THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-EFFICACY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

by

Kwabena Boateng Mensah

May 2013

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Dedication

For Those Who Haven't Made It,

I dedicate this work to all of those that were underestimated, overlooked, or underserved. It is my sincere hope that you find solace in the notion that you are truly greater than your current circumstance. Stand up, be heard, and put your dreams and visions into action. This moment cannot be taken away from you. Seize it. It will guarantee a fruitful tomorrow.

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mommy. It brings me great pleasure to have completed this project so that you can see the results of your sacrifice. Me Do Wu.

Mommy, thank you for living long enough for me to gain wisdom from one of God's finest creations. As you relax in heaven and find time for an interesting read, take a look at what I've written and let me know what you think. I hope that you are proud. You told me that one day I would be great, and hopefully this is a step down the walkway of greatness that you proclaimed. I love you and miss you.

"No condition is permanent."

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Abstract

Our current school system is under much scrutiny as academic standards are steadily rising and student achievement is unable to keep pace with the rapid increases. At the core, economically disadvantaged students are achieving at lower levels than their counterparts and school leaders are left searching for answers. The purpose of this study was to determine if self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students has a positive effect on student achievement. Research has been compiled that examines factors that influence student achievement, but studies focused on the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students are limited. This mixed-methods study intended to provide information that will be useful for all stakeholders that contribute to the success of economically disadvantaged students. This study revealed a significant difference in the performance of high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students and low self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students on the 4th grade reading STAAR examination. High self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students consistently outperformed low self-efficacy counterparts. Additionally, responses from a focus group interview pointed to key areas that educators can address when developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students and adults. This information can be utilized to guide conversations with students, develop the skills of teachers and parents, and adjust the perceptions of economically disadvantaged students in our schools.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Upbringing can have a significant impact on social and academic development, as well as the construction of views and ideals. Where we are raised can contribute greatly to our formative years and profoundly impact on our educational experience (Wong, 1998). Being raised in inner city areas presents opportunities and challenges that pale in comparison to the experience of one raised in the suburbs. Outside of the varying pace of lifestyle, one of the glaring differences between both areas is the difference in socioeconomic status of many families in the respective communities. Where a significant amount of children in the inner city will be raised in impoverished conditions, many of the suburban natives will have more financially secure upbringings. The difference in experience does not separate the two in a measure of good and bad; it just shapes the inhabitants differently. However, many would naturally consider the inner city experience to be bad and the suburban experience to be good. Equally, if not more important, is the quality of educational experiences in school. The perceptions of the ability of the students to perform in the suburban and inner city schools vary. Moreover, the expectation of the respective groups to perform at the same academic level is in question.

Like many others, my upbringing has had an abundant impact on the course that I have charted and the journey that I will take. I was raised in the Bronx, New York to Ghanaian immigrants looking for new life in the land of opportunity. The sole purpose of their emigration was to create better opportunities for themselves, which would, in turn, open doors for their children. There are many experiences within the confines of our

home in the North Bronx that I will forever cherish, but the moment that changed my life took place one cold winter day in the South Bronx.

As my mother told me, it all started one snowy winter day when she took me shopping to Fordham Road to pick up gifts for family and friends. At the time I was two years old and she was not a driver, so she navigated the snow-filled streets pushing me in a stroller. As she was walking, she was approached by an older gentleman who abruptly stopped her in her tracks. The gentleman leaned over, lifted up the stroller cover, and examined me with his eyes. He put his hand on my cheek and told her, “This young boy will grow up to be a great man one day”. When I was eight she recounted the story in detail.

When I heard this story it changed my life. I believed that I had a mission to fulfill because it was said, rather proclaimed, that I would. I knew that every step I took in the course of my life was an important one, and I never took opportunities for granted. It was an eye-opening moment and led me down the course of success in academic and athletic endeavors. My destiny was clear; I was going to be great, and my self-confidence sky-rocketed. I was grossly self-efficacious and determined to excel in all areas. I was an A student through high school, won a state and city championship in basketball and track, and was awarded a full scholarship to attend Rice University in Houston, Texas. All of these achievements did not come easily, but I always believed that I was capable of accomplishing them. There were many obstacles in my path that could have stunted my growth, but I was fortunate enough to bypass them. Negative influences from close peers, invitations to be initiated in gangs, and exposure to drugs were all challenges I faced as a teen. And as I look back, there was a clear divide when I was able to overcome this

whereas many of my peers succumbed to the pressure. This created a separation between us in regards to our future destination. One major difference is what I believed I was worth and how I was unwilling to compromise my value. My peers did not have the same outlook on their current situation or beliefs about their potential. There was a sense of defeat and complacency in their perspective. The mindset was that they did not have the power to impact their present nor their future. Many of them were brilliant and had potential for greatness, but were crippled by not truly believing in their abilities. I strongly believe that their prospects would have been immensely brighter if they were self-efficacious.

During the 2010-2011 school year, I openly shared my mother's story with my staff during a faculty meeting. While sharing the story, it reminded me of how much of a positive impact her words had on me. I emphasized that she was able to encourage me to believe that I was capable of achieving anything, because it was my destiny. As I told the story, I began to realize that there was the looming possibility that this story never took place. After over 20 plus years of living by those words, it hit me; she could have told me this account just to motivate me. This made me think about self-efficacy as a catalyst for success, especially in the minds of our youth. My mother has passed away, so I will never know the truth about that wintry day, but the belief I have in myself based on that story has had a lasting impact.

There could be a profound impact on student achievement if all economically disadvantaged students believed that they were highly skilled and could successfully complete any task and achieve their goals. It is my belief that economically disadvantaged students would be extremely successful if they cherished the work that

they undertook and were deeply immersed in the content. This would be eye-opening and could greatly impact their academic endeavors and the approach of school leaders in their interactions with them. Maybe they would not take opportunities for granted. It is possible that their self-confidence and self-esteem would sky-rocket. Many of these elements are attributes of a grossly self-efficacious student, and one that seems determined to excel in all areas. High achievement does not come easily, but if there is a belief in the ability to consistently succeed, there is a high likelihood of accomplishing those goals (Bandura, 1994). For high poverty students, there are many obstacles strewn about their paths that can derail their progress, but some are fortunate enough to bypass them. Negative influences from close peers, invitations to be initiated into gangs, and exposure to drugs are all challenges they potentially face. And as we examine their experiences, it is a remarkable feat for them to be able to overcome these temptations when so many of their peers succumb to the pressure. A targeted study on the connection between self-efficacy, student achievement, and this underrepresented group is greatly needed.

My personal accounts, as well as professional experience, are the driving force in my interest in studying self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. The factors that impact economically disadvantaged students in their relationships with others and their performance in school is of interest to school leaders in low socioeconomic areas. In this study, I examine the relationship of self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and their academic achievement. All of my experience as an educational leader has been in predominately low socioeconomic schools with varied levels of success. I have had working experiences in low performing campuses with “underperforming”

labels, as well as high performing schools with “Exemplary” and “Recognized” achievement status. Both sets of campuses have had similar demographics and student body composition but contrast in terms of overall student achievement. My interest budded in this topic through daily conversations with students about their beliefs and feelings about school and their potential for success. Countless hours were spent trying to figure out why some students were more successful than others, even though many of their contributing external factors were so similar. Far too often we have encountered students in classrooms with highly effective teachers and comparable economic status but glaring disparities in achievement with their counterparts. The state and classroom assessment data showed the achievement gaps, but there was not any clear indication as to how they could be remedied with individualized support. As administrators, we rely heavily on raw quantitative data to analyze student achievement, but the data were not crystalizing the crux of the issue. In order to delve deeper into the issue, it was necessary to collect qualitative data from students about their perspectives on schooling and resoundingly there was a pervasive theme. I have found through my own anecdotal notes, students that truly believed in themselves had a higher propensity to be successful in the classroom than those that did not. Initially, this idea seemed rather elementary, but after further thinking, it was clear that there was a wealth of study to be conducted to gain further information that would contribute to the success of many other economically disadvantaged students.

Statement of the Problem

Growing up economically disadvantaged can present many challenges for children in our schools. In many cases, these students are exposed to violence, abuse,

drugs, and hunger before they enroll into a school. The adverse effects of these obstacles can have lasting effects on the psyche of children and translate to limited success in school. Many school districts have seen a disparity in the achievement of economically disadvantaged students and their counterparts. The disparity pits economically disadvantaged students below their counterparts in state standardized testing and success in school. Findings have shown that students who live in high-poverty neighborhoods are 10 times more at risk of dropping out of school than students of high-income families (Cataldi, Laird & Kewal Ramani, 2009). District personnel, community members, and outsiders have varying opinions as to why this achievement gap exists. Some attribute the gaps to the differences in the amount of resources that economically disadvantaged students have access to. Others cite what they consider to be limited access to appropriate books and other forms of literature at an early age (Allington, 2006). Within the achievement gap, there are examples of high levels of student achievement for economically disadvantaged students. These examples leave school leaders to examine the factors contributing to students with "deficiencies" to be able to outperform "better" prepared students. If we are able to identify the factors that contribute to these students' success, school leaders and parents will be able to better prepare students for success in school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students has a positive effect on student achievement. Research has been compiled that examines factors that influence student achievement, but studies focused on the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students are limited. This

investigation was intended to provide information that will be useful for all stakeholders that contribute to the success of economically disadvantaged students. This information can be utilized to guide conversations with students, develop the skills of teachers and parents, and adjust the perceptions of economically disadvantaged students in our schools.

Research Questions

This research study examined the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and the resulting impact on student achievement. The questions that guided the inquiry and focused the study are listed as follows:

1. Does self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students have a positive impact on student achievement in 4th grade STAAR?
2. How do school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
3. What are the characteristics of school personnel that impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Background and Context

There has been a dire need to create structures and support systems that are geared towards ensuring that schools would be equipped to meet the academic needs of all student groups. Although there was legislation and federal doctrine supporting the enforcement of the mission, achievement gaps still persist (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). Federal funding through legislative mandates have been effective in providing resources for those that need it most, the economically disadvantaged. As schools with high proportions of economically disadvantaged students

receive funding based on their student populations, they are able to provide additional academic support. Tutoring programs, supplemental instructional resources, and highly qualified instructional personnel are some of the creative ways that school leaders have utilized federal funding. Without the additional funding many school districts that service impoverished communities would face perilous academic conditions.

In 2001 the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted in support of educational improvements for all children. The act followed the blueprint of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) act of 1965 while infusing elevated achievement standards and heightened accountability measures. Under the NCLB Act of 2001, students were tested more rigorously at the state level in order to meet the goals of competing in a high-tech global society. Schools that did not meet the standard faced harsh federal mandates and completion of stringent corrective plans (Wong, 2004).

NCLB is an expansive act, addressing many areas of academic improvement, but two central areas potentially have a large impact on student achievement for economically disadvantaged students. The emphasis on supplemental educational services to aid economically disadvantaged families and increased accountability for states are components that could influence the success of students. Students that attend a Title I campus that is designated as in need of improvement for more than one year can enroll in supplemental educational programs that provide additional educational support. The support is fashioned in afterschool or weekend tutorials, in core content areas such as Language Arts and math, or for areas of deficiency. Families have choice of instructional provider, within a set of parameters, as districts are required to provide a list of state-approved supplemental providers.

The increased level of state and federal accountability requires the district and campus level student achievement standards to be examined by all student groups. The heightened level of accountability has transformed the quality of education for all students. Rigorous instruction for all students became more commonplace as achievement standards increased. Teachers were now forced to differentiate and challenge all students, as they would all be accountable in standardized testing measures.

The new accountability also impacted the recruiting and hiring of teachers and school leaders. As standards evolved, the quality of teachers and school leaders became increasingly crucial to the success of students. NCLB called for highly qualified teachers in all classrooms and strictly enforced the induction of new teachers to campuses. With higher standards for the hiring of teachers and school leaders, the NCLB Act promoted quality over quantity in hiring, attempting to filter marginal new-hires. Albeit, there is much controversy surrounding the NCLB Act due to political agendas and the perception of its impact on marginalized groups; however, NCLB did succeed in creating structures that would monitor and support the success of all students. The fidelity of the standards and implementation are still debatable.

On the local level, Title I campuses have been working arduously to close achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged students and their counterparts. In particular, a Title I campus in North Houston has proven capable of closing this gap (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This elementary campus, with the highest population of economically disadvantaged students in the district at 91%, performed at the "Recognized" level in TAKS 2010. Students at this campus tallied a passing rate of 96% in Math, 93% in Reading, 92% in Writing, and 91% in Science. In comparison to their

district data, this campus outperformed the district averages. The district netted averages of 76% in Math, 84% in Reading, 90% in Writing, and 75% in Science (Texas Education Agency, 2011). These scores indicate that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can have large-scale academic success on state administered standardized tests. The academic prowess of this elementary campus, in regard to economically disadvantaged student achievement, suggests that there is opportunity for replication at campuses with similar demographics that have not yet achieved their academic goals.

Significance of the Study

Research on the impact of self-efficacy on the student achievement of economically disadvantaged students was needed to determine if it could be a contributing factor to their success. If the study reveals that there is a correlation between self-efficacy and student achievement for economically disadvantaged students, there will be new avenues for school leaders to address instruction and socialization for this subgroup.

The No Child Left Behind Act 2001 calls for heightened accountability in student achievement measures for all students. No Child Left Behind requires that student achievement be assessed in terms of subgroups as opposed to a holistic assessment. Subgroups are divided by ethnicity, English proficiency, disability, and economically disadvantaged representation. The federal government has identified that there is a need to address the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students through the NCLB act. Increased accountability has forced school leaders to pay closer attention to student achievement for all students. The focus on all students requires that school officials have a greater understanding of how to increase student achievement for all sub

groups. In particular, economically disadvantaged students have been under the microscope as they comprise a substantial portion of the Title I school population.

Definitions

Self-Efficacy: People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes.

Economically Disadvantaged: Students that receive lunch at free or reduced prices at school. These students are generally raised in low-income neighborhoods.

NCLB: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110) is a United States federal law (Act of Congress) that reauthorized a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, districts, and schools.

Title I: The first section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act refers to programs aimed at America's most disadvantaged students. This section details processes and structures that are implemented to support the academic growth by providing resources, funding, and services to those in most need.

TAKS: The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is a standardized test used to assess comprehensive skills in Math, Reading, Writing, Science, and Social Studies.

STAAR: The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness is the standardized test used to assess the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum standards. STAAR replaced TAKS in 2012.

Exemplary: Academic achievement on the TAKS test at 90% or above in all content areas for all subgroups.

Recognized: Academic achievement on the TAKS test at 80% or above in all content areas for all subgroups.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that there are factors within this study that are out of the control of the researcher that may have minimal impact on the findings. The assumptions in this study were that (a) all subjects that completed the survey/interview did so in truth and submitted accurate representations of their thought; (b) there were no interruptions that impacted their ability to answer questions accurately; and (c) other factors not addressed could contribute to these findings. This study is limited in that a sample of economically disadvantaged 4th grade students and focus group participants are used to generalize findings for a larger population. Lastly, the study is also limited in that teachers utilized a self-efficacy identification tool to determine levels of student self-efficacy.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

The authorization of No Child Left Behind in 2001 impelled school officials to pay close attention to accountability measures for all students and increase achievement across the board. The newfound era of accountability ushered in an increased emphasis on understanding interventions and best practices to meet the academic and social needs of all students. Nestled in the fray, school officials scrambled to utilize federal funding to reduce class sizes, purchase intervention resources, and extend school hours to address campus academic needs. According to Weinstien, Stiefel, Schwartz, and Chalico (2009), the increased Title I funding has rarely made a significant impact on student achievement. Their findings, coupled with our push for increased student achievement, forced educators to deeply explore the contributing factors to the student achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

The purpose of this section is to review and critically examine the relevant studies surrounding self-efficacy and its impact on student achievement for economically disadvantaged students. The research surrounding themes related to the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students serve as the foundation of the study. This literature review will focus on the following subsets: legislation & economically disadvantaged students, self-efficacy, economically disadvantaged students, and student achievement & self-efficacy. Examination of these subsets provides insight into the development of the area of study.

Legislation and Economically Disadvantaged Students

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was enacted in order to meet the academic needs of severely marginalized groups. This title focuses on leveling the playing field for groups that historically have been underserved. The statement of purpose, SEC. 1001, reads as follows: "The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Children are designated as economically disadvantaged based on their eligibility for free or reduced lunch programs. Using the federal poverty guidelines, families that have incomes within a particular threshold qualify based on the amount of people living in the household. For example, a family of three would have to make 19,090 or less to qualify as economically disadvantaged (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2013). Texas has seen a considerable increase in the amount of economically disadvantaged students within their school system. In the ten year span from 1997 to 2007, Texas added more than 750,000 economically disadvantaged students to their enrollment (Save Texas Schools, 2013). In the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 3 million students were identified as economically disadvantaged, a total of 60% of the entire student population (Texas Education Agency, 2013).

In order to ensure that all children receive a high quality education, certain requirements were established. High-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional resources must be

aligned with rigorous academic standards in order to measure student progress in academic achievement. Student achievement expectations are set at the state level, and all stakeholders have access to achievement progress. NCLB, Section I calls for school leaders to meet the educational needs of low achieving students in high poverty schools, limited English proficient students, disabled students, migrant students, delinquent children, and young children with reading deficiencies. A core responsibility of this act is to guarantee that schools of the highest poverty and lowest academic performance are receiving sufficient funding to support increased academic growth.

With an academic gap looming, Section II of NCLB charges schools to close the academic gap between high and low performing students with a focus on disparities between minority and nonminority students, as well as economically disadvantaged and affluent students. Teacher effectiveness and preparation are also identified as an area of opportunity. Substantial opportunities for staff development are compulsory to significantly improve the instructional skills of teachers. The bolstering of instruction is deemed to have a positive impact on the student achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Improved instruction is linked to the design of rigorous state assessments that measure student knowledge and application of critical and advanced thinking. In 2011, the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Collaboration Board, and Texas educators developed a new assessment system (STAAR) focused on increasing postsecondary readiness of graduating high school students and ensuring that Texas students are competitive nationally and internationally (Texas Education Agency, 2012). This transition has required schools to prepare for an increasingly rigorous state

assessment, STAAR, as a means to develop higher level thinking and application of skills.

Title I encourages the inclusion of outside support entities in the advancement of economically disadvantaged students as well (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). It calls for coordination of services with community partners that provide services to families and youth to meet social and academic needs. There is also an increased emphasis on parental involvement. Schools are required to provide meaningful opportunities for parents to engage in the academic process of their children. This stipulation mandates that funding is allocated to support increased parental involvement and training that may help them assist the academic development of their child. In the end, the efforts of the NCLB hold school, local educational agencies, and states accountable for making strides and producing adequate academic results for all students.

Self-efficacy

Albert Bandura, psychologist, is world renowned for his work in the areas social cognitive theory and self-efficacy. According to Albert Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p.2). In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura (1994) described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel (p.73). This belief in one's abilities can be a driving factor in how he or she prepares himself or herself to engage in an activity or task. Bandura and other leading psychologists support the belief that people with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to strongly believe the following:

- Challenging problems as tasks to be mastered.

- A deeper interest in the activities in which they participate must be developed.
- They should be committed to their interests and activities.
- Setbacks and disappointments are not dead-ends.

Generally, people with a weak sense of self-efficacy believe the following:

- They should avoid challenging tasks.
- Difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities.
- Personal failings and negative outcomes are an area of focus.
- Quickly lose confidence in personal abilities (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura believes self-efficacy is developed in early childhood as children deal with a wide variety of experiences, tasks, and situations. However, Bandura (1992) states the growth of self-efficacy does not end during youth, but continues to evolve throughout life as people acquire new skills, experiences, and understandings (p.73). The development of self-efficacy, as it pertains to economically disadvantaged students, is specifically different in that children who are raised in lower socioeconomic backgrounds are presented with many environmental challenges that contribute to the creation of their body of experiences. The economic and social structure of families stricken by poverty has a large-scale impact on the social development of children (Miranda, 1991). Often times, these children are given responsibilities to act as providers for younger siblings, play “motherly” or “fatherly” roles within the household, or show resiliency as they support the family in times of struggle. Being placed into roles that are generally reserved for adults is challenging, and could potentially contribute to changes in sense of self-worth and capacity to accomplish tasks. Their ability to withstand these trials and tribulations may help construct a belief about what they are able to accomplish outside of

their home. This could translate into an impact, at some level, in student achievement for this group of students. This outlook would be the opposite of what many would believe a high poverty lifestyle would create. Conversely, many naysayers would attest that children of lower socioeconomic status would have lower self-efficacy and believe that they were incapable of accomplishing more because of the limited resources and models of success surrounding them.

Self-efficacy can be categorized into four major sources. Mastery experiences, social persuasion, social modeling, and psychological responses comprise the major areas that Bandura identifies as sources for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Examining these four sources of self-efficacy is critical in determining the factors that create an environment in which the self-efficacy of children will flourish.

Engaging in mastery experiences has been identified as a method to develop and enhance self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) states that "The most effective way of developing a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences" (p.74). This notion centers on the belief that as an individual has an opportunity to be successful in a task, his or her self-efficacy will increase. For example, take a student that has been introduced to the alphabet at the age of two. Between the age of two and three, this student has mastered the alphabet and is able to recognize all letters. At the age of four when the student is inducted into formal education and is expected to learn the alphabet, this student is likely to have a heightened sense of self-efficacy because he has already had experience mastering this particular objective. Many students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are in situations where they have many opportunities to master skills to the point of mastery outside of the school environment. Learning to cook in order to provide food for

siblings while a parent is working a double shift, tending to the needs of a younger sibling, or feeding or changing diapers while parents are unable to meet those needs are some examples of experiences that some youth may have on a consistent basis. While these are centrally survival skills, mastery in these skills may have a positive effect on the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994).

Social modeling is also a contributing factor in the development of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1994), “Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities master comparable activities to succeed” (p.79). If children have surrounding examples of successful peers or family members, there is a likelihood that they will feel that they could replicate those actions. Providing children with the opportunity to share experiences with successful peers in school and home settings cultivates the self-efficacy and the lack thereof may have potential detrimental effects. Modeling is an important aspect of development and it is pervasive in many industries. It is used as a measure of a high standard, one that is worthy of replication. When the standard that is given is through social modeling, there is a high chance of positive results through replication. However, modeling a low standard may present adverse effects for those individuals that are trying to develop a better sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994).

Another aspect of self-efficacy development is through social persuasion. Social persuasion is defined as others persuading a person to believe that he or she has the capabilities to achieve at a high level (Bandura, 1994). Positive or encouraging statements that are internalized are used to support student progress. In times where an individual would consider self-doubt or uncertainty, these comments can have a positive

effect in encouraging the individual to continue without fearing failure. This also helps the individual construct a positive self-image, which contributes to a heightened self-efficacy. When children are engaging with teachers, peers, and family members that support their activities and give encouraging feedback, there is a likelihood that this will result in positive academic achievement (Bandura, 1994). Children search for opportunities to be praised or meet the expectations of those adults that they love and trust. Some models of instruction have components that encourage providing praise to children to develop their sense of self-efficacy. PEAK learning systems have a focus on ensuring that students receive continuous praise to build their self-esteem and confidence in the classroom. The core beliefs that are the foundation of PEAK learning are fun and enjoyment, freedom and independence, safety, success, valued purpose, and love and belonging (Rogers, 2012). These principles drive the relationship and culture building of classrooms. Spence Rogers, founder of Teaching for Excellence learning systems, spends much of his time during teacher development sessions focusing on the importance of building the self-confidence of children so that they may have the confidence to excel on their own. This belief closely connects to Bandura's assertion of the importance of social persuasion. Conversely, Carol Dweck (2006) has demonstrated that praising children for their intelligence could possibly backfire. It is Dweck's belief that when students connect their sense of self-worth to the idea that they are smart it can result in laziness (Glenn, 2010). She asserts that it could lead to students relying solely on their "smarts" and not putting forth the appropriate effort required to successful complete a task. Dweck also finds that these students do not invest time into improving their work or withdraw from engaging in challenging tasks in an effort to avoid failure (Glenn, 2010).

The manner in which we psychologically and emotionally respond to external stimuli also plays a key role in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Psychological responses deal with the moods, emotional states, stress levels, and physical reactions that impact how an individual feels about his or her capacity and ability to succeed in particular situations. For example, Los Angeles Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant's belief about his ability to make key free throws at the end of a close basketball game can be affected by how he generally feels about his current skill level and his emotional feeling, nervousness or calmness, in similar situations. Bandura (1994) also notes, "it is not the sheer intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted" (p.80). He affirms that those who learn how to minimize stress and elevate mood when facing adversity or partaking in challenging tasks will be better equipped to increase their sense of self-efficacy. Elite athletes are constantly put in situations where they are asked to perform in high stakes environments, and many times they are able to perform at a high level. A contributing factor to their success is their preparedness coupled with their beliefs about their ability to perform at a high level while under duress.

In Carol Dweck's book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, she introduces the ideas of "fixed" and "growth" mindsets. Dweck conducted extensive studies on children and posited that fixed mindsets were present in individuals that believed their intelligence or abilities were innate traits. Individuals with a growth mindset believed that their intelligence or abilities were tied to the intensity of their effort (Dweck, 2006). Through her research she found that children with the growth mindset were better equipped to handle setbacks in their life than those with a fixed mindset. Individuals with

a growth mindset are inclined to view setbacks as obstacles that they can overcome through persistence and hard work, versus individuals with a fixed mindset that believe their shortcomings are tied to their unchangeable personal characteristics (Dweck, 2006). Dweck characterizes how individuals respond to external stimuli as follows:

Fixed Mindset

- Avoids challenges
- Gives up easily
- See effort as fruitless or worse
- Ignore useful negative feedback
- Feel threatened by the success of others
- May plateau earlier and achieve less of their full potential

Growth Mindset

- Embraces challenges
- Persist in the face of challenges
- See effort as the path of mastery
- Learn from criticism
- Find lessons and inspiration from the success of others
- They reach ever-higher levels of achievement (Krakovsky, 2007)

Essentially, Dweck's work cites the power of individuals to impact their own intellectual prowess through the understanding of the root of intellectual and performance growth.

Bandura (1977, 1997) further defines the constructs of self-efficacy by assessing efficacy through level, generality, and strength. The level of self-efficacy refers to its dependence on the difficulty of a particular task, such as spelling words of increasing

difficulty; generality refers to the transferability of self-efficacy beliefs across activities, such as from algebra to statistics; strength of perceived efficacy is measured by the amount of one's certainty about performing a given task (Zimmerman, 2000). Essentially, Bandura utilized these categories to measure the performance capabilities rather than the personal qualities of individuals. He asserted that respondents would judge their capabilities in tasks like solving mathematical problems based on how well they believed they could complete the task, as opposed to how they felt about themselves. Ultimately, he proposed that self-efficacy would be based on the ability to perform in a specific domain. For example, efficacy beliefs about performance on a physics exam could differ greatly from that of an oral presentation of the impacts of the Emancipation Proclamation. While both scenarios require rigorous thought processes, they address very different and specific skill sets. Additionally, perceptions of efficacy depend on a mastery criterion of performance rather than normative or other criteria (Zimmerman, 2000). In this case, a student would rate his or her ability to complete a task successfully not based on what other students could do on the same task but on what they believe the level of mastery on that task is. For example, a self-efficacious student would not look to her peers to check if her performance was comparable, but would measure her success by an internal pre-determined mastery level.

Understanding the sources that contribute to increased self-efficacy, we can examine how these components impact the success of students of low socioeconomic background. Knowing that students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves and put forth maximum effort, the analysis of these connections to economically disadvantaged students is critical. In a society where education is grossly

underfunded, teachers are being cut, budgets are being slashed, and student achievement standards are on the rise, it is incumbent of school leaders in low socioeconomic areas to find ways to meet the needs of their students. In general, all students are hurt by the current economic shortfalls; but in particular, economically disadvantaged students and school suffer the most.

Student Achievement and Self-efficacy

Increased student achievement is the primary function of our school system. Teachers continually implement creative strategies in efforts to increase student achievement and prepare students for the next level of their education. Researchers have spent countless hours studying learning strategies and their effect on acquisition of information. Some researchers have examined the connections between self-efficacy and student learning, and the findings are compelling. Much of the research points to positive correlations between self-efficacy and student achievement in varying content areas. In one study, Shell, Murphy, and Bruning (1989) measured self-efficacy in terms of perceived capability to perform various reading and writing activities. It was found that efficacy beliefs and perceived efficacy beliefs predicted levels of reading achievement. Perceived efficacy was a strong predictor for high writing achievement. In terms of self-efficacy in its relation to motivation for academic success, these data support the notion that self-efficacy plays a large role. Understanding the role of self-efficacy in relation to student achievement could be extremely beneficial to classroom approaches for teachers.

In an attempt to explore the impact of self-efficacy in an isolated academic setting, Pajares and Miller (1994) used path analysis procedures to examine the roles of

self-efficacy in mathematical problem solving of college students. They resolved that math self-efficacy was a stronger indicator of problem solving than was math self-concept or prior experiences with math. Their resolution leads to the understanding that the belief in the ability to complete a task successfully may trump alternate factors such as prior experience, gender, or interest in the subject. Conventional wisdom would lead educators to infer that previous experiences and exposure to content would be a higher indicator of success, but their findings place these experiences as a secondary factor. This challenges, not neglects, the importance of establishing prior knowledge in order to increase the probability of success in problem solving.

Many educators have struggled with finding ways to motivate students and have seen connections between lack of motivation and decreased student achievement. Extrinsic means of motivation through rewards and prizes are commonplace in today's classroom. With the pressure to increase student achievement, many teachers have resorted to purchasing items that would entice their students to comply with behavioral expectations or achieve higher levels of success. However, Bandura's research shows that much of their efforts may be in vain. His research showcased the importance of self-efficacy, which is intrinsic in nature, and its impact on student achievement. Bandura (1997) stated that "self-efficacious students work harder, participate more readily, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter difficulties than those who doubt their capabilities". Bandura and Schunk (1981) found that mathematical self-efficacy beliefs were a predictor of engaging in more challenging tasks. Their study revealed that the students with higher self-efficacy engaged in more challenging activities like subtraction. This would imply that self-efficacy, in fact, has a direct

impact on the selection of academic activities, as well as the motivation to engage in an activity. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (1997) also cite self-efficacy as highly correlated with academic achievement. These connections between self-efficacy and the propensity to increase the chances of successful academic interactions cement the positive correlation with student achievement.

Teacher behaviors are crucial to the development and cultivation of self-efficacy. With home life experiences being a factor that schools have limited impact on, school leaders have to address instructional and social climate strategies that impact the development of self-efficacy. Research has shown that teaching strategies can have a positive impact on self-efficacy. Fencl and Scheel (2005) completed a study were they described a required, non-major physics course where the effects of different teaching methods on the classroom climate and self-efficacy were measured. The students' responses indicated that a question and answer format, inquiry-based lab activities, and conceptual problems had a significant effect on creating a positive climate in the classroom. They also found that collaborative learning and the use of electronic applications showed a positive correlation with increased self-efficacy in their student sample. Their study revealed that the instructional methods that showed a positive effect shared the common feature of engaging students in a comfortable or creative manner. Furthermore, pedagogies such as collaborative learning and inquiry-based activities have also been shown to have a strong correlation with how well students learn physics (Fencl & Scheel, 2005, p.20).

Schunk and Pajares (2002) completed studies that also found relevant teaching practices that have had an impact on self-efficacy. They state that teachers should

establish specific, short-term goals that will challenge the students, while also being viewed as attainable. An example of this process is the use of goal setting meetings with students to track their reading level progress. Teachers would meet with the student to discuss their current reading level and display it on a chart. In their discussion, the teacher would guide the student and establish a short-term goal that is visible on the tracking chart and challenge the student to meet the expectations of the next level. It is vital that the teacher establish a goal that is attainable by the student to ensure that there is a high likelihood of success, because failure may be disruptive to the process. Schunk and Pajares (2002) also believe that teachers should help students lay out a specific learning strategy and have them verbalize their plan. As students proceed through the task, ask students to note their progress and verbalize the next steps. In this scenario, the teacher facilitates the discussion centered on a learning strategy that would help the student achieve a particular goal. As discussion develops and the task progresses, the student is required to verbalize his or her progression in the activity. This reinforces his or her understanding of how to successfully complete the activity and steers him or her in the right direction. Johnson (2002) believes that the underachievement of economically disadvantaged students is a responsibility of the students and their parents, but as educators we are not absolved from proactive measures. He argues that "the primary problem lies not in the way economically disadvantaged students and students of color view education but in the way they are taught" (Johnson, p.6). If we find his beliefs to be true, it is the responsibility of educators to rethink the instructional and social approaches that are utilized to address the academic needs of economically disadvantaged students. Potentially, this may have an impact on self-efficacy.

In regards to struggling students, Margolis and McCabe (2002) present different teaching methods to address self-efficacy. Working with struggling students requires teachers to make adjustments in planning, design, delivery of instruction, and relationship building. They strongly believe that they should use moderately difficult tasks, tap into student interests, and use peer models.

Assigning moderately difficult tasks is a scaffolding technique that will allow students to use their prior knowledge to have success in activities while moderately increasing the complexity. It is critical that the teacher does not provide a task that is too easy, as it will reflect that the student does not have the skill to do more challenging work, and the task would be boring and uninteresting. It is equally important that the assignment is not too difficult because it will reinforce low self-efficacy when they fail. This is grounded in the research of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and the zone of proximal development (p.32). The assignment must be at the right level of instruction to ensure success, which is directly correlated to the development of self-efficacy.

Margolis and McCabe (2002) feel that focusing on the interests of a struggling student is a key component (p.220). Creating assignments that are structured to include topics that are of interest to the individual student will allow the student to make connections to the instruction. The sense of connection and interest is important for the student to become actively engaged. Their level of engagement dictates the amount of success they will have in the experience. Teachers who are skilled at surveying students' interests and embedding it into lessons and activities are more likely to have success with struggling students.

Utilizing peer groups is another instructional strategy that has shown to be successful for increasing self-efficacy in struggling students (Margolis & McCabe, 2002). Peer models offer students with a model of success that they can emulate. Generally, students feel comfortable working with peers in collaborative settings to get information. The collaborative setting allows struggling students to receive valuable feedback from students that are able to communicate in a fashion that most teachers are unable to do. Close attention must be paid to how the groups are created in order to stay true to the focus on self-efficacy development. A group of extremely high achieving students with little patience for assisting struggling students is a scenario that should be avoided. Peer groups comprised solely of low achieving students without monitoring from an adult will also be ineffective.

Mitchell and DellaMattera (2010) conducted an extensive study on middle school students in Maine to determine the effects of teacher support on self-efficacy. They surmised that student perception of teacher support had a positive effect on the development of student self-efficacy. Additionally, their findings indicate that students with low self-efficacy did not receive the same level of support as those with high self-efficacy. Their results also point to decreases in perceived teacher support as they ascend to higher grades in middle school. These findings support the notion that as students get older, they receive less support.

Mitchell & DellaMattera (2010) state that “a factor that has been identified as crucial to the development of students’ sense of self-efficacy is the support they receive from their teachers” (p. 1). Teacher support can take the form of actions such as assistance with class assignments or displaying interest or concern for student welfare.

Wentzel (1997) found that teacher support along with additional support behaviors were significant factors in determining and bolstering student self-efficacy. It was also determined that teacher support increased the propensity to have positive attitudes about school and greater effort in completing tasks.

Disparity in the achievement of economically disadvantaged students and their more affluent counterparts is far too prevalent. The disparity pits economically disadvantaged students and campuses below affluent campuses in state standardized testing rankings. District personnel, community members, and outsiders have varying opinions as to why this achievement gap exists. Some attribute the gaps to the differences in the amount of resources that economically disadvantaged students have access to. Others cite what they consider to be limited access to appropriate books and other forms of literature at an early age (Allington, 2006).

Researchers at the Dana Center and UT Austin recognized 11 Texas public school districts in 1997 as standout examples of academic success for economically disadvantaged students (Sklra, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000). These districts each had more than 5,000 students and one third were high poverty campuses, with at least 50% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch (Sklra, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000). The following year, the majority of these high-poverty schools were achieving at a level beyond 60% of the schools in the state. These data further encapsulate the ability of economically disadvantaged students to excel academically. The high achievement of these Texas schools forces us to examine the critical attributes of their success. Their academic achievement signifies that there is hope that the achievement gap between high poverty students and affluent students can be closed.

Economically Disadvantaged Students

The topic of meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged students is one that resonates within many of the nation's school districts. Teachers and administrators have continually collaborated with colleagues in efforts to construct strategies that support the academic and social goals of their students. With the achievement gap still present, more work must be done to close it. Early studies and perceptions of the academic potential of economically disadvantaged students have been discouraging. James Coleman (1966) notoriously presented the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* report that sparked conversations about economically disadvantaged students and a school's ability to effectively educate them. Coleman strongly attested that the school had minimal influence on the success of students. Furthermore, he proposed that family background and status were the key determining factors in the success of students. His proposition intimated that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds had a higher probability of being successful in school. Cramer & Lorenz (1979) studied the differences between high poverty students and high socioeconomic students in reading achievement. Their results showed that high socioeconomic students consistently outperformed high poverty students in reading scores. Shakiba-Nejad and Yellin (1981) uncovered a positive correlation between student achievement and economic status. Their research pointed to connections that the higher the economic status of the student, the better equipped they are to achieve. Groves (2002) and Lindjord (2002) also found that economically disadvantaged students consistently underperformed in comparison to their affluent counterparts.

Some contend that school districts have unique challenges when dealing with high-poverty children. Anyon (1997) supports the idea that school districts are dealing with problems that span beyond their locus of control. Additionally, he believes that with limited control of exterior factors, the school district should not be held solely responsible for inadequate student achievement. Donahue (2000) has a similar position in regards to the lack of effectiveness of schools impact on economically disadvantaged students. He too finds that urban districts lack the conditions conducive to school reform. He states:

> They are plagued with shortages of qualified teachers, high turnover of both teachers and administrators. Schools with demoralized and self-defeating cultures, inadequate and often derelict building and equipment, inadequate resources, sometimes inept central administrators engaged in endless series of reforms du-jour, and dysfunctional political systems including vicious racial and union politics. (p. 75)

Moreover, Berliner and Biddle (2005) affirm that it is disproportionately more challenging to educate economically disadvantaged students because of many limiting factors. They state:

> Hungry or in cast-off and torn clothing, who suffer from untreated medical problems, who live in neighborhoods that are rife with crime and violence, or who come from homes that lack even the basic amenities-let alone books and other support for education. (p. 219)

This bleak outlook is problematic and can discourage educators that work with high poverty students. These beliefs support limited accountability on schools and school officials and place the responsibility back on the community. Operating under this set of

ideals creates an environment conducive to maintaining or increasing the achievement gap.

Ruby Payne has conducted extensive research on social and academic constructs within the high poverty student. Her studies are grounded in the belief that in order to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students there must be an established framework (Payne, 2003). Much of Ruby Payne's (2003) research details concepts within the framework that will assist schools in working with children of poverty. Her framework includes, but is not limited to, the following basic ideas:

- Each individual has resources that greatly influence achievement, money is only one
- Students of generational poverty come with their own set of rules
- They do not know the middle class set of rules
- Relationships are the key motivators for learning for students of generational poverty. (Payne, 2003)

These basic concepts are valuable for application as it pertains to developing self-efficacy in students of high poverty. If self-efficacy is considered as a resource, it could potentially serve as an indicator that greatly influences student achievement. This connection between self-efficacy as a resource and its implications on student achievement can be very useful to educators as the look for ways to maximize the potential of economically disadvantaged students. For the most part, economically disadvantaged students are viewed as possessing limited resources, but Payne's view is contradictory. In her assertion, the onus is on a positive outlook for economically disadvantaged students (Payne, 2003). This view allows school leaders to focus on

preparing teachers to work with high poverty students by using strategies that will enhance self-efficacy. Even more important than using strategies is an outlook on economically disadvantaged students that has them with tools that have a positive contribution to their academic achievement. As students have a possible increased likelihood of increased student achievement linked to higher self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy could also increase if they have a belief that their actions can have a positive impact on student achievement.

Payne (2003) also poses that relationship building is central to learning as a positive motivator for economically disadvantaged students (p.5). Her research supports the notion that relationship building with students is an instrumental cog in the process of learning. The belief is that if teachers can cultivate relationships of trust with their students they will increase their chances of improved student achievement. Teachers must find ways to understand the needs of their students and work diligently to improve their interpersonal skills so that they may connect with them. Some schools spend resources and reform efforts on instructional improvement strategies to see a spike in student achievement but neglect to focus on the relationship building of teachers and students. Many character education programs have been established in order to address some needs of students and to create safe learning environments. TRIBES, a character education program, has a focus on student interaction with peers and adults (Gibbs, 2001). The program establishes tribes in which students and adults share feelings about various topics and craft a set of rules that guide their interactions. These tribes are intended to serve the purpose molding relationships within the classroom and creating a forum for participants to have open discussions that strengthen the cohesiveness of the group. Our

campus has seen some success in the implementation of this model as teachers ensure the fidelity of the program. The success is showcased in increased campus morale for students and staff members. This can be attributed to the emphasis on relationship building which encourages sharing and cooperation. These principles contribute to a positive learning environment, one in which teachers relish in a workplace. As mentioned earlier, fidelity of the program is critical. Veering away from any of the critical attributes could result in failure of the program. When there are inconsistencies, students are confused and unaware of the true expectations. With this in mind, adequate training and consistent monitoring is essential to sustain an effective program. Future study will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of this program in increasing student achievement and the connection with self-efficacy.

Wong (2003) presented the idea that at-risk children had the ability to achieve because of positive temperaments, adequate skills used to improve their lives, effective parenting, the presence of supportive gatekeeper adults, and timely opportunities at critical junctures in their lives. Wong's ideas shed light on the hope that can be associated with economically disadvantaged students. With the aforementioned characteristics and circumstances present, there is hope that a student with that background will achieve. The problem exists when some of the key pieces are absent. As school leaders, we are limited in our impact on the effectiveness of parenting, which Wong has eluded is a key factor in student success. We can offer suggestions, workshops, and parental support, but we cannot force them to become effective. Where we could contribute is in the development of adequate skills and service as the adult gatekeeper. Both areas tie closely to development of self-efficacy in students. As students master skills and develop an

understanding of their capability, it is likely that their self-efficacy will increase. Our role as the supportive gatekeeper could also enhance self-efficacy by focusing on developing intrinsic ideas of what the student is capable of accomplishing and cultivating his or her beliefs. This is a major responsibility that may transform the way we interact with economically disadvantaged students in schools.

Summary

There is a wealth of research available that addresses the importance of self-efficacy and its impact on students as well as adults. Much of the body of work points to positive connections between self-efficacy and student improvement. The relationship between self-efficacy and economically disadvantaged students has not been addressed in many full-scale studies. What if there are characteristics, specific to economically disadvantaged students, which predispose them to become more resilient and self-efficacious than other sub groups? What would school leaders have to do differently in their buildings to meet the needs of this population? There is a need to closely examine this topic because the demographics of the nation are steadily changing. According to research compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011), Texas is estimated to have a 27% child poverty rate. The number of economically disadvantaged students across the nation is increasing, and the students that are coming into our classrooms are different than those of the previous generations. We are working with a more tech-savvy generation, with varied interests, many of which are not aligned with our own interests. This generation of students is accustomed to having access to all the information, people, or resources they need or want at their fingertips. Facing all of these cultural and societal

challenges, we must be able to tap into everything that can be advantageous in instructing children and increasing student achievement.

Ultimately, I anticipated that the research study would reveal that economically disadvantaged students are inclined to be more self-efficacious than expected. I strongly feel that much of their talents and abilities must be uncorked and highlighted but have been neglected for far too long. The perceptions of what these students are able to achieve, especially those of the teachers, have been a driving force in the limited success in many of the students in this sub group. Even the label "economically disadvantaged" projects a negative presentation of what these students are and what they offer to schools. If educators continue to view them from this lens, the cycle will be perpetuated. Amazingly, with all of the negative deterrents, many economically disadvantaged students have been successful and progressed despite the odds. Some of the world's most influential people have come from meager backgrounds of limited means and have risen to highest heights of respect and success. Oprah Winfrey, one of the nation's richest entertainers, was raised in poverty in rural Mississippi. Winfrey was able to overcome her financial circumstances to revolutionize television and become one of the most charitable philanthropists in the United States. Examples of this sort serve as a beacon of hope for many economically disadvantaged students as they navigate through schools and search for opportunities to showcase their skills. If Oprah Winfrey, a poverty-stricken African American woman from the backwoods of Mississippi, can become of the most influential women in the world, what is holding back the rest of our youth? I firmly believe that there is much that will be uncovered as I review data from the 4th grade reading STAAR and responses from an educator focus group. I look for the results to favorably depict the

importance of self-efficacy in this group. In all, the research should stem an open mind set in terms of how we understand the needs of our low poverty youth and cultivate an environment that supports their continued student achievement.

Chapter 3
Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and the student achievement of economically disadvantaged students as measured by the 4th grade reading STAAR. This section includes the methodology of the study and is separated into the following subcategories: description of the research design, research questions, setting, subjects, procedures, and instruments. The aforementioned subcategories serve to frame the methodology of the study and provide detailed insight into the key components of the research.

Description of the Research Design

This study was explored utilizing a mixed-methods design encompassing both a qualitative and quantitative approach to inquiry. The mixed-methods approach was selected in part because of the ability to provide a broader range and perspective of the data. Mixed-methods designs are known for allowing researchers to benefit from receiving balanced data that are specific to the area of study, while accessing the experiences and perceptions of the participants engaged in the study. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), mixed-methods research can assist in clarifying the relationships that exist between two variables. While using a quantitative approach would have yielded correlational data pertaining to the study, it is absent of the relationships connected to the results on the data. Additionally, mixed-methods research provided an analysis of the depth of the relationship. The application of qualitative methods isolated the critical variables in the study. Once these variables were identified, they became quantified with an instrument that was administered to the individuals in the sample. These results were further analyzed by correlating the included variables.

It is very common to utilize a quantitative method for numerical data analysis. The quantitative portion of this design centered on the analysis and comparison of the achievement of high and low efficacious students on the 4th grade reading STAAR. Teachers involved in the study used a questionnaire that was derived from the questions that were embedded in the Gallup Student Poll to assess the self-efficacy of students. Using the Gallup formatted questions and Bandura's definition of self-efficacy, teachers identified students with high and low self-efficacy based on their experiences with the students. Comparisons were made between the achievement of both groups on the 4th grade reading STAAR, and students were matched based on gender, ethnicity, and participation in English as a Second Language program.

The qualitative section of the design was derived from the responses from a focus group of school personnel with varied experience working with the student population. Interview questions were created to illicit responses about what school personnel have determined to be characteristics of adults that develop and nurture self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. Furthermore, suggestions for supporting their development were also embedded in the questions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and student achievement. The following questions were explored through research:

1. Does self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students have a positive impact on student achievement in 4th grade reading STAAR?

2. How do school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
3. What are the characteristics of school personnel that impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Setting

The study was conducted at a midsize elementary campus in southeast Texas. The campus has a population of more than 700 students and serves both monolingual and bilingual students. Approximately 250 students are serviced in the bilingual program and 50 in the special education program. Two neighboring communities comprise the student population, and the majority of both communities are low income with pockets of lower middle class families. The community was historically middle class and majority White, but has transitioned in the past 20 years to become majority African-American and Hispanic. In recent years, the ownership of homes has shifted, and a substantial number of the homes are now under Section 8. Section 8 of the Housing Act of 1937 authorizes the payment of rental housing assistance to private landlords (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013). The Act intends to provide assistance that improves the living conditions for low income families. The community has an increasing amount of multilingual speakers with the majority of the families speaking Spanish as the first language. The campus demographics have a distribution of the following:

- Hispanic-64%
- African American-32%
- White-2%

- Asian/Pacific Islander-2%
- Economically disadvantaged-90%
- Mobility rate-21%

The campus has shown steady improvement in academic achievement in the past five years. The following list the academic distinctions the campus received via the Texas Education Agency:

- Recognized-2011
- Recognized-2010
- Acceptable-2009
- Exemplary-2008
- Recognized-2007

In 2011, the campus administered the Gallup Student Poll to a cohort of ninety-six 5th graders. The self-efficacy measures were delineated into the subsections of Hope, Engagement, and Wellbeing. Ninety-three students completed the section on Hope. The Hope section answered in a manner where the student rates their agreement with the statement on a scale from zero to five. The questions that students rated/answered were as follows:

- I know I will graduate from high school
- There is an adult in my life that cares about my future
- I can think of many ways to get good grades
- I energetically pursue my goals
- I can find a lot of ways around a problem
- I know I will find a good job when I graduate

The mean score for the student group was 4.45 in the Hope section. Table 3-1 details the data of the students' responses.

Table 3-1 Gallup Student Poll: Hope

Hope Items	Mean	Total Responses
Graduate	4.63	92
Adult cares	4.50	94
Get good grades	4.34	93
Pursue goals	4.39	93
Ways around a problem	3.93	92
Find a good job	4.61	93
Mean	4.45	

The Engagement section answered in a manner where the student rates their agreement with the statement on a scale from zero to five. The questions that students rated/answered were as follows:

- I have a best friend at school
- I feel safe in this school
- My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important
- At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday
- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing something good

The mean score for the student group was 4.41 in the Engagement section. Table 3-2 details the data of the students' responses.

Table 3-2 Gallup Student Poll: Engagement

Engagement Items	Mean	Total Responses
Best friend	4.57	96
Feel safe	4.35	93
Schoolwork important	4.61	92
Opportunity to do best	4.32	95
Recognition	4.14	93
Mean	4.41	

The Wellbeing section asked students to rate their present and future lives in a manner where the student rated his or her agreement with the statement on a scale from zero to ten. The questions that students rated/answered were as follows:

- Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom represents the worst possible life for you.
- On which step of the ladder do you think you stand at this time?
- On which step of the ladder do you think you will stand about five years from now?

The mean score for the student group was 4.41 in the Engagement section. Table 3-3 details the data of the students' responses.

Table 3-3 Gallup Student Poll: Wellbeing

Wellbeing Items	Mean	Total Responses
Step at this time	7.73	96
Step in five years	8.59	96
Mean	8.16	

The Gallup Student Poll data reflect a significant difference in the Hope indicators of Graduate (4.63), Adult Cares (4.60), and Find a Good Job (4.61) in relation to Ways Around a Problem (3.93). The Wellbeing indicator also presented a significant difference between what students thought about the current step at this time (7.73) versus where they thought they would be in five years (8.59).

Subjects

The participants in this study were 36 students from a suburban elementary school in southeast Texas. The demographics of the 4th grade group are as follows:

- Hispanic-23
- African American-12
- Asian/Pacific Islander-1
- Economically disadvantaged-36
- Female-17
- Male-19

All of the student participants are identified as economically disadvantaged. Their designation as economically disadvantaged is defined as any student that qualifies for free or reduced lunch based on family income and federal guidelines. All of the participants were 4th grade students from the 2011-2012 school year. Student achievement data was collected from the 4th grade reading STAAR in the 2011-2012 school year. The students were identified as having high or low self-efficacy based on teacher recommendation from their observations, experiences, and interactions with the student group. The teachers anonymously selected 36 students and submitted their names based on the two categories.

A focus group was created to gain a perspective of the characteristics of adults that influence the self-efficacy of students. This sampling consisted of six adult school personnel ranging from campus to district level experience. The school personnel included professionals that have experience working in schools with a significant amount of economically disadvantaged students and parents. These individuals were selected because of their experience working with economically disadvantaged families and their access to both students and teachers. The demographic breakdown of the focus group participants is as follows:

- African American- 3
- Hispanic-2
- Asian/Pacific Islander-1
- Male-2
- Female-4

The first educator was an elementary school counselor (A1) at a 2011 Texas Education Agency Recognized school housing over 700 students. The elementary campus serves Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade in the 2012-2013 school year. The campus is located in a large north Houston suburban school district with over 30,000 students. The counselor has 13 years of experience working with economically disadvantaged students at the middle and elementary campus level. The current assignment has been for four years.

The second educator was a director of curriculum and instruction (A2) in a 2011 Texas Education Agency Academically Acceptable school district. The school district is in North Houston and houses over 30,000 students. The director has a total of 11 years of

experience working with economically disadvantaged students. The director has experiences working with economically disadvantaged students at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

The third educator was a middle school principal (A3) in a 2011 Texas Education Agency Academically Unacceptable school. The middle school is in North Houston, grades sixth through eighth, and serves over 1,300 students. The middle school principal has 18 years of experience working with economically disadvantaged students at high achieving and low achieving campuses. The principal has experience working at both the middle and high school level.

The fourth educator was an elementary teacher (A4) at a 2011 Texas Education Agency Academically Acceptable school. The elementary school serves students Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. This campus houses over 800 students and is located in North Houston. The teacher has three years of experience working with economically disadvantaged students and has worked at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The fifth educator was an elementary assistant principal (A5) at a 2011 Texas Education Agency Recognized school. The elementary school serves students Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The campus houses over 700 students and is located in North Houston. The assistant principal has 16 years of experience working with economically disadvantaged students. The assistant principal has been in this position for two years and has experience working at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

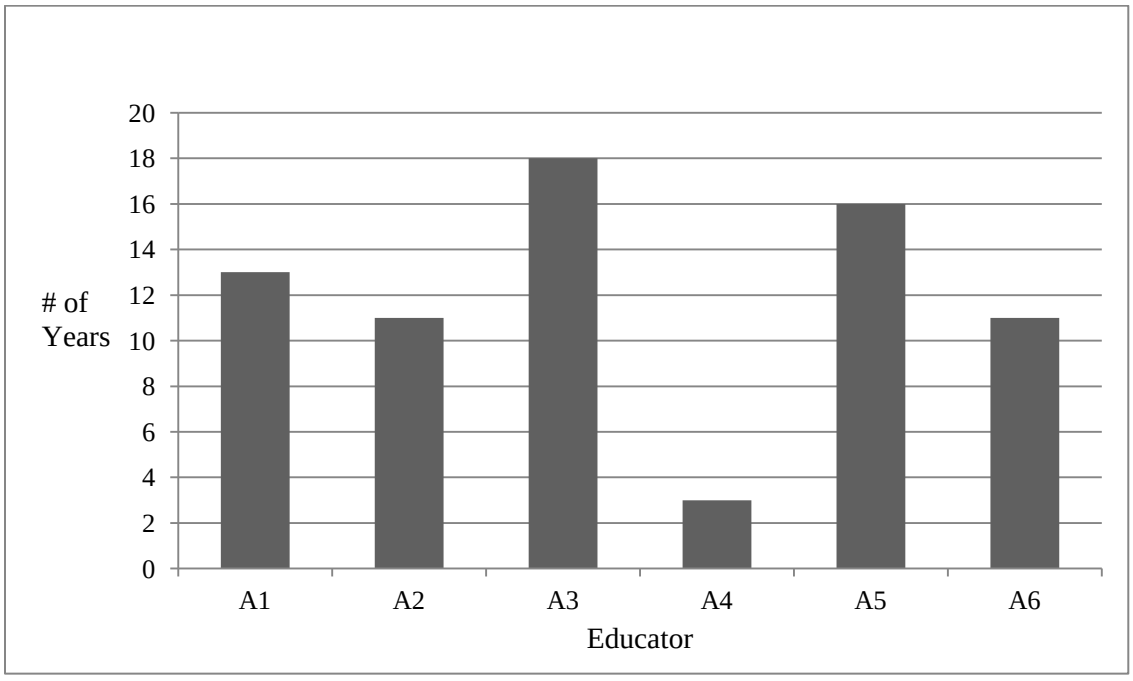
The sixth educator was an instructional specialist (A6) at a 2011 Texas Education Agency Recognized school. The elementary school serves students Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The campus houses over 700 students and is located in North Houston.

The instructional specialist has 11 years of experience working with economically disadvantaged students and two years in the current position. All of the experience has been at the elementary level as a teacher and instructional specialist.

Table 3-4 Experience and School Level

Subjects	Total Years Ed. Experience	Total Years w/ Econ. D	Current Position	School Level
A1	13	13	Counselor	Elem./Middle
A2	11	11	C & I Dir.	Elem./Mid./High
A3	18	18	Principal	Middle/High
A4	3	3	Teacher	Elem./Mid./High
A5	16	16	Asst. Principal	Elem./Mid./High
A6	11	11	Instruct. Spec.	Elementary
Average	12			

Figure 3-1 Years of Experience with Economically Disadvantaged Students



Procedures

Data were collected from accessing archival databases from the district curriculum and instruction department. The 2012 4th grade reading STAAR data is archival data that was retrieved from the district database and the Academic Excellence Indicator System. The STAAR data was measured using the STAAR-TAKS bridge study that developed an equivalent metric for the STAAR assessment, which currently is without a definitive cut score. Student raw scores were ordered from the highest to the lowest in both the high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy groups. Student raw scores were then compared between the high self-efficacy group and the low self-efficacy group. Furthermore, the economically disadvantaged students were matched using gender, ethnicity, and participation in an ESL (English as Second Language) program as the criteria. The raw scores were matched in descending order with the corresponding characteristic (gender, ethnicity, or ESL).

An invitation was distributed to selected school personnel to participate in a focus group about the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students. The sampling consisted of school personnel with experience working with economically disadvantaged students and their parents. Each member of the focus group received a consent form detailing the boundaries and usage of the interview. The school personnel focus group met for a round table discussion on the topic of self-efficacy and student achievement. During the round table discussion, interview questions were asked to extract information about their beliefs of the characteristics that are common in adults that work with students that are self-efficacious. The following questions were posed during the session:

- What do you believe are the characteristics of an adult that develop self-efficacy in an economically disadvantaged student?
- What do you believe adults can do in the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
- What do you believe adults can do outside of the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
- How do you believe an adult can develop skills that will help them to increase self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?
- What do you believe is the role of school leadership in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?
- What role do you believe the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students plays on their success on high-stakes standardized testing? Why?

The session was audio recorded and responses were concurrently transcribed. The collected responses are presented at the conclusion of this study.

Instruments

There were three instruments employed in this study. The 4th grade reading STAAR, a self-efficacy identifying tool, and an interview document were the three instruments that were selected.

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessments were created to measure the extent to which a student has learned and is able to apply the defined knowledge and skills at each grade level (TEA, 2011). The 4th grade reading assessment tests the following objectives:

- Objective 1-Basic Understanding
- Objective 2-Literary Elements
- Objective 3-Analysis Using Literary Strategies
- Objective 4-Analysis Using Critical Thinking Skills (TEA, 2011)

5th grade students must pass the reading TAKS test in order to advance to the 6th grade. Students that do not meet the standard on the first attempt have two additional opportunities to meet the passing standard. If the student is unable to meet the standard in three attempts, the determination of student placement is decided in a grade placement committee meeting. At this time, data are presented to make decisions about the appropriate placement for the student. In 2012 the STAAR was not used in the criteria for promotion standards.

The Gallup Student Poll was an instrument that surveyed the three core areas of hope, engagement, and wellbeing. These three areas were identified by Gallup as predictors for future achievement. Gallup suggested that students who did well in all three areas have a propensity to achieve higher grades, complete more credits, and feel better about themselves (Lopez, Agrawal & Calderon, 2010). The survey encompassed 20 questions that were designed to gain a better understanding of how students felt about their experiences in school and their ability to have an impact on their future. Each of the three measures had indicators that could be used to assess the self-efficacy of a student (Lopez et al., 2010). This instrument was created with the intention of providing school leaders with information that they can use to improve student achievement and decrease high school dropout rates. Each question is rated on a five point Likert scale. A response of 1 would indicate that the student strongly disagrees with the statement. A response of 5

would indicate that the student strongly agrees with the given statement. Student scores were tallied and disaggregated for all three metrics of hope, engagement, and wellbeing. The Gallup Student Poll questions were used to create a self-efficacy identifying tool that teachers could use to determine if students possessed characteristics that would deem them self-efficacious. Embedded in the instrument is Albert Bandura's definition of self-efficacy to assist teachers in closely matching students with similar characteristics with the appropriate category. Teachers with experiences working with economically disadvantaged students identified students for the study. Each teacher utilized a criteria information sheet to guide the selection of the students. The teachers used the Gallup Student Poll questionnaire and Bandura's definition of self-efficacy to assist in the selection of high and low self-efficacious students. The teachers identified characteristics and matched those descriptors with actions and experiences relating to their students. Based on their experience and relationship with their students, they identified students possessing both highly efficacious characteristics and those who displayed low self-efficacy.

The interview document for the focus group consisted of five open-ended questions. These questions were structured to illicit responses from the school personnel that provide valuable information about their perceptions of the characteristics of the parents of self-efficacious students. Additionally, information was garnered about their recommendations for supporting the development of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students.

Validity

STAAR and TAKS, standards-referenced assessments, are based on the content that they assess. Therefore, the test validity is tied to the content and statewide curriculum. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) drive the Texas curriculum and is the standard by which both assessments measures student learning. In order to make proper interpretations of test results, it is critical that there is evidence to support the intended interpretations and uses of the scores (Kane, 1992). The process of ensuring the highest level of content validity was done in collaboration with multiple committees within Texas. These committees were comprised of Texas teachers, test development experts and Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff members. Teachers statewide across content areas and grade levels participated in the committees. Their contributions provided input from practitioners with knowledge of the application of content in their specific grade level. Committee members worked together to develop the test objectives, test-item types, and item development guidelines (TEA, 2007). The range of experiences and knowledge in content areas strengthened the validity of the test by offering varied contributions from content experts and practitioners.

Throughout the process, item writers ensured alignment of test items with state learning standards. During each stage, verification of TEKS alignment was ensured to maintain the integrity of the assessment and confirm that items measured the appropriate content. TEA, Pearson, Educational Testing Service (ETS), and Questar Inc. provided expert test-builders to conduct an internal review of test items. Each review focused on the accuracy of measuring objectives. The review by expert test-builders aided and increased the probability of valid test items. The committees reconvened to edit and

review TAKS items for bias and to conducted a review of field-testing data. Multiple writers were used to create test items to increase the diversity of the questions and to limit the bias of contributors (TEA, 2007). The increased level of diversity in educators and submitted information further supports the validity of the test.

The Gallup Student Poll was developed as an online measure of non-cognitive metrics that predict student success in academic and general youth development settings (Lopez et al., 2010). This instrument also is concurrently valid with instruments examining similar psychological processes, such as optimism and self-efficacy (Lopez et al., 2010) In order to examine content validity, seventeen experts in the areas of hope, engagement, and well-being were invited to give feedback on the each item. The experts found all items and scales to be appropriate (Lopez et al., 2010). In 2009, a Gallup Student Poll dataset was analyzed to determine internal consistency, factor structure, and predictive validity as it relates to attendance, credits earned, and GPA. In terms of predictive validity, it was hypothesized that the Hope Index would be the best predictor of student performance (Gallup, 2009). Concurrent validity studies also focused on the associations between hope, engagement, and wellbeing scales and supplemental scales that were administered to a subgroup of the sample and were found to have a positive correlation (Gallup, 2009).

Reliability

Reliability is a critical characteristic of any measurement because weak reliability can negatively impact the ability to interpret the results in a valid way (TEA, 2007). Reliability refers to the consistency of scores for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Reliability expresses how

effectively an assessment measures learning. The TAKS provides estimates of achievement levels; therefore, test reliability measures are needed. TAKS reliability data are based on internal consistency measures. The internal consistency of multiple-choice items and short-answer/extended response items were measured by the Kuder Richardson Formula (KR20) and the stratified coefficient alpha respectively. TAKS reliability measures range from .87 to .90, with 1.0 equaling a perfect reliability score (TEA, 2006). The high reliability results yielded from these measures hold the TAKS assessment as a significantly reliable instrument for assessing student learning.

Chapter 4
Results

Introduction

The intent of this mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and their student achievement. An examination of student achievement measures on the 4th grade reading STAAR examination and responses from a school personnel focus group were utilized to answer three research questions. The following research questions guided the inquiry and research:

1. Does self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students have a positive impact on student achievement in 4th grade reading STAAR?
2. How do school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
3. What are the characteristics of school personnel that impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected from examining the 4th grade STAAR reading results of economically disadvantaged students that were identified as having high self-efficacy or low self-efficacy. As shown in Table 4-1, the cut off passing standard for the 4th grade reading STAAR is a raw score of 19 for English and 17 for Spanish test takers. Economically disadvantaged students scoring at or above the cut score of 19 (17 for Spanish testers) were identified as successfully mastering the examination.

Table 4-1 2012 STAAR-TAKS Equivalent

Grade	Tested Language	TAKS Cut Score on STAAR	Items Tested
4	English	19	44
4	Spanish	17	44

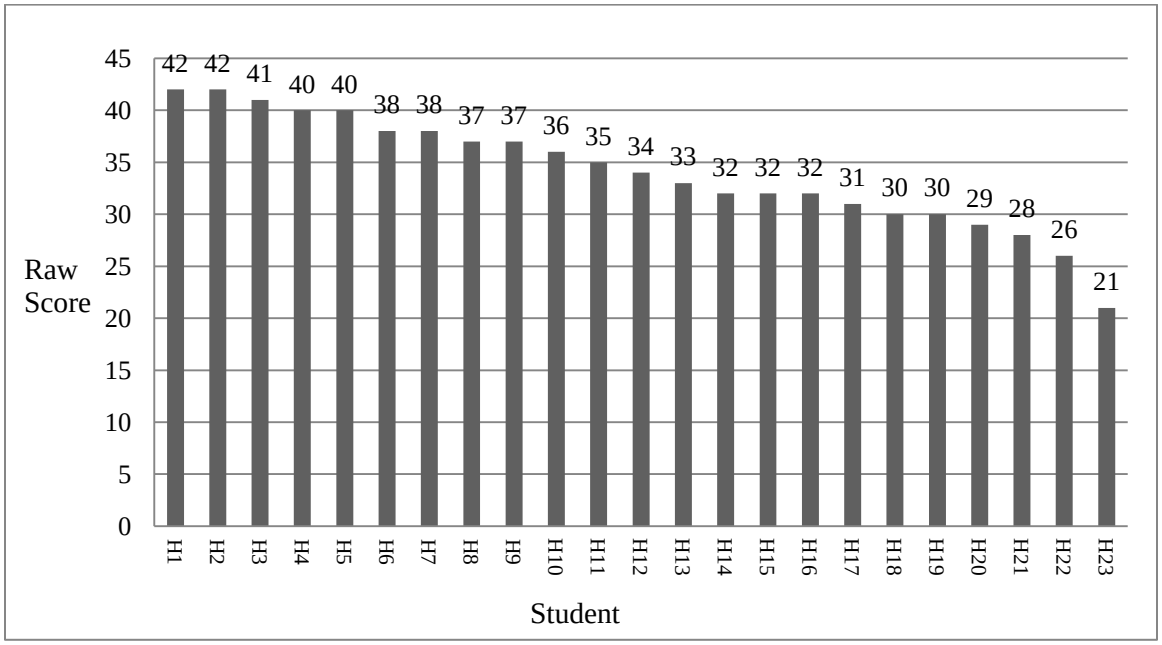
Classroom teachers with varied experiences working with economically disadvantaged students identified 36 students for the study. Each teacher was distributed a criteria information sheet to guide the selection of the students. The teachers used the Gallup Student Poll questionnaire and Bandura's definition of self-efficacy to assist in the selection of high and low self-efficacious students (see APPENDIX C). The teachers identified characteristics and matched those descriptors with actions and experiences relating to their students. Based on their interactions and relationships with their students, they identified students possessing both highly efficacious characteristics and those who displayed low self-efficacy. In isolation, 23 economically disadvantaged students were identified as having high self-efficacy and 13 students were identified as having low self-efficacy. The students' 4th grade reading STAAR scores were collected and segregated by efficacy cohorts. The analysis of the reading STAAR data revealed that 100% (23/23) of the high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged cohort mastered the reading STAAR with scores above the 19 cut score. The reading STAAR raw scores for the high self-efficacy cohort ranged from 21 (lowest) to 42 (highest). Figure 4-1 displays the reading STAAR results of high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students.

Table 4-2 displays the reading STAAR results of the high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged student cohort.

Table 4-2 High Self-Efficacy Student Reading STAAR Results

Subjects	STAAR Raw Score	Met Standard
H1	42	Y
H2	42	Y
H3	41	Y
H4	40	Y
H5	40	Y
H6	38	Y
H7	38	Y
H8	37	Y
H9	37	Y
H10	36	Y
H11	35	Y
H12	34	Y
H13	33	Y
H14	32	Y
H15	32	Y
H16	32	Y
H17	31	Y
H18	30	Y
H19	30	Y
H20	29	Y
H21	28	Y
H22	26	Y
H23	21	Y
Mean	33.8	

Figure 4-1 High Self-Efficacy Student Reading STAAR Results

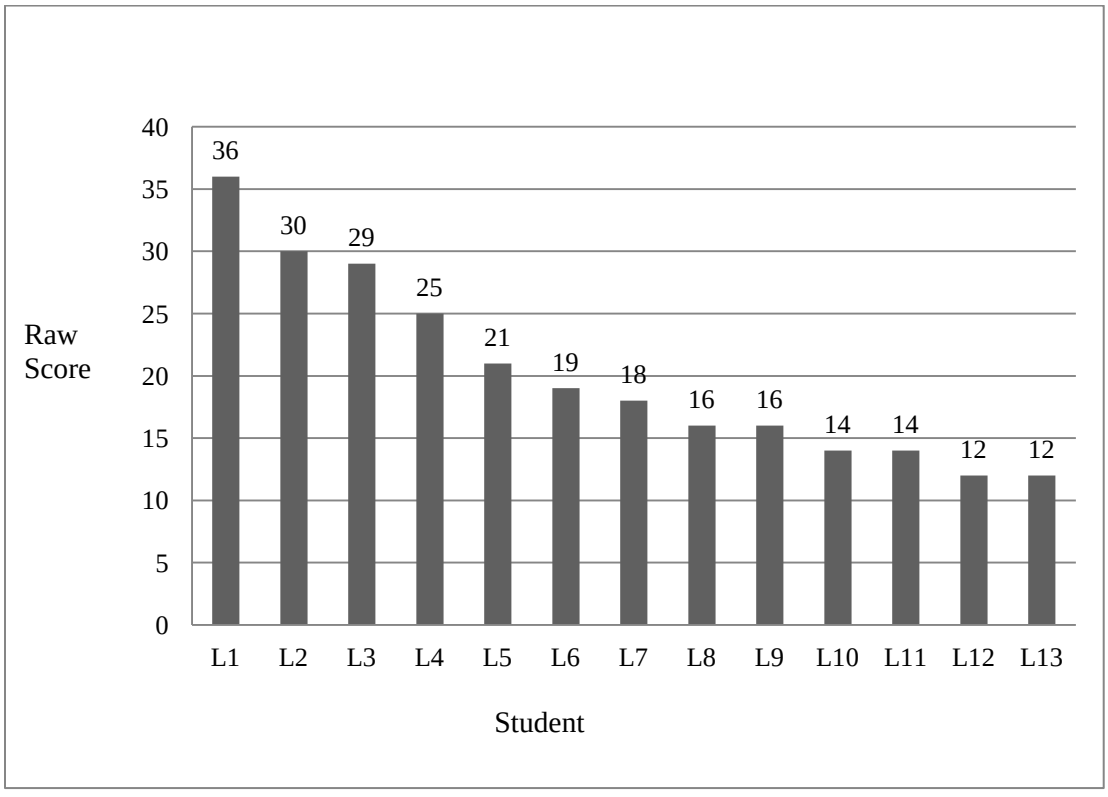


Further analysis showed that 46% of low self-efficacy students mastered the STAAR with scores above the 19 cut score (6/13). The reading STAAR raw scores for the low self-efficacy cohort ranged from 12 (lowest) to 36 (highest). Table 4-3 and Figure 4-2 show compiled results of the STAAR reading scores for the low self-efficacy economically disadvantaged student group.

Table 4-3 Low Self-Efficacy Student Reading STAAR Results

Subjects	STAAR Raw Score	Met Standard
L1	36	Y
L2	30	Y
L3	29	Y
L4	25	Y
L5	21	Y
L6	19	Y
L7	18	N
L8	16	N
L9	16	N
L10	14	N
L11	14	N
L12	12	N
L13	12	N
Mean	18.3	

Figure 4-2 Low Self-Efficacy Student Reading STAAR Results



The mean raw score for high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students on the STAAR was 33.8. The mean raw score for low self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students was 18.3. The STAAR achievement data from both groups were compared to determine if there was a significant difference in student performance between economically disadvantaged students with high self-efficacy and economically disadvantaged students with low self-efficacy. Figure 4-3 presents the data of the comparison of student performance of high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students on the 4th grade reading STAAR.

Figure 4-3 Comparison of High and Low Self-Efficacy STAAR Results

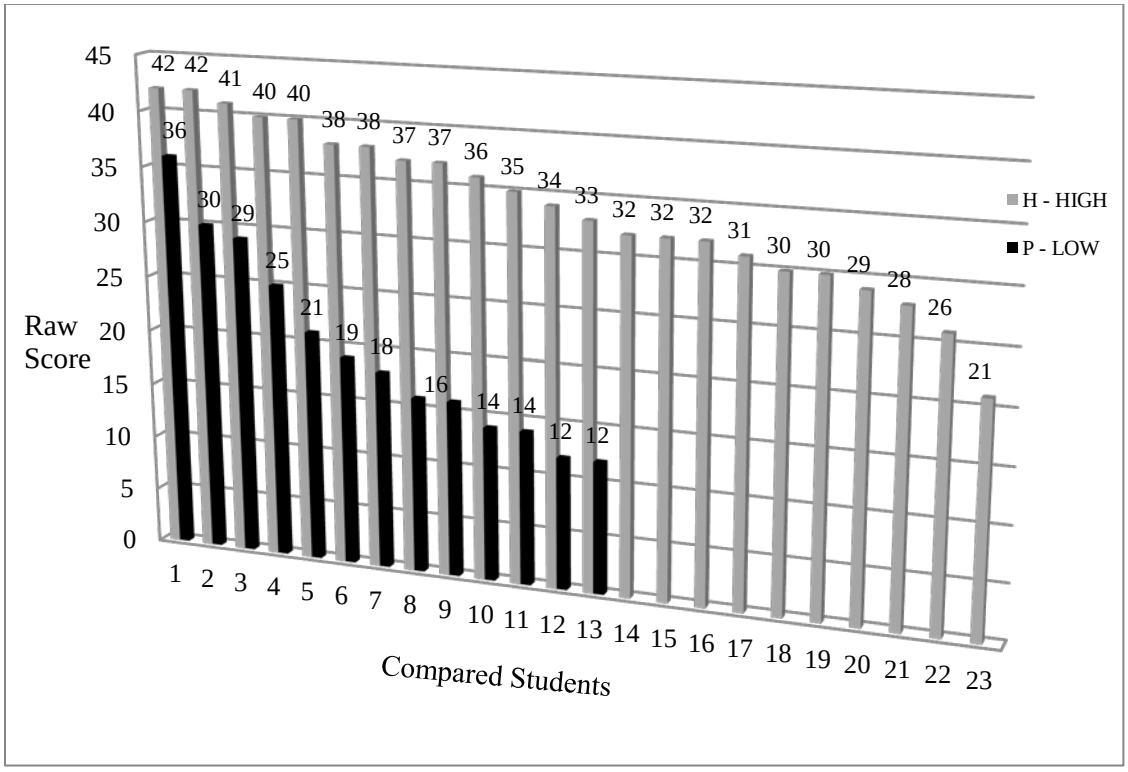


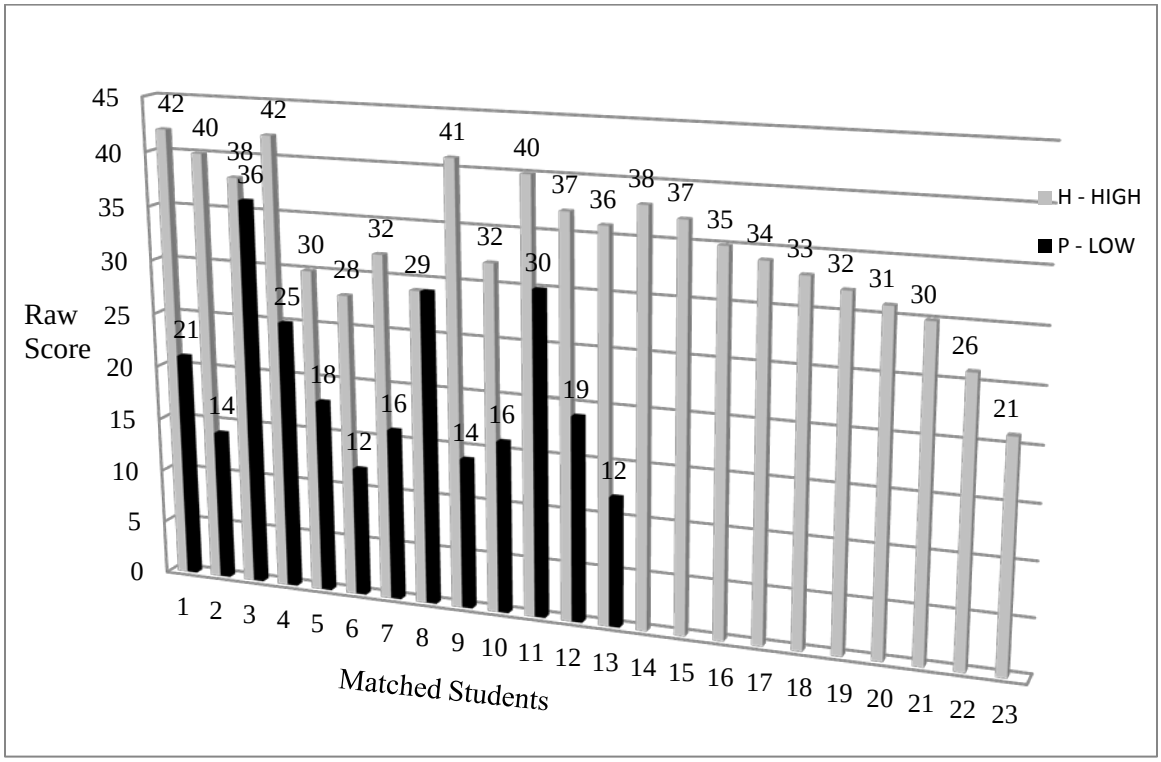
Table 4-4 presents the students when matched by gender, ethnicity, and ESL participation.

Table 4-4 Matched Comparison of High and Low Self-Efficacy Students

Matched Subjects	Low Self-Efficacy	High Self-Efficacy
1	Afr. American Female	Afr. American Female
2	Afr. American Female	Afr. American Female
3	Afr. American Male	Afr. American Female
4	Afr. American Male	Afr. American Male
5	Afr. American Male	Afr. American Male
6	Afr. American Male	Afr. American Male
7	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Male
8	Hispanic Female	Hispanic Female
9	Hispanic Female	Hispanic Female
10	Hispanic Female ESL	Hispanic Female ESL
11	Asian Pacific Female	Hispanic Female
12	Hispanic Male ESL	Hispanic Male ESL
13	Hispanic Male ESL	Hispanic Male ESL
14		Hispanic Female
15		Hispanic Female
16		Hispanic Male ESL
17		Hispanic Female
18		Hispanic Female
19		Hispanic Female
20		Hispanic Female
21		Hispanic Male ESL
22		Hispanic Male ESL
23		Hispanic Male ESL

Figure 4-4 presents a chart showcasing the data collected from the matched comparison of the STAAR raw scores of the students with high self-efficacy versus the students with low self-efficacy.

Figure 4-4 Matched Comparison of High and Low Self-Efficacy STAAR Scores



Focus Group Procedures

Six educators participated in a focus group in which the session was audio taped in its entirety. All participants were asked the same questions to gather background information on each individual's experience in education. The following questions were asked to each participant at the beginning of the focus group session:

- What is your current position?
- How many years of experience do you have in education?
- How many years of experience do you have working with economically disadvantaged students?
- What is your grade level experience?

Afterwards, the focus group was posed six open-ended questions about their perceptions of factors relating to self-efficacy and economically disadvantaged students. The following questions were presented to the focus group for their input:

- What do you believe are the characteristics of an adult that develops self-efficacy in an economically disadvantaged student?
- What do you believe adults can do in the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
- What do you believe adults can do outside of the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
- How do you believe adults can develop skills that will help them to increase self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?
- What do you believe is the role of school leadership in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?
- What role do you believe self-efficacy plays in student performance on high-stakes standardized tests?

The responses from the focus group session were audio recorded and transcribed. The collected responses were analyzed to develop commonalities and thematic connections.

Question 1: What do you believe are the characteristics of an adult who develops self-efficacy in an economically disadvantaged student?

The resounding themes derived from this question were the importance of a positive encouraging outlook, a standard of high expectations, and an understanding of

the students' personal experiences. The participants responded to Question #1 as follows:

Positive Outlook

- "They (adults) are very supportive of their (student) development"
- "Usually they (adults) are internally motivated and give positive feedback to their kids"
- "They (adults) don't see being economically disadvantaged as a failure, they want to work with those students to get the most out of them"
- "They (adults) don't harp on negatives and they are patient in dealing with children"

High Expectations

- "These teachers have high expectations, they're goal driven"
- "Internally motivated and committed"
- "They (adults) don't accept poor or sub-par performances at all"
- "They (adults) will not let kids off the hook. They will hold their kids accountable for their work and expect high performance"
- "They (adults) push kids to be great and give their best effort"
- "Believe strongly in high standards and will ensure that they (students) will learn"

Understanding of Personal Experiences

- "To them (adults), relationships are foundational"
- "Students are connected to them (adults) and will work for them"
- "They (adults) don't just apply middle class virtues on them. They accept their differences, actually embrace them"

- "They (adults) have the empathy to relate and understand their current conditions"
- "They (adults) are educated, opinionated, streetwise, and academically sharp"
- "Don't see their (students) economic status as a failure"

Question 2: What do you believe adults can do in the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Four major themes were gleaned from question #2. The focus group emphasized the importance of modeling, relationship building, a focus on strengths, and skill development. In response to question #2 the participants responded as follows:

Modeling

- "Teachers can be effective by example. It is important that they are a good role model"
- "They (adults) have to always model the behavior in their interactions"
- "Share the success stories that come from similar backgrounds. This way they (students) know that it can happen for them too. This is an example that they can follow"
- "Explain to them (students) the process of becoming successful. They (students) need to know early that it is a process, doesn't happen by accident"

Relationship Building

- "You have to build a sense of trust between you two"
- "Start with establishing the relationship"
- "You gotta develop a good rapport with the kids"
- "Let your kids know that they are human and can all succeed"

- "Try to find things that you can use to develop relationships and make connections"
- "Embrace individualism and show that you value it"
- "Show that you value them (students) beyond the classroom"

Focus on Strengths

- "Identify things that students do well"
- "Stop focusing on the bad things, focus on the good things that they (students) do"
- "Hone in on student strengths"
- "Give the students opportunities to work on their strengths"
- "Move from a deficit model to a strengths based model"
- "Give feedback and positive reinforcement specific to work those students do. It should be meaningful and intentional"

Skill Development

- "Help them (students) define the meaning of success in their terms"
- "Teach them (students) skills that will help them become successful"
- "Stretch outside of the normal curriculum. Introduce them (students) to leadership skills, presentation, soft skills, etc…"
- "Develop the whole student"

Question 3: What do you believe adults can do outside of the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Question #3 elicited responses that were categorized into three themes. Providing meaningful extracurricular involvement, an investment in family/school relationships,

and mentoring are the categories in which the responses were separated. In response to question #3 the participants responded as follows:

Meaningful Extracurricular Involvement

- "Get kids in extracurricular activities involvement that goes beyond only athletics"
- "Kids that aren't athletically inclined can get involved in extracurricular activities that may develop skills that can be used beyond the four walls of the classroom"
- "Offer them (students) choice so that they can get involved based on their interests"
- "Expose them (students) to experiences outside of their realm"
- "Expose them (students) to things that they haven't seen. Many of them haven't been outside of their five mile radius"
- "Take them (students) on meaningful field trips, virtual field trips, etc..."

Investment in Family/School Relationships

- "Establish family fun events in the community for more chances to develop relationships with parents and share tools for working with their kids"
- "Celebrate the success of students with family members"
- "Make celebration of student success a priority and involve parents and family members in the process"

Mentoring

- "Develop a different type of relationship outside of school"
- "Take them (students) places where there is high and low achievement and have them make analytical comparisons"

- "Help them (students) make the connection between what is going on in their life and what is going on around them"
- "Surround them (students) with appropriate role models. Role models that are positive people in positive environments"
- "Establish coaching and mentoring opportunities outside of school"

Question 4: How do you believe adults can develop skills that will help them to increase self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?

The themes that emerged from the responses to question #4 were a deep understanding and empathy, seeking mentorship, and being open-minded/coachable. In response to question #4 the participants responded as follows:

Deep Understanding and Empathy

- "Include them (students) in activities where they have more exposure working with high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students"
- "Do some research on economically disadvantaged students with high self-efficacy"
- "Participate in relevant staff development"
- "Educate themselves (adults) through studies, books, articles, etc…"
- "Talk with the parents of those students to get a better insight as to why they respond the way that they do"

Seek Mentoring

- "Talk with adults that come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to get a perspective and understanding of what it may take to develop these important skills under challenging conditions"

- "Seek out people that are successful in developing self-efficacy and watch their interactions with students"
- "Get advice from those who do well at developing skills in our students"

Being Open-Minded/Coachable

- "Start small with some strategies that you are successful in using"
- "Be open to coaching from people with a track record of success that have those skills"
- "Some of the skills are not innate so it is important to be coachable. Meet the kids where they are and develop them"
- "Be open to having conversations about labels, perspectives, and inequities"
- "Don't place judgment or external values on their (students) experiences"

Question 5: What do you believe is the role of school leadership in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?

The themes surrounding the role of school leadership were categorized into three sections. The focus group responses centered on establishing the culture, providing support, and empowering stakeholders. In response to question #5 the participants responded as follows:

Empowering Stakeholders

- "The primary work is in empowering the learners. Creating the environment in which the students are engaged and motivated"
- "If they (students) are in an engaging environment they will take advantage of the educational opportunities that are around them"

- “Principals should be building capacity in others to develop self-efficacy because so many individuals interact with the students”

Providing Support

- “School leaders should identify the issues facing our economically disadvantaged students with low self-efficacy and determine the needs”
- “Provide support”
- “They (principals) should provide staff development and seek out funds to assist programs for the development of self-efficacy in our students”
- “They (principals) need to create time in the schedule that supports the changes that are necessary”

Establishing Culture

- “Principals must hold teachers accountable for lessons that facilitate the development of self-efficacy”
- “They (principals) should create an environment where it is safe to provide opportunities in school that they may not have at home”
- “Principals should highlight the triumphs of the economically disadvantaged ”
- “The basic mantra of the school should support the belief that economically disadvantaged students can achieve”

Question 6: What role do you believe self-efficacy plays in student performance on high-stakes standardized tests?

The resounding themes derived from this question were the influence of perseverance in the success of students on high-stakes standardized testing and the

confidence they have in their abilities. In response to question #6 the participants responded as follows:

Perseverance

- "High self-efficacy ED kids are tenacious and don't get flustered by the rigor of the standardized tests"
- "They (students) stay focused, are not easily distracted, and generally finish with time to spare"
- " They (students) have the endurance to face multiple step problems and complex tasks while under pressure"
- "Tenacity is the key"

Confidence

- "They (students) go into the test knowing that they will do well"
- "Many times they (students) just see it as another test"
- "They (students) don't think, I'm economically disadvantaged or minority, they just feel that they can do it, so they do, and they do well "
- "They (students) appear very prepared on testing days"

Summary of Findings

The mean reading STAAR raw score of high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students (33.8) was significantly higher than the mean reading STAAR raw score of the low self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students (18.3). When matched using gender, ethnicity, and ESL participation, the students in the high self-efficacy cohort consistently outscored the low self-efficacy group with one outlier (an equivalent score).

The responses from the focus group delineate several clearly defined themes that target the myriad characteristics and actions that the participants believe contribute to the development of self-efficacy in both economically disadvantaged students and the skills of those that work with this student group. In Chapter 5, further discussion will address an overview of the study, discussion of the results, implications for school leaders, and implications for further study.

Chapter 5
Conclusions

Overview of Study

Economically disadvantaged students face many hardships and struggles. Many are deprived of appropriate shelter & nourishment, sufficient healthcare, and adequate educational resources. Notwithstanding these obstacles, these students are expected to learn and achieve academically at the same pace and level as students that do not face the aforementioned challenges. The National Association of the Education of Young Children estimates that three year-olds in poverty situations know 600 fewer words than those of middle class families (as cited in Gulick, 2012). This presents a tremendous challenge to educators nationwide. As the number of children in poverty increases, educators will be forced to rethink how they approach educating and supporting students in their schools.

This study examined the relationship between the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and their achievement. In particular, this study focused on the relationship between the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged 4th grade students and their performance on the 4th grade reading STAAR. Additionally, a focus group session in which educators with experience working with economically disadvantaged students shared insights relating to their views on the characteristics of educators that develop self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students and actions that can be implemented to facilitate development. A supplemental component of this study was an analysis of the Gallup Student Poll of a high performing Title I campus to examine self-efficacy at the campus level. The following research questions guided the inquiry and research:

1. Does self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students have a positive impact on student achievement in 4th grade reading STAAR?
2. How do school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
3. What are the characteristics of school personnel that impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Discussion of Results

Does self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students have a positive impact on student achievement in 4th grade reading STAAR?

Teachers that have working knowledge and experience with economically disadvantaged students identified 36 students that possessed high and low self-efficacious characteristics. The students' performance on the 4th grade reading STAAR was examined for mastery on the assessment. There was a significant difference between the levels of performance for the students in the high and low self-efficacy cohorts. Students in the high self-efficacy cohort tallied a mean raw score of 33.8 whereas the students in the low self-efficacy cohort registered a mean raw score of 18.3, a difference of 15.5 points. When matched based on gender, ethnicity, and ESL participation, there were substantial differences in each category. The African American female high self-efficacy group outperformed the African American female low self-efficacy group by an average of 28 points. The African American male high self-efficacy group outperformed the African American male low self-efficacy group by an average of 16 points. The Hispanic female high self-efficacy group outperformed the Hispanic female low self-efficacy group by 27 points. The Hispanic female ESL and Hispanic male ESL high self-efficacy

groups outperformed the Hispanic female ESL, and Hispanic male low self-efficacy groups by an average of 16 and 21 points respectively. There was also a significant achievement gap in the percentage of students that met the standard on the exam. All students (100%) in the high self-efficacy cohort met the standard on the examination. All (23 out of 23) surpassed the cut score of 19 to total a 100% passing average. However, only 6 out of 13 students met the standard in the low self-efficacy cohort. The 46% passing rate was significantly lower than that of the high self-efficacy cohort, equaling a difference of 54% percentage points. These quantitative data results point to a possible link between the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students and their performance on the 4th grade reading STAAR. The disparity of performance in the two groups highlights the impact of student self-efficacy, or the lack thereof, in both distinctive groups.

The focus group was posed the following question for their input in relation to student achievement: What role do you believe self-efficacy plays in student performance on high-stakes standardized tests? The themes that emerged were centered on tenacity, confidence, and perseverance. The focus group believed that economically disadvantaged students with high self-efficacy were more tenacious and exhibited the endurance to complete complex tasks under pressure. Likewise, Bandura (1997) states that students with high self-efficacy face fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter challenging situations. The focus group responses pointed to the students' confidence in their own abilities and the mindset that they would succeed on a standardized test regardless of the surrounding conditions. Perseverance is a characteristic that was used to describe these students as they encountered various

challenges in a testing environment. These descriptions support the necessary qualities that position a student for success in a challenging high-stakes testing environment.

How do school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

Qualitative data from the focus group session presented valuable perspectives on how school personnel impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students. In order to extract information specific to the impact of school personnel on the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students, the following questions were posed:

1. What do you believe adults can do in the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
2. What do you believe adults can do outside of the school setting to develop the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?
3. What do you believe is the role of school leadership in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?

The focus group offered various actions that school personnel should enact in order to facilitate the development of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. In terms of the actions school personnel can take to develop self-efficacy in school, the focus group suggested modeling, relationship building, focus on strengths, and skill development. Their comments reflected the significance of providing appropriate models of self-efficacy and self-efficacious behaviors. Similarly, Bandura's research on self-efficacy supports the value of modeling in developing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Relationship building was pointed out as a critical aspect of nurturing the self-efficacious characteristics. Employing a strengths-based model where school

personnel focus on student strengths was recommended to create environments of success. Lastly, skill development was mentioned as an avenue to intentionally develop academic and social skills that support self-efficacious behavior. These responses are closely linked to Bandura's emphasis on providing mastery experiences in which students can develop self-efficacy through gradual success (Bandura, 1994).

Creating opportunities to have relationships with economically disadvantaged students outside of the conventional teacher/student relationship was discussed within the focus group. The focus group highlighted the value of meaningful extracurricular involvement, investment in family/school relationships, and mentoring. Meaningful extracurricular involvement encompasses experiences outside of school that would expose economically disadvantaged students to experiences that they would not generally be afforded due to familial economic constraints. Investment in family/school relationships requires educators to become increasingly involved with students outside of school and create stronger bonds with their family members to help them in developing the self-efficacy of the child. Mentoring provides the space for guiding the student and cultivating the self-efficacy through one on one experiences and close modeling.

The critical roles of the school leadership were defined by the focus group. Their responses encourage school leaders to empower stakeholders, provide support, and establish the culture. School leaders should take steps to increase the number of individuals in their schools who are adequately prepared to develop self-efficacy in students. School leaders can accomplish this goal by providing staff development opportunities focused on self-efficacy and by prioritizing the development of these teachers' skills. The focus group responses keyed in to a need for the culture of the

building to embody principles that support the value of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. Within this culture, it would be commonplace for school leaders to hold teachers accountable to providing engaging instruction that facilitates the development of self-efficacy.

What are the characteristics of school personnel that impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students?

The focus group was posed two questions designed to illicit responses that provide their perspective on the characteristics of school personnel which impact the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students. The following questions were posed:

1. What do you believe are the characteristics of an adult that develops self-efficacy in an economically disadvantaged student?
2. How do you believe adults can develop skills that will help them to increase self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students?

The results from the focus group were that adults who possess a positive outlook, hold students to a high standard of expectations, and have an understanding of the personal experiences of a student are likely to develop self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. Mitchell and DelaMattera (2010) state that a critical element in the development of self-efficacy is the perceived support that students receive from their teachers. These adults are inclined to give positive feedback to their students and encourage their development frequently. They expect the epitome of excellence from their students and do not allow economic status to be a valid excuse. Furthermore, they are in tune with the nuances of their students' personal experiences and embrace them without compromising a high standard of academic excellence.

Based on the results from the focus group session, in order for unskilled teachers to enhance their skills in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students they would have to immerse themselves in the culture, seek out mentorship, and be open-minded/coachable. Unskilled teachers that embrace involvement within the culture of the economically disadvantaged will develop a different scope of knowledge in relation to economically disadvantaged students. Moreover, seeking mentorship from teachers or community members who are skilled in developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students will position the teachers to learn from experts and receive guidance from those that have a better understanding of working successfully with this population. Finally, being open-minded/coachable allows for the unskilled teacher to learn how to be effective with this student population without clenching to previous biases or misrepresentations. The "coachability" of the teacher also facilitates the mentor-mentee relationship and limits barriers that could make coaching the teacher challenging.

Implications for School Leaders

Today's school leader has a multitude of challenges in addressing the social and academic needs of the economically disadvantaged student. As school leaders scramble to find quick fix programs and miracle strategies that solve all problems, many have ignored some common principles of educating and supporting children. The results from this study highlight areas that school leaders may benefit from addressing when developing the skills of an economically disadvantaged student.

In lieu of thinking solely of student achievement and meeting state and federal achievement requirements, school leaders should include or place a higher priority on the importance of self-efficacy in their economically disadvantaged population. An initial

step would be ensuring that the vision of their schools embody the belief that self-efficacious economically disadvantaged students may have a propensity to perform better in school. Establishing a culture where all stakeholders are committed to the vision of developing self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students undergirds the facilitation of successful systematic implementation. In many cases, these changes would require a culture shift and school leaders must be courageous to withstand the challenges of engaging creating discomfort within the current system. The leader must be aware that such noble actions are not absent of detractors and naysayers.

A concerted emphasis on high quality specific staff development and training to support teachers in developing the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students is also an integral component for school leaders. Many times the success of initiatives is contingent upon the quality of induction, training, and development of teachers. In order to empower and build capacity in teachers to develop self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students they must receive adequate training and support. This will require school leaders to secure funding to commence training, structure the opportunities to provide training, and facilitate the development of teachers. School leadership will have to create comprehensive plans to track the development of their staff members and provide timely support. While providing the training is paramount, it will be equally important to monitor the progress of individual teachers to ensure their success.

Another implication of this study is the inclusion of self-efficacy specific data in the analysis of campus data. Generally, school leaders examine various data sets to make data-driven decisions about programs and personnel. Utilizing self-efficacy inventory tools will give school leaders rich information about the self-efficacy status of their

students. The Gallup Student Poll was used to assess the overall self-efficacy status of a campus and presented areas of need that can be addressed with stakeholders. Analysis of these items may spawn ideas and strategies that may contribute to the development or enhancement of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. Campus administrators should maximize the value of this qualitative data by sharing with stakeholders and creating/implementing effective action plans.

Recruitment and retention of teachers will be critical in sustaining a culture of highly self-efficacious economically disadvantaged students. School leaders will be compelled to recruit teachers that possess qualities that may contribute to the development of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. Interviews will have to be conducted in a manner which extracts responses that key into the prospective teachers' aptitude in developing self-efficacy. School leaders must invest in retaining the most talented individuals that create self-efficacious economically disadvantaged students. The work of these individuals will drive the success of the students. Failing to retain highly qualified teachers that develop self-efficacy may be tantamount to stunting the development of self-efficacy in many of our economically disadvantaged students.

Implications for Further Research

Based on the findings from this study, there are a few areas that would benefit from additional exploration. A study that examines the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students/student achievement relationship at multiple grade levels to determine how students perform on the elementary administrations of reading STAAR 3^{rd}-5^{th} would be beneficial. Extending this study to middle school groups of economically disadvantaged students (6^{th} -8^{th}) and high school economically disadvantaged groups (9^{th}

-12th) would show a linear progression of student achievement and possible self-efficacy development.

Another area of possible research is a potential study comparing the performance of high self-efficacy economically disadvantaged students and high self-efficacy students without the economically disadvantaged label. This study would focus on economically disadvantaged students with high and low self-efficacy, but further study could examine if there is an achievement gap between students with high self-efficacy but varying economic status. Analyzing this data at varying grade levels or levels of school would provide for an interesting study.

Moreover, it would be interesting to conduct an in depth study of the self-efficacy of economically disadvantaged students using a different tool to identify the self-efficacious traits. In the future investigation, the researcher could utilize a survey tool like the Student Gallup Poll exclusively to identify subjects for study. Researchers could also create unique self-efficacy identification tools by including elements of previous research and similar identification methods.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this research, I reflected upon the personal impact of my findings on my view of self-efficacy and economically disadvantaged students. Prior to conducting this research, I held a firm belief that the circumstances of the economically disadvantaged may increase the propensity to become self-efficacious. My beliefs were grounded in experiences with children that had the added responsibilities of supervising youth in their homes, opportunities to become successful at non-academic tasks, and sheer innate bravado that can exist within the culture. While holding this assumption, I

did not realize or expect there would be a huge gap between the economically disadvantaged students that are highly self-efficacious and those that were not. For me, this is increasingly troubling because if this achievement gap exists within a group that is already critically marginalized, it is possible it may never be addressed. Consequently, if we are failing to address this disparity the gap will widen. With this not being an idea or an agenda that is in the forefront of educational concerns, it is very likely to be overlooked. This may result in students, teachers, and schools floundering without knowing how to remedy these ills. Ultimately, my awareness has increased my level of responsibility and commitment to addressing the development of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students. As a school leader and lead advocate for those who are limited in voice, this is a launching pad for the advocacy of minimalized groups and securing their civil right to be appropriately educated.

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Appendix A

APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

March 4, 2013

Kwabena Mensah
c/o Dr. Angus MacNeil
Educational Leadership & Cultural Studies

Dear Kwabena Mensah,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-EFFICACY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS" was conducted on February 21, 2013.

At that time, your request for exemption under **Category 2** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents.

The changes you have made adequately respond to the identified contingencies. As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review. * Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and further approval. Please contact me to ascertain the appropriate mechanism.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,

For
Kirstin Rochford, MPH, CIP, CPIA
Director, Research Compliance

*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **January 1, 2018**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 13221-EX

316 E. Cullen Building Houston, TX 77204-2015 (713) 743-9204 Fax: (713) 743-9577
COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PROJECT TITLE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-EFFICACY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS:IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

You are being invited to participate in a doctoral research project conducted by Kwabena Mensah from the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at the University of Houston. This project is for a dissertation and the study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Robert Borneman and Dr. Angus MacNeil.

NON-PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any question.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose/objective of this project is to examine if there is a relationship between self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students and student achievement. The study has been examined for 1 year.

PROCEDURES

You will be one of approximately 6 subjects to be asked to participate in this project.

The participants will be involved in a focus group in which questions will be asked about economically disadvantaged students, self-efficacy, and adults that work with those student groups. The session will take approximately 35-45 minutes. Participants will be asked to share their opinions based on their experiences working with economically disadvantaged students. The session will be audiotaped.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this project. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number by the principal investigator. This code number will appear on all written materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned code number will be kept separate from all research materials and will be available only to the principal investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

No foreseeable risks are anticipated by participating in this study.

BENEFITS

While you will not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help investigators better understand the relationship of self-efficacy in economically disadvantaged students and student achievement.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this project is voluntary and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

PUBLICATION STATEMENT

The results of this study may be published in professional and/or scientific journals. It may also be used for educational purposes or for professional presentations. However, no individual subject will be identified.

AGREEMENT FOR THE USE OF AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES

If you consent to participate in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio/video taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio/video tapes can be used for publication/presentations.

- I agree to be audio/video taped during the interview.
    - o I agree that the audio/ video tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
    - o I do not agree that the audio/ video tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
- I do not agree to be audio/video taped during the interview.

SUBJECT RIGHTS

1. I understand that informed consent is required of all persons participating in this project.

2. All procedures have been explained to me and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

3. Any risks and/or discomforts have been explained to me.
4. Any benefits have been explained to me.

5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Kwabena Mensah at 281-891-8393. I may also contact Dr. Angus MacNeil, faculty sponsor, at 713-743-2255.

6. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.

7. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

8. All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with me may be released to no one other than the principal investigator Dr. Angus MacNeil. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or educational presentations without identifying me by name.

I HAVE READ (OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME) THE CONTENTS OF THIS CONSENT FORM AND HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ASK QUESTIONS. I HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS. I GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I HAVE RECEIVED (OR WILL RECEIVE) A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MY RECORDS AND FUTURE REFERENCE.

Study Subject (print name):

Signature of Study Subject:

Date:

I HAVE READ THIS FORM TO THE SUBJECT AND/OR THE SUBJECT HAS READ THIS FORM. AN EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH WAS GIVEN AND QUESTIONS FROM THE SUBJECT WERE SOLICITED AND ANSWERED TO THE SUBJECT'S SATISFACTION. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE SUBJECT HAS DEMONSTRATED COMPREHENSION OF THE INFORMATION.

Principal Investigator (print name and title):

Signature of Principal Investigator:

Date:

Appendix C

SELF-EFFICACY STUDENT INVENTORY

Self-Efficacy Student Inventory

The Hope Index, an indicator of respondents' excitement about and strategies for the future, is based on six items measuring the ideas and energy people have for the goals they set. The scoring of the items is proprietary. No weights are used in scoring. High-hope results are categorized as "hopeful," low-hope results are labeled "discouraged," with the remaining being "stuck."

- **I know I will graduate from high school.**
- **There is an adult in my life who cares about my future.**
- **I can think of many ways to get good grades.**
- **I energetically pursue my goals.**
- **I can find lots of ways around any problem.**
- **I know I will find a good job after I graduate.**

The Engagement Index, an indicator of respondents' involvement in and enthusiasm for school, is based on five items measuring the passion for and commitment to school. The scoring of the items is proprietary. Weights are used in scoring. High scores are categorized as "engaged," low scores are labeled "actively disengaged," with the remaining being "not engaged."

- **I have a best friend at school.**
- **I feel safe in this school.**
- **My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.**
- **At this school, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.**

- **In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.**

The Wellbeing Index, a global representation of a person's life evaluation, is based on the Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, which asks people to evaluate their present and future lives on a scale with steps numbered from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst possible life and 10 is the best possible life. Those that rate today a "7" or higher and the future an "8" or higher are considered to be "thriving." Those that rate today and the future a "4" or lower on the scale are considered to be "suffering."

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

- **On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?**
- **On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?**

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation

- Challenging problems as tasks to be mastered.
- A deeper interest in the activities in which they participate must be developed.
- They should be committed to their interests and activities.
- Setbacks and disappointments are not dead-ends.

Appendix D

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY

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Allison E.Matney, Executive Director for
Systems Accountability

January 25, 2012

Kwabena Mensah
2815 Ridge Hollow Dr.
Houston, Texas

RE: Research Request Approval

This letter serves as approval by the Spring Independent School District Research Committee to examine the impact of self-efficacy on the student achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,
Allison E. Matney

AM/ct