yes)	"Student success, data, just overall learning of my children."
<b>Diane, PS</b>	"Yes." "I teach the students and I think that is an important distinction." (Yes)	"How my students, number 1, are happy. How my students love learning. How my students are progressing."
<b>Janine, PS</b>	"On some days, I say yes and on other days, I question that, because there's certain concepts that are very abstract and the kids kind of struggle to get." (Yes)	"I look at student growth."
<b>Nancy, PS</b>	"Yes." "I think I am because I am all of the above (characteristics of an effective teacher)" (Yes)	"I gauge my effectiveness with the growth in their (students) reading."
<b>Sarah, PS</b>	"I do." "I know from talking to my adult students (who come back) that I made a difference." (Yes)	"I think I gauge my effectiveness by my ability to make a connection to my students."
<b>Tara, PS</b>	"Extremely. You bet." "The kids enjoy coming to school I make it more like a family and a home." (Yes)	"How well the students are learning." "If they're getting the concepts."

Participants were asked to describe the characteristics of an effective teacher. Further, they also shared whether they believed themselves to be effective teachers and if they embodied those characteristics mentioned. It was important to know whether teachers viewed themselves as effective without the evaluation process. Also, it was important to see how else study participants gauged their effectiveness in lieu of the evaluation process. Figure 6 lists various



characteristics mentioned by study participants. Some of the traits that were consistently mentioned are forming relationships and connections with students and parents; being organized and well prepared; being creative and engaging; and loves what they do and are positive, to name a few. All 12 participants stated that they believed themselves to be effective teachers. The characteristics of an effective teacher given by the participants are the characteristics they believed they embodied when they gave reasons for why they are effective teachers. For example, Deborah from Pioneer School stated, “I think I touch upon all of the qualities that I told you” and Nancy from Pioneer also gave a similar response. Renee from Edgewood School shares that she has a classroom that is student-driven, and student centered; thus, she believed that she was an effective teacher.

The evaluation process was not the only way teachers considered their effectiveness. Every teacher gave a response that was student centered when asked how they gauged their effectiveness. Student achievement was a common response with teachers from both Edgewood and Pioneer Schools giving such responses as “on my students’ learning” and “I look at student growth” as ways in which they measure their teacher effectiveness. Other responses also related effectiveness to how the students were feeling or connecting to the teacher. For example, Sarah from Pioneer School said, “I think I gauge my effectiveness by my ability to make a connection to my students.” Similarly, Diane from Pioneer School shared that if her students were happy and loving learning, then she was effective. Thus, the evaluation process, while important, was not the only thing factoring into teachers’ sense of effectiveness. Student needs and student achievement were also strong influences on teachers’ sense of effectiveness.

### **Characteristics of an Effective Teacher and Teacher Autonomy**

When teachers were asked to share what they believed to be the characteristics of an effective teacher, many traits were listed by the 12 participants. However, collaborative was not an attribute mentioned by any of the teachers from Edgewood School or Pioneer School.

Vankgrieken, et al. (2017) noted that autonomy was a fundamental construct in education and that teachers valued independence in the workplace. For example, Melissa from Edgewood School stated that once she closed the door, “it’s all about the students.” Teachers responses were centered on what they do individually that made them effective teachers, not collaboratively. Teachers want to focus on instruction and do their job as they see fit (Lortie, 1975). Teachers are also expected to teach students specific content knowledge and skills without assistance from their colleagues (Lortie, 1975). Teacher autonomy gives them the freedom to select instructional practices and make them responsible for student achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). When asked if she believed that she was an effective teacher, Diane from Pioneer School shared, “Yes, because I teach the students and I think that is an important distinction.” Not only does she “teach” to their needs, but she alone was teaching her students. She, like the other participants, exemplified classroom autonomy, exercising their freedom to make decisions about various aspects of classroom practice as they see fit (Vankgrieken, et al. 2017).

### Purpose of the Evaluation Process

Table 7: Summary of the Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

	What is the purpose of teacher evaluation?
<b>Jackie, ES</b>	"To assess the teachers in their districts and in their building." "Also, for them to learn about what goes on in the classrooms" "For teachers to self-reflect and see what areas they need to improve"
<b>Jane, ES</b>	"Point out teachers who are more effective at their job." "Weeding out teachers" "Figuring out if they need extra help or professional development in a certain area."
<b>Melinda, ES</b>	"Just evaluate how teachers are doing based on whatever criteria the district has set forth" "It's to get rid of the teachers who are not making."
<b>Melissa, ES</b>	"It helps professional development." "It's for the purpose for you to grow. It should be for that purpose. And to engage teachers on new strategies of how to be more successful..."
<b>Natalie, ES</b>	"I would hope it's for them to see what maybe a majority of teachers need help in."
<b>Renee, ES</b>	"The purpose of the teacher evaluation is to allow teachers to learn where they need to grow and better themselves in their profession."
<b>Deborah, PS</b>	"I think it is to follow through with the standards, curriculum, and making sure that they are executed along with the district initiatives...."
<b>Diane, PS</b>	"To document educational practices that are witnessed by administration." "To try to find a way to determine effectiveness."
<b>Janine, PS</b>	"I think teacher evaluation is to make sure that the teachers are keeping current and they're teaching abilities are matching the curriculum, and they're basically doing what they're supposed to be doing."
<b>Nancy, PS</b>	"Teacher evaluation is a way for a teacher to showcase his/her teaching abilities to administration and to gain feedback from the administrator."
<b>Sarah, PS</b>	"....the actual purpose of the evaluation is to rate teachers which I don't think is a bad thing."
<b>Tara, PS</b>	"I would think that that the main purpose is that you are following the Common Core." "You are teaching to the objectives." "Also to reflect on your teaching style.....getting feedback from your observer as well."

It was important to gauge whether teachers who participated in the study believed that evaluation was important or even necessary. From the viewpoints of teachers, evaluation may be a chance for positive interaction and professional growth or as a negative "obligation" that leads to frustration or embitterment (Peterson & Comeaux, 1990). Teachers from Edgewood School and Pioneer School were asked to share what they thought was the purpose of the evaluation process. They all believed that there was a purpose for an evaluation process and a need for evaluation to occur. Stronge (2006) identified several purposes for teacher evaluation including but not limited to assessing teacher performance, assisting in identifying strengths and weaknesses of teachers, planning staff development that is beneficial and useful and developing corrective action goals and activities for teachers who require it, among other things.

Teachers from both schools held similar ideas about the purpose of teacher evaluation. For example, teacher assessment was a common theme from teachers at both schools. Jackie from Edgewood School noted that the purpose of teacher evaluation is “to assess the teachers in their districts and in their building.” Melinda from Edgewood School also mentioned the need for administrators to assess evaluate how teachers are doing based on whatever criteria the district has set forth. Another comparable belief between the two cases about the purpose of teacher evaluation was that evaluation is meant to help teachers grow and develop in practice. As Tara from Pioneer School put it, the main purpose was that teachers were adhering to the Common Core, teaching to the objectives and reflecting on their teaching style. The responses supported what Stronge (2006) shares about a quality evaluation system being fair and based on performance and designed to inspire improvement in the teacher who is being evaluated. Teachers wanted to improve their practice and knowledge; teachers wanted and need information about their knowledge, performance and effectiveness (Stronge, 2006).

### Teachers' Perceptions of the Evaluation Process

Table 8: Summary of Teachers Perceptions of the Evaluation Process

	How would you describe your understanding of the evaluation process?	Impressions of Current Evaluation Process
<b>Jackie, ES</b>	"I understand the process." "They observe you and that they write you up and they give you different scores for different sections."	"I like it better." "I think that it's more specific." <b>(Positive)</b>
<b>Jane, ES</b>	"...gives you scores based on children's growth." "...your effectiveness with what your district deems as highly effective, effective, along those lines."	"I think it's good." "I think that there still needs some kinks to be worked out of it." <b>(Positive)</b>
<b>Melinda, ES</b>	"I feel that it is very much an 'I got you' driven concept and not a 'what are you doing and what are you doing right' concept."	"I don't think it is helpful." "They have no idea how to evaluate us." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Melissa, ES</b>	"It's very demanding." "...it tends to measure a teacher according to where that particular teacher is."	"It's both positive and negative." <b>(Neutral)</b>
<b>Natalie, ES</b>	"I think I understand it but it seems like a lot." "I always have like Google, I will have a separate tab open so I can look at that while I do my post and make sure."	"It seems like a lot." "...it's sort of overwhelming to the eye." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Renee, ES</b>	"I think my understanding is general." "I'm not sure that the effectiveness of the process I fully understand."	"I think that this process is maybe more complicated than it needs to be." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Deborah, PS</b>	"I think I understand it as well as I possibly could, the process we use, with the training that we're given."	"I don't think it's effective." "I think there's a lot of unnecessary things that takes a lot of the teachers' time....." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Diane, PS</b>	"I know pretty much just what I have been given." "I don't think my understanding is beyond what my personal experience is."	"I think that it is very limiting." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Janine, PS</b>	"So basically it's comprised of some sort of initial contact.....them coming in and seeing what you're doing...either there's going to be a face-to-face post or you'll get your evaluation in an email."	"The current tool I find is more user friendly." <b>(Positive)</b>
<b>Nancy, PS</b>	"As a tenure teacher I get t short observations each year."	"I feel that it was much easier years ago to earn higher scores.....it's harder to gain a higher score due to the process." <b>(Negative)</b>
<b>Sarah, PS</b>	"Uh I'm on a learning curve. I think that every time I get evaluated by a different person I get a new understanding of the evaluation itself and the interpretation of the evaluation."	".....the evaluation now pinpoints specific ways the teacher interacts with the students....." <b>(Positive)</b>
<b>Tara, PS</b>	"I would think that we have both been trained where it's the principals or the administrators have been trained in how it's evaluated."	"It just helps me gear my lessons to what I want my students to achieve." "It doesn't really tell you how effective you are every other day of the year and all the hours throughout. It's really just a small picture.....I do a lot more before and after and during that no one gets to see." <b>(Negative)</b>

To gauge how teachers comprehend the current evaluation process, participants were asked to describe their understanding of the present evaluation process. Further, teachers were asked to give their thoughts and impression of the current evaluation process. Participants mostly had a basic understanding of the evaluation process. The most common evaluation method was some variation of the clinical supervision model that included a pre-conference, observation and post-conference (Stronge, 2006). This was what Janine described so succinctly, "So basically it's

comprised of some sort of initial contact.....them coming in and seeing what you're doing...either there's going to be a face-to-face post or you'll get your evaluation in an email." That was the general understanding or perception of the participants of what the evaluation process entails. Natalie from Edgewood School, who had the least amount of experience of all the participants with three years of teaching experience, shared that she "thinks" she understands the process, but that is sometimes seems like "a lot" and that she sometimes used Google to help her understand components of the post observation piece.

Stronge (2006) noted that sometimes evaluators focus on their own personal viewpoints and interests when evaluating a teacher, so that what gets noticed is their own personal viewpoint. Teachers may sense this during the evaluation. Two of the participants' responses when asked to describe their understanding of the evaluation reflect this idea. For example, Melinda from Edgewood School shared that, "I feel that it is very much an 'I got you' driven concept and not a 'what are you doing and what are you doing right' concept." She had a negative understanding of the purpose of the evaluation process because she believed that the evaluators had ulterior motives or that they did not understand the evaluation process themselves. She is not the only teacher who had a different idea about the intention of the evaluation process. Sarah from Pioneer School stated that "every time I get evaluated by a different person I get a new understanding of the evaluation itself and the interpretation of the evaluation." Her feelings showed she understood that every evaluator had a different understanding of the evaluation process, which could possibly confuse teachers' understanding of the evaluation process as well. A lack of knowledge and training is problematic for the fairness and usefulness of the evaluation system (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Thus, it is not just the teachers who need to understand the process, but also the evaluators as well.

When asked to describe their impression or feelings about the evaluation process, seven out of the 12 participants had negative feelings about the evaluation process while four had positive opinions of the evaluation process. One teacher was neutral, stating that she felt the process was both positive and negative. Between the two cases, Edgewood School and Pioneer School, those who had a negative impression of the evaluation process had similar reasons for believing so. To be specific, Natalie and Renee from Edgewood School and Deborah, Diane and Nancy thought that the process was “overwhelming”, or “more complicated than it needs to be.” They also described the process as “very limiting” and that teachers had to do “a lot of unnecessary things that take away from the teachers’ time.”

Teachers shared that the purpose of evaluation was for teachers to grow and to engage new strategies to be more successful. Further, Stronge (2006) wrote that the purpose of teacher evaluation is to provide teachers with a representation of their performance to guide professional growth; thus, classroom observations should only be one portion of information. Thus, when Tara from Pioneer School gave her negative impression of the evaluation process, she believed “it doesn’t really tell you how effective you are every other day of the year and all the hours throughout. It’s really just a small picture.....I do a lot more before and after and during that no one gets to see.” It was important to her that the evaluators noticed all the effort that she puts into teaching and she thought the evaluation process didn’t effectively convey that. However, as Melinda from Edgewood emphatically stated, “They (the evaluators) have no idea how to evaluate us.”

On the other end of the spectrum, there were the four teachers who had a positive impression of the evaluation process. They felt that it was “good” and “more user friendly.” Jackie from Edgewood School believed that evaluation was now specific while Sarah from

Pioneer School shared that “the evaluation now pinpoints specific ways the teacher interacts with the students.” This was interesting considering that Deborah, also from Pioneer School had a negative impression and stated that, “I don’t think it’s effective. I think there’s a lot of unnecessary things that takes a lot of the teachers’ time.....” It was very interesting that two teachers from the same school would have opposite views about the evaluation process that was used to measure them. The same can be said for teachers from Edgewood School, such as Jackie who liked the process better and found it to be more specific and Melinda, who did not like the current process because she found that it wasn’t helpful and that evaluators did not know how to evaluate teachers. These opposite views could be attributed to individual experiences teachers have had with the evaluation process and the evaluators.

### Analysis Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Effectiveness and the Evaluation Process

Table 9: Summary of Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Effectiveness and the Evaluation Process

	Has your sense of efficacy changed as a result of the current evaluation process?	Has your sense of teacher effectiveness changed as a result of the current evaluation process?
Jane, ES	“No, because I am highly effective.” (No)	“No, I think my effectiveness and confidence is always there...” (No)
Melinda, ES	“When it started I felt less confident.” “Now as we’ve moved along in the process, I have absolutely learned how to game the system.” (No)	“I’m still effective as we do it.” (No)
Melissa, ES	“In the beginning it was rough because it made me feel a little insecure...” (No)	“...it didn’t help, it just caused more tension and frustration because I knew deep inside that I was an effective teacher.” (No)
Natalie, ES	“Not really.” (No)	“I do feel effective.” (No)
Renee, ES	“I’m gonna say no.” “I don’t think the evaluation process affects my belief in my teaching, I’m confident in what I do.” (No)	“So, I wanna say no. But you know I have had some instances where I felt like I had to defend myself for my teaching which makes me question my effectiveness a little bit.” (No)
Deborah, PS	“No.” “I think just good teaching is good teaching.” (No)	“No still feel effective.” (No)
Diane, PS	“Well I think that I very highly effective.” (No)	“No.” (No)
Janine, PS	“I’m going to say no.” (No)	“Again, I don’t think it’s been ...I don’t think an evaluation system will change my effectiveness.” (No)
Nancy, PS	“My sense of efficacy is the same.” (No)	“Old and new evaluation process for me, teacher effectiveness is the same.” (No)
Sarah, PS	“It has made me more self-aware of things in my room that I never really put a lot of importance on....” (No)	“I suppose I’ve always come across as an effective teacher.” (No)
Tara, PS	“There are times maybe where I feel I could have scored higher or maybe they missed something. If it really bothered me, I would bring it up....” (Neutral)	“I think my teaching styles have changed over the year, but does it have anything to do with the evaluation process? No.” (No)



Table 10: Comparison of Teacher Efficacy/Effectiveness and Past Evaluation Process

	Do you believe you had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness with the past evaluation process?
Jackie, ES	"No." (No)
Jane, ES	"No, I think it's the same. (No)
Melinda, ES	"I don't think... (No)
Melissa, ES	"Oh yes I did." (Yes)
Natalie, ES	N/A (novice teacher)
Renee, ES	"I think the past evaluation process was just clearer, so it made me, it gave me a better understanding of what I can improve on and what I was doing well which would maybe give me a higher sense of effectiveness." (Yes)
Deborah, PS	"I don't really think it's changed much because I see some similarities, I feel like they're evaluating the same things." (No)
Diane, PS	N/A
Janine, PS	"You know, it's interestingly, no." (No)
Nancy, PS	"No." (No)
Sarah, PS	"They certainly were more positive then (in the past) because I think they were more on a personal note." (No)
Tara, PS	"I would say yes." "It was more specific." (Yes)

The participants of the study shared their individual perceptions of their efficacy and effectiveness because of the current evaluation process (Figure 10). When asked if they believed their sense of efficacy changed because of the current evaluation process, all 12 teachers responded, "No". They did not believe that the current teacher evaluation process changed their sense of teacher efficacy. Teachers stated that they were confident in what they did as educators. There were various reasons given why their individual feelings of confidence in their teaching ability did not change because of the current evaluation process. For example, Renee from Edgewood School shared that she didn't think that the evaluation process affected her belief in her teaching, because she was confident in what she did in the classroom. This was like what Denise from Pioneer School said so succinctly when she stated, "I think just good teaching is good teaching." Melinda from Edgewood School noted that she had learned how to "game the system." Thus, evaluation process had no effect on Melinda's sense of teacher efficacy because she knew how to give the evaluators what they were looking for, while not letting the process affect her confidence in her teaching ability. Sarah from Pioneer School shared that she was

more aware of things in her room that she never really put a lot of importance on; however, she still had a strong sense of teacher efficacy.

Participants also had positive feelings about their teacher effectiveness. All 12 teachers stated that their sense of teacher effectiveness had not changed because of the current evaluation process. They all believed that they were effective teachers. Tara from Pioneer School disclosed, “I think my teaching styles have changed over the year, but does it have anything to do with the evaluation process? No.” So, over the course of her teaching career, she may have changed some of her teaching style; however, the evaluation process had nothing to do with her feelings of effectiveness. Echoing Tara’s statement Janine from Pioneer School shared that “I don’t think an evaluation system will change my effectiveness.” She still had a strong sense of teacher effectiveness and the evaluation system was not what helped her gauge her effectiveness.

Renee from Edgewood School had an interesting view, sharing that she had some instances where she felt like she had to defend herself for her teaching which made her question her effectiveness a little bit, but she still believed that she was effective, nonetheless. This could be attributed to who was doing the evaluation, which supported what Melinda shared about the evaluators not knowing how to accurately conduct the evaluation. Weisberg, et al. (2009) wrote that one of the flaws of evaluation is that observations are brief and sporadic and conducted by administrators without extensive training. While this may be the case in some instances, teachers still held a belief in their overall effectiveness regardless whether being evaluated using the current evaluation process.

When participants were asked if they believed that they had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness with the past evaluation process (Figure 11), seven of them answered no, they did not believe they had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness

with the past evaluation system. Three teachers responded that they believed they had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness with the past evaluation system. One teacher did not respond, and one teacher was a novice teacher who had only been exposed to the current evaluation system. Of those who believed that they did not have a higher sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness with the past evaluation process, only Deborah from Pioneer School offered some feedback by sharing “I don’t really think it’s changed much because I see some similarities. I feel like they’re evaluating the same things.” Thus, she saw no changes in her sense of teacher efficacy or effectiveness, since she believed that nothing had significantly changed.

On the other hand, those who believed that they had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness felt that the past process was “more specific” and “clearer.” According to Renee from Edgewood School, because the past evaluation process was clearer it gave her a better understanding of what she could improve on and what she was doing well, which would possibly give her a higher sense of effectiveness. Sara from Pioneer shared that she did not believe she had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness with the past evaluation, but she believed that the past process was “certainly more positive then (in the past) because I think they (the evaluations) were more on a personal note.”

### Analysis of School Culture and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Table 11: Summary of School Culture and Teacher Efficacy

	How would you describe your school's culture?	In what ways does your school's culture shape your sense of teacher efficacy?
Jackie, ES	"Very caring environment. Everyone works really hard for the kids. And nothing, no evaluators or supervisors can change that because I really feel like teachers and the administrators here are here or the students." <b>(positive)</b>	"Have to be my best for the students and my best for the other teachers and for my administrator." "....being here makes me better." <b>(not affected)</b>
Jane, ES	"I think our school suffers." "I think our school is struggling to figure out how to get a foothold in our district." <b>(negative)</b>	"I don't think it really does." "I think that we have to remember they're kids and the culture of the school, I don't care if you're having a bad day, or teachers are down. You have a job to do and you have a job to take care of those kids." <b>(not affected)</b>
Melinda, ES	"My school's culture is difficult sometimes for the kids at this school." "....such a low and varied SES that it is. I believe several of the teachers are giving excuses and they don't want to push as hard...." <b>(negative)</b>	"I believe that I can reach those kids." "It is a different set of circumstances but I think that makes me a better teacher because I have to weigh my options and figure out....how am I going to do it?" <b>(not affected)</b>
Melissa, ES	"I love this school. I love the principal." "So the love and the compassion that they (teachers) have for the kids, not only that, the diversity." <b>(positive)</b>	"When students come back..." "....it was that light that comes on and that excitement of this is why I went into education." <b>(not affected)</b>
Natalie, ES	"I think...to be honest everybody's really stressed out it seems." "It's a stressful environment." "It's like everybody's really stressed." <b>(negative)</b>	"It shapes it a lot actually." "I still feel confident and efficient in what I'm doing because I don't feel scared to ask or help." <b>(not affected)</b>
Renee, ES	"Ok I would say that morale is a little bit low." "I think that there's sometimes the lack of communication within the school that affects its culture." <b>(negative)</b>	"I think that the school's culture plays a role in your efficacy...." "If your school culture has lax communication and lacks the goals to inspire you, then it's gonna change your ability or your view of you ability as a teacher." <b>(affected)</b>
Deborah, PS	"Negative." "The morale is down....in our school." "I don't think that it's as positive as it has been in the past." <b>(negative)</b>	"I feel like sometimes our confidence is put down because of the work that we do here." "....there's a lack of support here." "There's a lack of leadership; there's a lack of follow through from the administration." <b>(affected)</b>
Diane, PS	"I think this is a tough time right now." "We're losing teachers." "It's somewhat of a negative school culture right now." <b>(negative)</b>	"I think it has to do with collaboration....if we are given the opportunity to help one another, we're all gonna get better." <b>(affected)</b>
Janine, PS	"Developing." <b>(neutral)</b>	"I've always worked with diverse learners. And so my classroom, in itself, is set up as a family." "I think they sense (students) when they're in my room, helps with my effectiveness, because they know they're wanted." <b>(not affected)</b>
Nancy, PS	"Unfortunately, I have to say the school has low morale." "We are overpopulated." "Our class sizes are large, libraries taken away for small group instruction, difficulty planning as a team because team members have different prep times." <b>(negative)</b>	"I tend to look at everything with a positive attitude." "I don't let the culture and the staff shape my efficacy." <b>(not affected)</b>
Sarah, PS	"Chaotic." "We have a huge turnover of administration." "We're chaotic because we now have an administration that is not cohesive. We have an administration that doesn't speak to each other." <b>(negative)</b>	"I don't get involved in it." (the negative school culture) "And I really, truly make my own way." <b>(not affected)</b>
Tara, PS	"I think, sometimes, that we can get a little negative because of all the issues that our district has, and all the demands put on us today and even our school demands." "The climate is more negative." <b>(negative)</b>	"Really it's feedback that I get from the kids and parents." "You can just feel as a teacher if what you're doing I the right thing." "That feedback from them (students and parents) makes you feel more confident as a teacher." <b>(not affected)</b>

School culture and its relationship to teacher efficacy were discussed with study participants. Teachers were asked to describe their school's culture as well as discuss how the school's culture shapes their sense of teacher efficacy (Figure 12). Of the 12 participants, nine teachers responded that the school culture was negative; two teachers responded that the school culture was positive, and one teacher stated that the school culture was developing. Four teachers from Edgewood School believed the school culture was negative and two teachers felt the school culture was positive. All the teachers from Pioneer School except one believed that the school culture was negative.

The teachers who described the culture as negative had several reasons for stating such. Teachers from both Edgewood School and Pioneer School stated that morale was low in their schools. Renee from Edgewood School shared that not only was staff morale low, but also that there was a lack of communication in the school, which affected the culture of the school. Both Deborah and Nancy from Pioneer School also said that staff morale was low leading to a negative school culture. Furthermore, Nancy was more specific sharing, "we are overpopulated, our class sizes are large, libraries are being taken away for small group instruction, and there is difficulty planning as a team because team members have different prep times." Jane and Melinda from Edgewood School alluded to the low socioeconomic status of the students being a factor in the negative school culture because teachers didn't have the support they needed in the classroom. Jane shared that the school was struggling to figure out how to get a foothold in the district due to the low socioeconomic student population.

The two teachers who believed that the school culture was positive both were teachers from Edgewood School. Melissa said that she loved the school and the principal, and she believed that the teachers had such compassion for the students. She also appreciated the

diversity of the school. Jackie also stated that the teachers worked very hard for the students and the school environment was very caring. In addition, Jackie said “and nothing, no evaluators or supervisors can change that because I really feel like teachers and administrators are here for the students.”

Teachers were asked to share in what ways did the school’s culture shape their sense of teacher efficacy. Of the 12 participants, nine stated that the negative school culture did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy. Those teachers still had a strong sense of teacher efficacy regardless of the negative school culture. Three teachers, one from Edgewood School and two from Pioneer School, stated that their teacher efficacy was affected by the negative school culture.

Of the teachers who stated that their teacher efficacy was not affected by the negative school culture, there were many reasons given for why they did not let the negative school culture affect their sense of teacher efficacy. For instance, Jackie from Edgewood School believed that she must be her best for the students, other teachers and the administration regardless of the negative culture. In addition, Jane from Edgewood shared that “I think that we have to remember, the culture of the school, I don’t care if you’re having a bad day, you have a job to do and you have a job to take care of those kids.” Janine from Pioneer School also referred to the needs of the students sharing that her classroom was set up for the students and that they know they are wanted. An interesting view came from Melinda from Edgewood who viewed the negative school culture as a challenge. Melinda said her teacher efficacy was not affected by the negative school culture because she saw the negative school culture as a means to making her a better teacher. “I have to weigh my options and figure out ‘how am I going to do it?’” The

environment increased her teacher efficacy because she had confidence in her ability to reach the students.

Three teachers shared that the negative culture affected their sense of teacher efficacy, one of the teachers being from Edgewood School and two of the teachers were from Pioneer School. Renee was the lone teacher from Edgewood School who believed the negative school culture affected her teacher efficacy. Renee thinks that “the school’s culture plays a role in your efficacy and that if the school culture has lax communication and lacks goals to inspire you, then it’s gonna change your ability or your view of your ability as a teacher.” The two teachers from Pioneer School, Deborah and Diane, also had strong views about how the negative school culture affected their teacher efficacy. Deborah noted the lack of support at her school as well as the lack of leadership and lack of follow through from the administration. However, Diane mentioned the lack of collaboration and lack of opportunities for teachers to assist each other as a reason why she felt the negative school culture affected her sense of teacher efficacy. This was interesting because, when talking about characteristics of an effective teacher, collaboration was not mentioned. Further, job satisfaction is affected by the culture of the school at which teachers work and factors such as leadership within the school, cooperation and communication among teachers could influence teacher job satisfaction (You, Kim & Lim, 2015). Therefore, the teachers who believed that the negative school culture impacted their sense of efficacy may not be experiencing job satisfaction as well.

### Analysis of District Culture and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Table 12: Summary of District Culture and Teacher Efficacy

	How would you describe your district's culture?	In what ways does the district's culture shape your sense of teacher efficacy?
Jackie, ES	"I think it's positive. I just think we're at the negative stage because change is scary for people." <b>(positive)</b>	"It makes me want to learn more." "It makes me want to continue my education because I want to keep up with the change and be a part of the change." <b>(not affected)</b>
Jane, ES	"I think that the district overall is feeling very bogged down." "...and I don't remember it ever being such low moral as it is now." <b>(negative)</b>	"I just feel like I have a job to do and I'm going to do my job." <b>(not affected)</b>
Melinda, ES	"The district culture right now is an 'I got you' culture." "I am concerned about who I am talking too." "Now I find myself hesitating before I say things because who else is that person talking to." <b>(negative)</b>	"It made me very, very hesitant to try new things." "When they started this new evaluation system.....it made me very, very worried and stilted when I was getting evaluate." <b>(negatively affected)</b>
Melissa, ES	"I see one thing being said but yet something else being portrayed." "And also the diversity. I don't see enough people of color, people that are from a different ethnicity." <b>(negative)</b>	"It doesn't. It really doesn't." "It is to me 'ok, this is what I have to do' and I just do it. But once I close that door, it's all about the kids." <b>(not affected)</b>
Natalie, ES	"I think there is a lot of emphasis put on what has to be changed." "We are doing a lot of good thing and a lot of positive things.....I feel like a lot of times it gets overshadowed by 'we're not doing this enough, we could do this'." "But I wish there was more positive celebrations of some that are going on opposed to always 'this is not right, this is wrong, let's do this more'." <b>(negative)</b>	"I mean I worry that everything that I do maybe incorrectly will get magnified and things that I do correctly will get minimized which is worrisome." "I really worry a lot that I'm doing something wrong....." "I think that feeling of stress on your chest all the time isn't good." <b>(negatively affected)</b>
Renee, ES	"I think currently our district's culture is a disaster." "I don't feel like teachers feel respected." "And I think there's a giant gap in communication in between the district and its staff and its teachers." <b>(negative)</b>	"I think in our district because I feel that they don't believe what I do is important....it affects my efficacy because you know they don't show the interest or desire to learn more about even what I do." <b>(negatively affected)</b>
Deborah, PS	"The morale is down in our district." <b>(negative)</b>	"I think that the culture of the district would improve teacher efficacy if, I think, if we had more support and there was a shared vision amongst the leaders and the teachers." <b>(negatively affected)</b>
Diane, PS	"People feel that the administration may not be backing up their teachers." <b>(negative)</b>	"I think of the superintendent and I think of how he affects our feelings of negativity." <b>(negatively affected)</b>
Janine, PS	"Developing." <b>(neutral)</b>	"It doesn't." <b>(not affected)</b>
Nancy, PS	"The district culture is negative." "We've had such a turnover of teachers and administrators." "Many things hitting the staff to cause low morale." <b>(negative)</b>	"Again, I don't let the (negative) culture of the district shape my sense of efficacy." <b>(not affected)</b>
Sarah, PS	"I think that the culture is one in which it's people who are for themselves, not for the group." <b>(negative)</b>	"I don't have confidence in the people who come to evaluate me." <b>(not affected)</b>
Tara, PS	"We have some great people and some people in town that have been very supportive with us." "I would say that 90% of our administrators support us." <b>(positive)</b>	"I will say one thing that all the administrators do say they're not out to get us. They want us to succeed." <b>(not affected)</b>

District culture and its relationship to teacher efficacy were also discussed with study participants. Teachers were asked to describe their district's culture as well as discuss how the district's culture shapes their sense of teacher efficacy (Figure 13). Of the 12 participants, nine teachers responded that the district culture was negative; two teachers responded that the district



culture was positive, and one teacher stated that the school culture was developing. Five teachers from Edgewood School believed the district culture was negative and 1 teacher felt the district culture was positive. Four teachers from Pioneer School believed that the district culture was negative, 1 teacher thought the district culture was positive and 1 teacher believed the district culture was developing. It is important to note that during data collection, both districts were experiencing difficulties that could impact how teachers described the district culture. The district where Edgewood School was located was amid protracted contract negotiations at the time of data collection. The district where Pioneer School is located was experiencing significant budget cuts , at the time of data collection, which led to substantial impending staff cuts and teachers being concerned about losing their jobs as a result.

Those who believed the district culture was negative gave varying reasons for believing so. One reason given by teachers from both districts was the lack of support from the district and district administrators. Melinda from Edgewood School shared that the district culture was an “I got you culture” and that she found herself “hesitating before I say anything because who else is that person is talking to”, while Diane from Pioneer School declared that the teachers did not feel that the administration was backing up the teachers. Further, some other views shared were that teachers didn’t feel respected, teachers were overwhelmed with the many things hitting them causing low staff morale and the high teacher turnover caused teachers to believe that the district culture was negative.

There were two teachers who had a positive view of the district culture. Jackie from Edgewood School believed that the district culture was positive, and she related other teachers’ negative feelings about the district culture to fear of organizational change that teachers were experiencing, among other things. Fear of organizational change as well as trying to meet diverse

student needs (Conley & Glasman, 2008) could be one of the reasons why some teachers viewed the district where Edgewood School is located, as negative. However, regardless of those fears, Jackie still maintained a positive view. Tara from Pioneer School also believed that her district's culture was positive. She said that there were great people in the district who have been very supportive of the teachers and she would agree that, "90% of our administrators support us."

Teachers views about ways in which the district culture shaped their sense of teacher efficacy was almost evenly split with seven teachers saying that the negative district culture did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy while five teachers shared that the negative district culture did affect their sense of teacher efficacy. Teachers from Edgewood School were evenly split with three teachers sharing that the negative district culture did affect their sense of teacher efficacy and three teachers sharing that the negative district culture did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy. On the other hand, four teachers from Pioneer School stated that the negative district culture did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy while two teachers from Pioneer School did believe that the negative district culture affected their sense of teacher efficacy.

The teachers who did not think their sense of teacher efficacy was affected by the negative district culture gave several reasons for their feelings. For instance, Jane and Melissa from Edgewood had similar views sharing that they have a job to do and regardless of what was going on in the district, "it's all about the kids." Sarah and Tara from Pioneer School discussed the administration. Sarah didn't have confidence in the evaluators and Tara felt that the administration wanted teachers to succeed. But both did not let the negative district culture affect their sense of teacher efficacy.

Five teachers did believe their sense of teacher efficacy was affected by the negative district culture. For Melinda, the negative district culture instilled fear in her and she was

unwilling or “very hesitant to try new things.” Further, she was worried that it made her teaching very stilted because she was unwilling to try new things. Natalie had similar feelings sharing that “I really worry a lot that I’m doing something wrong.” She also mentioned that the negative district culture was causing feelings of stress. Renee made a powerful statement. “I feel in our district because I feel that they don’t believe what I do is important, it affects my efficacy because you know they don’t show the interest or desire to learn more about even what I do.” Coincidentally, Diane had a somewhat similar view when she responded, “I think of the superintendent and I think how he affects our feelings of negativity.” She also didn’t feel that the district is invested in her, thus her feelings of teacher efficacy are diminished.

### Analysis of Socioeconomic Status and Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy

Table 13: Summary of Socioeconomic Status and Teacher Efficacy

Participant	In what ways does the SES of the students affect your sense of teacher efficacy?
Jackie, ES	“I think at times it makes it a little bit more difficult for me because they are a hard group of students to reach and they come to school with a whole different set of problems that are not only academic problems.” <b>(affected)</b>
Jane, ES	“I think that it’s hard because a lot of children don’t have the same things as other children.” <b>(affected)</b>
Melinda, ES	“I have a lot more to worry about with that.” <b>(affected)</b>
Melissa, ES	“So it makes me more tender-hearted towards them (students), more sensitive.” “We don’t know what they are experiencing on a daily basis.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Natalie, ES	“It affects it a lot.” <b>(affected)</b>
Renee, ES	“I don’t think it does.” “I don’t think that students’ socioeconomic status should affect how a teacher views her ability.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Deborah, PS	“I don’t think that the economic status of the children is the sole reason that teachers feel the way they feel and how it affects the job that we do.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Diane, PS	“...as hard as we work with them, they may or may not be progressing because there’s not follow through at home and not because parents don’t want to.” <b>(affected)</b>
Janine, PS	“It doesn’t affect it at all.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Nancy, PS	“The socioeconomic status does not affect it.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Sarah, PS	“Oh we are a low SES.” “I think that I give my heart and soul to my boys and girls....” “....they want to do we well for a person who’s invested in them and I want them to know that I’m that person.” <b>(not affected)</b>
Tara, PS	“It just gives you really empathy. You have to be empathetic....” <b>(not affected)</b>

Edgewood School and Pioneer School had similar socioeconomic populations in their schools. It was important to gauge how the socioeconomic status of the student population affected participants’ sense of teacher efficacy. When data was collected for this study, statistics from the New Jersey School Performance Report for 2015-2016 was used to discuss the socioeconomic status of the student population. According to the information obtained,

Edgewood School's enrollment was approximately 432 students in grades kindergarten to five. Eighty-seven percent or approximately 376 students are economically disadvantaged. Pioneer School's enrollment was approximately 651 students in grades kindergarten to five. Eighty-one percent or 527 students are economically disadvantaged, and 30% or 195 students were Limited English Proficient.

Study participants were asked in what ways did the socioeconomic status of the students affect their sense of teacher efficacy. Responses were almost evenly divided with seven teachers stating that socioeconomic status did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy and five teachers stating that socioeconomic status did affect their sense of teacher efficacy. To be more specific, four teachers from Edgewood School shared that their sense of teacher efficacy was affected by the socioeconomic status of the students while two teachers from Edgewood School shared that their sense of teacher efficacy was not affected by socioeconomic status. On the other hand, we have Pioneer School teachers, with one teacher stating that her sense of teacher efficacy was affected by socioeconomic status while five teachers from Pioneer shared that their sense of teacher efficacy was not affected by socioeconomic status.

Those teachers who believed their teacher efficacy was not affected by the socioeconomic status offered similar reasons why they held this belief. Renee from Edgewood simply stated that she did not think that the students' socioeconomic status should affect how a teacher viewed her ability. Other teachers from Pioneer School echoed Renee's thoughts, such as Deborah who said, "I don't think that the economic status of the children is the reason teachers feel the way they do and how it affects the job we do." Janine and Nancy simply said the socioeconomic status did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy at all. Sarah and Tara from Pioneer mentioned that they put their heart and soul into teaching those students who come from

low socioeconomic status. It did not negatively impact their sense of teacher efficacy; on the contrary, this made them more empathetic towards the students and they were invested in these students. Because 81% of the student population at Pioneer were from a low socioeconomic, these teachers were used to dealing with such a population more than teachers at Edgewood School.

The five teachers who claimed their sense of teacher efficacy was affected by the socioeconomic status of the students felt this way because they believed it was “more difficult” to reach these students. Jackie from Edgewood School noted “they are a hard group of students to reach and they come to school with a whole different set of problems that are not only academic problems.” Melinda from Edgewood School also felt that working with students from a lower socioeconomic status gave her more to “worry” about, thus affecting her sense of teacher efficacy. An interesting point was made by Diane who realized that even though she worked hard with this population of students, they may or may not progress since there was no follow through at home because families are at a disadvantage. Thus, this negatively influenced her sense of teacher efficacy.

### Teacher Self-Reflection and the Evaluation Process

Table 14: Summary of Teacher Self-Reflection and the Evaluation Process

Participant	
Jackie, ES	"I think that when I take the time to reflect on my teaching that's a good part of the evaluation process."
Jane, ES	"I think that I could look deeper on more...reflect."
Melinda, ES	N/A
Melissa, ES	"Actually, I like the reflection sheets. It's extra work but it definitely helps me look back and say 'whoa I could have done this differently'."
Natalie, ES	"But I reflect anyway, I'm always just thinking about my day. I'm always reflecting."
Renee, ES	N/A
Deborah, PS	N/A
Diane, PS	"It's really cause for reflection." ..."if they provide reflective questions...that's exactly what I need."
Janine, PS	N/A
Nancy, PS	N/A
Sarah, PS	"There is no self-evaluation." (reflection)
Tara, PS	"I think that sometimes, when I maybe read over my evaluation or look at that process, I focus in on my strengths...." (reflection)

Stronge (2006) wrote that good teachers do more than just teach; they also think about what they teach, they implement the plan and then think about what they taught. One common theme that arose from data collection was teachers' desire to self-reflect upon completion of the evaluation. Lortie (1975) defined "reflective practice" as a process in which teachers deliberate longer and harder about their teaching practices and work to guide their teaching activities. Seven of the 12 participants mention reflection and self-evaluation as something they desire of the evaluation process. They want to have the opportunity to think about their teaching practice. Sarah from Pioneer School said there was no self-evaluation. Self-reflection is one way in which teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and it can improve teacher morale and motivation (Airasian & Gullikson, 1994). Diane welcomed self-reflection, declaring that she wanted reflective questions because "that's exactly what I need," to be able to reflect and think about her teaching practice. Some teachers mentioned the use of reflection sheets signifying that they are used. "Actually, I like the reflection sheets. It's extra work but it definitely helps me look back and say, 'whoa, I could have done this differently'," said Melissa from Edgewood School. Thus, reflection on action, the ability to revisit certain events has many potential benefits

for teachers and time devoted to reflection can provide deepen broad perspective on practice (Airaisian & Gullickson, 1994.)

### The Importance of Feedback and the Evaluation Process

Table 15: Summary of Feedback and the Evaluation Process

Participant	
Jackie, ES	"They (administrators) give you feedback about how they felt." "You can get more feedback from the supervisors and administrators." "We can talk through situations that happened in the room and what I can do to be better next time."
Jane, ES	"They have to look deeper, and they have to you more information overall."
Melinda, ES	"We could have a dialogue about it. We could brainstorm..."
Melissa, ES	"...the principal a lot of times would give you feedback but sometimes not enough feedback to help you develop as a professional."
Natalie, ES	"I think it's more so to get feedback..." "...maybe we need to provide more feedback and information." "What advice do you have on this topic" "...give yourself feedback."
Renee, ES	"It would be helpful to me if they can just give a more open dialogue about the content in your teaching."
Deborah, PS	"You know maybe some feedback on an evaluation might change some things for certain teachers and make them better...."
Diane, PS	"Well what I go to most with my evaluations are the comments and suggestions." "The suggestions and the comments are really what I think are what I take from the evaluations the most."
Janine, PS	"And my question was, 'Well how? Tell me, how do I do that? Where should I go?'" (lacking feedback)
Nancy, PS	"I think the narrative at the end is helpful.....reading what my administrator comments and suggests."
Sarah, PS	"There is no follow up and there is no discussion....." "Have a conversation with me about education."
Tara, PS	"I like when the principal writes down their little summary (feedback)."

Every teacher deserves valid and reliable feedback; thus, the point of conducting teacher observations is to provide teachers with actionable feedback (Marzano, 2013). Teachers were asked what information from the evaluation process would be helpful to improving and strengthening their sense of effectiveness and feedback was a response given by all participants. Each teacher mentioned the need or desire for feedback and dialogue to take place during the evaluation process.

Many of the teachers believed that the purpose of the evaluation process was to get feedback about practice. They desired feedback so that they could "develop as a professional" and figure out what they could do better next time. Some had experiences with evaluators not providing feedback. For example, Sarah from Pioneer School said there was no follow up or

discussion after her evaluation while Janine from Pioneer School also said that she had questions that were unanswered such as “Well how? Tell me, how do I do that? Where should I go?” Her experience with receiving useful feedback was lacking.

On the other hand, Nancy from Pioneer School mentioned receiving feedback and shared that the narrative at the end provided by the evaluator was helpful as it contained comments and suggestions. Similarly, Jackie remarked that she welcomed more feedback from the administrators about what occurred in her classroom. Evaluation should have useful feedback that is connected to professional development opportunities and assisting teachers’ with meeting their goals.

### **Implications for Policy**

As previously mentioned in the literature review, on August 6, 2012, the TEACHNJ Act was signed into law by then Governor Chris Christie (NJ DOE, 2012). One of the goals of the TEACHNJ Act, according to title 18A:6-118 of the law was to raise student achievement by improving instruction through the implementation of evaluations that offer explicit, detailed feedback to educators (NJ DOE, 2012). Further, as per the ACHIEVE NJ statute 6A:10-1.1 delivery of clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies areas for growth and guides professional development was a minimum requirement for evaluation (NJ DOE, 2012). Thus, it was important to supply timely feedback, which was essential to helping educators improve. Evaluations that provide educators with more opportunities to have high-quality professional dialogue to design professional development to teachers’ needs are desirable and imperative.

The findings of this study show that teachers also believed that feedback was an integral part of the evaluation process and they welcomed the opportunity to engage in constructive



dialogue. Useful feedback was part of how teachers developed teacher efficacy, because it built teacher confidence. However, while TEACHNJ and ACHIEVE NJ statutes encouraged feedback and noted that feedback was a significant part of the evaluation, there was no way to ensure that these dialogues between teachers and administrators were actually taking place. Some of the respondents interviewed for this study shared that there was no follow up or discussion taking place at the conclusion of the evaluation. Furthermore, sometimes the feedback was not sufficient or valuable. Thus, to address this problem, the TEACHNJ Act could be amended to ensure it is stated that feedback be an imperative part of the evaluation process that must take place.

The TEACHNJ Act is a tenure law; however, the ACHIEVE NJ component of the law specifically outlined what was required of the evaluation process in order for teachers to gain tenure and remain in their teaching position. It should not only outline how important feedback was to the evaluation process, but also specify the timelines for when feedback should be given and in what manner the feedback should be given. By making timeline requirements more specific for administrators and supervisors to follow, feedback will be consistently given to teachers to provide them with support and tangible and useful professional development which may positively affect teachers' sense of efficacy.

Lastly, according to ACHIEVE NJ statute 6A:10-2.2, it was the responsibility of the district board of education to provide yearly training on the evaluation process for all teaching staff members, veteran or novice, who are evaluated in the school district (NJDOE, 2012). Further, the district must also supply updates and refresher training for supervisors who are conducting evaluations in the school. My research revealed that teachers have a basic understanding of the evaluation process. Responses varied from "They observe you and that they

write you up and they give you different scores for different sections” to “It’s very demanding” to “I know pretty much just what I have been given.” Teachers did not offer in-depth description of the evaluation process, which may be why most of the teachers had a negative impression of the evaluation process. Even though many of the teachers did not think the more rigorous evaluation process affected their sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness, it was important that governing bodies adhere to the statutes and make sure that teachers have a deeper understanding of the evaluation process. A better understanding of the evaluation tool may lead teachers to have an increased sense of teacher efficacy and a more consistent, positive experience with the evaluation process.

Delving further, teachers also believed that the person conducting the evaluation lacked the knowledge to perform the evaluation appropriately. For example, one teacher stated that “. I think that every time I get evaluated by a different person I get a new understanding of the evaluation itself and the interpretation of the evaluation.” Thus, there was an inconsistency in how evaluations are conducted. This could lead to a diminished understanding and decreased sense of teacher efficacy for the teacher because he/she may not comprehend the usefulness of the evaluation tool. The idea that evaluators are not effective when conducting evaluations is further supported by another teacher’s statement, “They have no idea how to evaluate us.” Therefore, it was imperative that districts adhere to the ACHIEVE NJ policy stating that supervisors or those who are conducting the evaluations must be retrained annually. This could potentially allow for better experiences for the teachers which may also lead to an increased sense of teacher efficacy.

### **Implications for Practice**

In the literature review, teacher efficacy was defined as a teacher's belief that they can produce positive changes in student achievement (Finnegan, 2013). As part of my research, I wished to determine if teachers believed that they had a high sense of teacher efficacy, and if so, was it connected to the more rigorous evaluation process. Teachers stated that they had a high sense of teacher efficacy, regardless of the evaluation process. Teachers connected their sense of teacher efficacy not only to student achievement, but also to teaching experience and preparation.

Teachers were not opposed to the evaluation process, sharing positive feelings about the purpose of the evaluation process. While some teachers believed that the current process was more complicated than necessary, my findings supported the assertions made in the research literature stating that teacher reflection and feedback was a very important part of evaluation for teachers that teachers believed was missing process. Teachers want valuable advice and the guidance that will enable them to improve their practice (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Teacher feedback was mentioned as an implication for policy; however, it was also important to mention it as an implication for practice as well. Evaluation that was truly effective produced feedback to teachers as well as provides professional dialogue between teachers and administrators (Finnegan, 2013). Teachers welcomed the opportunity to receive feedback from administrators because the feedback helped guide future instructional methods. One of the participants mentioned that she believed that "the suggestions and comments are really what I take from the evaluations the most," echoing the feelings of several of the study participants. Many of the participants felt that the feedback and dialogue component of the evaluation process was minimal or lacking. Moving forward, administrators and supervisors should be sure to provide

useful feedback for teachers. Finnegan (2013) stated that it is important for teachers to receive frequent and timely feedback which would enhance teacher self-efficacy. Thus, during the post-observation conference, open dialogue would be a welcome practice as well as giving useful feedback to teachers.

Teacher reflection was also a practice that teachers believed was necessary part of the evaluation process. The evaluation allowed teachers to contemplate what occurred during the lesson that was evaluated, and teachers complete a reflection form. Reflection on action, a mindful replay of their behaviors and practice, gives teachers time to revisit and contemplate, allowing them to develop a deep perspective on their practice (Stronge, 2013) Thus, moving forward, teachers should continue to take advantage of the self-reflection component of the evaluation process. In addition, since the reflection component was a part of the evaluation process, it may be useful for teachers to share with the evaluator during the post-observation conference. In this way, evaluators can use the reflection piece to inform their feedback. With teachers contributing their reflections to the post-observation conference, this may also positively affect their sense of teacher efficacy and the evaluation experience

### **Implications for Future Research**

Because much of my research was based around a singular evaluation model used in both districts that were the subjects of this study, it would be beneficial to further examine other districts using different evaluation models. Additionally, it would be wise to examine the Danielson Model since it used in approximately 60% of the districts in New Jersey and the Stronge Teacher and Leader Effectiveness System, the second most used evaluation system in New Jersey. This would include repeating the study in districts that use these different evaluation tools to see if using a different evaluation model has any effect on teacher efficacy.

Further, the sample could be expanded to be more diverse, by including male participants, novice teachers, teachers of various races and ethnicities and special area teachers. Including teachers from middle school and high school may also influence the data. Varying the teacher sample may yield interesting data because experiences differ for individuals based on the aforementioned factors. For example, a novice teacher who has never been exposed to the prior evaluation process may experience the more rigorous process in a different way because they have only been exposed to the newer process. Novice teachers may also have a diminished sense of teacher efficacy because they lacked experience. Veteran teachers in the sample all believed they had a high sense of efficacy. However, the one novice teacher in the sample, while stating that she had a high sense of teacher efficacy, she did share “with more experience I’ve gotten, it has grown a lot.” She is aware of the fact that she does not have much classroom teaching experience and that her sense of efficacy is growing over time while veteran teachers such as Deborah from Pioneer School declared that she had a high sense of teacher efficacy because “I feel confident about the way I teach and my ability because of the background that I have, the years I have been teaching, the trainings.....”

In terms of having access to male participants, of those solicited to participate in the study, only two were male. One male was reluctant to participate because of the negative district culture and fear of reprisal while the other male participant was unreachable. All others who were asked to participate were women. Teaching has always been a career path where women constituted the majority (Lortie, 1975). Thus, it would be interesting to see if men’s perceptions of their teacher efficacy and effectiveness would be significantly similar or different than their female counterparts.

Teacher collaboration and collective efficacy are also worth examining. Teachers did not name collaboration as a characteristic of an effective teacher, which supports some of the teachers' statements that there are not many opportunities for collaboration, if at all. If teachers were afforded the opportunity to collaborate more, teacher efficacy may increase, and collective efficacy may develop.

Finally, SES was an important aspect of the study. Both schools had a high population of students from families with low SES. During the 2015-2016 school year, 87% of 432 students at Edgewood School were economically disadvantaged. In addition, during the 2015-2016, 80% of 651 students at Pioneer School were economically disadvantaged. Teacher efficacy was affected by the SES status of the students. Thus, it would be interesting to repeat the study in a school district that is considered affluent or with a higher SES. Teachers in more prosperous districts may feel more efficacious because they would be dealing with a population that has access to educational tools that children with low socio-economic status do not. Further, district culture and school culture may not be as negative as district culture and school culture of a less affluent school district. This would be worth researching further.

### **Limitations to the Study**

While limitations to methodology were discussed previously in chapter 3, it is essential to recognize the limitations to the study by reflecting on the data as well. The data obtained in this study were restricted to the experiences faced by the 12 participants interviewed. Because the sample size was small, this may be considered a limitation. Having a larger sample size might have offered more complex and in-depth data for analysis. Thus, small sample size could be considered a limitation.

Another limitation was the sample itself. Of the 12 study participants, all of them were white females. 11 of the participants were veteran teachers, except for one teacher who had three years of teaching experience. Having more novice teachers, with limited or no experience with the evaluation process, participate in the study may have had some effect on the data collected and thus, impacted the analysis of the data. Further, all the participants were elementary school teachers. The experiences of middle school and/or high school teachers as well as special area teachers may have had an impact on the data. Thus, not having a more varied sample could be considered a limitation.

Additionally, there were limitations with recruitment of participants for the study. Because I work in the district where Edgewood School is located, I had access to teachers at Edgewood School. Further, because many teachers were reluctant to participate due to the negative district climate at the time of data collection, of the six participants at Edgewood School, I was familiar with five of the participants. A convenience sample, while it saves time and there is ease of recruiting participants, the data may be compromised (Cresswell, 2013). For example, teachers may not be fully forthcoming or honest when asked about their feelings of effectiveness and/or efficacy, especially when divulging this information to me, a peer.

Because my study included two school districts using one evaluation model, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, transferability or generalizability to other school districts is problematic (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Further, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model is not used by many NJ school districts. Therefore, teachers in districts who use other evaluation models, such as the Danielson model, the McREL model and the Stronge model to name a few, may have different experiences, positive or negative, based on their individual understandings with a different evaluation model. Furthermore, while focusing on one evaluation model is a

limitation, the study provides administrators and the districts with information that may drive future implementation of other evaluation models.

One aspect of teacher efficacy that was not included in the study is the concept of collective efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy, the belief that the efforts of the faculty will have a positive outcome on students, is based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, a unified theory of behavior change (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2010). Just as individual teacher efficacy may partly clarify the effect of teachers on student achievement, from an organizational perspective, collective teacher efficacy may help to explain the different effect that teachers in schools have on student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2010). Since the researcher was looking at teacher efficacy through the lens of the individual teacher and not teachers as a collective, this may be considered a limitation.

Finally, as the researcher and veteran teacher who has been exposed to the teacher evaluation model that is part of the study, I may have personal interest, otherwise referred to as positionality (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Omitting personal experiences is not without difficulties and interpretations of the data always incorporate assumptions that the researcher brings to the topic (Creswell, 2012; LeVasseur, 2003). Thus, researcher bias may have been a factor when analyzing and reporting the data.

### **Conclusion**

This phenomenological comparative case study sought to ascertain whether the passing of the TEACHNJ law and the implementation of a new, more rigorous evaluation process, negatively impacted or affected teacher sense of efficacy and teacher effectiveness. This study used interview data provided by teachers employed in two different peer schools to study teachers' experiences with the newer process thrust upon them. Teachers overwhelmingly stated



that the evaluation process did not affect their sense of teacher efficacy or teacher effectiveness. All the teachers in the sample stated that their sense of teacher efficacy and/or teacher effectiveness had not negatively changed because of the newer, more rigorous state-mandated process. Furthermore, most of the teachers, seven out of 12, stated that they did not believe they had a higher sense of teacher efficacy and teacher effectiveness with the past evaluation process.

While teachers reported that the evaluation process did not negatively impact their sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness, one thing that teachers were affected by was the socioeconomic status of the students they teach. The research literature points to the issue of addressing the needs of various students in the classroom, which may include struggling learners. Participants voiced that students who are low SES do not have access to materials necessary for learning, making instruction challenging. However, teachers believed that while it was challenging, students' socioeconomic status should not affect how a teacher views her ability. They put forth their best efforts and do what is necessary to support the students.

In both cases studied, school culture and district culture were negatively perceived by the participants. Teachers believed that their school's culture was negative; however, the negative culture did not affect their sense of efficacy. Similarly, while district culture was negative, teachers had a strong sense of teacher efficacy. The research literature stated that toxic cultures or negative subcultures can affect a school's environment and that teachers may have a weak sense of efficacy. However, the data negated this claim since most of the teachers shared that their teacher efficacy was unaffected by the negative school and district cultures. This could be connected to the fact that 11 of the 12 participants are veteran teachers who are used to dealing with such cultures.

Finally, the feedback and reflection components of the evaluation process were valuable to teachers. Many teachers discussed the reflective portion of the evaluation, sharing that having the opportunity to self-reflect was helpful as teachers try to hone and improve their practice. In addition, feedback was also very important to teachers. Constructive feedback from the evaluators was welcome and valued by teachers. However, in some cases feedback was either not valuable or useful. The ACHIEVE NJ law stated that feedback should be a part of the evaluation process. But, specific timelines and the ability to monitor if the feedback dialogue was occurring were lacking in the ACHIEVENJ statutes.

Ultimately, teachers are consummate professionals who have dedicated themselves to educating all students, regardless of the circumstances surrounding them. The evaluation process is just a component of all the tasks that were a part of the teaching profession. As always, teachers rise to the occasion and do their best. “Good teaching is good teaching” after all, and they do not need an evaluation to know that.

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## APPENDIX A: DISTRICT RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

[Name of Superintendent],  
[Name of school district]  
[Address]  
[Address]

Dear [Name of Superintendent]:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to contact [name of principal] and the teaching staff at [name of elementary school] for their participation in my dissertation research. The purpose of my research is to examine how teachers perceive their teacher efficacy based on the evaluation process. Using a qualitative case study research design, I wish to understand what aspects of the evaluative process makes teachers feel more efficacious, in the hopes of making the evaluation process a more positive experience for educators.

The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews with teachers in grades kindergarten-five as well as special area teachers. I would require 5-6 participants. I will also be conducting a focus group interview as well. The interviews would be recorded using an audio recorder. Teachers could choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Teacher participation will also be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time. This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as position and years of experience.

Participants' names and the name of the school(s) in which they teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

With your permission, I would like to contact [name of principal] and arrange to forward a request for participation letter to teachers at the [name of middle school]. I have included a copy of these letters for your review. As a token of my appreciation for your school's participation in this research, I would be happy to provide you with a summary of the study's findings upon completion of this project.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (201) 320-6060 or by e-mail ([korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (848) 932-0721 or by e-mail ([catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu)).

If teachers have any questions about their rights as a research subject, they may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants, at Rutgers University.

Institutional Review Board  
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey  
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200  
335 George Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: 732-235-9806  
Email: [humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu)

To begin my research, I would need a letter of approval of which I am providing a sample that you may use or modify as you see fit. I hope you will consider my request. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Keri C. Orange  
2 Patton Drive, apt. D  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

## APPENDIX B: APPROVAL LETTER PROVIDED TO DISTRICT

[Date]

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to give approval for Keri C. Orange, a student at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to conduct her dissertation research at the [name of elementary school] in [name of town], New Jersey. She will complete her research during the 2016-2017 academic school year.

Miss Orange will be researching how teachers perceive their sense of teacher efficacy and effectiveness as a result of the evaluation process. The purpose of her research is to help teachers develop an understanding and better experience with the evaluation process as well as find ways to increase and/or improve teachers' sense of their efficacy as a result of the evaluation process.

I understand that Miss Orange will be using qualitative research methods that will include individual interviews with teachers that will be audio recorded and will also include observational notes of school documents related to the evaluation process. She has informed me that all research associated with her project will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Teacher and institutional pseudonyms will be used.

Teachers will elect to participate voluntarily and may choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. They will have the right to withdraw at any time.

Sincerely,

[Name of Superintendent]  
Superintendent

## APPENDIX C: SCHOOL RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

[Name of principal], Principal

[Name of middle school]

[Address]

[Address]

Dear [Name of Principal]:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to contact the teaching staff at [name of elementary school] for their participation in my dissertation research. I have received approval from your superintendent to contact you for this request.

The purpose of my research is to develop an understanding of how teachers perceive their sense of teacher efficacy as a result of the evaluation process. Furthermore, I wish to aid teachers with cultivating a better experience with the evaluation process as well as find ways to increase and/or improve teachers' sense of their efficacy.

Using a qualitative case study research design, my goal is to capture the real-life experience of teacher participants in order to improve the evaluative process and improve teachers' sense of efficacy. The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews. The interviews would be recorded using an audio recorder. Teachers may choose to not answer any question or questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Teacher participation will also be voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time.

This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as position and years of experience. Participants' names and the name of the school(s) in which they teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (201) 320-6060 or by e-mail ([korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (848) 932-0721 or by e-mail ([catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu)).

If teachers have any questions about their rights as a research subject, they may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants, at Rutgers University.

Institutional Review Board  
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey  
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200  
335 George Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: 732-235-9806  
Email: [humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu)

With your permission, teacher recruitment at [name of school here] will occur by forwarding all teachers a request for participation letter. I have included a copy of this letter for your review. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to inform me of your decision. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Keri C. Orange  
Ed.D. Student  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

## APPENDIX D: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

Dear Teacher:

I am a student in the graduate program in educational administration and supervision in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers. The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in my dissertation research. I have received approval from your superintendent and principal to contact you for this request.

The purpose of my research is to develop an understanding of how teachers perceive their sense of teacher efficacy as a result of the evaluation process. Furthermore, I wish to aid teachers with cultivating a better experience with the evaluation process as well as find ways to increase and/or improve teachers' sense of their efficacy. The design of this study requires me to conduct 30-45 minute interviews. The interviews would be recorded using a digital audio recorder. You may choose to not answer any question or questions with which you feel uncomfortable. Your participation will also be voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

This research will be stored in a secure location and remain confidential. Confidential means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as your position and years of experience. Your name and the name of the school(s) in which you teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, please contact me by phone at (201) 320-6060 or by e-mail ([korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)) or my advisor Dr. Catherine Lugg at (848) 932-0721 or by e-mail ([catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu)).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants, at Rutgers University.

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Tel: 732-235-9806  
Email: [humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu)

If you are interested in participating, please complete the attached form with your name and contact information (so that I may contact you), the subject(s) you teach, and the number of years of experience you have with the current evaluation model used (Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model). For this small-scale study, I will select a sample that is representative of teachers at different grade levels and years of experience.

I hope you will consider my request, and I look forward to your participation in my research. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Keri C. Orange  
Ed.D. Student  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey



APPENDIX E: Teacher Recruitment Information Form  
TEACHER RECRUITMENT & CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

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**Title of Study**

Teachers Understandings of Evaluation and Teacher Self-Efficacy

**Contact Information****Principal Investigator**

Keri C. Orange  
2 Patton Drive, apt. D  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Tel: (201) 320-6060  
Email:  
[korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)

**Additional Contact Person**

Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.  
19 Graduate School of Education  
10 Seminary Place  
Rutgers, The State University of NJ New  
Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: (848) 932-0721  
Email: [catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu)

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☐ I am interested in being interviewed in the above-named research study related to teacher evaluation and teacher self-efficacy.

☐ I would agree to the use of a digital audio recorder for the interview process.

(Please note that the purpose of recording your responses is to ensure accuracy and avoid misrepresentation. However, you do not have to agree to be recorded to participate in this study.)

☐ (if applicable) I would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, if necessary. (Please note that the purpose of a follow-up interview would only be to confirm my understanding of your earlier responses and/or to request additional information.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Your Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(E-mail address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
£ ☐ Cell £ ☐ Home (contact number)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Subjects You Teach)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Grade Levels)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Years Experience)

Please return this form to the principal investigator named above no later than [date].

Thank you.

## APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study**

Teachers Understandings of Evaluation and Teacher Self-Efficacy

**Contact Information****Principal Investigator**

Keri C. Orange  
2 Patton Drive, apt. D  
Bloomfield, NJ 07003  
Tel: (201) 320-6060  
Email: [korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:korange@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)

**Additional Contact Person**

Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.  
19 Graduate School of Education  
10 Seminary Place  
Rutgers, The State University of NJ  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: (848) 932-0721  
Email: [catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu](mailto:catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu)

**Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about its purpose, the possible risks and benefits of being in the study, and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. If there is something you do not understand, you should ask me. You should be satisfied with the answers before you agree to participate in the study.

**Background/Purpose**

The purpose of my research is to develop an understanding of how teachers perceive their sense of teacher efficacy as a result of the evaluation process.

**Description**

Participation in this study will involve one or more of the following:

- Interviews of approximately 45 minutes about your experience with the evaluation process and your belief in your teacher efficacy. These interviews will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. If you feel uncomfortable with any question, you do not have to answer it. If at any time you would like me to turn off the audio recorder, I will.
- Review of documents generated in preparation for, during, and as a result of the evaluation process.

**Cost & Compensation**

There are no costs associated with participating in this study. There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

**Alternatives to participation**

Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose whether or not to participate. You may choose to withdraw at any time during the study without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer questions with which you are uncomfortable.

**Risks**

The risks associated with this study are minimal, however you may experience embarrassment or discomfort with a specific question. If you feel uncomfortable during any part of an interview, you may choose to not answer that question. Should you require counseling due to participation in this study, you will be referred to the Psychological Clinic of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

**Benefits**

Participation in this study may not benefit you directly. However, some people enjoy talking about and sharing experiences. Your participation may indirectly improve middle school teacher experiences by helping us to better understand what works and what could be improved.

**Confidentiality**

This research is confidential. This means that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as your position and years of experience. Your name and the name of the school in which you teach will be removed from interview transcripts and notes, and you will not be identified by name. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a secure location during this project. Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be stored on my password-protected computer. The Institutional Review Board at Rutgers and I are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results presented, the information will remain confidential.

**Contact**

If you have any questions at any time about the research or the procedures, you may contact me or the faculty advisor for this project. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, which is a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants, at Rutgers University.

Institutional Review Board  
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey  
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200  
335 George Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: 732-235-9806

Email: [humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu)

### **Participation & Freedom to Withdraw**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate. You may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty to you.

### **Consent to Participate**

Sign below if you agree to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Researcher's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

### **Consent to Audio Record**

Sign below if you agree to the use of an audio recorder for the interview process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)

*This informed consent was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on January 24, 2017. Currently, there is no expiration on the approval of this form.*

## APPENDIX G: Audio/Visual Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: **Teachers Understandings of Evaluation and Teacher Self-Efficacy** conducted by **Keri C. Orange**. We are asking for your permission to allow us audio record our interview as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for transcribing our conversations. I will use these typed transcriptions for analysis in this study.

The recording(s) will include a statement of an identifier, the date, and your position at the beginning of the interview. If you say anything that you believe at a later point may be hurtful and/or damage your reputation, then you can ask the interviewer to rewind the recording and record over such information OR you can ask that certain text be removed from the dataset/transcripts.

The recording(s) will be stored in an encrypted folder, on a password protected computer. Transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet and remain confidential, meaning that the research records will only include non-identifying information, such as teaching position and years of experience. Participants will be advised that all audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*This informed consent was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on January 24, 2017. Currently, there is no expiration on the approval of this form.*

## APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Background Information**

How many years have you been teaching?

What subject(s)/grade levels do you teach?

How many years have you been teaching your current grade level/subject area?

**Teacher Efficacy and Effectiveness**

1. How would you describe your feelings of confidence in your teaching ability?
2. What is an effective teacher?
3. Do you think you are an effective teacher? How?

**Teacher Evaluation and Experience with Evaluation Process?**

1. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of teacher evaluation?
2. How would you describe your understanding of the evaluation process? Please detail and/or describe your understanding of the process.
3. How many years have you been evaluated using the current evaluation?  
What was used in the past? What is your impression of the current evaluation process?
4. Has your sense of self-efficacy changed as a result of the current evaluation process?  
Has your sense of teacher effectiveness changed with the current evaluation process?  
Do you believe you had a higher sense of self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness with the past evaluation process?
5. Besides this evaluation process, how do you gauge your effectiveness?

**School Culture**

School Culture is defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

1. How would you describe your school's culture?
  - a. How would you describe district's culture? (Tierney, 2008)
2. In what way does your school's culture shape your sense of teacher efficacy?
3. In what ways does the district's culture shape your sense of teacher efficacy?
4. In what ways does the SES of the students affects your sense of teacher efficacy?

**Moving Forward**

1. Explain how you could better utilize aspects of the evaluation process to help you strengthen your sense of effectiveness.
2. What information from the evaluation process would be helpful in improving your sense of effectiveness?