

August 2018

Developing Teacher Efficacy in High Poverty Schools

Dawn Stites

University of South Florida, dawn.stites@sdhc.k12.fl.us

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Other Education Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Stites, Dawn, "Developing Teacher Efficacy in High Poverty Schools" (2018). *Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.
<https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/7578>

This Ed. Specialist is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Developing Teacher Efficacy in High Poverty Schools

by

Dawn Stites

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Education Specialist
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career and Higher Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Judith A. Ponticell, Ph.D.

Co-Major Professor: John Mann, Ed.D.

Joyce G. Haines, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:

May 10, 2018

Keywords: teacher engagement, student motivation, engaged learning

Copyright © 2018, Dawn Stites

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	ii
Abstract	iii
Section One: Introduction	1
School District Context.....	2
Elementary School Context	4
Section Two: Perspectives from Selected Literature	6
Teacher Engagement and Student Learning	6
Building Capacity for Teacher Engagement.....	9
Summary	10
Section Three: Project Report.....	11
Data Sources	11
Data Analysis	13
Summary	15
Section Four: Insights Gained and Reflection	17
Areas for Improvement at the School Level	17
Areas for Improvement at the District Level	18
Reflections on Leadership Growth and Development	19
References	20

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 2014-2015 School Climate Perception Inventory (SCIP) Data	13
Table 2: 2014-2015 Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey (TELL) Data	14

ABSTRACT

This capstone project was part of a group project completed by three principals in elementary schools in Hillsborough County, Florida. The project began because of our passion to understand effective teachers. Our collective goal was to have more engaged teachers which would create more engaged students resulting in greater student and teacher success.

Our overall group project purpose was to discover the behavior and characteristics an engaged teacher demonstrates and how these behaviors affect the learning environment and the students that are in that environment. The project was guided by the question, how does a culture of engaged teachers develop and support student engagement, choice, and voice?

My area of focus was, how do children and adults benefit from an engaged learning environment? Selected literature was reviewed that concentrated on the impact of teacher engagement on student learning; student, teacher and parent voice, student and teacher mutuality, and building capacity for engaged learning environments. Results of two district-administered survey instruments were used as data sources: the School Climate and Perception Survey (SCIP) and the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL). A secondary analysis of the 2014-2015 survey results was conducted for this project, using our three schools as the unit of analysis.

Key findings in my area of focus included the importance of relationship and student voice in student engagement; the importance of teacher autonomy, self- and collective efficacy in teacher engagement; and barriers to engagement in the learning environment.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Our project group believes a culture of engaged teachers will impact students in a positive way - academically, socially and emotionally. We see that some teachers feel overwhelmed with the day-to-day requirements of their positions; they become disengaged, creating an environment of low expectations for their students. Engaged teachers focus on students being actively involved in their learning. There is positive classroom climate where student voice is evident and where effective teaching practices are being utilized. Learning is relevant, challenging, and fun.

As school leaders we must help create an environment where students and teachers are celebrated. We must engage them in a collaborative and risk free environment where teachers have the opportunity to network and build instructional capacity. Current limitations on such collaboration are time, teacher attitude, motivation, and a feeling of disempowerment. This results in teacher apathy, not a culture of enthusiastic, engaged teachers. Sometimes district mandates and constant change can invite negative alliances and naysayers with hidden agendas. These agendas can sabotage the desired change towards engaged teaching.

Our group project focuses on the question, how does a culture of engaged teachers develop and support student engagement, choice, and voice? We believe this question is important because some teachers are not engaged, and student learning is not optimal. For example, some teachers appear to be going through the motions, and students have checked out and are not making the expected gains socially, emotionally, or academically. These disengaged teachers are not motivating students to learn, innovate, or achieve. Their lack of expectations and excuses cause students to have low motivation and not reach their full potential. These behaviors also create a

negative school culture. Change is needed so that students and teachers become passionate about learning.

Personal focus. I am the principal of an elementary school. I have worked in Hillsborough County for 23 years. Although this is my first role as principal, I have been an administrator for 16 years. I consider it my mission to ensure that my students know that all the adults in their school truly care about them as individuals. I started on this inquiry path for the Capstone Project because I wanted to better understand those teachers who truly invest in their students and their students' learning. What encourages teachers to do this? And, if at all possible, is there a way to develop more teachers to think and act this way?

My focus in this group project considered the impact of engaged teaching and learning: how do children and adults benefit from an engaged learning environment?

School District Context

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) is divided into eight areas and has more than 270 school sites, including 141 kindergarten through grade five elementary schools, 43 middle schools, 27 high schools, five kindergarten through grade eight schools and 47 charter schools. Of these schools 141 are Title I schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families. Title I schools receive federal financial assistance to help schools ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. All public schools receiving Title I funds are district schools operating as Schoolwide Programs. Schools utilize Title I funds to add highly qualified staff, support parent and community involvement efforts, improve staff professional development, purchase additional instructional materials and supplies, and add technology and needed equipment.

Turnaround schools. In thinking about our Capstone Project, we identified three issues in turnaround schools in Hillsborough County. The first is the impact of school and district culture on the likelihood of success. Positive cultures enable dreaming, collaboration, trust, and positive attitudes, all child-focused. Negative cultures disable through constant change, fear, lack of autonomy, feeling overwhelmed, and feelings of mistrust.

The second issue is the change process. How people experience change affects their willingness to change and innovate. Positive change experiences build ownership, a sense of empowerment, feelings of safety, and motivation. Negative change experiences create fear, a deficit focus, and lack of understanding of the need for change.

The third issue is building leadership capacity. It takes more than one leader to sustain change. Building leadership capacity develops a stronger content knowledge base, stronger relationships and people skills, belief in our own ability to change, motivation, passion, and willingness to work for the greater good. Disempowerment breeds content with the status quo, lack of responsibility for actions and results, lack of shared knowledge, lack of confidence, and lack of positive relationships and people skills.

District priorities. In 2015 Hillsborough County Public Schools hired a new superintendent. After collaborating with the School Board, a new vision and mission were created. The vision is “Preparing Students for Life,” and the mission is to provide an education and the supports needed to enable each student to excel as a successful and responsible citizen. The superintendent is invested in making sure all students are successful. Four Strategic Priorities were established: (1) increase graduation rates, (2) communicate with stakeholders, (3) build strong culture and relationships, and (4) strengthen foundations of financial stewardship. Our group

project was directly linked to the district's priority of building strong culture and relationships and indirectly related to the district's priority to increase graduation rates.

Elementary School Context

The school opened in 1948. It is in an unincorporated community in Hillsborough County, Florida. Boundaries include McKay Bay, Tampa city limits, Clair Mel, and Progress Village. The 2010 Census showed a population of 21,024. Fifty-one percent were female, and 28% were under the age of eighteen. Fifty-five percent were White alone, 39% were Hispanic or Latino, and 30% were Black or African American alone.

The Census lists the number of Housing Units as 7,838 with 59% of those homes occupied. The median home value was \$103,600 with an average mortgage payment of \$1,171 for those homes with a mortgage. The average number of persons per household was three. Forty-three percent of those surveyed spoke a language other than English in the home.

The median income was \$36,167, and the per capita income was \$16,884. Of those under the age of sixty-five, 25% were without Health Insurance. Seventy-seven percent held a high school degree or higher, and of those 16% held a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Today 516 students attend the elementary school. Ninety-five percent of those students receive free or reduced price lunch, qualifying the school for Title I status and designating it a Renaissance School in Hillsborough County (those schools with 90% and above with free/reduced lunch status). Fifty percent of the student population is Hispanic, 33% is Black, 13% is White, 4% is Multiracial, and 1% is Asian or Pacific Islander. Twenty-six percent of the students are enrolled in the English Language Learners (ELL) Program. The majority of those students, as well as many other non-ELL program students, come from a home where English is not spoken. Twenty-four percent of students receive some type of Exceptional Student Education Program services. Three

percent of students participate in the Academically Gifted Program. Despite being a Head Start site, as well as having ESE Pre-K, only 3% of the students currently enrolled participated in some type of Pre-School.

As with many high poverty schools, teacher turnover is frequent. The instructional staff consists of 60 teachers. Twenty-seven teachers are between their first and fifth year of teaching. Thirty-three range in experience between six and 39 years. While some veteran teachers bring experience to the classroom, many are not up to date on best practices or how to teach the state standards, nor do they have the patience for the variety of learners in their classrooms. While professional development is a constant focus, many of the newer teachers take the training and leave to work at a school they view as “easier” (meaning more affluent) schools.

In addition to the need for teachers, the need is for *strong* teachers who understand the population and the challenges that come with high-poverty. Another challenge is ensuring that teachers are setting the expectation bar high. Many of the teachers seem to struggle with rigor. Students aren’t challenged because teachers think “they can’t” simply because they are poor. Having teachers understand that all students deserve the best possible education, as well as a teacher who will work hard to help their students find academic success, is a day-to-day challenge. In the 2015-2016 school year 43% of our district teachers were considered ‘highly effective’. At the school 49% were rated ‘highly effective’.

SECTION 2. PERSPECTIVES FROM SELECTED LITERATURE

A review of literature was guided by the question, how do children and adults benefit from working and learning in a highly engaged school environment? Engaged teachers create an environment for learning fueled by autonomy, mastery, and purpose. This environment improves social, emotional, and academic outcomes by engaging and motivating students to learn, innovate, and achieve.

Methods used to conduct the review. To prepare this literature review, the University of South Florida Libraries general keyword, title, and abstract searches were used to search a variety of databases including: Academic Search Premier, EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, SAGE, and Web of Science. Searches included the following keywords: teacher engagement, student engagement, teacher motivation, student motivation, engaged teaching and learning, advantages of teacher and student engagement. Sources within selected texts were cross-referenced, resulting in additional searches by author or source. Sources were limited to the last 10 years, and the primary focus was on studies conducted in the United States.

Teacher Engagement on Student Learning

Our world has changed drastically, and teachers are challenged with teaching students that no longer need to sit in a classroom and have an adult talk at them. Students today can experience learning on-line through self-directed learning as well as through virtual models that allow a teacher to be available when needed. Attention spans, as well as the real world of students, are constantly changing and thus have an impact on students' desire and motivation to learn. Along with the change in students must come a change in teachers.

Student voice. The importance of the student’s voice is apparent in the article by Yazzie-Mintz and McCormick (2012). This article focuses on students’ perception of the learning environment. Through the use of the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), the researchers were able to find out what 42,754 students in 2009 had to say about their school experience. Questions asked included motivation, engagement, and teaching practice.

Teachers must get students to “want to learn” rather than “have to learn” (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012, p. 753). Teachers must become engaged in their students and their teaching. Another term for this is *invested* - invested in the students as well as their learning. Students interviewed as part of the HSSSE study reported preferring to be taught by interacting with their peers and teachers in a collaborative discussion model (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012).

When asked if they had ever been bored in class, of those students surveyed 48.7% responded daily. When asked why they went to school, only 35.8% responded because they enjoyed school, and 23.1% responded because of their teachers. The largest response (73.1%) was “because I want to get a degree/go to college.” That response shows that there is hope. Students are willing to come to school, all the more reason to make it an enjoyable experience. Because teachers build human capital, it is essential that teachers working with high poverty, at-risk students be able to reach their students.

Teachers’ social engagement. Teachers as learners and teachers is captured in “Narratives of Teaching and Learning: A Tribute to Our Teacher” (Chan & Ross, 2007). This article focuses on what students learned within their classes and its impact on their classrooms as they experienced the important role of learner and teacher. The Engaged Teachers Scale (ETS) is a survey instrument that measures the motivation and engagement of teachers, looking at select factors such as the dimensions of engagement as well as the importance of social engagement. The

study determined that teachers' social engagement with their colleagues and with students is an important dimension of overall engagement for teachers. Meyer (2015) described how one school worked to build professional development that inspires and engages their faculty.

Teacher and student mutuality. Ruzek et al. (2016) focused on emotional support through interactions between teachers and students and its effect on motivation and behavior. They stressed that students had autonomy in class; therefore, the teacher-student relationship is a key piece in ensuring that students choose to engage in learning. The nature of teaching requires a social relationship that is critical to the success of the teacher as well as the student. Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen (2013) defined this relationship as “the establishment of long-term meaningful connections with the students that characterizes the job of teaching” (p. 35). Chan and Ross (2007) explained their relationship with their professor Michael Connelly as one that influenced their own classrooms and how they engaged with their students. Perhaps Hardy and Grootenboer (2013) best define this by stating that practice is not only influenced by what is said and done, but also by the nature of the relationship. Sixteen percent of the students responding to the HSSSE indicated that the reason they may have considered dropping out was having no one at their school that cared about them (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012).

Meyer (2015) reasons that engaged teachers equal happy teachers, and happy teachers result in better teacher performance, engaged and happy students, and engaged and happy parents. Why are engaged/invested happy teachers and students important? According to Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen (2013), teachers spend more time with their clients than almost any other field. They go on to state that “teacher-student relationships may play the primary role in fostering student engagement and positive student outcomes” (p. 35).

Beyond the classroom (parent voice). Hardy and Grootenboer (2013) focus on the efforts of teachers to reach students through a community gardening project. The study demonstrated how the relationship between the teacher and students can excite and motivate students. The teachers taking part in the Australian gardening project rewrote curriculum, changed their teaching practices, built community partnerships, and helped poor refugee students get excited about learning. By working side by side with the students, learning about them, helping them to make real-world connections, as well as building relationships between the school and community, the teachers were able to get their students authentically engaged in learning.

When interviewed both parents and students reported that students were excited about what they (the students) had learned about gardening and were eager to build their own gardens. While this project may not have taken place in a typical classroom setting, the growth of student engagement can be attributed back to the way in which the teachers engaged students in learning. The authors claim, “These more praxis-oriented approaches, including teachers’ understandings of ‘non-academic’ outcomes, constitute some of the most valuable and valid learning which teachers experience” (p. 717).

Building Capacity for Teacher Engagement

So, how are engaged environments built? The Fay School in Texas works to develop their faculty as people (Meyer, 2015). Through giving teachers insight into what they do and how they think, the school can then help each teacher understand individual strengths and talents. The school believes that teachers who are the most self-aware make the best teachers and have the best relationships. The school then works with this knowledge to create professional development that builds great teaching teams of all types. Results have not only been more positive in the area of teacher turn-over, but in student turn-over, parent involvement, and student performance.

While the Fay School is able to afford the time and methods necessary to understand their faculty's strengths and weaknesses, not all schools are able replicate their model. The teachers studied by Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen (2013) were not able to give a definitive answer as to what makes teachers engaged. While they were able to state the importance of it, they weren't able to determine if there was a point in time in a teacher's career when it becomes a factor in a teacher's professional development or if colleague relationships play a part in a teacher's level of engagement.

Summary

None of the studies reviewed mentioned the type of school as working for or against a teacher's level of engagement. For some teachers, working in high poverty schools can be exhausting and result in burn-out. Yet, none of the articles reviewed mentioned or sought to understand this. One would hope that teachers who are engaged and authentically invested in their students would not experience burn-out; in all honesty it would be unrealistic to think that it does not happen. Another group to consider are those who thrive in high poverty schools. What is it about the experience that allows them to thrive? What is it that allows them to be successful, and is that success sustainable?

SECTION 3. PROJECT REPORT

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the assumption that finding what works right in an organization helps it focus on what is important, effective, and successful (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). Appreciative inquiry can enable teachers to dream and collaboratively design a plan, which results in team building toward a common mission and vision. Focusing on this positive core helps an organization think about ways to sharpen its vision, leverage its energy, and take action for change. It is strengths-based rather than deficits-based thinking.

Our group project began because we had this passion to research effective teachers. We want more engaged teachers in our schools to develop more engaged students resulting in greater student and teacher success. Our collective purpose was to discover the behavior and characteristics an engaged teacher demonstrates and how these behaviors affect the learning environment and the students that are in that environment.

The project was divided into three areas of focus. The first was engaged teachers, specifically the types of behaviors and the attitudes that are exhibited by an engaged teacher. The second focused on finding definitions and examples of highly engaged learning environments. And, the third area (my specific focus) was considering the impact of engaged teaching and learning, looking for benefits for children and adults.

Data Sources

Each year the Hillsborough County Public Schools district administers an anonymous student climate survey to a sample of students in grades K-12. The School Climate and Perception Survey (SCIP) is a 30-item electronic survey administered by Scantron. The items are organized

in five domains: My School, My Teachers, My Principal, My Family and Friends, and My Experience. The district provides reports of results to schools. We conducted a secondary analysis of the 2014-2015 results for for our three schools nine items across the domains as proxy measures for indicators of students' perceptions of their learning environment and relationships with teachers.

The Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey consists of a core set of questions that address the following teaching conditions: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, Instructional Practices and Support, and New Teacher Support. The New Teacher Center (NTC), a national non-profit organization, administers the anonymous, online survey and provides results to school districts and schools, using the school as the unit of analysis. The Center works with client districts to use survey results in school improvement plans and policies (see <http://teachingconditions.org/home/about-tell>).

The Hillsborough County School District contracts with the New Teacher Center to administer the survey annually to monitor educators' perceptions of teaching and learning at their individual school sites and across the district. The district provides reports of results to schools. This information is then used to plan school improvement for the district as a whole and for individual school sites. A secondary analysis of the 2014-2015 results in the category of Teacher Leadership was conducted for this project, using the results across our three schools as the unit of analysis.

Our use of these survey data which we receive annually from from the Hillsborough County Public Schools was approved by the district's Office of Assessment and Accountability.

Data Analysis

Table 1 below presents the results of the 2014-2015 School Climate Perception Inventory (SCIP). Results in bold font indicate overall percentage scores that were below the mean.

Table 1

2014-2015 School Climate Perception Inventory (SCIP) Data

SCIP Student Questions	Overall % Score
I enjoy coming to school	71.4%
My teachers care about me	93.2%
My teachers want me to do my best	99.4%
My teachers help me to correct my mistakes	91.0%
My teachers use different activities to help me learn	90.7%
My teachers make sure our class stays focused on learning	95.9%
My teachers and principal ask what I think about school	39.4%
I can get help if I need it	89.1%
My principal and teachers help me to be ready for the next grade	94.0%
MEAN	84.9%

Teacher-student relationships matter. Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen (2013) observed that teachers spend a lot of time with their ‘clients’/students. They assert that “teacher-student relationships may play the primary role in fostering student engagement and positive student outcomes” (p. 35). SCIP survey results show that a high percentage of students felt their teachers care about them (93.2%). Furthermore, Klassen et al. found that teachers’ attitudes and motivation are transmitted to students. SCIP survey results show that students feel teachers want them to do their best (99.4%), make sure the class stays focused on learning (95.9%), and help students get ready for the next grade (94%).

SCIP Survey data also show, however, that only 71.4% of students surveyed enjoy coming to school, and only 39% of students surveyed felt that their teachers and principals ask them what

they think about school. These results are important. Today's students expect to have their voices heard in decisions that affect their education (Marx, 2015). So, while students acknowledge that their teachers care about them, support their learning, and want students to be successful, this does not necessarily mean that students enjoy coming to school or feel their voices matter.

Table 2 below presents the results of the 2014-2015 Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey (TELL). Results highlighted in bold font indicate overall percentage scores that were below the mean.

Table 2

2014-2015 Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey (TELL) Data

TELL Survey Teacher Questions	Overall % Score
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about education issues	69.6%
Teachers are effective teachers in this school	84.6%
Teachers are recognized as educational experts	75.9%
Teachers have appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school	65.1%
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	87.9%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction	70.5%
Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction	88.3%
Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes	88.7%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching	80.7%
Sufficient resources are available for PD in my school	91.5%
Teachers have time to collaborate w/colleagues	74.9%
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instruction delivery	53.1%
Teachers believe what is taught will make a difference in student's lives	87.9%
Teachers require students to work hard	95.9%
Teachers work in PLCs to develop and align instructional practices	91.4%
Teachers believe that almost every student has the potential to do well	91.4%
Provided supports translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers	88.8%
Overall my school is a good place to work and learn	82.3%
PD deepens teachers content knowledge	92.8%
PD enhances teachers abilities to improve student learning	95.7%
PD enhances teachers' abilities to implement instruct. strategies to meet diverse learning needs	91.5%
MEAN	83.3%

How teachers feel about their work environment is as important as how students feel about their school. TELL Survey results indicate that 82.3% of the teachers responding felt that their school was a good place to work and learn. Derrington and Angelle (2013) explored the relationship between teacher leadership and participation in decision making and collective efficacy in schools. TELL Survey results indicate that teacher decision making and influence were less than desired: 75.9% of teachers responding felt they were recognized as educational experts; 69.6% of teachers felt they were relied upon to make decisions about education issues, and 65.1% felt they had an appropriate level of influence in school decision making. Furthermore, while 70.5% of teachers responding felt they were trusted to make sound instructional decisions, only 53.1% felt they had autonomy in making decisions about instructional delivery.

Collective efficacy (DiRanna & Loucks-Horsley, 2001 as cited by Derrington & Angelle, 2013, p. 1) is evident when teachers want to work for change, believe they can bring about change, and have both knowledge and skills to do so. TELL Survey results indicate that while teachers perceive that there are sufficient resources available for professional development (91.5%) and that teachers work together in PLCs to develop and align instructional practices (91.4%), they are less confident that they get the feedback they need to improve teaching (80.7%) and have time to collaborate with their colleagues (74.9%).

Summary

When I initially began the capstone project, I thought that if I gave teachers tools (e.g., required district professional development courses and school-based professional development activities), they would be engaged in teaching and student learning. The selected literature reviewed acknowledges the importance of teacher-student relationships. Teachers need to provide a space conducive to learning and know their students as learners *and* people. SCIP Survey data

show that students feel their teachers care about them, support their learning, and want students to be successful. However, 71.4% of students responded that they enjoy coming to school, and only 39.4% felt their principal and teachers ask them how they feel about school.

Similarly, the literature reviewed indicates that how teachers feel about their work environment is as important as how students feel about their school. TELL Survey results show that while teachers perceive that the teachers at their school are effective (84.6%) and that their school is a good place to work and learn (82.3%), there are important work environment conditions that may not support *collective efficacy*: lack of autonomy, lack of influence on decision making, trust in teachers' expertise and professional judgment about instruction, and lack of time for collaboration with colleagues.

SECTION 4. INSIGHTS GAINED AND REFLECTION

As a leader I have grown. I seek out research to learn and to reinforce the decisions I make. The Appreciative Inquiry Process has taught me to inquire through a positive lens. I now have a process that can be used to inquire and to investigate. I learned to communicate specifically and work with other to inquire about a topic that was of interest to us. I have a passion to make a difference in our schools and to create a culture that encourages teacher and student engagement.

This project has also brought to light the importance of teacher-student relationships. Teachers need to learn how to listen and emotionally support each student. When students feel emotionally supported, they are more motivated to listen and to learn. They have a connection. Students' voice is important, and I feel our teachers must teach students to be their own advocates, to speak up and to let others know what they need to be successful. Many times students in poverty will not stand up for themselves. They tend to be compliant or to act out when they do not understand. I want to change that mindset.

Areas for Improvement at the School Level

Students' voices need to be heard. Students want us to help them be successful; they want us to encourage them and care about them as learners and as people. We need to embrace a positive classroom culture where the students have a voice. Students need to be involved in making decisions that help to ensure their learning is active, relevant, and challenging.

Teachers also need to know students as individual learners, not just as students. They need to know the stories of their students, and students need to know their stories. Teachers need to ask

questions: How do students feel about their learning? What do they think? What helps them to learn best? What supports do they need? What interests them most?

Teachers' autonomy needs to be enhanced. TELL data show that teachers value professional learning so they can improve their practice. Teachers need professional learning opportunities to study and talk together about students and what student engagement looks like in our classrooms. Teachers need to work together to explore how active, problem-based learning supports student engagement.

It is vitally important for school leaders to hire caring and engaged teachers that will be open to teaching the whole child. Autonomous decision making based on the instructional needs of the students supports engaged teaching and learning. It is therefore important that our teachers have the autonomy to take care of their students. Teachers should have regular and sustained opportunities for embedded teacher collaboration. The principal's role should be that of an encourager, facilitator, and supporter.

Areas for Improvement at the District Level

Our school district's new vision "Preparing Students for Life" ensures that we are focusing on students. We are on a journey with a superintendent who is committed to serving the needs of our students and our schools. To develop and sustain engaged students and teachers, our school district must shift the mindset from focusing on students' test scores to focusing on students as learners with a voice. More attention needs to be placed in professional development on knowledge of the importance of student voice and the effects of teachers' knowledge of students' lives and families on relationship building and student success.

Building collective leadership capacity is critical. TELL Survey data clearly show that there are work environment conditions that work against collective efficacy: lack of autonomy,

lack of influence on decision making, trust in teachers' expertise and professional judgment about instruction, and lack of time for collaboration with colleagues. Schools will need support and embedded opportunities for teacher collaboration in these areas.

There is also need for the school district to support autonomy for principals. The principal should be able to make site-based decisions based on the individual learning needs of the students and instructional needs of the teachers. Area superintendents and district offices should see their roles as encouragers, facilitators, and supporters rather than monitors and enforcers.

Reflections on Leadership Growth and Development

It is important that I lead by example, and if I am expecting my teachers and staff to continue to develop professionally, then I need to do the same. I was thrilled to have been chosen for the Ed. S. in Turnaround Leadership program. We were told that this degree would probably change us. The classes have changed us, broadened who we are, and who we want to be. We envision our schools differently. We encourage our district to become more involved in the appreciative inquiry process and in listening to student and teacher voices. As a leader I will continue to take what I have learned about student and teacher engagement and utilize it to impact my school.

REFERENCES

- Chan, E., & Ross, V. (2007). Narratives of teaching and learning: A tribute to our teacher. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 9(1&2), 21-34.
- Cooperrider, D., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. (2008). *The appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Derrington, M., & Angelle, P. (2013). Teacher leadership and collective efficacy: Connections and links. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Hardy, I., & Grootenboer, P. (2013). Schools, teachers and community: Cultivating the conditions for engaged student learning. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(5), 697-719.
- Klassen, R. M., Yerdelen, S., & Durksen, T. (2013). Measuring teacher engagement: Development of the engaged teachers scale (ETS). *Frontline Learning Research*, 2, 33-52. doi: 10.14786/flr.v1i2.44
- Marx, G. (2015). *21 Trends for the 21st century: Out of the trenches and into the future*. Bethesda, MD: Education Week Press.
- Meyer, B. (2015). The highly engaged school: A successful model For professional development. *Independent School*, Winter, 104-109.
- Ruzek, E. A., Hafen, C. A., Allen, J. P., Gregory, A., Mikami, A. Y., & Pianta, R. C. (2016). How teacher emotional support motivates students: The mediating roles of perceived peer relatedness, autonomy support, and competence. *Learning and Instruction* 42, 95-103.

Yazzie-Mintz, E., & McCormick, K. (2012). Finding the humanity in the data: Understanding, measuring, and strengthening student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 743-762). New York, NY: Spring Science.