

A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER ATTITUDES, BELIEF SYSTEMS, AND
BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUBSTANTIVE STUDENT
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN A CHARTER SCHOOL
SERVING AN ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
URBAN POPULATION

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The University of Houston-Clear Lake
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

DECEMBER, 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the support of my family during this doctoral journey. Their understanding and encouragement made all of this possible. I especially want to thank my loving husband, Greg, and my precious children, Halle and Blake, for cheering me on and keeping our household functioning. The love and patience you all exhibited was so thoughtful and appreciated. I would like to thank my superb parents, Ann and Bob Bragg, for supporting me through this challenging endeavor and for always believing in me. They are the best parents a daughter could ever have. Thank you for always setting such high expectations for me as well as sharing your value of education. I also want to share the inspiration provided by my grandfather, Dr. Thomas M. Spencer. He was the first University of Houston Doctorate of Education graduate in 1947. Also, thank you to my Aunt Betty, Dr. Betty von-Maszewski, for giving me encouragement and the very special gift of the doctoral hood that my Granddad and she both wore when they each earned their doctoral degrees. It is so very special to me. I am so blessed by God for giving me such a wonderful and special family.

I am likewise so grateful for my magnificent committee members. Thank you to Dr. Gary Schumacher for all of his support and time reading through my many drafts as well as providing insightful feedback, reassurance, and the extra helpful timelines to keep my progress moving forward with such a swift pace. I also appreciate the time he took to visit my school for tours and offer encouragement. My entire committee thoughtfully helped me reach my goals of learning and growing through meaningful research.

Appreciation is given to Dr. Lillian McEnery for the support in creating the idea for this dissertation, Dr. Amy Orange for being my methodologist and showing this former math teacher the valuable world of qualitative research, and Dr. Carlos Price for taking the time away from the blissful retirement life to serve on my committee. I am eternally appreciative to each of you.

Another heart-felt thank you goes out to my work family. They, too, supported me throughout this stellar journey! I appreciate each and every one of you! I have special appreciation for our administrative team who took up the slack when I was unable to be physically present. Matt, Holly, Kendra, Christi, Ginger, Heather, Aimee - you all made this degree possible. Also, I am so thankful to the wonderful teachers and students for your insight, time, reflections, trust, and willingness to participate.

A final thanks is well deserved by so many special friends. Thank you to Jan for helping with my love bugs while I was busy with classes and writing papers as well as Becky and Amy from church for raising my children for me every Wednesday through Homework Help and Youth Bible Study while I was in class. And last but certainly not least, I have a heartfelt appreciation for the best doctoral program cohort family ever: Holly, Shelly, Kelly, Heather, Pete, Robin, Louis, Ashley, and Jade. Thank you all for your ongoing encouragement and optimism! Together, we traveled this journey to the top of this mountain! Well done, my friends!

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to research teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with academic achievement for students in a charter school serving an economically disadvantaged, urban population. This research sought to acquire teacher and student perceptions concerning what they believed were the most effective perspectives, convictions, and actions of successful teachers. Since the research shows that the teacher really matters and is the most impactful component to student academic achievement, then administrators can use these guiding qualities to hire the best teachers for their students and to focus on improving the caliber of their teachers. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory was utilized to frame this study as the researcher viewed

perceived best practices through the lens of four teachers and nine high school students in a public charter school. The findings indicated that research based best practices supporting effective teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are consistent in a public charter school as well and the greatest opportunity for academic achievement improvements lies with the quality of the teachers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As accountability standards continue to rise, student academic achievement is reportedly one of the major issues that schools today face. This challenge leads educators to search for factors that contribute to the most growth in student academic improvement. Huang and Moon (2009) reported that teachers are the most influential factor in a child's academic growth. The researchers further explained a student who has a poor performing teacher could be significantly hindered in academic growth. It is imperative that a child does not have more than one ineffective teacher in subsequent years. Huang and Moon (2009) also share many different qualities of effective teachers. Some of the leading qualities are motivation, enthusiasm, presentation skills, teacher expectations, attitudes, instructional practices, caring, and dedication. The overall message was that it is imperative to identify what those qualities are and which teachers possess them especially in the early years of a child's educational career. A school could make the most achievement in increasing student achievement simply by improving the quality of teachers.

Other researchers agreed with Huang and Moon (2009) that effective teachers are the essential key to increasing student academic achievement. Bloom's (2012) research agreed that one of the biggest factors in students' success is that they have a strong teacher working with them. In their study, Akbari and Allvar (2010) found that teachers are one of the most important players influencing academic student achievement.

Effective teachers have the ability to fill in the gaps in student learning. A teacher's degree of reflectivity, sense of efficacy, and teaching style including intellectual excitement, and interpersonal rapport with students has a positive correlation with increasing student achievement (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). In addition to Akbari and Allvar, Sanders and Horn (1998) believe that teacher effectiveness is the most imperative factor in a student's academic growth. According to these researchers, a school could make the most significant achievement in increasing student achievement simply by improving the quality of teachers.

Although studies have been performed to research effective teacher qualities, limited studies were conducted with public charter school teachers (Hill, Angel, & Christensen, 2006). Extremely limited research is available concerning studying teachers in charter schools, especially low income public charter schools. Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement specifically in a public charter school with primarily a low income student population.

Huang and Moon (2009) found some of the leading teacher qualities include motivation, enthusiasm, presentation skills, teacher expectations, attitudes, instructional practices, caring, and dedication. Earlier, Berlinger (2004) described different factors that foster expert teachers such as motivation, good coaching, and practice. He also encourages schools to provide these opportunities to grow their teachers. This qualitative study will focus on the specific teacher qualities that support student growth.

Bellanca (2016) summarized by stating:

It is easy to list the attributes of the 21st century effective teachers, as the list is

but a mirror of the desired student attributes. The only difference is the teacher becomes the person who *helps* students build the foundation of core content, think critically and problem solve, collaborate, communicate effectively, develop self-direction as a learner, and build confidence in their lifelong learning abilities. In this image, effective teachers first and foremost are those whose *actions* keep the student at the center of every decision. (p. 6)

This chapter will introduce this qualitative, multiple case study by providing the need for the study, research questions, definitions of key terms, and the researcher identity.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a charter school serving economically disadvantaged students. Once a school can identify the specific teacher characteristics that promote the most significant levels of student achievement with their student population, then they are able to seek out and grow those same qualities in others. It is simply sharing best practices within one's learning environment.

Stellar Journey Charter School (pseudonym for participating charter school) will provide the setting for this qualitative study focused in determining teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a charter school serving a low income population of students. The researcher uses a multiple case study analysis through interviews, observations, and open-ended survey questions for teachers in a predominately economic disadvantaged charter school (83% of

the students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program) located in Southeast Texas.

Good and Lavigne (2015) remind researchers that further research should be conducted to expand and build upon the specific measure we use to express and characterize good teaching. The authors also remind readers of the following:

It is prudent to recall that as recently as the late 60's teachers were not considered to have much impact on students' achievement and that students' success in schools was primarily determined by student and family variables. If we look at using good research procedures, we may well find evidence that some aspects of teaching and their consequences on students are more enduring than teacher effects on standardized achievement scores. (p. 10)

Need for Study

Staff is voicing that the greatest concern at Stellar Journey Charter School (SJCS), a predominately low income public charter school, is the disconnect between how hard the educators feel as though they are working compared to the slow progressing results of their students' academic achievement and successes. The staff feels as though they are working diligently to help their students create their own stellar journey through life, yet the school continues to barely meet rising accountability standards. Although they do continue to meet the accountability standards, the scores are consistently too close for comfort to the cut score between acceptable and unacceptable. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to research a few of the teachers who are achieving higher levels of student academic achievement than many of their coworkers to identify what are their attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors and then share the best practices so that others can learn from their strategies and methods to increase academic achievement for all students.

Furthermore, this study will examine the perceptions of teachers concerning why they feel their students made substantive academic achievement in a majority economically disadvantaged public charter school in Southeast Texas. Specifically, what do they perceive are their attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that contribute towards economically disadvantaged, charter school students' academic achievement and success?

The advantages of this study are to provide the school with research and data that manifests successful practices of teachers in the past so they can replicate them now. The entire reason the researcher is committed to this research study is to help the teachers and students make improvements in their practices and learning. The school has many things they are doing well, but they also have many things that they could improve upon.

Although this public charter school has over 83% and 53% economically disadvantaged and at-risk students, respectively, there are many teachers that are consistently able to help their students make substantive academic achievement and reach a successful level. They also have several teachers, who no matter what their grade level or content area assignment is, they are just not as successful as their peer teachers. This study will help identify what it is that makes the successful teachers able to more effectively grow children academically.

This study will also help with hiring and save educational monies. Each year, an exorbitant amount of public education dollars are spent to recruit, hire, train, support, and develop new teachers only to have over half of these new teacher leave the teaching field within their initial five years of service (Synar & Maiden, 2012). This is especially important because Combs, Yongmei, Hall, and Ketchen (2006) pointed out that staffing usually creates close to 80% of a district's budget, and therefore must be efficient and

effective.

The history of educational policy development also manifests a need for effective teachers. Wong (2008) provided the history review from 1965 when the federal government enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to specifically focus on addressing the education needs of economically disadvantaged children and student with special needs to the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act and the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act pushed by the 1983 publication, *A Nation At Risk*. It is imperative that students have the most effective teachers. Wong (2008) further reported how accountability shifted in 2001 from measuring performance of school districts through fiscal accountability to measuring the entire public school system for results.

The limitations identified in this study are that effective teaching related to student academic achievement is a widely researched topic (Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Berliner, 2004; Bloom, 2012; Huang & Moon, 2009; Love & Kruger, 2005; Muijs & Reynolds, 2015; Peabody, 2011; Stronge, 2002; Wagner & DiPaola, 2011). Unfortunately, specifics about how teachers can ensure academic growth is limited for charter schools (Hill et al., 2006). In Texas, charter schools are predominately sought out by families with struggling students. Many charter school students were not being successful in their residential independent school district's school, so they search for another free, public school option. Therefore, another limitation of this study was that the percentage of struggling students and even percentage of special education students was often higher than a traditional public school (Guvercin, 2013). Therefore, the data may be skewed due of this imbalance of student population. Another concern identified in this study was the possible challenge to find commonalities among thoughts and

generalizability because this study depends on teachers' perceptions of just a few individuals.

In conclusion, the school's accountability ratings do not reflect what the staff would like the students' performance to manifest. Their elementary students' state assessment scores tend to be lower than the state average performance levels. The middle school scores tend to be at or just slightly above state average scores, and the high school scores are usually higher than state average scores. Therefore, the school's students tend to perform better the longer the students are at the school which is conversely what is typically seen in traditional public schools with the highest scores at the elementary levels and lowest at the high school levels. The staff has all speculated reasons to this increasing trend in the data as their students grow with them, but they are not certain about the root cause nor have they been able to improve the phenomena to increase elementary scores. The researcher wants to help identify specific strategies that seem to support academic improvement to help the students and teachers.

Research Questions

The researcher and school staff believe that the quality of the teachers in their low-income, public charter school directly influences the level of academic achievement of the students. Therefore, this qualitative study will focus upon identifying what teachers perceive to be their own attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that contribute to substantive student academic achievement. This study will also include student perspectives as well. Specifically, this research will address the following research questions:

- 1) What perceived attitudes do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?
- 2) What perceived belief systems do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?
- 3) What perceived behaviors do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?
- 4) What student perceptions exist about attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers whose students demonstrate substantive academic achievement?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following are the definitions of key terms used throughout this dissertation.

Quality Teachers: Teachers whose pedagogy is considered to be grounded in values and beliefs that foster care, positive student and teacher relationships, rooted in trust and high standards of professional ethics (Boon, 2011).

Self-Efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994).

Substantive Student Academic Achievement: For this study, it is defined as the percentage of student achievement on the state STAAR test in core subject areas meeting or exceeding the average county and/or state levels of achievement.

Teacher Attitudes: For this study, it is defined as a manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., that a teacher has with regard to a person, thing, or idea (Dictionary.reference.com). Attitudes are feelings that can affect behavior (Knox &

Anfara, 2013).

Teacher Behaviors: How a teacher acts and things they do which are influenced by their efficacy beliefs (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Teacher Belief Systems: For this study, it is the ideas and things that a teacher holds to be true concerning education and teaching. Pajares (1992) defined beliefs as “the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives” (p. 307). Beliefs are “far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior” (p. 311).

Teacher Reflectivity: When a teacher steps back to think about his or her actions or thoughts. A teacher’s degree of a reflective attitude has a positive correlation with increasing student achievement (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy: The belief that a teacher possesses about his or her competencies to increase student engagement and learning (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). Also, self-efficacy is the judgement a teacher has about his or her capabilities to affect desired results of student engagement and learning, even with more challenging or unmotivated students (Henson, 2001).

Teaching Style: When a teachers’ personal educational philosophy is manifested through their instructional practices (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Basic Assumptions

The basic assumptions of this study are that the results will be applicable and used by this specific school environment with this specific student population. Although many findings will be common across other learning environments, this study is not necessarily applicable to other school environments. Each school has its own school culture, and

therefore, the findings are directed towards the public charter school where the research occurred.

Researcher Identity

The researcher's past educational experiences has definitely led to her overarching research topic of student success. The entire reason she decided to go back to graduate school and join the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Doctorate of Educational Leadership program is to research best practices and grow her effectiveness as an educational leader in the realm of student academic achievement.

As a student herself, she was academically successful. She always made good grades and worked hard. Her parents taught her to value education, and therefore, she has an appreciation for learning. As a result, she is a lifelong learner.

As a former teacher in an independent school district intermediate school, the researcher's students were academically successful. Her students and classes always did well on state assessments as well as local and classroom assessments. It was not until she became an administrator at a public high school that she experienced a learning environment where so many students struggled. She counseled students on their academic goals, testing performance, study habits, and more. She perceived a feeling of defeat in many of them. In her role as campus testing coordinator, she also met and interacted with many "out-of-school" individuals who had completed their high school coursework, but had not passed their exit level state assessment and could not graduate because of it. Usually, these students were lacking passing only one subject area although they had earned passing grades in those classes. Although the researcher only served in this administrative role for two years before her family moved to another area

of Texas, this experience significantly impacted her. She wanted to help struggling students.

When the researcher began working at SJCS 11 school years ago as superintendent and principal, she had no prior experience with public charter schools as all of her past educational involvements were with independent school districts. She was shocked and dismayed by the number of struggling students at SJCS. Once she visited the classrooms, her disbelief intensified. The teachers and the school as a whole were struggling as well. She feels like God had placed her in that school to help them all. It became a passion of hers to improve this public charter school. She believes that if a charter school was going to exist for parents and students to have another public school option, then it better be an excellent option!

For several years, academics continued to improve at SJCS. Both the quality of teaching improved along with the growth of the academics of the students. The school culture and climate improved as did compliance concerns. In the past few years though, the upward trajectory of academic improvement has somewhat leveled off. Although the quality of the SJCS staff seems to continue to improve according to years of experience, type of experience, perceived knowledge of content areas, as well as collaboration among staff through both vertical and horizontal teams, student achievement does not seem to be able to increase to the desired level. This is the reason the researcher decided to join the doctoral program. She wanted to find ways to increase student learning in her school. SJCS had grown from 183 students to over 800 in its primary location, and the charter just added two new schools totaling approximately 1,100 students district wide. The researcher feels as though it is her responsibility to learn how to better help them.

The researcher understands that her personality, behaviors, and personal beliefs will affect her search for answers and perceptions to her research questions. She will study attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers that are able to make significant academic achievement with their students. She believes that she was that kind a teacher. So, her assumption is that these teachers would share similar traits as her, but she also thinks she may actually find something different. Although her attitude, belief system, and behavior centers around being a Christian, showing love and patience for others, believing that there is good in all people and potential in all, being flexible and easy going, and that anyone can achieve with hard work; she perceives some very different personalities and attitudes in some of SJCS's more successful teachers. She is eager and curious to see what she will find.

Another experience that the researcher has undergone is extensive training in Stephen Covey's (2008) *The Leader in Me* which focuses on his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (2004). She thinks this training has also affected her behaviors and perceptions of others' behaviors. She looks for opportunities in herself and others to be proactive, put first things first, seek first to understand before being understood, think win-win, begin with the end in mind, synergize, and renew/sharpen the saw. This training has encouraged her to be more reflective, and she wonders if more effective teachers exhibit reflective behaviors. She thinks it is very likely.

The researcher's background has also taught her a lot about perceptions. As an individual and educator, she works diligently to try to see all sides of a situation, but she understands that not everyone does that. Others' perceptions are their reality, and she has to work within their paradigm or work diligently to not just change their mind but change

their whole way of thinking about something. Many times, she too has to shift her paradigm or way of thinking. This, also, will affect her research.

The researcher believes that she will have several advantages to her research from her own experiences and history. Specifically, she knows the school history, culture, climate, people, students, and families. Because the staff knows her so well, she feels they will be more likely to trust her and be open with her. She found this to be true when interviewing one teacher who claimed that she was fine with telling her in person all of her thoughts since she trusted her but would rather not write them all down because just anyone could see what she said. The teacher was relieved that an alias would be used for other readers but was just fine talking and sharing with the researcher.

Consequently, the researcher feels that she can really dive down deep to identify some root causes or specific strategies that are helping students perform well in specific classes for specific teachers but not for others. She also has access to student historical data which will be very beneficial.

Another anticipated benefit specifically for the subjects includes participation in a reflection activity of their own practices that are effective with increasing student achievement. Teachers do not always make the time to reflect on what they do and how they do it. This study promotes reflection time for the specific purpose of improved teaching and student achievement.

Because of her circumstances, the researcher believes she will also experience several disadvantages to her qualitative research since she is more personally connected. Because she works or has worked with the people she will be interviewing and observing, she thinks several teachers might tend to be a bit hesitant to be brutally honest. Luckily, she

is not their direct supervisor. She will spend time before her interviews begin to be sure to explain that their openness is essential to the outcomes of the study and the possible positive impact on all of SJCS's students. Also, another disadvantage that the researcher foresees is that the students seemed to improve academically the older they were and the longer they had stayed with SJCS. Unlike most schools' data that she has researched where the strongest scores are at the elementary level and then decrease in middle school and even lowered in high school, this school's data shows the opposite. SJCS's elementary scores are the lowest performance while the high school scores are the best and even outperform many of the local schools, districts, and state scores. Although the researcher understands that her experiences have an impact on the research, she will do everything she can to make this a valid study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a public charter school which serves a predominately economically disadvantaged population. Therefore, this chapter focuses upon the review of literature encompassing previous research specifically related to student academic achievement, teacher attitudes, teacher belief systems, teacher behaviors, and charter schools. This chapter also includes a summary of the findings and the theoretical framework at the conclusion of this literature review.

The Teacher Makes the Difference in Student Academic Achievement

The teacher makes the difference is the focus of numerous studies (Bloom, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Rowe, 2004; Stronge, 2002). Hattie (2009) analyzed over 50,000 studies which led to the conclusion of the importance of the classroom teacher. Rowe (2004) agreed that the quality of teachers is a determining factor of student results. Bloom (2012) suggests that every single student can learn better and make better grades if he or she has an effective teacher. The author stresses that one of the biggest factors in a student's success is that they have a strong teacher working with them and that this is the key to student improvement. A good teacher can reach children regardless of their circumstances (Bloom, 2012). His research shows that effective teachers can help students raise their grades irrespective of their family background, ethnicity, economical status, etc. The data also posits that if a child has a good teacher in each class, he or she

will achieve results four and a half grades higher than a student in the same school with poor teachers (Bloom, 2012). This shows excellent teaching makes the difference. In fact, Bloom (2012) found a direct correlation between the greater the quality of the teacher and the more the achievement in student performance. Although a student's qualities affect academic performance the most, the level of teacher skill makes a great impact, and the research continues to tell educators that the teacher matters (Bloom, 2012).

Stronge and Hindman (2003) as well as Stronge and Tucker (2000) echoed that the teacher matters by showing that the teacher is the single, most influential factor in a school that contributes to student achievement. Therefore, "we can greatly improve student achievement if we come to an understanding of what constitutes an effective teacher and then seek out teachers who demonstrate those desired qualities and behaviors" (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p.49). Stronge, Grant, and Xu (2001) explained how teaching not only matters but is also complex work that is constantly changing its specialized body of skills and knowledge. In a later study by the same authors, research showed that this changing has created an evolution of the evaluation of teachers to not only include the teaching process but also include student outcomes (Stronge, Grant, & Xu, 2013).

Research by Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) showed that students who were placed with effective teachers for three years in a row scored 52 percentage points higher on an achievement test than their peers who were placed with ineffective teachers for three years. Mendro's (1998) study showed similar trends with data from Dallas ISD showing that highly effective teachers' students will remain ahead of their peers for at

least the next few years as opposed to their peers who may need up to three years of remediation to recover from an ineffective teacher.

Huang and Moon (2009) also agree that teachers are one of the most influential factors of a child's academic growth. Therefore, it is important for school leaders to understand that a school will make the most achievement simply by improving the quality of teachers (Huang & Moon, 2009).

In conclusion, teachers do make the difference in student achievement. Shaw and Newton (2014) expressed trepidations about how to safeguard a suitable work force of resilient, robust, highly effective teachers. Consequently, the authors left readers with this thought, "if the most precious product developed in education is the students, then our most prized commodity should be the classroom teacher" (p. 101).

Teacher Attitudes

An effective teacher emulates a positive attitude about life and teaching (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). As a person, he or she possesses an attitude of caring and fairness, is a reflective thinker, and has high expectations for self and each learner.

Huang and Moon (2009) also discussed many different qualities of effective teachers including teacher attitudes. Specifically, several of the leading effective attitude qualities are motivational, enthusiastic, caring, and dedicated. The overall message of identifying what those attitudes are and which teachers possess them, especially in the early years of a child's educational career, is imperative (Huang & Moon, 2009).

Attitude of Care, Support, Fairness, Respect, and Trust

Quality teachers possess an attitude of care and trust (Hattie, 2009; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Rowe, 2004; Stronge & Hindman, 2003). A student knows when a

teacher genuinely cares about them as an individual in addition to caring about the class as a whole (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). The learning environment is effective because it is built on respect and trust. Stronge and Hindman (2003) further state that although it is difficult to define an effective teacher precisely, usually individuals can describe their favorite teacher using descriptors such as “caring, competent, humorous, knowledgeable, demanding, and fair” (p. 49). Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie (2000) agreed that effective teachers possess an attitude of respect for students, and Muijs and Reynolds (2015) found effective teachers are warm and supportive towards their students.

Attitude of Commitment, Dedication, and a Passion for Teaching

Another teacher attitude associated with improved academic growth includes an attitude of commitment (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Greenlee & Brown, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll, 2003). This teacher attitude is especially necessary with students in challenging, low-income, and low achieving schools because the opposite effect of committed teachers is widening the achievement gaps. According to Darling-Hammond (2003) and Ingersoll (2003), the most common factors affecting teachers leaving a challenging school are related to concerns about classroom management or working conditions. Effective teachers must possess an attitude of dedication to their students. Bond et al. (2000) confirmed that the qualities and behaviors of effective teachers include a greater respect and dedication to students and an obvious display of passion for teaching.

Attitude of Job Satisfaction

A direct correlation exists between student academic achievement and teacher job satisfaction (Knox & Anfara, 2013; Mertler, 2002). Teacher feelings and attitudes affect

the behavior of educators and influence the overall success or failure. Teachers that are content and fulfilled with their job are more effective while teachers that have an attitude of dissatisfaction or frustration with their job are less likely to provide quality teaching. Shaw and Newton (2014) also studied teachers' job satisfaction and found a significant positive correlation in the data in comparison to the school leadership and teacher retention. Teachers must also understand the amount of influence and control they have over their own attitude of satisfaction as well as coworkers' attitudes and work to improve these factors (Knox & Anfara, 2013). This extra effort of a positive attitude about their job will positively affect student achievement.

Attitude of Reflexivity

Akbari and Allvar (2010) studied how teachers affect student achievement outcomes. The results show that the teacher's degree of a reflective attitude has a positive correlation with increasing student achievement. Specifically, the authors define teacher reflectivity as simply when a teacher is willing to step back to think about his or her actions or thoughts. Possessing the attitude of self-examination is significant in improving teaching practices and teacher effectiveness and can help teachers improve upon their daily experiences that elicits positive change (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Nurturing a reflective attitude also encourages improved classroom management, teacher knowledge, and contributes to the teacher being a role model for life-long learning. This teacher reflective attitude also tends to be modeled for students which is another positive effect to student improvement (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Attitude of Tenacity

A tenacious teacher possesses an attitude of "extreme persistence, strong and

personalized opinions, infectious enthusiasm, and utter determination” according to Ernst (2015, p. 20). Tenacity, especially in the field of music teaching, is considered “a hallmark of excellence” (2015, p. 20). Student engagement is promoted by teacher attitudes that are demanding yet encouraging, firm yet determined, and persistent until the student achieving the sought-after goal. Other attitudes and actions that contribute to a tenacious teacher are possessing a specific vision, self-efficacy, honest and authentic feedback, and flexibility to meet the needs of the students (Ernst, 2015). This author expresses that the opposite of tenacity is complacency, which is why a teacher must continue to strive to help students improve.

Akbari and Allvar (2010) found that they are more open to innovative ways to increase student achievement and are much more insistent and enthusiastic to find solutions when problems occur. They are also less critical of students and more committed to teaching (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). Muijs and Reynolds (2015) concurred that effective teachers are warm, supportive, enthusiastic, and have high expectations for their students.

Teacher Belief Systems

The premise that teacher quality and quality teaching are linked with values and beliefs is extensively regarded as truth by many researchers (Arthur, 2010; Clement, 2007; Clement, 2009; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Rowe, 2004; Westcombe-Down, 2009). A teacher’s belief system is considered the best indicator on the basis of decision making. Beliefs, more than knowledge, influence how a teacher plans, makes instructional decisions, implements classroom practices, organizes, defines tasks and problems, and are the strongest predictors of behaviors (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992).

Muijs and Reynolds (2015) also reported that teacher beliefs are more profound and important to the effectiveness of teaching than simply observable behaviors.

Thompson (1992) also concluded that belief systems have a dynamic, two-way connection with practice and are also vulnerable to change in light of practical experience.

Beliefs about the Importance of Helping Students Make Connections

Muijs and Reynolds (2015) further reported about specific teaching beliefs termed connectionist. This type of teacher believes students are able to learn with effective teaching that helps them make connections between what they already know and what they need to learn. Connectionist teachers also believe in interactive teaching filled with content based discussions for learning (Muijs & Reynolds, 2015).

Belief of Teacher Efficacy

One of the most important teacher belief systems is a teacher's strong sense of self-efficacy (Akbari & Allvar, 2010; Archambault, Janosz, & Chouinard, 2012; Peabody, 2011; Throndsen & Turmo, 2012; Wagner & DiPaola, 2011). Akbari and Allvar (2010) define teacher efficacy as the belief that a teacher possesses about his or her competencies to increase student engagement and learning. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to be risk takers, have high expectations for themselves and their students, provide the opportunity for students to grow more academically, are more innovative, and utilize classroom management strategies that promote student motivation and self-esteem. Akbari and Allvar's (2010) research manifested that all of these factors increase the chance for student success. These teachers also take responsibility for their students' learning and are extremely persistent. Valuable teachers like these are more

likely to use effective learning strategies rather than simply cover the content (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). The authors' found that teachers' behaviors are also influenced by their efficacy beliefs. The greater their belief that they can improve student learning, the more likely they are to behave in specific ways. Teachers are more likely to put forth more effort and increase the level of goals they set for their classes (Akbari & Allvar, 2010).

Archambault, Janosz, and Chouinard (2012) also studied the effects of teachers' beliefs about their own effectiveness as well as beliefs and expectations about their students' abilities to be positive influences upon academic achievement. Specifically, the authors hypothesize that a teacher's negative beliefs and attitudes about a student of low socio-economic status play a significant hindrance on the student's academic success and cognitive engagement. Consequently, Archambault et al. (2012) found that "teachers' beliefs directly predicted students' academic experience in mathematics...the more teachers maintain high expectations and the more efficacious they feel in helping their students succeed, the more students' achievement increased over the year" (p. 324).

Nevertheless, Archambault et al. (2012) also found major limitations concerned with their study. Their results did not show a strong relationship among all students as expected. They concluded several reasons for the lack of substantial data to prove their hypothesis: the study only measured change over one school year which is too limited to see significant improvement; they could have studied teaching practices rather than specific teachers' influences; high achieving students were already performing so highly that improvement could not be adequately measured, such as the ceiling effect; and a student's past educational experiences over the years, inclusive of positive or negative experiences, was a stronger influence than a teacher could have in simply one academic

school year (Archambault et al., 2012). The overall implications of this study include the importance of schools to support and encourage their teachers to help them have positive attitudes about student success and abilities, feel more efficacious about their teaching and abilities, and to strengthen teachers' satisfaction in the school environment, especially in low socioeconomic schools. This study's outcomes "suggest that the beliefs of one teacher can promote low-SES students' engagement and academic achievement" (Archambault et al., 2012, p. 326).

Wagner and DiPaola (2011) researched the relationship between student academic achievement, academic optimism, and organizational citizenship behaviors in Virginia public high schools. Specifically, the authors studied teachers' beliefs and perceptions about themselves, their coworkers, and their overall school environment related to academic success. Three factors – teacher efficacy, academic emphasis, and faculty trust in students and parents – collectively called academic optimism work together to positively influence student academic achievement (Guvercin, 2013; Wagner & DiPaola, 2011). Some applications from this study include professional development and feedback to increase teacher efficacy, limit disruptions and use data to guide instructional time to emphasize academics, and promote collaboration between teachers, students, and families (Wagner & DiPaola, 2011). Guvercin (2013) researched similar beliefs in charter schools. This research is one of the only studies done of this kind in public charter schools as opposed to traditional charter schools.

Thronsdon and Turmo (2012) researched the gender differences in teacher efficacy beliefs and student mathematical achievement. They found students' mathematics performance and teachers' beliefs had a positive relationship. Teachers with

a strong sense of teaching efficacy believe they can implement specific strategies that will positively affect student learning and motivation. Conversely, teachers who have low teaching efficacy believe that improving student achievement is beyond their control. Although this specific study focused on the differences between women and men teachers, the authors felt like they did not have a large enough sample of elementary male mathematics teachers to solidify the findings of their data that “female teachers tend to be more student-centered and supportive of students than male teachers” (Thronsdon & Turmo, 2012, p. 168).

Beliefs about Establishing High Expectations

Stronge and Hindman (2003) shared that effective teachers have high expectation for themselves as well as their students. They established high expectation specifically concerning student achievement and behavior. Goal setting supported these expectations.

Hattie (2009) also found that teachers who set high expectations for their students were quality teachers. These teachers challenged students with high quality thinking tasks paired with appropriate feedback for their students, and consequently their students achieved above average academically.

Love and Kruger (2005) learned these types of teachers possessed a “do what it takes” belief to help students reach high expectations. These teachers also shared the belief that they are responsible for their students (Love & Kruger, 2005). Therefore, valuable teachers know how to have high expectations for their students as well as for their teaching which will push students to achieve academically (Berliner, 2004; Huang & Moon, 2009; Muijs & Reynolds, 2015; Weisman, 2012).

Beliefs about the Importance of Building Relationships

Love and Kruger (2005) studied the correlation between teacher beliefs in urban schools and African American students' academic achievement. They wanted to examine if specific beliefs would increase student success. Teachers from six different urban schools all serving predominately African American students were surveyed, and two of the schools' student data was disaggregated to identify specific teachers that were more effective with student academic achievement. Then, the survey results were analyzed to identify specific teacher beliefs that the more effective teachers possessed. Love and Kruger (2005) found that teachers who made more student academic achievement shared beliefs regarding a family-like learning environment. The teachers with more experience believed that their success with their students is due to them connecting with their students along with proving to students that obstacles of learning do not have to prohibit success. This study also found that teachers overwhelmingly agreed that learning from students is as important as teaching them and that teachers must teach students to think critically. Therefore, they developed a symbiotic relationship of mutual respect.

Hattie (2009) found that teachers who believed in creating positive relationships with their students were quality teachers whose students achieved above average academically. Also, empirical studies have shown that a positive teacher-student relationship improves student learning, behavior, and attendance while negative relationships are often related to students with problems in schools (Boon, 2011). Peabody (2011) also found evidence that effective teachers build relationships with students. Silva & Morgado (2004) found that two of the most impactful factors of

academic achievement are effective, empathy-based teacher and student relationships as well as teachers having faith in students' capacity to learn which is tied to self-fulfilling prophecy.

Akbari and Allvar (2010) also believed that although not all teachers teach alike nor have equally effective classroom teaching styles, they believe in building relationships. Berliner (2004) described an essential factor of success for expert teachers is knowing their students personally and having built relationships with them.

Beliefs about Motivation

Wiesman (2012) sought to research the alignment of student and teacher beliefs regarding motivation. He specifically found that one of the top five reasons students are more motivated to learn and achieve academically happens when the student and teacher have developed a positive rapport with one another. In addition to a positive rapport, Wiesman (2012) agreed that "educators can positively influence individual interest when they teach children to get excited about learning new concepts and help them to become life-long learners" (p.105). Weisman also stated that additional effective teacher strategies include making connections between the students, their personal lives, and the content would also lead to increased motivation and academic achievement. In conclusion, Wiesman (2012) stated "if educators wish to improve academic achievement by maximizing their ability to motivate students, then they must understand the various motivational theories and know which constructs are the most effective" (p. 107).

Love and Kruger (2005) posited that the quality teachers with more experience believed that their success with their students was due to them motivating their students. They possessed the belief that all students can learn. Also, Stronge and Hindman (2003)

found that an effective teacher believes in a motivating learning environment by matching strategies and resources to a students' needs. Huang and Moon (2009) as well as Berliner (2004) also discussed motivating others as a belief of effective teachers.

Other Teacher Belief Systems

Love and Kruger (2005) also found that teachers who realized more student academic achievement shared beliefs that teaching is an art. Some of the participants in this study claimed that teaching was the profession where they belonged and:

Were in urban schools by choice. The teachers endorsed the commitment to teaching as a way of giving back to the community; this endorsement related significantly to reading achievement. Results indicate that teachers believe, however, that students need a quality education to move out of their community and attain a better life for themselves. Some teacher may have seen the strength of the communities beyond the poverty surrounding and the schools. (p.96)

This same study also found that effective teachers also believe they must have flexible strategies to meet students' ever changing needs.

Peabody (2011) researched teacher beliefs in regards to at-risk students. Overall, findings showed that teachers of at-risk students in high-performing schools focused their energy on learner-centered instruction while teachers at low-performing schools were guided by teacher-centered behaviors. Although state test scores were the determining factor between these high- and low-performing high schools studied, the higher performing teachers did not emphasize the test. Instead, these teachers believed in creating a positive learning environment through student choice, technology integration, student-directed activities, emphasizing reading while integrating literacy skills,

scaffolding learning, and having a strong sense of self-efficacy (Peabody, 2011).

Silva and Morgado (2004) studied teacher beliefs specific to special education students' academic achievement. Although their study focused on special education students, the premise of their research was based upon the idea that "beliefs guide behavior and, as such, influence teacher-student academic interactions" (Silva & Morgado, 2004, p.208). In general, the authors found that the most impactful factors of academic achievement are teacher-student relationships, teachers' believing in students' capacity to learn, as well as collaboration between teachers, support services, and families supporting student academic growth (Silva & Morgado, 2004).

Teachers' beliefs also affect new teachers who are usually perceived to struggle in the beginning simply because they are new at the profession of teaching. Thompson, Windschitl, and Braaten (2013) found how some novice teachers were more successful with their students than others. One of the conclusions from this study includes how beginning teachers engage their students depends upon the teacher's personal beliefs about the how the community affects the students' thinking. The more successful new teachers believed that it was important to focus their teaching centered on what and how their students think and learn (Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013).

Boon (2011) also affirmed that effective and quality teaching resulting in improving student outcomes is connected to teacher beliefs and values which is why this author advocates for ethics training. Lovat and Toomey (2007) also agreed that an ethics curriculum for college students training to be teachers could be a sustainable intervention across all circumstances to enhance teacher quality and, consequently, student outcomes since positive teacher-student relationships generally tend to pave the way to learning.

Teacher Behaviors

Earlier studies of effective teaching based upon personality led to more reliable studies focused on teacher behaviors that positively affect student achievement. Stronge and Hindman (2003) as well as Muijs and Reynolds (2015) studied effective teacher behaviors through questionnaires and classroom observations. Their research along with many other studies found that student outcomes are strongest when effective teaching behaviors are present.

This next section of the chapter focuses on a review of the literature centering on effective teacher behaviors that are associated with substantive academic achievement in students. Specifically, this section will share the literature review about creating an effective classroom climate, supporting effective teaching practices, as well as behaviors of expert teachers.

Behaviors Creating an Effectively Managed Classroom Climate

Muijs and Reynolds (2015) researched effective classroom climates created by master teacher behaviors. The initial positive classroom climate factor that the authors found included teacher behaviors that supported an orderly and businesslike learning environment. The use of brief transitions also contributes to an effective classroom climate and management that promotes learning as well as the effective use of instructional time, clearly established student behavior rules, and misbehaviors that are redirected quickly and correctly. Research conducted by Bond et al. (2000) coincided with the support that effective teachers establish better classroom climate and have better perceptions of classroom events.

Behaviors Supporting Effective Teaching Practices

In addition to classroom climate and management, Muijs and Reynolds (2015) also found that teacher behaviors must also support effective teaching practices. Some of the effective practices of teaching identified through their research included highly structured, interactive whole class teaching combined with higher level questioning, objective focused, student centered, and with immediate and authentic feedback provided. Teachers must also allow students to practice what they learn through cooperative small group work or short sessions of individual work while the teacher actively helps students. Teachers must implement behaviors that utilize a multitude of teaching strategies to reach every student. Different students may need content explained in different ways according to the students' levels and strengths (Muijs & Reynolds, 2015).

Stronge and Hindman (2003) found that effective teachers “make the most of their instructional time” through “hands-on learning, problem solving, questioning, guided practice, and feedback” (p. 51). They also monitor the progress of their students and adjust their instruction accordingly.

Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) compared teaching practices of high performing and low performing teachers. “Differences were found between the two groups of teachers in the areas of classroom management and personal qualities but not in the areas of instruction or assessment” (p.348). Specifically, effective teachers build positive relationships with students, encourage a sense of responsibility, possess effective classroom management, and are organized. These qualities and behaviors lead to higher academic achievement.

An earlier study by Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2007) examined effective teaching practices and instructional behaviors. The findings concluded that “effective teachers tended to ask a greater number of higher level questions and had fewer incidences of off-task behavior than ineffective teachers” (p.165).

Schumacher, Grigsby, and Vesey (2015) found that hiring practices should hinge upon effective teaching practices. Specifically, the teaching behaviors necessary to identify in potential hires fall under one of the four categories of behaviors: “classroom management and organization, organizing instruction, implementing instruction, and monitoring student progress and potential. “Collectively, the four domains... significantly impact student achievement” (p.146).

Akbari and Allvar (2010) also believe that another variable to improving student learning through effective teaching is a teacher’s teaching style. No matter what content area or grade level a teacher may be teaching at a particular time, a teacher’s teaching style usually remains constant. Teachers’ teaching styles shine when their personal educational philosophy is manifested through their instructional practices. Also, teaching style greatly affects students’ learning experiences.

The research conducted by Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie (2000) reported an accumulation of the qualities and behaviors of effective teachers. Better problem-solving strategies, better decision making, better monitoring of learning and providing feedback to students, and better skills for improvisation all are components of effective teaching practices. Additional behaviors identified by Bond et al. (2000) were better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners, better ability to read the cues from students, presenting more challenging objectives, more frequent testing of hypotheses,

and having a greater sensitivity to context.

Huang and Moon (2009) also discussed many different qualities of effective teaching. Some of the leading behaviors were possessing effective presentation skills and using effective instructional practices. These authors voiced that a school could make the most achievement simply by improving the quality of teacher behaviors.

Behaviors of Expert Teachers

Stronge et al. (2007) found several leading behaviors of expert teachers. Effective teachers understand that a need may occur to alter a lesson presentation or materials in order to acquire student learning. They exhibit behaviors showing that they believe “that a one-size fits all approach typically is not the best fit” (p.180). Expert teachers also asked approximately seven times as many higher level questions than lower performing teachers. This study also found that effective teachers allowed less classroom disruptions than struggling teachers.

Bond et al. (2000) specified expert teaching performance into characteristics. Some of the qualities and behaviors of effective teachers identified were better use of knowledge, extensive pedagogical content knowledge, and deep representations of subject matter knowledge.

Akbari and Allvar (2010) found that teachers’ behaviors are also influenced by their efficacy beliefs. The greater their belief that they can improve student learning, the more likely they are to behave in specific ways. Teachers are more likely to put forth more effort and increase the level of goals they set for their classes (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). They also tend to increase their level of planning and organization as well as use intellectual excitement and establish interpersonal rapport.

Tuncel (2009) surveyed students to identify what teacher behaviors students perceive contributed to their academic success. This study identified 27 types of teacher behaviors that student felt were most likely to improve their academic achievement. The top three behaviors found were for teachers to provide help to students willingly, listen attentively to students' questions, and treat students equally and fairly. Also, this study also found that expert teachers show an interest in the student's personal world, show enthusiasm when teaching, and are fair and non-judgmental.

Berliner (2004) brought together studies concerning expert teachers. The time period that it takes to become an expert in one's teaching field is as little as two years and as long as seven years, but the average amount of time for a teacher to reach expert level is four and a half years. Teachers achieve expert level through becoming skilled in their content as well as working with students. Berliner (2004) described different factors that foster expert teachers. Good coaching and practice are essential to a teacher becoming an expert according to Berliner (2004). Schools must provide these opportunities to grow their teachers. Expert teachers tend to take more time to plan and usually plan more than one activity or strategy to teach a concept. They also make certain that they completely understand the concept and that they know their students' academic levels. The most skilled teachers can also translate their experience and success to other situations (Berliner, 2004). Expert teachers consciously choose what they are going to do by establishing priorities and making specific plans. Ultimately, the highest level of expert teaching is when teaching just becomes natural, effortless, and intuitive (Berliner, 2004). This is when a teacher becomes one with teaching.

Charter Schools

Research specific to charter schools and substantive student academic achievement is limited. Anderson (2005) conducted a case study during research about a specific charter school and how it was a response to contemporary cultural shifts in the country. This case study was absent of a literature review and student academic data and was constructed as part of a larger evaluation study of charter schools in North Carolina as required by state legislation. The findings showed that the back to the basics practices in collaboration with a business approach had unfound merit.

Carpenter (2013) examined the pattern of expenditure allocations of Texas charter schools as comparison to Texas non-charter public schools. This study evaluated whether the autonomy legislation afforded to charter schools resulted in significant differences. No significant differences were found. Yeh (2011) also studied charter schools for cost-effectiveness in search for financially positive approaches to increase student achievement and found that more research was needed. Yeh (2011) reported that it would be helpful to have studies that differentiated between the types of charter schools to show results of which type is most effective. While Yeh (2011) stated that it would be possible that researchers could provide this information in the future, research does not currently exist to discern this type of conclusion.

In the research analysis by Hill, Angel, and Christensen (2006) with the National Charter School Research Program, the authors examined every study published from 2000 to 2005 linking charter schools and student academic achievement. According to this analysis, the big picture of charter school research is that limited studies are available. Only 41 studies were conducted, and none of these studies focused on long-

term results. Also, these studies only covered 13 of 40 states that have charter schools while 12 of the 13 studies concentrated on Texas, California, and Florida. It is almost impossible to make any generalizations because charter schools vary depending upon state laws, mission, funding, grade-level coverage, size, or teacher agreements (Hill et al., 2006). Also, of the available research, the conclusions are mixed. Some results concerning academic achievement in charter schools are positive, some are neutral, and some are negative. Thus far, the effect sizes for charter schools are small. The few possible conclusions of more effective results of student achievement with charter schools that one could possibly draw from these limited studies are:

1. The policy environment in which charters operate—the state law, funding policies, and rules about teacher qualifications and independence of collective bargaining agreements—limit the degree to which charter schools can differentiate their programs and results from surrounding public schools.
2. Charter schools add the most value when they serve students whose public school alternatives are of very low quality.
3. Charter schools with low absolute test scores can add high value when they attract children whose previous school performance was much worse than average for children from the same neighborhood, income group, race, or ethnicity.
4. The performance of new charter schools improves steadily over their first five years of operation. Affiliation with an experienced school provider can speed up the school maturation process, but the addition of one grade per year or

high rates of teacher turnover prolong the start-up period (Hill et al., 2006, p. 146-147).

In conclusion, future studies concerning charter schools and student academic achievement must be conducted to further determine effectiveness (Hill et al., 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study is framed through the lens of Bandura's (2010) self-efficacy theory. His research of perceived self-efficacy focuses upon people's beliefs in their own capacity to affect experiences that influence their lives. This theory is the foundation of maintaining an attitude of motivation, behaviors that lead to accomplishments, and belief of being emotional healthy. Bandura (2010) believes:

Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

Whatever other factors may serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one can make a difference by one's actions (p. 71).

The four main components of self-efficacy theory that are simultaneously parallel with effective teaching that is associated with student academic achievement are competence, emotional well-being, mastery, and motivation (Bandura, 2010).

Bandura (1994) defines perceived self-efficacy "as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p.71). Self-efficacy beliefs define the way individuals "feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (p.71). Such philosophies construct these varied outcomes through cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.

These processes connect to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which further connect to positive results. Bandura (1994) states through his theory that:

People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression (p.72).

Hence, the connection between this qualitative study of effective teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors is parallel to this theoretical framework of self-efficacy.

Summary of Findings

In conclusion, specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors are associated with greater student academic achievement. The literature shows that although many studies have been conducted concerning these three topics, limited research has been conducted focusing on charter schools (Guvercin, 2013). Some specifics such as being a reflective practitioner and having a strong and solid sense of efficacy to building relationships with students, have proven most effective for student academic growth. Does this hold true in a charter school that serves a predominately low socioeconomic population?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative, multiple case study analysis was conducted through observations and interviews to identify specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that elicit substantive student academic achievement at a high needs charter school. Baxter and Jack (2008) believed a case study “is an excellent opportunity to gain tremendous insight into a case” and “gather data from a variety of sources” (p. 556). Additionally, Lichtman (2013) stated “information from case studies provides rich and detailed insight” (p. 94).

Interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings as well as email feedback. Observations were performed during class time and limited to individual class periods which were approximately 55 minutes each. Also, a research journal was kept throughout the study to document the process and provide helpful and productive researcher reflections. Pseudonyms were used for the school name as well as the teachers’ names.

Participants and Setting

Stellar Journey Charter School (a pseudonym) was a predominately low income public charter school located in Southeast Texas. This charter school served approximately 750 children in prekindergarten through high school. The student demographics of Stellar Journey Charter School (SJCS) included approximately 83% economically disadvantaged, 69% Hispanic, 18% White, 9% African American, 53% at-

risk, and 24% English language learners. The grade level demographic breakdown is listed below in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics by Grade Level for 2014-15

	Total	ED	AR	LEP	H	AA	W	PI	AI	2+
PK	110	104	60	38	80	12	11	5	0	2
K	75	61	36	26	53	6	16	0	0	0
1 st Gr.	78	69	38	25	53	11	12	0	0	2
2 nd Gr.	76	60	29	25	57	4	12	2	1	0
3 rd Gr.	88	74	29	14	60	11	13	1	0	3
4 th Gr.	66	51	42	13	43	7	13	0	1	2
5 th Gr.	64	54	47	16	40	6	15	0	1	2
6 th Gr.	54	47	48	13	36	7	13	1	1	1
7 th Gr.	58	42	28	8	43	1	12	0	0	2
8 th Gr.	59	45	33	4	39	3	16	0	0	2
9 th Gr.	18	16	10	0	14	2	1	0	1	0
10 th Gr.	10	6	4	0	6	1	1	0	0	0
Total	756	629	404	182	524	71	135	9	5	16
Percent		83%	53%	24%	69%	9%	18%	1%	1%	2%

Note. Date retrieved by Rodriguez, A. (2016, February 17). Retrieved from SJCS's TxEIS Database.

The number of children per grade level ranged from 10 to 110 students. SJCS had approximately 50 teachers including core teachers in prekindergarten through high school, electives, and special programs. The researcher choose this charter school because she had served this school for over a decade and was extremely passionate about improving student achievement with this specific population.

SJCS was a growing charter school in southeast Texas. Table 2 shows the growth over the years. In 2008, the dip in enrollment was due to Hurricane Ike destroying the school and community. Also, high school was added to the school's grade level span beginning in 2013 with the first freshman class.

Table 2

Past Years of Enrollment by Grade Level

	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	2010- 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015
PK	69	66	33	115	156	167	112	108	110
K	54	50	45	64	65	80	81	79	75
1st Gr.	58	38	45	46	65	58	84	78	78
2nd Gr.	39	39	44	56	51	60	63	81	76
3rd Gr.	40	22	27	60	62	57	64	62	88
4th Gr.	20	19	29	37	63	60	58	62	66
5th Gr.	22	21	15	38	37	70	66	61	64
6th Gr.	22	21	15	30	37	46	63	58	59
7th Gr.	21	13	19	24	45	38	46	59	58
8th Gr.	14	22	15	35	30	38	42	38	59
9th Gr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	18
10th Gr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Total	359	311	287	505	611	673	679	704	761

Note: Texas Education Agency (2006-2015). *Stellar Journey Charter School: 2006-2015 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).*

This research concentrated upon teachers from SJCS, a majority economically disadvantaged public charter school, who were achieving higher levels of student success than many of their coworkers. The goal was to see if others could learn from the identified strategies and methods to increase overall student achievement at SJCS. This study centered on the perceptions of teachers concerning why they felt their students made substantive academic achievement. Specifically, what did they perceive were their attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that contributed towards economically disadvantaged, charter school students' academic achievement and success?

Teachers from SJCS were selected based upon their state test results for STAAR End of Course assessments. Three secondary teachers were originally selected from a pool of approximately 50 possible teachers with 25 of those 50 teachers having STAAR testing results. The three teachers initially selected for the study had the highest passing rates as well as the highest percentage of students reaching the top Level III: Advanced Academic Performance rating of achievement. After the researcher interviewed the students, another teacher who also had high student performance was invited to join the study because each student group mentioned this specific teacher as someone who has positively affected their learning.

Once the researcher determined which teachers to include in the study, then the invitation process began. She talked individually and in person with each teacher to share the findings of identifying them based upon his or her students' performance. The researcher further explained the process, time, and final product that the project will entail with the hopes that each teacher would agree to participate. This hope came to fruition when all teachers eagerly agreed to participate in the study.

Data Sources and Collection

Data for the study included interviews, observations, and a research journal. The primary data source was face-to-face interviews, but some follow-up and even initial interviews with the teachers were conducted via email. For the face-to-face interviews, the researcher talked with each teacher for approximately 45 minutes to an hour in her classroom before school, during conference periods, or after school. Also, follow-up interviews occurred several times for short, five to ten minute conversations. Communication also occurred via email.

For the interviews, the researcher asked demographic information as well as specifics about teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that led to student academic achievement. The researcher asked the teachers if it was important to them that each student grows academically. Then, the teacher discussed her attitude concerning student academic growth. The teachers also told the researcher about their belief systems or behaviors that they perceived contributed towards student academic growth. Some of the specifics the researcher and teachers discussed included: teaching and education in general; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; data and interventions; stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, administration; and this particular school. The actual interview questions are included as Appendix E.

The data collected was specifically targeted to gain perceptions of teachers concerning the research questions. Adequate time for interviewing and observing the teachers was allotted to ensure adequate data collection. The data collection process began once CPHS and research approval was received from both the University of Houston-Clear Lake and the charter school. The first step was to gain participants' agreement to join this study. The researcher asked the teachers in person if they would

like to participate after explaining how and why they were selected. The researcher quickly followed up the invitation by emailing the participants an agreement to participate as well as the interview questions. The intent of the project was for the interview participants to share through face-to-face interviews. In the end, they also emailed what they thought or believed supported substantive student academic achievement. The researcher began each interview by explaining that the teacher needs to feel free to say and share anything he or she feels. The researcher further established that the teacher would not be judged nor benefitted from participating in this study. The researcher worked to put all teachers at ease in sharing their thoughts and perceptions. Each interview was recorded, and the researcher also took field notes. The recording was saved on multiple devices, and the researcher transcribed the oral interviews for coding. The researcher also documented any electronically written teacher responses.

The data collection process continued with one to two observations of each of the participants. The researcher sat in the back of the classroom during class time for 30 to 55 minutes depending on the class flow and duration of teaching. The researcher recorded instructional practices exhibited as well as perceived attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Behaviors were more easily recorded due to the nature of being visible, but the researcher also recorded actions that could reflect perceived attitudes and beliefs such as how the teacher interacted with his or her students, what was communicated, as well as non-verbal cues displayed. Data were recorded via typed field notes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis included several steps. The initial step was to transcribe the oral interviews into written text. The next step was to make sense of the data by color coding the big ideas on the electronic documents. The researcher used the highlighting

feature through Microsoft Office Word to code the different topics that were discussed during the interviews, the data collected via email, and data seen through observations. The coding consisted of yellow for attitudes, green for beliefs, and blue for behaviors.

She also included some of her thoughts in brackets so that she could remember what she was thinking or what she inferred that the teacher was saying during the interview or observation. The initial data collection included the different teachers and their perceived attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that they believed led to increased academic achievement. Therefore, the data were divided into three main categories by highlighting all comments concerning attitudes in yellow, beliefs in green, and behaviors in light blue. Then the researcher compiled the data from each source into one document sorted by teacher within each of the three colored section. The researcher reviewed the data again to sort in to subcategories within each of the three broad categories. Each subcategories had data from only one or up to all four teachers' data depending upon the teachers' perceptions. The same process was followed for analysis of student data.

Validity

To establish validity, the researcher took several steps. Initially, the researcher had many peer reviews of the topic as well as the research questions over the past two years through doctoral students and professors analyzing and adjusting the topic and questions. The researcher also used bracketing while collecting data. Lichtman (2013) stated that bracketing, epoché, or eidetic reduction involve “placing one’s own thoughts about the topic in suspense or out of question. Epoché involves the deliberate suspension of judgment” (p. 88). The researcher also reviewed the coding of the data several times to minimize the chance that personal beliefs and thoughts were infused into the data analysis. Once the researcher analyzed the data and finalized the paper, she had peer

reviews conducted with the findings through content experts reviewing the findings.

Triangulation of the data through teacher interviews, teacher written feedback, teacher observations, and student feedback through interviews and focus groups strengthened the validity of this study.

The researcher also kept a journal throughout the entire process of the project to support validity. The journal served to provide a reflective addition to this research. It allowed her to brainstorm freely and try out ideas before moving forward with them. The journal gave the researcher significant insight to what was working and what was not successful.

The obvious limitation and validity concern of this study was that the researcher worked at the research site and knew the teachers. Although prior relationships definitively affected this study, the researcher perceived that it affected it in a positive manner. The teachers also were flattered to be asked their thoughts and opinions, and therefore, they were very eager to participate and share. Lichtman (2013) discussed the critical role of the researcher. She explained that research must be thought about in a “new way, one that acknowledges the role of the researcher and his or her belief system. Objectivity should not be considered bad; rather, it is just another way of thinking about how we gain knowledge and what knowledge is” (p. 25). Lichtman (2013) also continued to explain that “it is imperative, then, that the researcher has experience and understanding about the problem, the issues, and the procedures” (p. 25). She further explored the idea of objectivity and how it is one of the fundamental assumptions of traditional research, but yet qualitative research:

Acknowledges the role of the researcher as a filter through which data are

collected, organized, and interpreted. As such, looking for objectivity is not only foolish, it is impossible. Researchers should not strive to be objective and look for ways to reduce bias. Rather, they need to face head on the subjective nature of their role. They need to consider effects on the research process and effects on themselves (p.159).

Therefore, although the researcher was very knowledgeable of the study site and participants, this was regarded as a positive viewpoint with which to collect, organize, and interpret the data.

Ethics and Potential Risks for Participants

Confidentiality was maintained in this study by using pseudonyms for the school, teachers, and students. Journals, data, interview notes and recordings were stored electronically under a secure password that only the researcher could access, view, and utilize. Data will be stored for at least five years. After the completion of the study, all data will be destroyed.

Other unanticipated risks may have occurred. One risk included the teachers' loss of time by participating in this study. Another possible risk included teacher frustration due to a teacher not being aware of exactly what they do that really helped students. Many effective teaching strategies came naturally to master educators such that they occasionally were unable to verbalize what worked for them and what exactly was supporting the higher levels of student academic achievement. The benefits of participant reflection opportunity, though, outweighed the possible risks of this study since the potential risks were minimal.

Additionally, all data was kept confidentially and safely stored on a thumb drive kept under lock and key as well as on a password protected computer for five years after the completion of the study. Then, the data will be destroyed.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study was thorough, limitations always exist. Some of the limitations were due to the sampling population. Because the purpose of this study was to focus on one school's capability to grow students academically through teacher performance, the study was very limited. An overall generalization of this study would have increased in validity and been more applicable if the sampling population was larger and more diverse. On the other hand, qualitative studies are not intended to be generalized. Lichtman (2013) explained that case studies are "more interested in the richness of the information we generate from the case than the ability to generalize" (p. 92). Furthermore, Lichtman (2013) says:

Students think they have to identify a case that is representative of all cases of a particular type. This kind of thinking occurs because the novice researcher is thinking about making generalizations to other cases. In qualitative research, this is definitely not so because you do not have sufficient breadth to make generalizations. So, it is not important to get a case that represents all other cases. Your goal is to get detailed and rich descriptions of the case you select (p. 92).

Lichtman (2013) also continued to explain how many researchers did not value qualitative research, but researchers now see the importance of data gathered through qualitative methods. She explained:

The use of case studies has had a resurgence of interest along with other

approaches to qualitative research. I think you will find it helpful to remember that information from case studies provides rich and detailed insight into the case being studied. As with other approaches to qualitative research, generalization is not expected or viable.

Also, as Good and Lavigne (2015) pointed out, “it is not reasonable to assume that teachers and teaching is stable across time” (p. 1). Therefore, a teacher may do an effective job for a few years but then may not provide the same level of effective teaching years later or vice-versa. Researchers must be certain that “they are studying teachers who have stable performance and effects” (p. 10).

In conclusion, some research perspectives may have viewed this study as possessing several significant validity and limitation concerns due to the researcher being well acquainted with the participants and study site. But, with the progress of qualitative research and the increased value found through qualitative methodology, this study actually gained strength in the fact that the researcher was so familiar with the school and teachers. Chapter IV displays the researcher’s findings and results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a charter school serving an economically disadvantaged population through utilizing the multiple case study methodology. This research was important because previous studies showed that the teacher makes the difference (Bloom, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Rowe, 2004; Stronge, 2002). Also, previous research confirmed that studies within charter schools are lacking (Hill, Angel, & Christensen, 2006). Therefore, to help identify specific charter school teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that seem to support academic achievement to further help the students and teachers, the following research questions were investigated through this study:

- 1) What perceived attitudes do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?
- 2) What perceived belief systems do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?
- 3) What perceived behaviors do teachers possess associated with substantive student academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms?

- 4) What student perceptions exist about attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers whose students demonstrate substantive academic achievement?

The findings of this study yielded much insight and several common themes regarding teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that teachers and students perceived supported student academic achievement. Stellar Journey Charter School (SJCS) teachers and students participated in this study. The four teachers selected based upon State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) results all taught upper middle school and high school students. Table 3 displays the data utilized for selection. Briana Everton taught social studies and history, Bea Lowery taught English Language Arts (ELA), and both Blake Knight and Prim Rose taught mathematics. These teachers freely shared their thoughts and perceptions, and their passion for teaching was apparent.

Nine students from SJCS were also interviewed through focus groups and individual interviews. All of the students were high school students who all had been taught by all four teachers and even had several of the teachers more than one year. The multiple students also gave great insight to their opinions of what teachers think, believe, and do that helps students learn most effectively. All data was collected from October 2015 to June 2016. The following describes the results of the feedback obtained through interviews, email responses, and observations concerning teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with student academic achievement.

Table 3

State Assessment Averages for Case Study Teachers Compared to State and County Averages

Teacher Subject Area	School Year					
	2011 TAKS	2012 STAAR	2013 STAAR	2014 STAAR	2015 STAAR	2016 STAAR
Bea Lowry <i>ELA</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	76-7th Rdng* 82-7th Writing*	88-8th* 69-Eng I ** 73-Eng II *	79%-Eng I 83%-Eng II
Briana Everton <i>Social Studies</i>	100-8th*	66-8th	77-8th*	79-8th* 92-US Hist*	75-8th*	N/A
Blake Knight <i>Math</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	84-8th** 88-Alg*	94-Alg*	N/A
Prim Rose <i>Math</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	88%-Alg
* Met or exceeded state and/or county average						
**Within 5% of state and/or county average						

Context

Participants and Selection Process

The pseudonyms for the four teachers selected for this study are Beatrice (Bea) Lowry, Briana Everton, Blake Knight, and Prim Rose. Bea Lowry was 33 years old and had taught for 12 years. Her experience included English Language Arts (ELA) mostly at the high school level, but she also taught ELA for one year at the middle school level. She had taught at SJCS for three consecutive years, and her students had consistently

achieved higher passing rates than the rest of the school and had met or exceeded the state passing rate.

Briana Everton was a 35 year old teacher with five years teaching experience. She taught sixth through tenth grade social studies during her years at SJCS. Her eighth grade Social Studies State of Texas Academic Assessment of Readiness (STAAR) and United States History STAAR End of Course (EOC) scores exceeded the state passing rates and even once had 100% of her students pass on the state assessment. She does not currently work at SJCS because she moved to a school closer to home due to having young children.

Blake Knight was a 26 year old teacher with a little less than two years of experience all of which has been at SJCS. She taught eighth through tenth grade math with at least three different grade levels at one time. Her students' state assessment scores met or exceeded the state passing rate. She currently was a stay-at-home mother.

Prim Rose was a veteran teacher with 39 years of experience and was in her sixties. Prim was not one of the original teachers selected for this study due to the limited amount of STAAR data available for her. At SJCS, she was mostly responsible for academic coaching for teachers, but she taught a few math classes over the years. After her name was mentioned in every student focus group as one of the teachers who made a difference in academic achievement for the students, Prim was contacted to participate in the study. She had taught math most of her career as well as coached other teachers on best practices. Prim had worked at SJCS for three years.

This study also included student focus group interviews. Nine high school students participated in this study through four different interview sessions during May

and June 2016. The following were the interviewed students' pseudonyms and the sessions that occurred:

1. Single student interview with Henrietta
2. Three student group interview with Vic, Jeff, and Mario
3. Three student group interview with Ashley, Eli, and Brenda
4. Two student group interview with George and Corey

Participant Data Collection

Bea Lowry spoke freely and eagerly about her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that she perceived attributed towards her students' success. Bea also followed up the interview with an email with more information. The researcher was also able to observe her while teaching. For Bea's observations, the researcher sat in the back of the classrooms and took notes on her computer. The notes included what she saw and heard in the classroom specific to actions and words that seemed connected to teaching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. In addition to documenting Bea's teaching through typed notes, she also drew pictures of the classroom to help her visualize the classroom, note situations, and remember the overall observation at a later time.

Briana Everton's data collection was quite challenging. Although the researcher had observed her classroom in previous years, she was unable to observe this teacher recently for this research because she moved to a school closer to her home after having a baby the previous year. Briana and the researcher were also unable to coordinate their schedules to meet in person, but Briana did give a tremendous amount of feedback via email to the interview questions.

Blake Knight's data collection was also challenging due to the fact that she was pregnant and ended up leaving earlier than expected to have her baby. The researcher was able to complete one observation, but the face-to-face scheduled interviews did not happen. Like Briana, Blake eventually was able to provide a significant amount of data via emails. Also, she was extremely excited about participating in the study.

Prim Rose's data collection was very simple and met with enthusiasm. Once Prim was invited to participate in the study, she was eager to complete a face-to-face interview. She also supplied a written response to all of the interview questions as well as expanded upon her thoughts in a recorded interview.

The student participants were also very eager to participate in this research project. They wanted the opportunity to tell the researcher which teachers had really helped them learn and what they perceived were those teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that helped increase their own academic achievement. One student was not available on the day of the focus groups but emailed the researcher afterwards to explain how much she would like to participate and to schedule a one-on-one interview. The students provided very valuable information from a different yet extremely important perspective.

Results

The results of this qualitative study encapsulated several different perceptions. This specific section of Chapter IV will share the results of the teacher perceptions of charter schools. Then each teacher's perceptions as well as the students' perceptions will be shared concerning attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Charter School Perceptions

Although the first charter schools are celebrating their 20th year of existence, research was limited about charter schools. Therefore, the researcher focused this study on a public charter school, SJCS. Also, this particular charter school serves a student population that is majority economically disadvantaged. The following results were the perceptions of charter schools found from this study.

Collaboration, flexibility, freedom, and positive culture. Both Briana and Bea believed that charter schools provide the opportunity to collaborate and share amongst teachers more effectively than traditional public schools due to the increase in flexibility. They also believed that the people at SJCS supported the attitudes of collaboration, enthusiasm, and effectiveness for teaching and learning. Consequently, the flexibility and positive culture of this charter school provided support for these effective attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to better support students and their academic achievement.

Blake Knight believed that SJCS was a perfect fit for her as a teacher. She was given a large amount of freedom over how she was allowed to teach the curriculum as well as how she spent her time in the classroom. She believed “many schools have become very over-bearing and controlling as to how a teacher does their job.” She did not feel SJCS was like this. The freedom and flexibility allowed her to thrive and truly enjoy her job. She is convinced that this amount of freedom contributed to the academic achievement her students made. “I wasn’t tied to a curriculum calendar or told how to teach. I was trusted to do what I saw fit. I loved this atmosphere and will never teach anywhere that doesn’t allow me to have this freedom.”

Safe, smaller, caring learning environment. Prim Rose also attributed her students' academic gains to the learning environment of SJCS. She felt that in this school "we provided a safe learning environment for all students. We specifically meet the needs of a special population who might not be serviced at such an individualized level." Another added benefit of this charter school Prim mentioned were the smaller class sizes. She stated:

Class sizes are small, but the kids support one another. In the classroom when they see that teacher so accepting of that autistic child who you never know what he's going to say. I found such humor and I enjoyed it so much, I think the kids picked up on that and they were so accepting and so protective even of these same children. So, even though we have a high needs population, we're very accepting of that and we're very protective of that. We take care of one another. The kids are wonderful. Wonderful. I truly did not have a single discipline problem.

At SJCS, Prim felt students just knew the staff and their fellow classmates cared about them. It made students certain that this was the place for them. Although Prim voiced her certainty that many of the students at SJCS would not have been able to make it in an independent school district, she still believed that the key is the teacher. The teacher is going to be the one:

...to set the tone, she's going to set the mood. The kids are going to follow that. Is she accepting? Does she care? Does she really care? How does she talk to them? When they answer wrong how does she address that? The one thing I know when you talk to my kids they'll tell you I was never rude, never disrespectful. I said you couldn't have given me more than you've given me. When you've got that in a

classroom that's everything. Everything. They did. If I asked it of them, they gave it. And they would not let me down. They just wouldn't do that to me. It makes me tear up.

In conclusion, Prim considered that the reason the students were successful at SJCS may be because:

...the kids are coming from a different environment. They know what's on the other side. They didn't feel safe there and they do feel safe here [in this charter school]. They feel accepted here and that's maybe a big key as to what makes us so different is that environment of acceptance that's, again, I use the word safe. It's a safe environment. It's even safe to give wrong answers and to make mistakes.

One of the students, Henrietta, also shared her beliefs about charter schools. She felt the atmosphere at a charter school is different from a traditional public school:

Because in the charter school, you just feel more like everybody's going to hug you with warmth and all that good stuff. It feels like a family. While a public school, it just feels cold. I don't know, every time I'm in the cafeteria of a public school, I feel this weird feeling in my stomach. It's just cold. You might know a couple of teachers. You might not. You might know enough about the friends. You might not.

Briana Everton's Perceptions

Being an experienced teacher of five years, Briana Everton had taught sixth through tenth grade social studies during her years at SJCS. Her eighth grade Social Studies State of Texas Academic Assessment of Readiness (STAAR) and United States History STAAR End of Course (EOC) scores exceeded the state passing rates and even once had 100% of her students pass on the state assessment. The following results share

her perceptions of her own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with student academic achievement.

Attitude of leadership and love for content area and learning. Briana Everton's teacher attitudes that she perceived supported student academic achievement included an attitude of leadership, love of her content area, confidence, participation for all, flexibility, hard work, responsibility, competition, sharing, collaboration, and support. She felt that the "teacher is in charge" and must lead the "learning and cooperation" in the classroom in order for the students to follow "down the educational path." Briana stated that she absolutely loves the content she teaches – history. She felt passionately that a teacher must exude an attitude of love for learning especially in their content area. History was something that she lived to "know and find out more about." An attitude of confidence in the content as well as confidence in possessing the skills needed for students to succeed was a requirement of Briana. She also portrayed an attitude in active participation from all including teacher and every student because "no one is allowed to be passive or unresponsive" in her classroom. She felt teachers must have an attitude of flexibility and hard work in order to meet their students' needs since "it is equal amount of work for both" teachers and students to "make it happen!" She took on the attitude of responsibility in that "it's not the next teacher's problem, it's my class, and my problem that I need to solve." She also felt that successful teachers have a natural attitude of competition, but not with each other; rather, with themselves. They want to continually learn from one another through an attitude of sharing and collaboration. Briana stated that successful teachers are:

...willing to work as a community to increase the overall achievement of the school. They are willing to share, support and back up their colleagues for the overall good of the students, not themselves. They understand it is a team effort. They are not looking for the individual recognition but to see the success in their kids. They are always “their” kids. Again, working as team for all our success is important on a campus.

Belief that all students can learn. As for beliefs about students, Briana Everton firmly held that “every student may not grow on the same scale, but they will have grown to their own potential in my classroom. Students are expected to grow to their individual scale.” She held that children have:

...multiple ways of absorbing and learning the content. All students learn differently and even differently on any given day. One day a student might pick up on a concept visually, the same student another day auditory. There is not one set formula for each child. One way is definitely not going to “hit” all students.

Belief in structured learning environments. In addition to her conviction about student academic growth potential, Briana also held strong beliefs concerning teachers. She believed that teachers must establish structure in the learning environment.

Structure is an important part essential to education. The structure has to be there in order for ANY learning to take place. When students walk in the room, they should have a routine and know their place in that classroom.

Belief in importance of building trusting relationships. Briana also believed that a successful teacher must establish trust with their students. One method she believed built trust with her students was that they could see her passion and knowledge

in the course content she taught them each day. “The teacher must understand the concepts and show interest in the subject to “win” over students and teach their content effectively. A teacher can lose whole class if they are not trusted to know their content.” Briana conveyed that this teacher factor of building trusting relationships was also “essential for students to gain correct knowledge.”

Belief in using reflection and data to improve teaching. Briana held firm confidence that data was essential to learning. She believed this was how she identified where the gaps are in a student’s learning. “Assessment is very important for me to adjust my teaching. Both formal and informal. I need to see where I need to slow down, go back over or move on before I can completely move on from an issue.” The data helped her focus and reteach information that the students missed. As a teacher, she felt that she could also see her successes and failures in the data.

The data is essential for me to improve my teaching. I as an educator have to accept that there is always room for improvement. My improvement correlates to the improvement in my students. It is as much of an intervention for me as it is for them.

The data would guide a teacher to strategically identify the specific content needed to go back to reinforce with different levels of “interventions so the gaps don’t become huge.” She also believed strongly that teachers must constantly assess and gauge student learning to “find out where each student stands individually” and to “let them know they are on the right path. A checkpoint in their learning, so to speak.” She felt that assessments also measures and guides the teacher so lessons can be adjusted to fill in the gaps. She also stated:

The teacher needs to be savvy enough to recognize when lessons need to be adjusted and retaught. The teacher needs to have an arsenal of lessons in order to meet the needs of the classroom. Each lesson every year does not meet the needs of that particular classroom. You have to know that classroom and how to adjust on a yearly/weekly/daily basis.

Belief in importance of engaging stakeholders and having support.

Stakeholder engagement was another intense belief of Briana's. She stated that "everyone is a stakeholder in education but not all at the same time." She thought, in a perfect world, everyone would work together for the success of the student.

Unfortunately in her experience, she saw that this is not the majority of the case although she would have loved for it to be so. She felt the parents of SJCS were not very involved in their children's education. Therefore, she concluded that the "two main stakeholders in the equation include the teacher and the student, with the teacher being the constant."

According to Briana, the constant stakeholder must be the teacher in order for the student to achieve in their education due to the fact that the students "have to know that their education matters to someone, and that someone is the person in the room everyday with them, encouraging them and taking them to the next level."

She also conveyed her belief about the essential pieces of having a supportive administration for the teachers while simultaneously focused on the overall goal of the campus. "For when [the teachers] waver, it is up to the administration to keep them going and positive." She believed that although administration may not be in the classroom as much as the teacher, they still hold the key to motivation of the teacher by providing "opportunities and resources for teachers to grow and share with their students"

as well as supporting the classroom structure by backing up “a teacher when further discipline is needed to restore the learning environment.” She claimed that “teachers have to know that their admin is working hard for them, as the teachers are for the students.” Occasionally, administrators needed to support the teachers if the education in the classroom is being affected negatively due to behavior issues or attendance. She believed the teacher should be the communication point person with students, administration, and parents, but it was helpful to know “that your administration was there to support the teachers.”

Briana continued with the belief of the importance of parents as stakeholders. She believed they make a significance difference for their child, but in her experience, she found that the parents are not always engaged in their child’s education. She gave several reasons why parents may not be involved in their child’s learning including their job, their own level of education, or the lack of importance they place on education. Consequently, she further explained that the teacher must step in and take responsibility for the students.

The final stakeholder that Briana discussed was the school, specifically SJCS. She believed that this charter school provided:

...an experience that is amazing for students and teachers. Teachers are given room to explore and try almost anything in their classroom. This freedom allows students to have experiences that public bureaucratic schools don’t necessarily provide. Enriching the curriculum with outside experiences is an amazing component for a classroom, which [SJCS] provides in many forms. School culture does amazing things for students that would normally be disenfranchised in the

public school arena. At [SJCS] everyone is included and the staff goes through great lengths to keep that spirit alive. It does wonderful things for in the classroom and the school as a whole.”

Beliefs about high expectations for all. Another belief that Briana held intensely is that academic achievement can only be made through setting attainable and realistic goals for all involved stakeholders. She believed high expectations were essential as well as holding teachers and students accountable. She said, “Teachers have to be held to a standard in order to make sure they are effective in the classroom.” She liked benchmarks that are set by a school or district wide department coordinator because a teacher would see true reflections of the classroom as well as providing the administrative team with a clear view of each classroom’s mastery of the TEKS. This benchmark data correlated to the proof that teachers are aligning their instruction to the established scope and sequence timeline of instruction as well as the overall curriculum. Although she believed that teachers should have some flexibility with the pacing of their instruction and lessons in order to respond to her students’ academic needs, she felt strongly that every teacher must be held to the same standard so that their content is taught and mastered by students. She felt strongly that all of this accountability ensured the needed pressure and sense of urgency for student academic progress. She had seen “too many teachers teach to a test, rather than cover curriculum as a whole and emphasizing readiness standards.” She believed the students saw this sense of purpose and urgency in her and sensed that it was important to her as a teacher, and “ultimately made it important to them,” even if just as support to her as their teacher.

Briana's overarching belief system held a solid foundation in expectations for students. "I believe in students and hold them to a high standard," she said. She worked diligently to form a bond with her students by coordinating and helping all of the students fundraise for an extended field trip to Washington D.C. Because of this level of commitment, she believed her students would jump through hoops for her because of everything she did for them to make a once in a lifetime experience happen for them. She saw this mutual commitment through their classwork and homework. Briana believed the teachers that had the most success shared her similar characteristics of believing in students and committing to them. Through observational data, the researcher witnessed Briana not accepting excuses and really pushing her students beyond their comfort level to learn more. For example, she explained to a student that not having their homework was simply unacceptable and that he would just have to stay after school or come during lunch to complete the work because the information was important. The student was reluctant but did agree and completed the necessary work.

Ensuring effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Briana Everton's most important behavior was to ensure she had effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She knew her curriculum and because she worked in a public charter school, was able to create the curriculum in a way that engaged her learners. She ensured her curriculum was:

...both teacher and student lead. The teacher has to balance giving them the independence to learn the content but not get lost or overwhelmed. Direct instruction by the teacher must be accompanied to the students' individualized or cooperative learning.

Also, she ensured she presented the content in several different ways to give students more opportunities to gain understanding. She created:

...lessons, homework, and mini lessons (warmups, etc.) that hit all ways of learning. I always need to have several ways to teach something for me to feel comfortable enough to teach a subject. I want to be able to switch gears as needed in the room and be flexible when a lesson isn't reaching the students.

Due to working in a charter school, Briana was also able to assess at various times to provide her information to go back and reteach before the formal assessment instead of having to follow strict pacing guides. This is how she was reflective and self-monitored her teaching to make sure she reached all of her students. Through this reflection process, data provided a check for her to improve her teaching. She said effective teachers:

...set goals and bend over backwards to help students achieve. They go home and constantly play out their day in their heads and try to think of new adjustments or strategies to create success. They pour over data to see the weaknesses and come up with a plan to address them.

Reflection was a daily occurrence for Briana to continue to improve her instruction and her students' learning.

Establishing relationships and high expectations through communication and collaboration. Briana worked diligently to build relationships and set high expectations with students and parents. To engage all learners, Briana would “tell them the stuff they need to know but throw the extra that they are interested in, to connect them to the content.” She also took the:

...extra time to support each student, but don't allow them to use excuses to impede their learning. I might give extra time, tutoring, or help, but I do not give in to excuses. It's easy to give in and feel sorry for a student, but it's much better to overcome for both parties.

Briana insisted on establishing high expectations for all students. She would not accept excuses or reasons they could not achieve academically. She continued to push each student to their potential.

Briana supported her high academic achievement with students by keeping in constant communication with her students' parents in a variety of ways. Through email, phone calls, parent conferences, and even texts, she was able to connect with parents to help their students. She especially ensured that she kept in contact with her struggling students' parents "in hopes that it provides a pressure for all to become stakeholders." At SJCS, she said she worked:

...collaboratively across grade levels to make sure the TEKS that feed into each year are covered in depth. For instance, Civil War is covered in 7th grade and needs to be emphasized for the 8th grade teacher's success. I also had the privilege to work with an ELA teacher last year that helped emphasize the history of what they were learning through the reading and assignments in her classroom. And vice versa for me. I worked on the writing in the content that helped her emphasize her work. We collaborated cross curricular for our students.

Providing students experiences beyond the classroom. Briana also took a special interest in her students and worked diligently to give them opportunities outside the classroom. This extra effort better helped her students connect their learning inside the

classroom to the rest of the world and its history. Her goal was to “show them up close and personal the things they are learning. I loved being able to take my students to Washington D.C. and go through the fundraising process with them.” The entire process of planning, working together towards a common goal, and then seeing that goal to fruition supported Briana building relationships with her students and families she served.

Beatrice (Bea) Lowry’s Perceptions

Bea Lowry’s 12 years of experience included English Language Arts (ELA) at the high school level with one year of middle school ELA experience. She taught at SJCS for three consecutive years, and her students had consistently achieved higher passing rates than the rest of the school with meeting or exceeding the state passing rate. Bea’s perceptions of her attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs associated with her high levels of student academic achievement included the following.

Attitude of responsibility. Like Briana, Bea Lowry also adopted an attitude of responsibility to increase student academic achievement. She felt it was imperative that the students and administration knew they could depend on her because she was going to ensure that her students progressed. She constantly felt a “sense of urgency” to teach students and ensure they learn “all day, every day.” She took on that pressure for her students’ success.

Attitude of high expectations for all. Bea also embraced an attitude of frustration for those adults not meeting her high expectations and not doing what she felt was best for kids. Because she had a “passion for kids,” her attitude became judgmental about what other teachers were or were not doing for their students. “I don’t think my frustration ever comes from kids. I think my frustration comes from adults.” She commented, “We have kids that are driven, kids that are not, and kids that are lazy. We

have adults like this as well.” She felt some teachers did not work hard or effectively for kids due to “pure laziness.” She said that some teachers would not take the time to disaggregate their data to drive their instruction because they had already decided “this is what I’m teaching today. This is what I’m teaching tomorrow,” and she spoke firmly saying, “that’s not helping our kids.” She expressed that her frustration with adults also bled into her frustration for “the state of the union when it comes to education.” For example, she explained how her frustration took over when she read a passage that she knew her economically disadvantaged students would not have the background knowledge to connect the meaning and inferences intended for the readers. This made her angry at the test writers. She felt as if she had been the law makers’ teacher, then they would not be making “such a mess of education legislation.” She voiced that she will make sure the students she teaches will make better choices and changes for education in our future.

Attitude of care and gratefulness. In addition to an attitude of frustration for adults, Bea assumed a courageous, caring, emotional, confident, responsible, and take-charge attitude concerning her students. She felt committed to an attitude of courage to help students “learn from their mistakes or errors.” Not all teachers take on the attitude to courageously teach students life lessons in addition to content instruction, but Bea takes this attitude on consistently because she cares about her students. She even became emotional when speaking of them even though she claimed to not be “really an emotional person but talking about them [made her] emotional.” She said that maybe “I really just care about them that much.”

Bea was also grateful for her small classes at her charter school. She saw the pros and cons of having smaller classes, but tried to be grateful by focusing on the advantages of smaller classes. Unfortunately, her frustration with the teachers in her school would sometimes take over because “those adults in these subjects/grade levels behind you” she felt had not prepared her students in prior years appropriately to the level of rigor necessary for them to be academically successful. At SJCS, the frustration would overwhelm her “more than before I came here because I was always just high school and just assumed, I don’t know where [the students] came from.” But when it is “close, when you know where it came from and you're like...that's terrible.” Because this charter school housed prekindergarten through high school on one campus, Bea really struggled with being at the same campus as a few of the teachers that she believed were responsible for her students not progressing academically during previous years. She felt adamantly that those teachers should have taken care of the students and done a better job teaching the students. This issue really frustrated her and conflicted with her attitude of gratefulness for the charter school.

Attitude of excitement and humor. In the classroom, she took on an attitude of excitement and humor with her students. During a classroom observation, the researcher witnessed her laughing with her students when she would model how to read a character’s lines in a play to show that he was being angry. The student then reread the lines similar to the teacher and the entire class laughed as they seemingly grasped a better understanding of the character’s point of view. From how she encouraged the students to act out the character’s feelings in the play to making humorous connections of the learning to their life, she and her students laughed and learned together daily. Her sense

of humor tended towards the sarcastic side of humor but in an amusing, entertaining way that her students seemed to appreciate and enjoy.

Belief in students. Much of Bea's belief system mirrored Briana's theories specifically concerning believing in children, having high expectations, the importance of building relationships, holding responsibility for her students, and using data to make instructional decisions. Bea begun by stating boldly in a loud and strong voice that "I believe in kids." She continued to say that she would never embarrass them. She felt strongly that "nothing is their fault...yet." Her belief was that high school students are at "the age where most life altering mistakes are made, especially with some of these kids that don't have anything to go home to." She explained her dedication to instill in her students that their home life or situation cannot be an excuse for their future. She said:

Just because they didn't have a great mom or a great dad or a beautiful house or two dogs. That's not going to be an excuse anymore. And maybe it's because I went through this when I was that age. I had somebody in my life that was able to explain to me, if you can get through this right now, then you get to decide who is in your life. Just because you have a crazy mom right now doesn't mean that you have to open the door to her in the next couple years. You just have to get through the next thing. And again, its survival skills because that's a life lesson. Just because you have a bad job doesn't mean you get to quit. Just because you're having problems with your partner doesn't mean you get to walk out. Just because you don't feel like changing the dirty diaper doesn't mean you don't have to. They're going to be doing these things soon and forever.

Bea expressed her love for her students and how she felt like she is the best thing for them when things start becoming their fault. Because she has been through tough times and made it through, she established high expectations without excuses for them as well. She believed that she has helped many of her students make better, more decent decisions with their lives due to what she considered her strict demeanor combined with being non-judgmental. The researcher observed her telling a student, “No excuses.” She voiced that she enjoyed the pressure she put upon herself to positively affect students and their important decision. She felt “it’s absolutely worth it.”

Bea also spoke of gaining mutual respect between the students and herself. Even from her first year of teaching, she believed that she was able to establish this shared respect by never calling students out; anytime she would notice a few students were not understanding or making the necessary instructional and content connections, she would simply stop everybody so as to avoid a feeling of embarrassment. She spoke of her passion that drives her to work with economically disadvantaged students at SJCS although she did not initially think that solid desire existed within her. “It wasn’t something that I imagined in the beginning, but it sure is something that holds true now.”

Belief in importance of building relationships. Bea also spoke of how establishing relationships with students was a careful balance yet essential to attaining academic achievement. She said:

I see so many teachers that try to go too far. They try to be friends and parents make the same mistake. It happens. Then I see some that are so rigid and so tight that they lose them there too. It’s a balance and even the kids that don’t have a whole lot of discipline at home or really they don’t have any interaction with their

parents at home, they'll be mad at first and then that first time that they feel some success because of that, they're yours and they'll do anything for you. I joke and probably shouldn't but I tell my husband, I could ask them to go steal a car for me and they probably would. Not because I'm a pushover and not because they're all making 98's in my class, it's because something beautiful has happened where they want to please me and they know that they can trust me and that I'm not going to ask them to do anything that's not for their success.

Bea conveyed that relationships with students are so important that teachers must be “willing to put in the hard stuff on the front to get the good stuff later. The delayed gratification.” She described:

Developing relationships with these kids in the beginning was hard. The first few weeks they thought I was a nightmare. They're like wait, she's going to make us turn in stuff on time? Wait. Woah. Then as time goes on, they just know.

Since she had taught one grade level of her students three years in a row and then another grade level two years consecutively, Bea claimed that this was “one of the greatest starts of a school year this year” because she already had built rapport with her students, and they knew how to meet her high expectations.

Belief in responsibility. Bea's beliefs, like Briana's, also held responsibility for her students as a core value. She stated:

I am solely responsible because I won't drop the ball on them, and I want everyone to feel that belief. Yes, yes. Absolutely. I need everybody to be that way and feel the sense of urgency for that. And not just the week before the test. No, its got to be all day, every day.

Bea stated that even when they made a mistake that “they should know better,” she would take responsibility for them because “they're kids, and we're going to help them get there.” In collaboration with taking responsibility for her students, she also instilled in her students a sense of responsibility for themselves. She wanted to be certain that they would not grow up “to be the adults that disappoint other adults.” She believed that she shows her students that she accepts responsibility for them by caring for them.

My students trust me and know I truly care for each and every one of them. I believe if that connection and trust is there, we all grow both academically and personally. When each student maximizes his/her individual potential, it insures that students of all ability levels are prepared to meet the challenges of life beyond the school setting. Fortunately, I have the luxury of teaching in a content area that naturally provides an opportunity for me to address a wide range of skills in my classroom.

Belief that data drives instruction and all students can learn. Bea's beliefs also aligned with Briana's views concerning the essential need to use data to drive instruction. Bea said that it took her several years of teaching to understand fully how the curriculum, instruction, assessment, data, and interventions align and “how all that marries. But when it does, the data really should be driving instruction.” Differentiation was mentioned by both Briana and Bea as something they believed in. They both used data to drive the direction of differentiation. Bea noted, “We don't live in a society where we can leave people behind.” She claimed that although differentiation is working “when done correctly,” but that it was “one of the most challenging things in this profession.”

She believed most teachers struggled with it because differentiation “takes a lot of effort.”

Belief in collaboration. Bea also believed strongly in collaboration and learning from one another. Her belief was steadfast that the key to student academic achievement was using data to drive instruction and then working with the other teachers to plan different ways to meet the needs of the students. She claimed that SJCS:

...has a reputation for embracing collaboration among its teachers, staff, and administration. When we as educators think, plan, decide and act cooperatively, the students end up with the best of the great ideas and lessons that every teacher brings to the table. Earnest collaboration magnifies individual accomplishments and enables educators to better serve their students.

Bea also implemented an effective organizational system. She said this tends to be her forte. She claimed to be “super organized” and knew exactly what she was going to teach and how she was going to teach it. She described a time when she decided to let go of some of her organization. She said:

The other day when we were in the faculty meeting, and they were talking about this beautiful lesson that this one teacher was doing with writing and using Expo markers and writing on the desks with the kids all of the time, I felt like that's my nightmare. So okay, I'm going to try this even though it is so far out of my comfort zone but also knowing that we're very different but there are certain things that we all share.

Therefore, Bea was willing to try something new, even something outside her own personal organized comfort zone, to work to help her students. She would also use

this opportunity to teach children to get out of their comfort zone and to do things that they don't like. This was just another life lesson she taught herself and her students. She also said it was important for teachers to collaborate:

...because all of us use data to drive instruction. We talk about it even though we teach different subjects. You know, we talk about how about this piece or what about that piece because even though we may teach totally different subjects, truly it's not that different. It's really not that different."

Differentiation to reach each learner. Bea Lowry also worked diligently to ensure each and every student progressed academically. One way she did this was using differentiated instruction for her students. She saw differentiation as a process of bringing students forward through different means. She also used data to support differentiation. Bea shared:

I think where I've made the biggest strides with my students, especially the ones that I now have for three years, is that they know we don't go through the motions. They know that however they perform, I'm going to take that data and work to use that so really there's no such thing as an easy day because we're never going to do something that they already know how to do because I don't waste time with that. Therefore, every instructional second is actually focused on something that they need instead of just going through the motions.

With these students that she has taught for three consecutive years, she focused on "front loading." She said, "It was there day one. We just picked up exactly where we left off," and there was no lagging or time wasted. She made sure she taught them how to front load or be proactive. "If you get so much done on the front end, it is not going to be

a nightmare” in the end when things are due. She also modeled this as a teacher. For example, she ensured that her grades were ready to go at any time. She also felt that teaching her students the skill of being proactive positively affected their learning and performance results.

Bea teaches interactively with her students. For example, the researcher observed Bea’s class while students were reading different short stories. Bea was walking around asking prompting questions to assess where the students were in their comprehension so they did not get further behind. Bea stated that effective teachers use questioning as one way to stay “on top of things” to be certain they do not miss knowing their students’ strengths and weaknesses. She modeled this during this specific observation. If they were not understanding something, then she would stop them to intervene immediately. She explained during an interview that she would not let the misunderstanding linger. Bea also tried different instructional strategies with her students. She attempted to “design lessons that can address and foster all different learning styles.” She felt it was her “job to accommodate instruction and materials so as to provide them with a variety of strategies for success.” She also utilized humor and connections to everyday life to increase engagement. During the observation, she reread a passage in different, funny voices to help the students use context clues to identify how the main character was feeling. The students laughed but really understood the literature on a higher level.

Another avenue she used was implementing technology to reach all students and increase engagement. She was “excited about the opportunity to teach in an educational environment like [SJCS] where there is an emphasis on technology.” This excitement and enthusiasm about teaching by integrating technology into learning made Bea very

happy. Simply speaking about using technology systems to look at her students' data just made her "giddy with excitement." She also motivated the students by infusing humor and technology integration into her lessons. She shared:

As a teacher that has been exposed to technology throughout my entire adult life, I have not found the adjustment to integrating different types of technology in my classroom difficult. My students consistently use portable laptops to generate research reports, literary criticism, and projects using technology based applications.

Building effective relationships and teaching real life lessons. Bea expressed that effective teachers build relationships with students. In building that relationship, these teachers also ensure that students do not have the "perception that they think that they're one of them," and are therefore not peers. The teacher must be sure there is mutual respect including respect for the rules. Bea made sure she followed the rules whether she agreed with those rules or not because every situation became harder when other teachers let students do certain things that are against the rules. She expressed that she has high expectations for students and adults, and the adults tended to "disappoint me a lot more than the kids do. Isn't that terrible? That's terrible."

Bea also taught what she called "survival skills." She wanted them to learn with her and at their age "the difference between a mistake and an error. A mistake being something that you didn't mean to do and an error is something that you meant to do and you did it anyway." She wanted to ensure that they thought about their actions and made better choices. She stated that she did not "mind taking that on my shoulders." She felt a lot of teachers "are really scared of that," but she did not mind dealing with it at all. She

wanted to help them learn these life lessons. “What goes on in the classroom is not just mastery of the content area objectives, but also character development and true connectedness.” In her perception, teaching the students these types of lessons also reinforced and strengthened the teacher and student relationship.

Blake Knight’s Perceptions

Although Blake Knight only had a little less than two years of experience all of which has been at SJCS, she had strong perceptions about teaching. She taught eighth through tenth grade math with at least three different grade levels at one time. Her students’ state assessment scores met or exceeded the state passing rate. Her views of her own teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors included the following themes.

Maintaining a positive attitude for the joy of teaching. Blake Knight’s primary teacher attitude that she perceived supported student academic achievement was possessing an overall positive attitude. She ensured that the students saw that “I truly enjoy coming to work each day and teaching in general. My own positive attitude makes me a better and more caring teacher.” She felt the students pick up on the teachers’ attitudes because “if the teacher isn’t happy and hardworking, then the students aren’t either. When the teacher is happy and hard working with a positive attitude, then the students will follow.” She wanted to ensure the students perceived her attitude similarly as Bea described her excitement for teaching and Briana shared her love and passion for her content. She felt this type of attitude would motivate and support students’ academic achievement.

Blake also conveyed that even when she did not feel so positive or great that she would still be sure that her students only saw a positive, supportive, and caring attitude.

For example, she referred to “assessments as evil and a time waste, but I never once let the students see that attitude.” Even when student would tend to complain about the state assessment, she would be sure to redirect them because they would follow her same attitude. If she acted as if she hated the test, then the students would too, and she felt she would lose them for good. She felt her attitude was the best way to lead by example.

Some of Blake’s frustrated attitudes came from the amount of data collection required by the school and the amount of time used to meet about data. She occasionally let things associated with data lessen her positive attitude because she felt these type of activities and meetings took away from time she needed to better plan engaging lessons and activities for her students. She felt she did not need as much data as she was required to collect as a teacher to know what to do with her students. She believed she knew her students’ strengths and weaknesses through observations in the classroom. She knew that her colleagues and administrators probably were able to see her negative attitude towards data, but she ensured that her students would never see that attitude. She makes sure that she puts a “face” on for her students. She described it as the following:

As far as my own attitude towards data I always just remember that I’m an adult and I have to do things I don’t like. So I go to the meetings, I pay attention, and then I attempt to plan for my three different subjects in the ten minutes that remain. My colleagues and administrators are probably able to see my attitude towards data, but my students never will.

Blake also took on an attitude of pride in her teaching. She was very proud concerning her use of instructional time. She was always the last teacher still teaching before school would let out for an extended break. She made sure she never wasted any

instructional time. She believed “the students needed every minute of it, and there was no way I was going to waste it.”

Belief in caring for students and the power of education. Blake’s belief system held that “successful teachers care about their students, make time for their students, adapt when they face challenges, and give 110% whenever they are with their students.” She believed “academic growth is one of the very most important things to see in students throughout the school year.” Blake was confident that her “contagious, positive attitude is one of the major contributing factors to the student academic gains seen in my classroom.” Blake believed “teaching is one of the most important jobs there is and that a quality education is one of the best things a child can ever receive.” She claimed that she never let up on her students due to this strong belief in the power of education. “Many of my students come from less than desirable situations that I have no control over. However, the one thing I do have control over is the education they receive while in my classroom.” Blake believed that the math classes she taught are a necessary piece of the puzzle that will help support their education. All of these classes are their path to a better life. “When they complained about why do we need to learn this, I reminded them that this is their ticket to a high school diploma and so much more.” She was adamant that she must instill this belief in her students, and she thought this was one of the keys helping them reach greater academic gains in the classroom.

Beliefs about accountability and data collection to drive instruction. Blake felt passionately that certain assessments and data collecting were a waste of time. She believed there are many more effective ways “to encourage academic growth instead of sitting silently taking a test. However, there has to be accountability for both the students

and teachers. Each assessment has its purpose, and they all need to be part of the education system.” Therefore, she concluded that these assessments are a “necessary time waste.” She continued to state that she believed:

An A on a test always brightens their day and gives them a little pat on the back for all their hard work. However, chapter tests can also quickly ruin a low student’s self-esteem. But, like I said, they are a necessary evil and this part is hard to avoid.

After sharing her thoughts about formative, chapter tests, she also proceeded to tell about her perceptions of state required summative assessments:

State assessments (STAAR & EOCs) are as much about teacher accountability as student accountability. Because this is a standardized test that all students take it really does give a good picture as to which teachers excel at teaching the curriculum. I always look at the state assessments as a way for both me and my students to show what we can do. Having high passing rates on these assessments is an achievement I hold very dear. However, I think of these as a necessary evil as well. They are necessary to hold teachers accountable and measure student growth but they waste a lot of instructional time. Students are in a classroom for approximately 180 days a year. 5-10 of those days are spent focusing solely on the STAAR test (benchmarks, reviewing testing strategies, practice tests, and of course the test itself). Additionally many portions of days are spent doing practice problems. This time could be spent in so many other ways. But like I said...a necessary evil and time waste.

She concluded that she made test preparation fun and competitive. Blake used games and even a zombie themed unit to prepare the students and measure academic mastery. They also counted down the days until the test on the board. When the students started to complain about the test, she would redirect them. She strongly believed that she must stay positive about the state test in order for her students to be successful.

Her other frustration centered around her belief that schools collect too much data on students. She said:

A teacher doesn't need four RenLearn tests, Chapter Tests, a Home Life Survey, a Reading Level evaluation, a Math skills evaluation, a Benchmark test, and a STAAR test to know a student is low. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses within minutes of working with them in a classroom. A low student and his teachers don't need a piece a paper saying he is an 8th grader reading on a 4th grade level. We all know. All this does is waste valuable instructional time and demoralize the student. He knows he's low. He doesn't need to see it printed out, put in a folder, and have a meeting with 10 adults to go over it.

Blake believed some data is needed, but believed the education system as a whole has gone overboard with data. She further explained:

Not only is student instructional time spent on this but large amounts of teaching planning time is spent on this. That two hour meeting to discuss the 8th grader reading on a 4th grade level always pulls the teacher away from either teaching or planning.

Her beliefs about interventions were a "completely different story. I believed fully thought out interventions can help see extreme academic growth. Whole class

interventions, small group interventions, and one-on-one interventions all have a much needed place.”

Beliefs about stakeholders’ communication, cooperation, and involvement.

Blake also felt it was essential for parents, teachers, and administrators to work collaboratively. All of these stakeholders are:

...working towards the same goal...seeing our students succeed. Whenever one of these people or I get worked up, I try to remember that the only reason we are worked up is because we care so much about the success of the students.

Therefore, effective parent communication was a staple of Blake’s belief system. She worked diligently towards this:

The fact that the students knew I had such a good line of communication with their parents made for much easier classroom management. Parent involvement and communication would be one of the top reasons I was able to get my students to work so hard and see such great academic gains.

Blake did not hesitate to pick up the telephone and call her students’ parents to work together to improve the students’ behavior or academic progress.

Belief in building relationships. Blake’s educational belief system all pivots around one central theme. She shared:

The final and most important thing that I contributed to academic achievement in my classroom was that I truly cared about my students and tried to build relationships with them. The more they felt that I cared about them as a person (and not just as a math student) the harder they would work for me. I really loved my students and enjoyed spending time with them. Many of them felt the same

way about me as their teacher. Thus, why so many would come for tutorials. I even had some who would come to morning or lunch tutorials to eat their food even when they had no work to do. I had one student in particular who did this every single day for lunch. He finally told me that my room was the one place he felt safe. This is just one story out of many. I cared for my students as if they were my own children. This caring and trust made them work so hard for me. Blake worked tirelessly to reinforce her positive relationship with the students through ensuring they knew she cared about them, spending time with them, and giving extra attention for their academic work.

Active engagement by all. During an observation, the researcher observed many different behaviors Blake displayed that revealed a successfully run classroom with effective classroom management. Initially, children were on task and engaged in a warm-up activity. Blake gave the students a three minute warning while moving around room to check concept mastery and answer questions. The classroom was quiet, students raised their hands for help, a student moved around the room to check students' answers with marker and a key, and all while Blake would redirect any off task behavior. She utilized small groups, dry erase markers for students to write on their tables to show work, and the school wide hand signal to regain students' attention. She also had a pleasant demeanor and showed excitement for teaching. The students used choral response as they reviewed a strategy for deciding which number is greater than the other. She connected with different types of learners through talking, writing, and modeling. Blake had students in leadership positions posted on the board. She also challenged students by explaining that she one of the questions they had "not actually gone over this

one yet, but I wanted to see how you did it. Give yourself a big pat on the back if you got this because we have not learned this yet.” She then stepped through the problem one step at a time with students giving answers per step, and finished this example with praise, “This was a challenge! Great job!” Blake also ensured engagement through asking prompting questions.

Established high expectations for all. Due to Blake’s strong belief in the power of education, she shared in her interview that this drove her teacher behaviors. She never let up on her students by having high expectations for them. From her perspective, she felt she would continuously push them to learn more to reach a “deeper level of learning.” She also put a:

...huge emphasis on growing in maturity and responsibility throughout the year with the students. I remind them that this is their ticket to a high school diploma and so much more. I work hard to instill this important belief in my students.

She established these high expectations for her student and herself. She tried very hard to give her students “110% regardless of her personal feelings” toward what they were doing or learning each day. Each day she worked diligently to:

...never let my daily mood or personal problems affect my teaching. I normally find that even when I arrive at work stressed or in a bad mood, I can quickly reverse it by simply pretending to be in a good mood. Before I know it I’ve forgotten about my troubles and am truly enjoying the day again (and the students were never the wiser).

Effective planning and preparation for engaged learners. How Blake planned was another aspect she mentioned was the key to her students’ academic success. She

felt “many teachers will find ways to complain about the curriculum they are given, and they get so lost in complaining that they never really dive into it.” She made sure she looked at her curriculum as a starting point from which she would supplement. She knew the concepts and TEKS that she was responsible for teaching the students and enjoyed using and creating a variety of supplementary activities, worksheets, and games to keep everyone engaged. She said:

I firmly believe that if you are bored while teaching, then the students are even ten times more bored than you. Whenever I start to fall into a rut or get bored I change it up. This keeps both myself and my students engaged in what we were learning. Some examples of ways I supplement the curriculum are by using KhanAcademy.com as an assessment tool, getting kids out of their seats to do Task Card Walks, QR Code Activities, and even creating worksheets that are Maze or Zombie themed!

She also shared a story about how one of her quiet and polite students asked, “Why are there no zombies in Algebra?” This was the catalyst to her creating a Zombie Polynomial Flip Book. When she distributed the activity to the students the very next day, “they were all shocked!” They had so much fun in math class, and it was one of her favorite lessons of all time.

Blake worked hard to make test preparation fun and competitive. She also wanted to be sure that she was portraying a positive attitude about the state assessment as well as leading by example to show that math is fun. Chapter tests were one way hard working students were able to show off what they knew. In general though, she felt these assessments held the students accountable for what they had learned as well as help her

assess the students' understanding before going onto the next chapter. She did these things to be sure she was not losing any students along the way. She worked diligently to ensure that she never left a student behind when teaching. Although she did not always feel successful at this, she always tried extremely hard. If she noticed a small group of students or even just one student falling behind, she would either provide intervention or get them help from the special education teacher or the math specialist. She reinforced her feelings about data stating that these reteaching moments were simply due to observations she made in her classroom and not through quantitative data disaggregation. She felt she rarely had time review the quantitative data because she was so busy teaching or planning engaging activities for her students.

Showing care and concern for students. Blake also discussed how she showed that she cared about her students. She would go to “bat” for them to help them in different ways even if she occasionally had to step on other peoples’ toes to do so. For example, she really wanted to change the dress code for her high school students and talked to administration on their behalf. The high school student dress code was relaxed due to her intervention. She also cared about their education which is why she insisted that they use every instructional minute they had to learn the most and the best they could. All of this portrayal of care helped build trust and respect with her students which enabled her to “get so much more out of them in the classroom.” She transferred this same care, trust, and respect to working with the students’ parents to get their support for their student. She constantly communicated with her parents to better motivate some of her students. Through her emails, calls, and parent conferences, she was effectively able to encourage parents to help encourage their students.

Supporting effective relationships by being there for students. The final two things Blake did that she believed translated into academic achievement for her students was to make herself available to her students but also take care of herself. She would get to school early to have tutorials for her students every day. She also provided help during lunch and afterschool. “I explained to them if they did not do their homework at home, then they would have to join me during lunch and do it then. I wanted them to know that the homework I gave was important.” She felt this is how she built trust and relationships as well as helped with her classroom management. Although she would come in early, stay late, and give all she had during the day, she made sure to never take her work home with her if she could avoid it. “I gave my all at work each day, but I also need to give my all at home.” She felt this helped her avoid the burnout that is so common by the end of the school year. She wanted to ensure that she portrayed positive attitudes and behaviors to lead her students in a positive direction. Getting the rest she needed at home enabled her to be enthusiastic and engaging in the classroom.

Prim Rose’s Perceptions

Prim Rose’s participation in this study was added after her name was mentioned in every student interview and group. Each of the students mentioned that she was a teacher that they perceived as effective. They felt she had made a positive difference in their academic achievement and, therefore was added towards the end of the data collection process.

Attitudes of excitement, humor, care and passion. Prim Rose adopted a teacher attitude of excitement for teaching math and passion to help students. She shared how she had retired from education, but just missed the students and the teaching. “I just had to come back. I missed them too much.” This was when she decided she had to

return to the field of education. She continually shared that she just loved helping students understand math. “People have said that this is just one of my gifts.”

She also shared an attitude of humor and care for students and education. She described one of her challenging first days of school saying as she found herself right in the middle of all of the chaos, she just knew she cared about her students and that her classroom and this school was the right place for them. She said she remembered her attitude of humor at that moment because she just had “to sit and laugh. Instead of cry, I just had to sit and laugh.” She felt that it was important that her attitude showed humor and acceptance that the students would see that in her. She also felt an attitude of respect and care was imperative.

Belief about the importance of relationships and high expectations. Prim Rose’s belief system hinged on building relationships. She believed that her greatest strength and reason for student academic success in the classroom is her relationships with her students. “They know I care about them, and they want to do their best. They trust our relationship and know that I am their biggest supporter for them to be successful.” She reinforced this belief when she left the classroom to serve as the math specialist in a new district. She realized that she had to apply the same belief system to the teachers she was responsible for coaching. She had to build relationships, trust, and care before she was going to be able to make a difference. She found that it came naturally for her with students, but with adults, she had to be more thoughtful and intentional in building the relationships.

Prim also contributed her foundational belief system of building relationships to her students meeting her high expectations in the classroom. She explained how her students would consistently complete their homework:

It (their homework) may have all been wrong, but it was done. It was all done.

They just wouldn't do that to me. They wouldn't let me down like that. It's all about that relationship piece. I think it's key to everything.

She believed that when she gave her students an assignment, they would all complete it because they did not want to let her down because she had set that expectation that it would be done, and they wanted to meet that expectation.

She also believed strongly that it was important to her students that she was proud of them. "That's that relationship piece." She had a student who really struggled that poured all his effort and used all of his time on his state assessment because he wanted her to know that he had shown his work and done everything to please her. She emotionally claimed, "You can't ask for more than that."

She further described one of her students with special needs that would consistently call out during class to make sure he was doing everything correctly. She and her students all adapted to this constant calling out because they knew that is what this student needed to do to be successful. Her focus on individual relationships and high expectations supported the belief that "we need to concentrate on individual student growth instead of every student reaching the same level of success."

She believed that all students can learn and that each and every student growing academically was essential in her classroom. She never lacked in her high expectations for each student. She also believed that every student "may not be at the same rate or the

same level of learning.” Because of her belief “that all students can learn, we need to structure teaching to individual student needs. This sounds good in theory; however, it is very difficult in practice,” but this was the high expectation she placed upon herself. She also believed “the curriculum should meet the needs and goals of individual students. The pathway of curriculum choices should be individualized for each student’s goals.” She described how this took extra effort on the teacher’s part, but for doing what was right for students, a teacher must meet that high expectation to meet every student’s need.

Beliefs about using data to drive instruction and involvement of stakeholders.

Prim also believed similarly to the other teachers concerning data and stakeholders. She felt that “data drives the types of interventions that are needed in each specific case. The data needs to be relevant to the individual student in order for the intervention to have value.”

She also agreed with the belief that “all the stakeholders need to be invested for the learning process to be successful. My beliefs and attitudes are the same. All stakeholders need to be invested.” Prim agreed with Blake’s philosophy in the sense that data is also collected through observations of students. Much of what Prim described about data driving her instructional practices centered on what she learned about the students’ academic levels, strengths and weaknesses through daily classroom interactions throughout the lessons, classroom discussions, and individual practice. She really focused on the students’ work to learn where they need extra instructional assistance.

Creating a structured learning environment with high expectations. Prim

Rose also had very specific behaviors she was certain contributed to supporting the students’ academic achievement in her classroom. Two of the main behaviors she

provided for her students were creating structure and very high expectations in her classroom. She held students accountable by using a weekly grade sheet so that the students could have ownership of their own grades and progress. Then the students would take the initiative to ask her if they could come in during tutorials or make corrections to improve their grades. If she saw they were putting forth the effort and care, then she was willing to be flexible and would negotiate with them. “I would always meet them half way as long as they were willing to put forth some initiative and effort.” She said that she just wanted to know that they knew the concept.

Consistent communication with stakeholders. Prim also communicated regularly to support increased academic success in her classroom. She texted, emailed, and called her students’ parents daily to ensure they were actively involved with their child’s education. “I just call them. And when I do not have time, then I just send them a text. Parents just need to know how their student is doing.” For example, the researcher observed her giving a student another chance to redo a homework assignment but also made sure to text the student’s parent that he needed to rework the problems again. The student returned with the homework completed correctly the next day. She also communicated with her students’ fellow teachers and administrators to have a comprehensive understanding of her students’ academic performance in all of their classes. She often entered an administrator’s office to say, “We need to talk about so-and-so”, or “I am really concerned about one of our students.” She also had consistent communication with the special education teachers and teaching assistants to best support her students. She felt communication with everyone involved with the student was a key to student success.

Safe, positive, and engaged learning environment. She worked diligently to “establish a climate that is safe for all students to take risks.” She explained that she would not judge nor criticize. She was very accepting and could always find a positive. She knew this was important to build the relationship and trust while showing them that she cared about them. She was always there to help and be a resource. She felt she was gifted at building relationships with students. She explained how it was harder to build relationships with fellow teachers and other adults than it was for students because it:

...came natural because I just love them. That was just an automatic. I didn't love those teachers I had to work with. That was a harder thing. For me even the ring-tailed tooters, the ones that are most difficult always win my heart over first because you can see that nobody else loved them. You had to love them because nobody else loved them. Really, I was always able to win over the power kid.

Once you get that power kid on your side, then you've got the class.

During conversations about her students, Prim would constantly smile. She shared the importance of providing a positive learning environment for her students, and relationships seemed to be the key in her perception.

Prim further described how, different than any other year she had taught, that it was her special education students who were the most actively engaged and would be the first to call out an answer. She attributed this to her providing a safe learning environment for them and validating their effort. She would also praise them for asking questions and participating, even when they got the wrong answer. She made them feel safe. She described a typical classroom discussion:

Oh, I see what you did wrong. I'm so glad you did that because now we can use that as a teaching moment because you know there's going to be about five or six in here that will do it just the way you did it. Now we're got to figure out okay, why did you do it that way? Can we come back and try it again from this approach and see how we could change that?" If you observe my classroom those six carried the dialogue which is so different from what I was used to.

Ensure effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Prim ensured curriculum, instruction, and assessment were an ongoing and cyclic practice because all three were an integral part of the learning process. She ensured that she structured the curriculum and instruction to “meet all modalities of learning. Since I am a visual learner, I teach to that main type of learning; however, I also model notetaking and auditory processing.” She also used her data to provide one-on-one intervention through tutorials and small group learning.

Encourage and motivate students. In the end, Prim was her students' biggest cheerleader. “I always tell them we can do this. Don't give up. We're going to do this.” She shared that she just kept giving positive reinforcement and encouragement to help them do their best. When a student told her that he had tried his best, she affirmed that she had noticed his effort and was so proud of him. She even encouraged some of her special education teaching assistants who were not strong in high school math concepts. Prim joked, “I would even tell the adults that they were doing a great job.” Many times, the assistant would be learning the math along with the students. Prim recalled one time when an assistant was so excited he was understanding the concept that he kept calling out the answers and exclaimed that he finally understood the math and that it all made

sense to him now! Prim remembered praising him just like the students and telling him how proud she was of him. She continued to show how she cares about the students and the adults as well as the content. “I tried to help them see that math is fun and can be enjoyable when you understand it!” It was really important to her that they all understood the concepts.

Student Perceptions

Through student focus groups and interviews, several students shared insightful perspectives about attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers who they believed supported their own academic achievement. The students reflected and provided astute thoughts about individual teachers and what exactly those teachers seem to think, believe, and do that helped them in their quest for learning. In general, their common themes aligned with the teachers’ emerged themes. The following results include perceptions from Henrietta, Mario, Vic, Jeff, Ashley, Eli, Brenda, George, and Corey.

Briana Everton. The students voiced the structured environment of Briana’s classroom and her high expectations helped increase student learning. Henrietta described Briana:

She did very well. She had a more rigid system than all the others. Trying to teach us U.S. History. I think I’ll never forget all about the cotton gin...great now I forgot all about the cotton gin, when was it made, but still she, oh...1791. She tried to make sure we learned. But, I guess she had a more rigid system.

Henrietta further described how Briana's class was her "favorite one" although she "was so rigid. She wanted this one way, and this way for that." Jeff said, "Her behavior was real positive, and she just worked her class hard." Ashley further added:

She believed in honesty and respect. Yeah. Big time. She believed that you should always be honest not only to yourself but with other people. You should respect yourself. You should respect other people. She believed that you should respect everybody around you and respect yourself, or you're not going to get respected. She believed in all the social skills.

The students shared how Briana really cared that her students learned the content and had a great passion for teaching history. Henrietta explained that Briana "did not teach in a way that was all about the STAAR test." Briana was very strict but really wanted her students to learn the content. Henrietta further described a time when her entire class did not do well on a test, and Briana retaught the content in a fun way and retested them. Mario, Vic, and Jeff also mentioned how Briana cared about them learning the content. Vic shared:

She would do activities that helped us understand history better. I think she believed that even though sometimes the students would mess up, she would go back and help, and she wouldn't let students fall behind. I think she believed in that, like, don't let students fall behind and help them, no matter what.

Briana's love for history, the students, and teaching was obvious to Ashley, Eli, and Brenda even though they initially thought Briana was "scary." They thought she really cared about them, and Eli said she "would be there for us if we needed to talk to

somebody about something.” Then, they described her as a teacher who pushed her students because she really believed in them. Brenda said:

I like that like she really believed that we could pass the class, and she knew we all had it into us. So like if we had an assignment, she would like get onto us about it but like in a good way. She would have us like keep striving to finish your class with the best grade you can get.

Mario, Vic, and Jeff concurred with the general perceptions of Ashley, Eli, and Brenda.

Jeff shared:

She really enjoyed teaching history and especially U.S. history. When she got to teaching it, she'd really get into it and give us facts and stuff about it. We would ask questions about what we're studying, and she would go find the details, also. We could talk a while about the topic which we are learning and yeah, she really enjoyed it.

George and Corey described Briana as teachers who had helped them learn better. They shared that Briana's class was hard, but she really helped them learn. They also could see that she liked her content area and wanted the students to understand it.

The students shared that Briana built relationships with them and made learning fun. Ashley, Eli, and Brenda described Briana as funny, engaging, upbeat, honest, respectful, and willing to make personal connections. Eli stated:

She let us like be like a modern talk of history. She made history so fun, like it wasn't just like PowerPoints and just stand there, like she would connect with us like on the level that we would understand it and won't be so bored about it.

They remembered much that they had learned from her class through the games they played and the jokes she would make. Henrietta also thought it was really great they way she would teach them in fun, original ways instead of making it all about a test. Mario, Vic, and Jeff also mentioned Briana's class and how she would do activities that helped them understand history better. They remembered doing fun activities. Mario said:

She used to make us do board games and flash cards, sometimes re-enact stuff like the stock market crash. She would have little cards and stuff and they'd be sorted and stuff like that. Just little things here and there.

George and Corey shared that she even integrated songs into her teaching because she wanted them to pay attention "to be a star." George said, "I still remember that song. Everybody went home that day and listened to the song. It was argumentatively burned into our minds and everybody pretty much passed that test."

Beatrice (Bea) Lowry. The students perceived Bea as a "strong teacher" who enjoyed teaching. Henrietta remembered Bea sharing:

She was very happy about [SJCS] because she really liked how everything was just small. She tried to show her pride, and she tried to enforce that with the high schoolers. She wanted them to just be proud of our school.

The students also perceived Bea as a teacher who helped her students and would not let her students fall behind. Mario, Vic, and Jeff discussed how she seemed to really help them become better writers and readers. Vic explained:

She really gets into the lessons and she goes over and over and over until we fully understand it, and she's one of those teachers, also, that if you fall behind, she will help you constantly to catch up. Yeah, that's a really good thing that I like about

her. Like, even if a student messes up or falls behind, or even doesn't do good as far as attitude wise, she tries to cheer you up, or anything as far as, even like schoolwork.

George and Corey also described Bea as teacher who had helped them learn better. They felt Bea had a positive attitude, pushed her students to do better, gave high fives and handshakes to each students each day, and would help students personally when needed.

The students described Bea as a teacher who would stand up for them, expect and give respect to all, and had a good attitude. Ashley said:

I like how she stands up for us a lot. She sees how some people treat us like the little kids, and I like how she would fight for our freedom. Yeah, she said you're in high school and it's different. She values and respects us.

Then, Eli added:

She actually believes in respect. It's like if you give her respect she respects you, it's just that whole respect kind of cycle. She also has a great attitude. I can say that honestly. She always like every morning, "Hello, friends."

Brenda also contributed:

And I know that she believes that no matter how you are, what you believe in, because I know I've told her some things, and she was accepting of everyone. It's important. Yeah. She's not being biased at all. You can't be biased in this kind of profession. She puts herself in the students' shoes before she does something, and I really like that. For instance, she gave us a research paper, and we had a bunch of book stuff. So, she extended a period on which we can do our research paper and even gave some class time.

Blake Knight. The students shared a common perception of Blake as having high expectations, a positive attitude, enjoying teaching and believing in and being there for her students. Mario, Vic, and Jeff shared that they learned a great deal from Blake, and Jeff thought “she has a really great attitude in class. She enjoyed teaching and she loved it and yeah, she had a really good attitude. As far as helping us out, really good attitude throughout the whole class.” They said that she would not accept it if they did not do their homework and would help them at lunch. Ashley, Eli, and Brenda, explained how she was always cheerful, respectful, and would consistently help her students. Eli claimed that she was “lovely yet stern” and would really focus on what they were learning. “A ray of sunshine on a cloudy day” was how Ashley described Blake. Her assignments were also described as engaging activities to keep Brenda “intrigued in math.” They believed Blake was constantly trying to improve them, their attitude, and their education all because she believed in them, that they were all equal, and could all learn. This was very important to these students. George and Corey described Blake as one of the teachers that made a difference with them and believed in them. George said:

She taught algebra, and I would say because she helped me a lot in that. She like you can go to her for pretty much anything. I still knew you could ... I still use her as a tutor so sometimes when I need help I still call her sometimes. Yeah, she was just a positive person and she liked teaching.

They specifically noted that she was always there for them, willing to help, and had a positive attitude. They could tell that Blake believed learning was important and they could go out in the world and make their “own footprint.” She also encouraged and pushed her students to do more and go further than they thought they could. They felt

she made learning fun such as making games for them to practice what they learned and making zombie themed lessons and activities. Henrietta remembered being in her dual credit class and remembering something Blake had previously taught her:

There was something that was funny that [Blake] taught me back in algebra class and we learned it our last unit of pre-cal, and I'm like, "Hey, I remember this!" That's the best! That's my favorite feeling in the world. When you're in college and then I'm like, "Hey, I remember this."

Prim Rose. The students perceived Prim as a teacher who cared about them and their learning. Henrietta specifically described Prim as kind, nice, caring, understanding, and could explain high level concepts in a way that students understood. She also shared that Prim expected “students to do their part in learning” which included pay attention and listening. Henrietta commented that she believed Prim liked teaching at SJCS because it was a “close knit community, and she likes to teach at smaller, more relaxed, schools instead of a more rigid system.” Although Henrietta preferred a more rigid system herself, she liked Prim’s classroom’s nice, comfortable feeling. She also described how Prim would give the students positive reinforcement.

Mario, Vic, and Jeff also agreed that Prim was able to teach them math concepts better than they had ever learned. Jeff stated:

I always had trouble with math, I was the slowest kid in the high school. She would show different ways to do things like examples and stuff, and they're actually the kind of stuff that can help me with math throughout high school.

They felt Prim always had a positive attitude, believed that each student had potential, and was very helpful. They also commented on her positive reinforcements.

Ashley, Eli, and Brenda also described Prim as one of their best teachers. They felt she was the type of teacher who would make sure the students learned. Ashley said:

She's great. She's the sweetest little lady you'll ever meet. I love that her outfits always match. I just love her. Like for our lessons, she would have a warm up but then we will all go through it together, and she would let us ask specific questions on the warm up so if we didn't get something, we would then get it. She would make sure you learn. If you failed the test, she'd always call you in after class. She wouldn't embarrass you in the class. She would talk to you about it and give you the chance to make it up. She always had faith in everybody, and she always had the best attitude. I've never seen her mad which is great. I've never seen her sad either. She's always there for everybody. And I love her quadratic equations song! x equals the opposite of b plus or minus the square root of b squared minus $4ac$ all over $2a$!

Eli also added:

Having her as a teacher was really awesome. Like she always played classical music which really helped me focus and learn, and one of them was Phantom of the Opera. We both realized we had that in common, and she actually gave me the movie, Phantom of the Opera. I watch it all the time!

Brenda stated, "She's just very nice. She's patient and supportive and always gives a second chance. If I could have anybody handing my diploma on that day, it would be her.

Additional perceptions of effective teachers at SJCS. The students also shared general thoughts about SJCS's effective teachers without naming a specific teacher.

Henrietta shared that her best teachers challenged her and really made connections of what she learned in the classroom to her life. She specifically felt that effective teachers really understood and knew their content, wanted "students to be engaged, and are not lazy." These teachers also knew students, cared about them, and knew how to work with them.

Mario, Vic, and Jeff all seemed to like teachers who taught in a way that they were engaged in learning. Specifically, they enjoyed a hands-on approach. Jeff shared how he sometimes got lost in some of his more interesting classes because he was so absorbed in what he was learning. Vic said, "Some teachers just make it more exciting than others. Like they really make me not realize I am learning." They also thought the best teachers had a positive attitude, loved teaching, and had a passion to help students. Jeff said, "They just really care about us. And you can tell they like teaching and even the stuff they teach. They keep it exciting."

In general, Ashley, Eli, and Brenda felt that effective teachers were always there for their students, made them feel part of the family, had confidence, trust, and faith in them, focused on preparing them for the real world, and always had a smile on their face. These students like for their teachers to help them learn to think for themselves, make them follow through, learn to be responsible, to communicate properly, and teach them the things they have to know before they get out there in the real world. Brenda stated, "They really changed our lives in a good way." Ashley shared:

They teach us not only about the classes but they know that we're about to be adults and they teach us everything we need to know before we go out there. It's so important. I think they all taught us a lot about responsibility. They all really strive to get us to understand what responsibility was and they understand sometimes if something happens but on other times it's really just your fault. They teach us communication and how to properly communicate with others. Because it's like this is a small school but if we have a question about something or we need to talk out something, they're not like just on our side just to make us feel better, we're in the wrong. They'll tell us, you need to work on this, this, and this so that when we started like really talking to people we know how to communicate better.

George and Corey also agreed that the teachers that have made a difference with them were ones that helped them, believed in them, and were willing to help them.

Summary of the Findings and Common Themes

This section encapsulates the findings based on the research questions posited in Chapter I. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a public charter school serving a predominately economically disadvantaged population.

Teacher Attitudes Common Themes

Several common themes emerged from the teacher perceptions concerning teacher attitudes associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. Briana's and Bea's attitude centered on a sense of

responsibility for their students. They took ownership that the students were their kids, and they would do whatever it took to ensure that they succeeded academically. They both exuded an attitude of confidence and “take charge.” The researcher interpreted these shared attitudes as taking initiative for their classroom and students. Neither teacher just sat back and expected others to do it for them. Their students were their responsibility, and they would make learning happen. Briana and Bea also displayed an attitude similar to Blake and Prim which included a positive attitude of enthusiasm, excitement, passion, and love for both their content area and teaching. They thought holding this attitude gave their students an advantage and motivation to learn. The teachers also cared about their students. Some of the other attitudes they expressed were acceptance, respect, flexible, dependable, humor, support, courageous, and confident. They believed that SJCS supported these attitudes of collaboration, enthusiasm, and effectiveness for teaching and learning.

Teacher Belief Systems Common Themes

Multiple common threads developed from the teacher insights concerning teacher belief systems associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. The researcher found that the teachers mostly agreed upon belief systems that focused on caring for and believing in all children, the importance of building relationships with students, holding responsibility for their students, building trust and mutual respect, and using data to make instructional decisions through collaboration and differentiation. They also shared the common theme that they believed in maintaining and communicating high expectations for their students and themselves as the instructional leader and would not accept excuses. Belief of involving the parents

through communication was also a common theme for the teachers. They believed that structure, discipline, and routines must be established in order for learning and differentiation to occur for all students to be engaged and learn. Their final shared belief held that teachers must share and collaborate with one another to improve themselves and the school as a whole. They believed that charter schools provide this opportunity more effectively than traditional public schools due to the increased allowable flexibility.

Teacher Behaviors Common Themes

Shared philosophies materialized from the teacher views concerning teacher behaviors associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. The common themes of teacher behaviors were numerous and overlapped several of the previously mentioned attitudes and belief systems. In general, the teachers agreed that effective teachers must know their content area, show enthusiasm for teaching and learning it, and be able to present the material in a multitude of ways to ensure student engagement and success. They also constantly assessed their students through observation and other ongoing means so they can adjust and reteach to meet the needs of all of their students. They helped their students make connections, took extra time for their students, communicated high expectations, collaborated, stayed organized, used humor, remained flexible, maintained consistent classroom management, created a safe learning environment, used questioning, engaged parents, set goals, and bent over backwards to help student achieve. They constantly replayed their day in their heads to reflect on what they could have done better, new strategies they should try, or adjustments they should make the next time they teach that same thing. These teachers used every instructional minute available to them to help continue to build their students'

knowledge and skills. They remained positive yet possessed a sense of urgency for learning. Most importantly, these effective teachers who ensured student academic success explicitly built relationships with their students because they cared about them.

Student Perceptions Common Themes

Numerous collective and similar thoughts were discovered from the student ideas presented concerning attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers whose students demonstrate substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. Through student focus groups and interviews, nine students shared very insightful perspectives about individual teachers and what exactly those teachers seemed to think, believe, and do that helped them in their quest for learning. In general, their common themes aligned with the teachers' emerged themes and include the following qualities about the most effective teachers they have had teach them.

The students perceived that the most effective teachers who helped them learn best were happy, respectful, and had positive attitude. These teachers loved, enjoyed, and had a passion for teaching and really understood and loved their content. They were extremely focused on learning. Effective teachers are also flexible, funny, honest, not lazy, nice, understanding, patient, and supportive. Most of all, these teachers always had a smile on their face.

The students perceived that effective teachers believed that each student had potential, knew their students and how to work with students, and cared about their students. High expectations like not accepting incomplete homework and expecting students to do their part in learning were shared student perceptions of teacher beliefs. The students also thought their teachers really wanted students to learn the content,

helped students no matter what it takes, would not embarrass a student, and made them feel like part of the family. The students agreed that the effective teachers had beliefs that included confidence, trust, and faith in their students and in education.

The students also shared common perceptions of teacher behaviors that helped them learn better such as making personal connections, building relationships, engaging all learners, challenging students, and making connections of classroom learning to real life. The students believed their best teachers could explain high level concepts in a way that students understood, did not teach in a way that was all about the STAAR test, reteaches the content in a fun way, and retested them when needed. The student shared that these teachers were able to teach them math concepts better than they had ever learned before, provided creative activities that helped them understand things better, did not let students fall behind, and taught with a hands-on approach to make learning interesting, fun, and ensure all students learned. The students perceived these teachers as giving second chances, always being there for the students, and teaching students life skills of thinking for themselves, following through, learning to be responsible, and communicating properly.

In summary of the similarities of the students' and teachers' views, both types of participants gave similar feedback concerning teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that supported student academic achievement. The overarching theme among both teachers and students was that the teachers, the students, and their relationships matter. This relationship is founded in mutual respect earned by both parties. Teachers must exude a positive attitude passionate about teaching, their content, and learning. Teachers must believe in students and that each child has the potential to learn and succeed. Both

students and teachers also agreed that a classroom must have a standard of high expectations and believed that the best teachers do whatever it takes to help their students.

Ineffective Teacher Common Themes

Lack of classroom management. Briana Everton perceived unsuccessful teachers fitting into one of three categories: lack of classroom management, lack of content knowledge, or lack of believing in a child's abilities. Teachers that lacked classroom management skills missed "the skills or proper training on how to manage a classroom. It does take a certain personal characteristic to walk into a room and command the respect and attention of a room full of students. While the personalities are not always the same, they must be comfortable enough in their abilities and routines to make an environment conducive to learning." She found:

...teachers that lack this, it is evident the first few times you meet them and see in their personality their either lack of confidence, or over confidence, unwillingness to change. Teachers have to be flexible for the classroom to run. Each student/classroom/personality is different but the goal remains the same. Teachers must adapt to course to get to the same result every year (student success). The course is always changing, it is NEVER linear. If a teacher can't accept that, then they have zero business in the classroom. They become too rigid and lose the trust of the students. It becomes a power struggle instead of a learning environment. On the other hand they must not be too loose in their management or they cannot steer the classroom back on course. They are the ones blowing the students off course because there is no destination or no organization for the class. Quite

simply. You cannot learn in chaos. For whatever reason, the teacher does not have control of the room. Examples that I have seen are the teacher lacks the confidence, relies on students' opinions of them personally, or just has low expectations of the students.

Lack of content knowledge. Briana also shared her perceptions about ineffective teachers who lacked content knowledge. She thought both the teacher not knowing the content or not knowing the progression of or connections between the content matters could hurt student learning. She believed "it is just not possible" for someone to be an effective teacher who could not break the content down and build it back up for student understanding. A teacher must be able to know the content "well enough to explain it several different ways to help reach students."

Lack of believing in a child's abilities. Not believing in a child's abilities is another sign of Briana's in identifying an ineffective teacher. One example she mentioned of ineffective teaching is:

...the teacher that gives grades based on little effort, not actual knowledge or REAL effort. They are undermining every teacher and kill the credibility of the teachers that DO make educational gains and are successful with students. Too many of these teachers, feel their heart is in the right place to give students amazing grades for minimal effort in order to not cause waves or have to put in work to get a student to the level that they need to be at. They make excuses for students, and say, "Oh, they have a rough home life," or "They did something of minimal effort and should be rewarded." They enable the learned helplessness of a student and become part of the problem of the overall educational system.

Excuses are always there, it's our job as educators to help student succeed despite, not give them a gold star for effort. There should be some effort based grading, but not completely. We can step in and try to lessen those burdens, but reality is they have to overcome to be successful in life. It's not how the real world works and students have to know it's not acceptable.

She continued by expressing that "educators need to quit short changing students' ability by thinking they are not capable." She believed that all students have the ability to compete academically and educators must trust that students are capable and have the mental ability. Briana further explained that ineffective:

...teachers need to check their own social prejudices at the door and stop thinking economically disadvantaged kids can't rise to the occasion. Believe in your students, so they can believe in themselves. Show them small success along the way to encourage the bigger successes.

Lack of holding high expectations. Bea echoed some of Briana's opinions concerning ineffective teachers. She expressed that some teachers "baby" students and do not hold them to high expectations. She felt unsuccessful teachers did not hold their students accountable. She also voiced that some teachers are in education for the wrong reasons.

I think that it's very easy for a lot of people to come here and interact with kids just so they don't have to interact with adults. To come here and look I'm a teacher and I'm playing with these kids and look, they're having a great time and they really like me and then go home.

Bea also stated that “some people are just lazy. Some people are buying time until they do something else. Some people are frustrated at the system as a whole and can't seem to separate the part from the whole.” These are several examples Bea gave concerning ineffective teachers.

Lack of hard, rigorous work. Blake concurred with Bea about ineffective teachers not working as hard as they should. She noted that although she enjoyed freedom within her curriculum, “this freedom was not a good fit for all teachers. Some teachers used the freedom to run the other way. They showed movies, did a few too many “projects,” and gave way too much free time.” She expressed that the challenging part was that the students gravitated towards the easiest route. Then, the more effective teachers who held their students accountable had to:

...fight the battle of “Why can’t we just watch a movie like we are in _____’s class” or “Why are we still learning things...we aren’t doing anything in our other classes.” It was a hard battle to fight but I fought it until the last day of school (or at least the 2nd to last day of school since the last day was a designated fun day).

Lack of positive attitude. In general, Blake shared that not only are unsuccessful teachers lazy and do not use their instructional minutes effectively, they also get caught up in drama, have a “poor me” attitude about everything, and put themselves ahead of the students. Blake concluded that this type of teacher behavior was not what supports student academic achievement.

Lack of building relationships with students. Prim voiced her belief that ineffective teachers do not value the relationship piece essential for student academic success. Throughout her years of teaching, she has “observed teachers in classrooms

treat their students with such disrespect that students are not even trying to learn.

Students can tell you which teachers care and which teachers don't. If a student is already an at-risk student, they are not going to perform for these disrespectful teachers.”

Conclusion

The four teachers and nine students provided great insight into best practices that work in a charter school serving a predominately economically disadvantaged student population. Although many of the findings overlapped among the three topics of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, many insightful findings were discovered. Also, the perspective of a public charter school was introduced to the field of study of best practices for teachers helping student achieve academic success.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter consists of the following four sections: 1) Summary of the Findings, 2) Implications and Recommendations, 3) Recommendations for Future Research, and 4) Conclusion. The first section, Summary of the Findings, presents a synopsis of the findings drawn from the results presented in the Chapter IV. The results are reported in response to the research questions presented in Chapter I. The second section, Implications and Recommendations, compares the findings to the literature review from Chapter II as well as discusses the implications generated by the conclusions and interpretations. The third section, Recommendations for Future Research, suggests further alternatives to build upon this research. The final section of Chapter V, Conclusions, offers deductions based on the results of the data analysis.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that are associated with student academic achievement in a public charter school which serves a predominately economically disadvantaged population.

The review of literature showed the teacher matters (Stronge & Hindman, 2003; Stronge & Tucker, 2000). These authors echoed that the teacher matters by showing that the teacher is the single, most influential factor in a school that contributes to student achievement. Therefore, “we can greatly improve student achievement if we come to an

understanding of what constitutes an effective teacher and then seek out teachers who demonstrate those desired qualities and behaviors” (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p.49).

Bloom (2012) also found one of the biggest factors in students' success is that they have a strong teacher working with them and that this is the key to student achievement.

Research shows that effective teachers can help students raise their grades irrespective of their family background, ethnicity, economical status, etc. In fact, Bloom (2012) found a direct correlation between the greater the quality of the teacher to the greater the student performance achievement. Huang and Moon (2009) also agreed that teachers are the most influential factor of a child’s academic growth. Furthermore, a student who has a poor performing teacher could be significantly hindered in academic growth. Therefore, knowing what effective attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors teachers hold is imperative.

A multiple case study design was used to identify these teacher qualities. The participants included four teachers and nine students in an urban, open enrollment, public charter school in Southeast Texas, pseudonym Stellar Journey Charter School (SJCS). The teachers’ assumed names included in the case study are Briana Everton, Bea Lowry, Blake Knight, and Prim Rose. The nine interviewed students were all high school students who had been taught by all four of these teachers for at least one school year. Also, given that a charter school does not operate through attendance zones, the students that attend this school were from all over the county which provided a more diverse perspective. Therefore, the demographic and grade distributions are important to note. The charter school serves prekindergarten 3-year olds through high school students. The number of children per grade level ranges from 10 to 88 students. The student population

is 83% economically disadvantaged (ED), 53% at-risk (AR), 24% limited English proficient (LEP), 69% Hispanic (H), 18% White (W), 9% African American (AA), and 1% other (O).

This chapter summarizes the results obtained from the data analysis of this qualitative research study. Consequently, these findings have generated certain implications and conclusions concerning specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement.

Summary of the Findings

This section encapsulates the findings based on the research questions posited in Chapter I. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors associated with substantive student academic achievement in a public charter school serving a predominately economically disadvantaged population.

Teacher Attitudes

Several common themes emerged from the teacher perceptions concerning teacher attitudes associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. Briana's and Bea's attitudes centered on a sense of responsibility for their students. They took ownership that the students were their kids, and they would do whatever it took to ensure that they succeeded academically. They both exuded an attitude of confidence and "take charge." The researcher interpreted these shared attitudes as taking initiative for their classroom and students. Neither teacher just sat back and expected others to do it for them. Their students were their responsibility, and they would make learning happen. Briana and Bea also displayed an

attitude similar to Blake and Prim which included a positive attitude of enthusiasm, excitement, passion, and love for both their content area and teaching. They thought holding this attitude gave their students an advantage and motivation to learn. The teachers also cared about their students. Some of the other attitudes they expressed were acceptance, respect, flexible, dependable, humor, support, courageous, and confident. They believed that SJCS supported these attitudes of collaboration, enthusiasm, and effectiveness for teaching and learning.

Teacher Belief Systems

Multiple common threads developed from the teacher insights concerning teacher belief systems associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. The researcher found that the teachers mostly agreed upon belief systems that focused on caring for and believing in all children, the importance of building relationships with students, holding responsibility for their students, building trust and mutual respect, and using data to make instructional decisions through collaboration and differentiation. They also shared the common theme that they believed in maintaining and communicating high expectations for their students and themselves as the instructional leader and would not accept excuses. Belief of involving the parents through communication was also a common theme for the teachers. They believed that structure, discipline, and routines must be established in order for learning and differentiation to occur for all students to be engaged and learn. Their final shared belief held that teachers must share and collaborate with one another to improve themselves and the school as a whole. They believed that charter schools provide this opportunity more effectively than traditional public schools due to the increased allowable flexibility.

Teacher Behaviors

Shared philosophies materialized from the teacher views concerning teacher behaviors associated with substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. The common themes of teacher behaviors were numerous and overlapped several of the previously mentioned attitudes and belief systems. In general, the teachers agreed that effective teachers must know their content area, show enthusiasm for teaching and learning it, and be able to present the material in a multitude of ways to ensure student engagement and success. They also constantly assessed their students through observation and other ongoing means so they can adjust and reteach to meet the needs of all of their students. They helped their students make connections, took extra time for their students, communicated high expectations, collaborated, stayed organized, used humor, remained flexible, maintained consistent classroom management, created a safe learning environment, used questioning, engaged parents, set goals, and bent over backwards to help student achieve. They constantly replayed their day in their heads to reflect on what they could have done better, new strategies they should try, or adjustments they should make the next time they teach that same thing. These teachers used every instructional minute available to them to help continue to build their students' knowledge and skills. They remained positive yet possessed a sense of urgency for learning. Most importantly, these effective teachers who ensured student academic success explicitly built relationships with their students because they cared about them.

Student Perceptions

Numerous collective and similar thoughts were discovered from the student ideas presented concerning attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers whose students demonstrate substantive academic achievement in low-income charter school classrooms. Through student focus groups and interviews, nine students shared very insightful perspectives about individual teachers and what exactly those teachers seemed to think, believe, and do that helped them in their quest for learning. In general, their common themes aligned with the teachers' emerged themes and include the following qualities about the most effective teachers they have had teach them.

The students perceived that the most effective teachers who helped them learn best were happy, respectful, and had positive attitude. These teachers loved, enjoyed, and had a passion for teaching and really understood and loved their content. They were extremely focused on learning. Effective teachers are also flexible, funny, honest, not lazy, nice, understanding, patient, and supportive. Most of all, these teachers always had a smile on their face.

The students perceived that effective teachers believed that each student had potential, knew their students and how to work with students, and cared about their students. High expectations like not accepting incomplete homework and expecting students to do their part in learning were shared student perceptions of teacher beliefs. The students also thought their teachers really wanted students to learn the content, helped students no matter what it takes, would not embarrass a student, and made them feel like part of the family. The students agreed that the effective teachers had beliefs that included confidence, trust, and faith in their students and in education.

The students also shared common perceptions of teacher behaviors that helped them learn better such as making personal connections, building relationships, engaging all learners, challenging students, and making connections of classroom learning to real life. The students believed their best teachers could explain high level concepts in a way that students understood, did not teach in a way that was all about the STAAR test, reteaches the content in a fun way, and retested them when needed. The student shared that these teachers were able to teach them math concepts better than they had ever learned before, provided creative activities that helped them understand things better, did not let students fall behind, and taught with a hands-on approach to make learning interesting, fun, and ensure all students learned. The students perceived these teachers as giving second chances, always being there for the students, and teaching students life skills of thinking for themselves, following through, learning to be responsible, and communicating properly.

In summary of the similarities of the students' and teachers' views, the participants in this research, gave similar feedback concerning teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that supported student academic achievement. The overarching theme among both teachers and students was that the teachers, the students, and their relationships matter. This relationship is founded in mutual respect earned by both parties. Teachers must exude a positive, passionate attitude regarding teaching, their content area, and student learning. Teachers must believe in students and that each child has the potential to learn and succeed. Both students and teachers also agreed that a classroom must have a standard of high expectations and believed that the best teachers do whatever it takes to help their students.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the summary of the findings discussed in the previous section, multiple implications and recommendations are warranted. Chapter II focused upon the review of literature encompassing previous research specifically related to student academic achievement, teacher attitudes, teacher belief systems, teacher behaviors, and charter schools. This chapter compared and contrasted the findings from the literature review to the findings from this qualitative study.

The Teacher Makes the Difference in Student Academic Achievement

The teacher makes the difference was the focus of numerous studies (Bloom, 2012; Hattie, 2009; Rowe, 2003; Stronge, 2002). Stronge and Hindman (2003) as well as Stronge and Tucker (2000) confirmed that the teacher matters by showing that the teacher is the single, most influential factor in a school that contributes to student achievement. Therefore, “we can greatly improve student achievement if we come to an understanding of what constitutes an effective teacher and then seek out teachers who demonstrate those desired qualities and behaviors” (Stronge & Hindman, 2003, p.49).

The findings of this study confirm the perception that the teacher makes the difference. Prim Rose confidently stated that “it’s the teacher. Yes, the teacher makes the difference.” The student voice was loud and clear that their success was anchored on specific, talented teachers such as the ones involved in this qualitative study. The students agreed with Bloom (2012) when they stated that their effective teachers believed in them and that they could learn just as well as any other students. A good teacher can reach children regardless of their circumstances (Bloom, 2012). Bloom’s research showed that effective teachers can help students raise their grades irrespective of their family background, ethnicity, economical status, etc. In fact, Bloom (2012) found a

direct correlation between the greater the quality of the teacher and the more the achievement in student performance. Consequently, this study supports that teachers do make the difference in student achievement.

Teacher Attitudes

This study also confirmed prior research supporting that an effective teacher emulates a positive attitude about life and teaching (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). As a person, a teacher possesses an attitude of caring and fairness, is a reflective thinker, and has high expectations for self and each learner. All four teachers as well as the students echoed Stronge's and Hindman's (2003) researched findings about the positive attitude necessary for effective teachers. All participants also adamantly agreed that teachers must care for, support, and respect students. Effective teachers are respectful towards and show trust in students which leads to stronger student and teacher relationships (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). The participating students supported that their best teachers' attitudes showed that learning was important and that they were passionate about teaching. These were perceived as key factors to productive classrooms.

The students also consistently voiced that their most effective teachers were always there for them which supported the research as an attitude of commitment (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Greenlee & Brown, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003). This study also supported the research that a direct correlation exists between student academic achievement and teacher job satisfaction with several teachers and even students commenting how it was obvious that the best teachers liked teaching and the school in which they worked (Knox & Anfara, 2013; Mertler, 2001).

The research supporting a teacher attitude of reflexivity and tenacity was also

solidified in this study by the participants. This research and previous research supported the overall message of identifying what those attitudes are and which teachers possess them is imperative to the success of schools and student academic achievement (Huang & Moon, 2009).

Teacher Belief Systems

The premise that teacher quality and quality teaching are linked with values and beliefs was extensively regarded as truth by many researchers (Arthur, 2010; Clement, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Rowe, 2004; Westcombe-Down, 2009). A teacher's belief system was considered the best indicator on the basis of decision making. Beliefs, more than knowledge, influence how a teacher plans, makes instructional decisions, implements classroom practices, organizes, defines tasks and problems, and are the strongest predictors of behaviors (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). The teachers and students in this study confirmed the researched based beliefs about the importance of helping students make connections, beliefs of teacher efficacy, and beliefs about establishing high expectations.

All participants agreed with the research by Stronge and Hindman (2003) that effective teachers have high expectation for themselves as well as their students and the research by Love and Kruger (2005) that these effective teachers possessed a "do what it takes" belief to help students reach high expectations. These teachers also shared the belief that they are responsible for their students (Love & Kruger, 2005). Therefore, valuable teachers know how to have high expectations for their students as well as for their teaching which will push students to achieve academically (Berliner, 2004; Huang & Moon, 2009; Muijs & Reynolds, 2015; Weisman, 2012).

This research also supported the researched based belief that teachers must build effective relationships with their students. Every participant was passionate about the importance of building relationships. These beliefs about relationships were perceived as the basis of motivating students to achieve academic success.

Teacher Behaviors

Earlier studies of effective teaching based upon personality led to more reliable research focused upon teacher behaviors which positively affect student achievement. Stronge and Hindman (2003) as well as Muijs and Reynolds (2015) studied effective teacher behaviors through questionnaires and classroom observations. Their research along with many other studies found that student outcomes are strongest when effective teaching behaviors are present. The literature reviewed revealed effective teaching behaviors to fall under the following three categories: creating an effective classroom climate, supporting effective teaching practices, as well as behaviors of expert teachers.

This study also supported the findings of the literature review. Specifically, the teachers and student interviewed agreed with the research by Muijs and Reynolds (2015) in which the initial positive classroom climate factor that the authors found included teacher behaviors that supported an orderly and businesslike learning environment.

The most mentioned teaching behavior was the effective use of instructional time which supported the Muijs and Reynolds (2015) and Stronge and Hindman (2003) research. Multiple teachers mentioned this as a very important aspect of their students' academic achievement. The same authors' research about monitoring the progress of their students and adjusting their instruction accordingly was also echoed through this study in addition to supporting the researched based behavior that successful teachers

must create a positive classroom climate with effective classroom management behaviors. This research also supported similar findings by Bond, et al. (2000) which reported that effective teachers better monitor learning and provide feedback to students.

In addition to classroom climate, management, instructional time, and monitoring learning, the findings in this study supported Muijs' and Reynolds' (2015) results that teacher behaviors must support effective teaching practices such as utilizing a multitude of teaching strategies to reach every student. Different students may need content explained in different ways according to the students' levels and strengths (Muijs & Reynolds, 2015). Several of the teachers and students discussed this effective teacher behavior when interviewed. The participants also supported the researched based practice of the teacher actively helping students.

Akbari's and Allvar's (2010) research discussed teachers' teaching styles shining when their personal educational philosophy is manifested through their instructional practices. A couple of the teachers and students reiterated this discussion through the importance of education showing through the teachers' behaviors in the classroom.

The participants also supported the additional behaviors identified by Bond et al. (2000) which included better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners. This study also supported Huang's and Moon's (2009) thoughts that a school could make the most achievement simply by improving the quality of teacher behaviors.

This study's findings also paralleled research presenting specific behaviors of expert teachers. Bond et al. (2000) specified expert teaching performance including better use of knowledge, extensive pedagogical content knowledge, and deep representations of subject matter knowledge. Both teachers and students mentioned these three aspects that

they stated supported academic achievement. Also, Akbari and Allvar (2010) found that teachers' behaviors are also influenced by their efficacy beliefs. The greater their belief that they can improve student learning, the more likely they are to behave in specific ways. Teachers also tend to increase their level of planning and organization as well as use intellectual excitement and establish interpersonal rapport. This research agreed with these findings as well as with Berliner's (2004) research supporting that expert teachers are skilled in their content, working with students, taking more time to plan, planning more than one activity or strategy to teach a concept, and knowing their students' academic levels.

In summary, it is imperative that schools hire the most effective teachers for their students. Finding teachers who are a good fit for the specific school is also important. Administrators and hiring teams should use these specific teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to identify these teachers. Administrators should also support these same qualities by instilling them through ongoing professional development, coaching, and evaluation processes to best support student academic achievement.

Charter Schools

Because research specific to charter schools and substantive student academic achievement is very limited, the majority of the findings from the participants about charter schools was a fresh outlook on the subject. Researchers such as Hill, Angel, and Christensen (2006) posited that future studies concerning charter schools and student academic achievement must be conducted to further determine effectiveness. As for this one charter school with these four teachers and nine students, the reviews were very positive in favor of this charter school supporting academic achievement in students.

From the students feeling as though the school was like a family to the teachers enjoying the smaller learning environment, most participants commented on the positive effects that SJCS and the teachers had on student learning. Carpenter (2013) and Yeh (2011) both studied charter schools from a cost-effectiveness approach to increased student achievement and found no significant difference existed and that more research was needed. This study at least added one more body of research to the limited studies available linking charter schools and student academic achievement. According to Hill et al. (2006) with the National Charter School Research Program, the authors examined every study published from 2000 to 2005 concerning this topic and only 41 studies were conducted. Also, of the available research, the conclusions are mixed. Some results concerning academic achievement in charter schools are positive, some are neutral, and some are negative. Therefore, this study will add a qualitative perspective to how a charter school serving an economically disadvantaged population helped student academic achievement through effective teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors.

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed through the lens of Bandura's (2010) self-efficacy theory. His research of perceived self-efficacy focused upon people's beliefs in their own capacity to affect experiences that influence their lives. This theory is the foundation of maintaining an attitude of motivation, behaviors that lead to accomplishments, and belief of being emotional healthy. Bandura (2010) believes:

...unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of

difficulties. Whatever other factors may serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one can make a difference by one's actions. (p. 71)

Self-efficacy beliefs define the way individuals “feel, think, motivate themselves and behave” (Bandura, 2010, p.71). Such philosophies construct these varied outcomes through cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. These processes connect to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which further connect to positive results.

This qualitative study of effective teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors definitively paralleled the theoretical framework of self-efficacy. Each teacher interviewed truly believed that she could greatly influence her students’ academic achievement regardless of their intellectual level or background. They were certain that their effective teaching practices including their positive attitudes, their relationship building skills, and their solid belief that their students could learn would positively affect student academic achievement. The students even remarked that these teachers loved teaching, were passionate about their subject matter, and cared about them. The teachers set high standards for themselves and their students and stayed strongly committed. Universally, these teachers possessed confidence and efficacious outlooks on their abilities as effective teachers who could make a difference in their students’ learning and lives.

Recommendations for Future Research

In reflection, the researcher felt that the data collected somewhat changed her perceptions while strengthening other beliefs. One of the changes was the manner in which she viewed these teachers. She understood them better as a teacher and as a person. She found the majority of their answers insightful and pleasantly encouraging.

Another shift in perception was the way she viewed their school. One teacher gave her a better view of some of the concerns she had about the way things are done as well as the perception she had about things that others do. The conversations as well as written responses with the teachers were very interesting and enlightening. Their thoughts also strengthened the researcher's attitudes and beliefs concerning aspects of teaching that she also agreed helped students and supported academic achievement.

If the researcher did this study again, she would do several things differently based upon these reflections. The primary difference would be to include quantitative data to further support the findings by utilizing a mixed methods approach. The researcher would also include a few more teachers for the qualitative aspects of the study. She was so delighted by the rich data collected through the four teachers, but she believed a few more teachers would add validity and even richer data and insight! The researcher would also do multiple interviews, observations, and electronic open-ended surveys to increase the data collected as well as increase the level of detail in the data.

The researcher surprised herself in how this study really sparked a reflective paradigm shift in terms of qualitative research. She really enjoyed the process of qualitative research, growing in the role of a qualitative researcher, and learning from others' insights, passions, beliefs, and thoughts. She previously believed that she would have known most of the teachers' thoughts through her many conversations with them, but from the study learned that such valuable knowledge, content, and data can be drawn out of someone through a qualitative collection process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the teacher does make the difference in student achievement. Therefore, it is imperative that schools hire the right fit and most effective teachers for

their students. In doing so, administrators and hiring teams must be aware of specific teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with student academic achievement. Administrators must also infuse these research based practices through ongoing professional development, coaching, and evaluation processes to best support student academic achievement. This study showed consistency in researched based specific teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that were associated with greater student academic achievement. The literature showed that although many studies have been conducted concerning these three topics, limited research has been conducted focusing on charter schools (Guvercin, 2013). Some specifics such as being a reflective practitioner and having a strong and solid sense of efficacy to build relationships with students, have proven most effective for student academic growth. This researched based philosophy held true in a charter school that served a predominately low socioeconomic population. Just as Huang and Moon (2009) agreed that teachers are one of the most influential factors of a child's academic growth, it is important for school leaders to understand that any school will make the most gains in student achievement simply by improving the quality of its teachers. Also, Shaw and Newton (2014) expressed trepidations about how to safeguard a suitable work force of resilient, robust, highly effective teachers. Consequently, the authors left readers with this thought, "if the most precious product developed in education is the students, then our most prized commodity should be the classroom teacher" (p. 101).

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APPENDIX A
CPHS APPLICATION FORM

APPENDIX A
CPHS APPLICATION FORM



University
of Houston
Clear Lake

COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
Faculty/Sponsor Application for Investigation Involving Human Subjects
2700 Bay Area Blvd. 281.283.3015 FAX 281.283.2143
Houston, TX 77058-1098 uhcl.edu/research

DATE:	September 9, 2015
TITLE:	A Case Study of Teacher Attitudes, Belief Systems, and Behaviors that Elicit Substantive Student Academic Gains in a Charter School
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):	
STUDENT RESEARCHER(S):	Jennifer Goodman
FACULTY SPONSOR:	Dr. Amy Orange and Dr. Gary Schumacher
PROPOSED PROJECT END DATE:	September 2016

All applicants are to review and understand the responsibilities for abiding by provisions stated in the UHCL's Federal-wide Assurance (FWA 00004068), approved by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) on March 9, 2004: (a) The Belmont Report provides ethical principles to follow in human subject research; and (b) Federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and all of its subparts A, B, C, and D are the minimum standards applied to all of UHCL's human subject research.

See <http://www.uhcl.edu/research> -- Protection of Human Subjects, [Federal-wide Assurance](#).

For questions, contact the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) at 281-283-3015 or sponsoredprograms@uhcl.edu

Principal Investigator (PI) / Faculty Sponsor (FS) Responsibilities Regarding Research on Human Subjects:

- **PI / FS** acknowledges reviewing UHCL's FWA (Federal-wide Assurance) (FWA #00004068) approved by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP). **PI / FS** understands the responsibilities for abiding by provisions of the Assurance.
- The **PI / FS** cannot initiate any contact with human subjects until final approval is given by CPHS.
- Additions, changes or issues relating to the use of human subjects after the project has begun must be submitted for CPHS review as an amendment and approved PRIOR to implementing the change.
- If the study continues for a period longer than one year, a continuing review must be submitted PRIOR to the anniversary date of the studies approval date.

- PI / FS asserts that information contained in this application for human subjects' assessment is complete, true and accurate.
- PI / FS agrees to provide adequate supervision to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects are properly maintained.
- Faculty Sponsors are responsible for student research conducted under their supervision. Faculty Sponsors are to retain research data and informed consent forms for three years after project ends.
- PI / FS acknowledges the responsibility to secure the informed consent of the subjects by explaining the procedures, in so far as possible, and by describing the risks and potential benefits of the project.
- PI / FS assures CPHS that all procedures performed in this project will be conducted in accordance with all federal regulations and university policies which govern research with human subjects.

A. DATA COLLECTION DATES:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. From: | The date of approval from the CPHS committee |
| 2. To: | September 2016 |
| 3. Project End Date: | September 2016 |

B. HUMAN SUBJECTS DESCRIPTION:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Age range: | 13-70 |
| 2. Approx. number: | 5 teachers and 5 students |
| 3. % Male: | 15 |
| 4. % Female: | 85 |

C. PROJECT SUMMARY:

Complete application using commonly understood terminology.

1. Background and Significance

Provide a **CONCISE** rationale for this project, based on current literature, information, or data. Include references as appropriate.

Huang and Moon (2009) report that teachers are the most influential factor of a child's academic growth. Consequently, a school could make the most gains in increasing student achievement simply by improving the quality of teachers.

Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that elicit substantive student academic gains specifically in a public charter school with a majority low income student population.

Huang, F., & Moon, T. (2009). Is experience the best teacher? A multilevel analysis of

teacher characteristics and student achievement in low performing schools.

Educational Assessment, Evaluation & Accountability, 21(3), 209-234. doi:

10.1007/s11092-009-9074-2

2. Specific Aims

Purpose, Hypotheses/Research Questions, Goals of the Project. **BRIEFLY** describe the purpose and goals of the project (include hypotheses or research questions to be addressed and the specific objectives or aims of the project. Describe or define terms or methods as needed for CPHS reviewer's understanding.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to focus upon improving student academic achievement and specifically addresses the following research questions:

- 1) In a low-income, public charter school, what do teachers perceive are their own attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that contribute to substantive student academic gains?
- 2) What attitudes do teachers exhibit in charter school classrooms where students elicit substantive academic gains?
- 3) What belief systems do teachers exhibit in charter school classrooms where students elicit substantive academic gains?
- 4) What behaviors do teachers hold in charter school classrooms where students elicit substantive academic gains?
- 5) What do students perceive are the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of teachers that they feel helped them learn the best?

3. Research Method, Design and Procedures

- (A) Provide an overview of research methodology and design; e.g., how the data are to be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.
- (B) Provide step-by-step description of procedures and how they are to be applied. Procedures are to begin from CPHS approval and end when data compiled and results reported. Possible information to include: What are participants asked to do? When and where are they to participate? How long will it take to participate? Describe type of research information gathered from participants, i.e., data being collected.

Note that ethical responsibility of researcher to participant does not end until participant's information has been destroyed. Research documentation cannot be destroyed for up to three years after completion of a study.

(A) This qualitative study will be conducted through teacher and student interviews and observations. A journal will be kept to record both activities.

(B) Once CPHS approval is received:

- 1) Gain participants agreement to join this study.
- 2) Interview teacher and student participants before or after classes/work day about what they do, think, or believe that elicit substantive student academic gains. Interviews should take no longer than 45 minutes and information will be recorded in journal.
- 3) Observe teacher participants for 30 minutes to 3 hours during class time teaching and record instructional practices seen.
- 4) Data will be compiled and results reported. Interviews will be audio recorded as well as documented in a journal. Observations will also be recorded in the methods journal.
- 5) Research documentation will be retained for at least three years.

4. Instruments for Research with Human Subject

Indicate instruments to be used.

(A) Submit copies electronically, if possible.

(B) Submit copy of copyrighted questionnaire for CPHS review. Copy kept on file by CPHS.

(C) Examples of instruments are as follows: (1) Educational Tests, (2) Questionnaires/Surveys, (3) Psychological Tests, (4) Educational Materials, i.e., curriculum, books, etc., (5) Interview or Phone Script, or (6) human subjects recruitment advertisements.

Participants will be asked the following open ended questions through an interview:

Teachers:

In this school, what do you perceive are your own attitudes that contribute to substantive student academic gains?

In this school, what do you perceive are your own belief systems that contribute to substantive student academic gains?

In this school, what do you perceive are your own behaviors that contribute to substantive student academic gains?

Students:

In this school, what do you think are the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of your best teachers that helped you learn the best?

5. Human Subject Source and Selection Criteria

Describe the procedures for the recruitment of the participants. Indicate when human subject involvement is expected to begin and end in this project. Example information to include:

- (A) Characteristics of subject population, such as anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health.
- (B) Where and how participants are drawn for subject selection criteria. Coercion or undue influence needs to be considered and eliminated.
- (C) How ensuring equitable subject selection.
- (D) If applicable, criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion and provide rationale.
- (E) Children are classified as a vulnerable population. See Subpart D, §46.401, of federal guidelines for additional safeguards aimed to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects.

As soon as CPHS approval is acquired, three to ten participants will be selected for the qualitative portion of this study. They will be teachers chosen based upon their previous student data on their STAAR results showing that they were able to make substantive academic gains with their students in a low income, public charter school. The teachers' ages, sex, ethnic backgrounds and state of health will vary since teachers are selected based upon their previous data. Students that have had those same teachers will be interviewed.

6. Informed Consent

For more details, see "Federal & University Guidelines" document, "Informed Consent" section.

- (A) Describe procedure for obtaining informed consent.
- (B) Use language that is appropriate for age or understandability of subjects.
- (C) Attach informed consent page.
- (D) If applicable, attach the following documents for review: (1) Parental permission form for participation of minors (under 18 years of age). (2) Assent form for children between ages 7 and 17: (2a) ages 12-17 must sign assent form; (2b) ages 7-11 must have witness sign attesting to child's positive assent.
- (E) **Request CPHS waiver for documentation of informed consent, if appropriate.** Justification is required. See "Federal & University Guidelines."

Please see attached informed consents.

7. Confidentiality

Describe how data will be safeguarded: (a) how confidentiality maintained; use of personal identifiers or coded data; (b) how data collected and recorded; (c) how data stored during project; (d) who has access to data or participant's identifiers; (e) who is to receive data, if applicable; (f) what happens to data after research is completed.

Note that research documentation, including signed informed consent forms, are safeguarded for three years after completion of study for federal audit purposes. Faculty sponsors are responsible for safeguarding research documentation completed by students.

Confidentiality will be maintained in this study by using pseudonyms for the school, teachers, and students. Journals, data, interview notes and recordings, etc. will be stored electronically under a secure password that only the researcher can access, view, and utilize. Data will be stored for at least three years. After the completion of the study, all data will be destroyed.

8. Research Benefits

Describe any anticipated benefits to subjects as well as reasonably expected general results.

Anticipated benefits to subjects include participation in a reflection activity of their own practices that are effective with increasing student achievement. Teachers do not always make the time to reflect on what they do and how they do it. This study will promote reflection time for the specific purpose of improving teaching and student achievement.

9. Risks

Describe any foreseeable risks to the subjects, whether physical injury, psychological injury, loss of confidentiality, social harm, etc., involved in the conduct of the research. Explain precautions taken to minimize these risks. If there are any foreseeable risks, provide contact information of organization(s) for professional treatment.

Anticipate risks include loss of time by participating in this study. This study could also cause frustration if a teacher does not really know what they do and why. Many effective teaching strategies come naturally to educators such that they may not be able to verbalize what is working for them. The benefits should outweigh the possible risks for this study and the potential risks are minimal.

10. Other Sites or Agencies Involved in Research Project

Indicate specific site if not UHCL, e.g., school districts or school, clinics.

- (A) Obtain written approval from institution. Approval should be signed and on institution's letterhead. Other proof of documentation may be reviewed for acceptance by CPHS.
- (B) Institution should include the following information: (B1) institution's knowledge of study being conducted on its site; (B2) statement about what research study involves; (B3) outline specific procedures to be conducted at site; and (B4) identify type of instrument(s) used to collect data and duration needed to complete instruments; (B5) statement that identities of institution and participants will be kept confidential; (B6) institution's permission granting the use of its facilities or resources; and (B7) include copy of Informed Consent document(s) to be used in recruiting volunteers from the institution.
- (C) If at all possible, electronic copies of letter or other documentation are to be submitted with CPHS application.
- (D) If letters are not available at time of CPHS review, approval will be contingent upon their receipt.

Please see attached approval letter.

APPENDIX B

TEACHER PARTICIPANT LETTER

APPENDIX B
TEACHER PARTICIPANT LETTER

Dear Teachers,

I am in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the University of Houston-Clear Lake and am conducting research investigating teachers' attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that elicit substantive student academic achievement in charter schools. Your input through surveys, interviews, and observations will help in understanding some effective teacher practices that lead to student achievement.

Please respond to each inquiry to ensure the information is most useful. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. In addition, you will not benefit directly from your participation in this study at any time. This study includes a short survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, an interview that will last no more than 45 minutes, and possibly a few observations of you teaching. Your information will be treated anonymously and will be kept completely confidential.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this study! By proceeding with the interviews and surveys, your consent to take part in this study will be implied. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (409) 789-0534, or e-mail me at jgood7205@msn.com.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Goodman

The University of Houston-Clear Lake

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TEACHERS

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TEACHERS

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: A Case Study of Teacher Attitudes, Belief Systems, and Behaviors that Elicit Substantive Students Academic Achievement in a Charter School

Principal/Student Investigator(s): Jennifer Goodman, M.Ed.

Faculty Sponsor: Amy Orange, Ph.D. and Gary Schumacher, Ph.D.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to identifying the teacher attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors that elicit substantive student academic achievement specifically in a public charter school with a majority low income student population.

PROCEDURES

- 1) Gain participants agreement to join this study.
- 2) Interview participants before or after classes/work day or during conference periods about what they do, think, or believe that elicits substantive student academic achievement. Interviews should take no longer than 45 minutes and information will be recorded in journal.
- 3) Observe participants for 30 minutes to three hours during class time teaching and record instructional practices seen.
- 4) Administer a Likert Scale survey measuring attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors.
- 4) Data will be compiled and results reported. Survey data will be entered into

SPSS. Interviews will be audio recorded as well as documented in a journal and transcribed. Observations will also be recorded in the methods journal.

5) Research documentation will be retained for at least three years.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately two to six hours including time observed.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand some of the teachers factors that contribute to increased student academic growth.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Principal Investigator for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Jennifer Goodman, M.Ed., at phone number 409-789-0534 or by email at jgood7205@msn.com. The Faculty Sponsor, Amy Orange, Ph.D., may be contacted by email at Orange@UHCL.edu.

SIGNATURES:

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed name: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

Date: _____

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title: Jennifer Goodman

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date:

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

A Case Study of Teacher Attitudes, Belief Systems, and Behaviors

that Elicit Substantive Student academic achievement in a Charter School

The purpose of this study is to focus upon improving student academic achievement in our public charter school with predominately low-income students. By proceeding with this interview, your consent to take part in this study will be implied, but please also sign my consent form.

1. Name:
2. Gender:
3. Age:
4. Ethnicity:
5. Years teaching experience:
6. Years teaching experience with this specific school:
7. Teaching assignments overall:
8. Teaching assignments at this specific school:
9. Is it important to you that each student grow academically in your class?
10. Think about things you think about that encourage increased student academic achievement in your classroom. What do you perceive are your own attitudes concerning:
 - Teaching and education in general -
 - Curriculum, instruction, assessment -
 - Data and interventions -
 - Stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administration -

- This school -

11. Think about things you believe that encourage increased student academic achievement in your classroom. What do you perceive are your own beliefs concerning:

- Teaching and education in general -
- Curriculum, instruction, assessment -
- Data and interventions -
- Stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administration -
- This school -

12. Think about things you do that encourage increased student academic achievement in your classroom. What do you perceive are your own behaviors concerning:

- Teaching and education in general -
- Curriculum, instruction, assessment -
- Data and interventions -
- Stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administration -
- This school -

13. Are there any other things that you think, believe, do, etc. that elicit substantive student academic achievement in your classroom?

14. What do you perceive are things that other successful teachers think, believe, do, etc. that elicit substantive student academic achievement in our charter school?

15. What do you perceive are things that other unsuccessful teachers think, believe, do, etc. that do not elicit substantive student academic achievement in our charter school?

APPENDIX E

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

APPENDIX E

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

You are asked to help me in the project described below. Your parents or guardian have given their okay, but you get to decide if you want to be in this study or not. You may stop or quit the study at any time by telling me, and it is okay. If you want to know more about the study, it is okay to ask questions.

Title of Study: A Case Study of Teacher Attitudes, Belief Systems, and Behaviors that Elicit Substantive Students Academic Gains in a Charter School

Principal Investigator:

Jennifer Goodman, Doctoral Student at University of Houston-Clear Lake

Faculty Sponsor:

Gary Schumacher, Ph.D.

schumacher@uhcl.edu

Dr. Amy Orange

orange@uhcl.edu

281-283-3512

ASSENT FORM

Purpose: Study charter school secondary student perceptions of teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that help students learn the most.

Procedures: You will be asked to meet individually with the principal investigator listed above in a nearby classroom or office and answer simple questions about what you view as the types of teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that have helped you learn the most in this school. It will take about 15 minutes for you to complete the interview.

I will do everything to make sure that you do not get hurt in any way. I will be the only person who knows what you say and do. If this information is shared with others, it will be combined with responses from all students interviewed and presented anonymously.

If you understand what you are being asked to do and you decide to help, you are asked to sign your name below.

 Printed Name and Signature of Adolescent

Date

 Researcher's Signature

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL

RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX F

PARENT CONSENT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX F

PARENT CONSENT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: A Case Study of Teacher Attitudes, Belief Systems, and Behaviors that Elicit Substantive Students Academic Gains in a Charter School

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Goodman, Doctoral Student
University of Houston-Clear Lake
409-750-9289 jgoodman@odyssey-academy.com

Faculty Sponsor: Amy Orange, Ph.D. and Gary Schumacher, Ph.D.
University of Houston-Clear Lake
schumacher@uhcl.edu and orange@uhcl.edu 281-283-3512

Your child is invited to participate in a research project. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose that your child not participate. If you choose for your child to participate, or if you withdraw your consent and stop your child's participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits normally available for you or your

child. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Jennifer Goodman at the phone number listed above.

The purpose of this research is to study charter school secondary student perceptions teacher attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that most helped the student learn. A description of the procedures is as follows: Your child will meet individually with the principal investigator listed above in an available classroom or office at your child's present campus and answer simple questions about what he/she thinks teachers do, think, or feel that helps them learn the best. It will take about 15 minutes for your child to complete the interview.

The benefits of this research include providing valuable insight for school administrators about what students believe make the best teachers.

There are no risks expected as a result of your child's participation.

Any information obtained from this study will remain confidential. Your child's responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project. The data collected will be used for educational and publication purposes and presented in summary form. For federal audit purposes, the documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the principal investigator or faculty sponsor for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, documentation may be destroyed.

SIGNATURES:

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow your child to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw consent for your child to participate in this study at any time by contacting Jennifer Goodman at the phone number provided. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Printed Name of Child

Printed Name and Signature of Parent Date

Signature of Investigator Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX G

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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RQ: What student perceptions exist about attitudes, belief systems, and behaviors of teachers whose students demonstrate substantial academic gains?

1. Name
2. Age
3. Grade
4. Ethnicity
5. Tell me about a teacher who has made a difference for you.
6. Tell me about a teacher who helped you learn something better.
7. What are their attitudes that helped you or other students learn better.
8. What are their beliefs that helped you or other students learn better.
9. What are their behaviors that helped you or other students learn better.
10. Would you like to talk about any other teacher's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors?

Say only if students do not discuss each of the teacher participants:

At our school, I have identified three teachers whose STAAR data has been exceptionally good. I am studying what students think these teachers did to help students learn.

Therefore, let's talk about questions 8-10 specifically concerning each of the teacher participants.