

MISSOURI EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF CONDITIONS THAT DEVELOP  
COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SETTING

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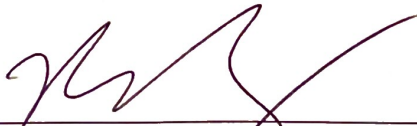
MISSOURI EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF CONDITIONS THAT DEVELOP  
COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SETTING

Presented by Brittany N. Payne a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.



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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department  
Southwest Baptist University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

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Doctor of Education

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By

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During this journey, I experienced a global pandemic, sold a house, lived in our in-law's basement for eight months while building a new house, got a puppy, had a baby, and transitioned to a new leadership role in a different district. Don't let anybody tell you it can't be done!

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate collective teacher efficacy within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. This study explored teacher perceptions regarding certain conditions, through the lens of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention, that work towards the development of group efficacy within teacher teams to benefit student achievement. The participants in this study were teacher teams in Missouri serving in kindergarten through fifth-grade buildings, who exhibited high levels of collective efficacy within their teams. Through this qualitative process, this study recognized building leaders and teams of teachers must be intentional in implementing and fostering certain conditions in order to work towards high levels of collective efficacy within their teacher teams and schools. This study identified teacher perceptions about what conditions hold value in developing high levels of collective efficacy over others, providing insight to how certain conditions can help or hinder this development.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bandura (1977) noted “the strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations” (p. 193). Imagine two different elementary schools. One has a culture of shared vision, goal consensus, shared responsibility in helping students master content, and has built the capacity in students to believe they can do well in school. At this school, there is a strong perception among teachers that they can make a difference in the lives of the students they serve, despite outside circumstances beyond their control. The other school spends its time complaining of students’ home environments, parental involvement, and socioeconomic status, feeling that because of these external factors, there is nothing teachers can do to help students achieve academically, and feeling the odds are stacked against not only their students, but themselves as teachers. The first school has a high sense of collective teacher efficacy (CTE), while the second school knows there is a need to improve, but feels defeated before even getting started. When teachers believe they can collaboratively impact the achievement of all students, even those who arrive at school with difficulties, a high sense of CTE is created. Research shows CTE contributes significantly to schools’ academic achievement (Hattie, 2012; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2006).

Early in his career, John Hattie set out to discover what influences had the greatest impact on student achievement. His research showed that CTE ranked above all other factors, including student socioeconomic status, student motivation, parental involvement, and prior achievement. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998)

acknowledged the infectious feeling of a low sense of efficacy in schools and the feeling's effect.

Schools where teachers' conversations dwell on the insurmountable difficulties of educating students are likely to undermine teachers' sense of efficacy. Schools where teachers work together to find ways to address the learning, motivation, and behavior problems of their students are likely to enhance teachers' feelings of efficacy. (Tschannen, et al., 1998, p. 221)

Efficacy beliefs are powerful in guiding our behaviors and actions within our work in determining our focus, responding to difficulties, and devoting our efforts (Bandura, 1977; Donohoo, 2017).

This research focused on the need to better understand the sources that work towards the development of CTE and the conditions needed within our schools to maximize levels of CTE within groups from educators' perspectives. This research examined how these conditions are developed to better generate CTE among teacher teams. A review of current literature along with focus group interviews were conducted to capture teacher perspective and knowledge of the development of CTE. This research aimed to better help educational leaders and teachers attend to these conditions for the overall goal of increased CTE. This first chapter explores the problem statement and purpose of this study, as well as the research questions that were used to guide this research. The theoretical framework is detailed in its entirety, followed by the limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and design controls set out in the study. Finally, this chapter defines key terms for the study.

## **Problem Statement**

While self-efficacy is focused on whether or not individuals believe that they have the ability to meet certain demands (Bandura, 1977; Dewitt, 2018), CTE expands on this as the collective perception that teachers in a school can make an educational difference in the lives of their students (Dewitt, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Knowing that educators' beliefs about their own capabilities to impact desired outcomes with students can be strengthened, we must look deeper into strategically utilizing sources of CTE and fostering the conditions that best promote these desired outcomes and this strategic work of educators. While certain conditions do not directly cause positive outcomes to occur, they can increase the likelihood that things will turn out as predicted (Donohoo, 2017). Hattie (2009) published *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* with the intent of determining the elements within the school setting that had the greatest impact on student achievement. Eells' meta-analysis in 2011 related to CTE and student achievement in education, adding an additional 400 studies, demonstrated that teachers' beliefs about the ability in their school as a whole are positively associated with student achievement. Hattie (2016), on the basis of Eells' meta-analysis, has since ranked CTE as the number 1 factor influencing student achievement with an effect size of 1.57, measuring the strength of the relationship between the two. Hattie uses Cohen's  $d$  to represent effect size. Cohen's  $d$  is defined as the comparison between two means. For reference, Cohen suggested that  $d=0.2$  be considered a small effect size, 0.5 represent a medium effect size, and 0.8 a large effect size (Salkind, 2010). According to Hattie's 2016 research, CTE ranked higher than socioeconomic status, prior achievement, home environment, and parental involvement.

With the effect size of 1.57, CTE ranks three times higher than socioeconomic status, parent involvement, and classroom management (Hattie, 2016). Because of the high correlation CTE has to student achievement, it is crucial to learn more about how collective efficacy beliefs are formed.

While individual teacher efficacy has proven to be a major influence in individuals' belief in successfully overcoming problems and the ability to reach certain goals, the literature on CTE notes the overall success at a schoolwide level, in terms of student achievement, depends on the collective belief that the teachers within the building can improve student achievement (Donohoo, 2017; Kudelich, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Other positive outcomes for overall CTE within a teaching team may include: greater teacher effort, teacher persistence, growth mindset and risk taking, high student expectations, increased student engagement, decreased disruptive behavior, continual commitment, and increased parent involvement (Donohoo, 2017). The problem, which was the focus of this study, is there is a lack of understanding of the sources that support the development of CTE and the conditions needed within schools for high levels of CTE to exist. Exploring educators' perceptions as to what conditions are necessary in generating CTE may inform educational leaders on the groundwork to begin to implement, continue to foster with time and resources needed, or discontinue.

Although Donohoo (2017) has stated there are no guaranteed steps of action that leaders can take to ensure the CTE of their teachers, she outlined a theory of action that includes six enabling conditions that, when attended to, can help foster CTE within a building. Through her research on school characteristics associated with CTE, Donohoo (2017) identified advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge of one

another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention as the six enabling conditions that will cause CTE to flourish. Within her book, *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning*, Donohoo (2017) stated that although existing research provides guidance on leaders fostering CTE within their teachers, there is still much to be learned regarding factors that contribute to high levels of CTE within their leadership practices. Teacher perceptions of these conditions and how their presence or absence work towards developing their CTE on a daily basis present themselves as a gap in literature discovered by the researcher and present the need to seek further exploration.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study, a narrative inquiry approach to qualitative research, was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate how these conditions are developed within the working environment of a school to contribute to CTE within teams. Adding to the existing body of research on this topic could provide guidance in continued focus or next steps for developing CTE.

Donohoo (2017) identified six enabling conditions associated with high CTE in schools. This study will add to the body of research focused on these six enabling conditions by investigating educator perceptions on conditions that work towards the development of CTE and the presence or absence of these conditions that may help or hinder this development. Although these enabling conditions are not necessarily a recipe for change, attending to some or all of these conditions may help in realizing the

possibility of CTE in the school setting. Their development will help increase the possibility for success, contributing to higher CTE and higher student achievement (Donohoo, 2017). The analysis of educator perceptions collected in this study provides insight for building leaders in fostering CTE by attending to certain conditions in a manner that best correlates with the perceptions of educators and their insight in approaching the “how” of implementation. The perceptions and findings in this study also seek to add to the body of research about the enabling conditions that promote CTE endorsed by Donohoo.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?
2. What are educators' perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework is the underlying structure of research that is built by investigating concepts and theories that inform the study (Maxwell, 2019). After immersing oneself in the research, a lens through which to view the research problem comes to the surface, creating a theoretical framework (Roberts, 2018). It is important for a researcher to build a theoretical framework to guide research inquiry and serve as an outline within which the research is conducted (Adom, Hussein, & Agyem, 2018). Each part of the research study should be informed by the theoretical framework and written through this lens (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The theoretical

framework should then guide each aspect of the research process from research question, literature review, methodology, discussion of findings, and conclusions (Adom et al., 2018).

**Social cognitive theory.** The theoretical framework for this study stems initially from Canadian psychologist Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory, later updated to social cognitive theory (SCT). According to SCT, a person's behavior is a result of choices to act based on cognitively processed information about oneself, the environment, and the perceived consequences of their behavior (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's theory put forth the argument that humans learn and are motivated to act through triadic reciprocal causation influenced by behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1989). While earlier theories on behavior explored either internal or external factors individually, SCT separated itself by examining both internal and external factors collectively when influencing behavior (Wulfert, 2016).

Bandura's (1986) SCT is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with one another in a social context or by observing others in a social context. This theory consists of six main constructs: reciprocal determinism, observational learning, reinforcement, expectations, behavioral capability, and self-efficacy. The construct of self-efficacy was added when the theory evolved from Social Learning Theory to SCT. Reciprocal determinism, or triadic reciprocal causation, is the core concept of SCT, looking at the triangular relationship between a person's learned experiences, environmental factors, and behavior motivations as causes in shaping each individual (Bandura, 1989). Reciprocal causation considers the relationship between thought, affect,

and action, concluding that what people think, believe, and feel affects their behavioral actions (Bandura, 1986).

Observational learning is the second construct of SCT. Observational learning, which occurs through observing both negative and positive behaviors, leads to a change in behavior in three ways: thinking about a situation in a new way and being motivated to act, direct experiences that occur, and when change is made permanent (Bandura, 1986, 1989). Bandura (1997) determined that a majority of human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. He found that from observing others, an individual can form concepts of how new behaviors are performed with this information serving as a guide for action. The third construct of SCT is that of reinforcements, which can be positive or negative. Reinforcements refer to one's motivation for behavior.

Reinforcements, internal and external, determine the likelihood of a choice behavior recurring or not recurring (Bandura, 1977). Expectations, the fourth construct, refers to the intentional consequences that may occur due to one's behavioral actions (Bandura, 1997). Tied to personal motivation, individuals think first about what will happen as an outcome of the behavior prior to engaging in such behavior. Behavior capability refers to one's ability to perform a behavior, and is the fifth construct of SCT. Behavior capability is based on one having the prior knowledge and skills essential to the task (Bandura, 1986).

**Self-efficacy.** Bandura (1977) introduced self-efficacy, the sixth construct of SCT, as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations, producing desired outcomes, powerfully affecting people's behavior, motivation, and ultimately their success or failure. Bandura

(1997) further identified a direct correlation between a person's perceived self-efficacy and behavior change determining that one's level of self-efficacy dictates whether one will engage in a certain behavior. Self-efficacy plays a large role in determining success (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Donohoo, 2017; Goddard, 2001). People with high self-efficacy will engage in challenging tasks with assurance and confidence in their abilities with sustained effort and commitment (Bandura, 1994; Goddard, 2001). Bandura developed four main sources influencing people's beliefs about their self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and physiological and emotional arousal.

The four sources of self-efficacy are addressed in detail in Chapter Two, but are summarized here. Mastery experiences, the most effective source in creating a strong sense of efficacy, involves one's personal experiences in success or failure. Efficacy beliefs are strengthened when success occurs, while experiences resulting in failure undermine efficacious beliefs (Bandura, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Vicarious experiences involve observing models similar to oneself, succeeding in what are seen as challenging activities, and persuading oneself that they too can achieve success (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Verbal persuasion (sometimes referred to as social persuasion), the third source of self-efficacy, refers to people who are persuaded verbally that they possess skills and capabilities to master given tasks. Most often, verbal persuasion takes the form of encouragement and feedback influencing behavior in a positive manner (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Physiological and emotional arousal, or affective states, describes one's feelings of excitement or stress and anxiety in a given situation (Bandura, 1994; Donohoo, 2017). Bandura (1994) concluded, while it is not the level of

intensity brought upon by emotional and physical reactions that is important, but rather how an individual perceives and interprets these reactions. People with a stronger sense of efficacy are likely to view these states as energizing, whereas those with lower levels of efficiency are left with feelings of stress and self-doubt (Bandura, 1994).

**Teacher self-efficacy.** Bandura (1997) identified teacher self-efficacy as a type of self-efficacy with the four sources of self-efficacy being linked to both teacher efficacy and CTE in many ways. We cannot examine CTE without first defining teacher efficacy. The first theorist noted as attempting to study teacher efficacy was Julian B. Rotter (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), theorizing that teachers' perceptions of their personal capabilities were a critical component when measuring teacher efficacy. This thinking paved the way for the Rand Corporation's in-depth research on teacher efficacy, allowing them to distinguish between teachers who felt capable and confident in their abilities to impact learning and those who believed their efforts were out of their control due to many outside factors (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) proposed an integrated model of teacher efficacy based on both the Rand Corporation's study and Bandura's description of self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's confidence and capabilities in the promotion of student learning (Goddard et al., 2000). Within an organization, such as a school setting, collective efficacy represents the beliefs of all group members as a collective whole (Bandura, 1997). A teacher can think positively about his or her own ability to influence student outcomes, but CTE is reached when a group reflects these beliefs about the collective ability to take action and achieve success within their school (Goddard et al., 2000). Educators with a positive belief of efficacy exhibit a greater sense of openness and

effort in exploring new methods to address student learning, exhibit effective planning and organization, show resilience during challenging tasks, display enthusiasm, and commitment, along with many other positive attributes (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Protheroe, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

**Collective teacher efficacy.** Through initial research on self-efficacy and teacher efficacy, CTE is based upon the shared beliefs within a school to produce desired student learning outcomes. Goddard et al. (2004) built upon the concept of teacher efficacy, defining CTE as the perceptions of teachers in a school that they themselves can collectively organize and carry out the course of action required to produce given accomplishments and levels of achievement success. Although teachers often teach in isolation behind their classroom doors with a great deal of autonomy to teach the way they want, people working in a social structure influenced by an organizational culture, such as a school, do not function in isolation and in turn do influence teachers' collective thoughts and beliefs (Bandura, 1997). These collective beliefs stem from the same four sources set forth for self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Outcomes of CTE include engaging in challenging tasks and willingness to try new strategies, strong planning and organization, and persistence when challenges present themselves (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Donohoo, 2017; Goddard et al., 2000). Ultimately, CTE proves to be an important predictor of student achievement despite outside factors (Goddard et al., 2000; Hattie, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

The concept of teacher efficacy first stemmed from Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, referring more specifically to teachers' perceptions of their own abilities to

influence student achievement (Hughes, 2015; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). From this, Bandura later went on to describe collective efficacy as a group's shared belief in their abilities to plan and execute actions required to produce certain outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017; Furr, 2018). Through the years, educational researchers have applied self-efficacy and collective efficacy to teacher efficacy and CTE (Rodriguez, 2019). The efficacy of a collective group of teachers is rooted in their shared beliefs in their shared abilities to produce successful student outcomes within their school setting (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Donohoo, 2017). In Donohoo's 2017 book, *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning*, she identified six enabling conditions to attend to in order for CTE to flourish within schools. These conditions were identified in relation to school characteristics linked to CTE, documented within the research, and include these variables: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention. Donohoo (2017) suggested that school leaders attend to the six enabling conditions to help foster CTE, helping to ensure teachers collaborative encounters are grounded in cohesive work and empowering teachers while fostering CTE.

Theoretical frameworks provide a particular perspective, or lens, through which to frame the study and examine a topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher aimed to build upon Bandura's early theories of self-efficacy and teacher efficacy with the more recent research of Goddard et al. (2004) and Donohoo (2017) supporting CTE and the enabling conditions Donohoo introduced through teacher perception. Teacher perceptions, the thoughts they have about their students and position, are molded by a

teacher's individual background and experiences (IRIS Center, n.d.). An individual's education, work, and culture may contribute to how a person views different situations (IRIS Center, n.d.). Teacher perceptions on Donohoo's enabling conditions of CTE were investigated through the lens of this theoretical framework.

### **Limitations**

Within this research study there were factors that were both within the researcher's control and those that were not. Although no research method is perfect, the researcher set out to limit variables when possible. Limitations, delimitations, and assumptions are outlined below.

According to Roberts (2018), limitations are particular attributes of the study that have a possible negative effect on the conclusions with which the researcher has no control. Limitations of this study include the following:

1. This study did not consider all variables that may influence perceptions related to an educator's thoughts of personal self-efficacy and/or CTE, such as past experiences or other outside factors.
2. This study was limited by the knowledge and understanding of the topics presented in this study.
3. This study was limited by a lack of control over the number of questionnaires completed in a timely manner.
4. Any preconceived perceptions or bias of participants towards that of their current teaching team and/or building staff could not be considered.
5. Integrity and honesty in completion of the questionnaires and willingness to share within interview and focus group sessions could not be controlled.

6. Researcher bias is possible in a qualitative narrative study.
7. The researcher attempted to add reliability by triangulating data through multiple reviews of session recordings and notes to draw upon common themes presented by interviewees.
8. Student demographics, including socioeconomic status and ethnicity, were not considered within this study.
9. The researcher did not look at student academic data, including standardized test results.
10. This study did not consider impacts the Coronavirus and school closures, Spring 2020, had on teachers and their perceptions of efficacy.

### **Delimitations**

Roberts (2018) defined delimitations as parameters of the study set forth by the researcher to narrow the extent of the study. Delimitations of this study included the following:

1. This study was limited to the research problem, methodology used, and the participants and setting of the study.
2. Participants meeting the criteria for this study were current elementary educators in the state of Missouri serving in buildings with the makeup of kindergarten through fifth grade with a student population of 300 or greater.
3. Participants meeting the criteria for this study were classified as either having high CTE or non-high CTE based on The Enabling Conditions of Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017). Participants

completing the questionnaire with an overall scale score of 72 or above were considered as having high CTE.

4. The theoretical framework of this study was based on the work of Badura's study of Social Cognitive Theory and self-efficacy, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy's study of teacher self-efficacy, and Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy's study of CTE.
5. This study was bound by the enabling conditions of CTE: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge of one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions of this study included the following:

1. There was an assumption of honesty.
2. Transferability of this study could apply to schools in the state of Missouri in which there are collective goals and collaboration with time in place set aside to target such goals working alongside one another.

### **Design Controls**

The researcher conducted a qualitative narrative study designed to gain insight into educators' perceptions of the conditions put in place that help to develop CTE within teacher teams and investigate how these conditions contributed to higher levels of CTE within these teams. The researcher had to acknowledge that all variables related to an educator's thoughts and feelings of their own personal self-efficacy and their CTE within their team could not be controlled and therefore could not be considered. Any preconceived perceptions of participants' current collaborative teams or the impact of the

Coronavirus could not be controlled and therefore were not considered in the narrative findings of this study. Researcher bias is a factor to consider when conducting a qualitative narrative study. For this reason, the researcher set aside any personal opinions and judgements and based the study on the research. Through data collection from educators, and careful analysis of the qualitative findings gathered through focus group interviews, personal bias of the researcher was controlled. Prior to conducting the formalized research process, the researcher met with a number of teachers and educational leaders that helped to ensure the validity of the research process through peer debriefing. This process helped to eliminate researcher bias or assumptions. This group of people was able to examine the research questions and focus group interview questions prior to the study taking place and provide feedback to the researcher that helped the overall success of the study and research process. Qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their world and the experiences within their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher conducted research through initial questionnaires discovering the conditions that develop CTE. The researcher then explored educator perceptions of why and how these conditions may contribute to higher CTE. The researcher conducted interviews and focus group sessions with educators who had perceived high CTE according to Donohoo's (2017) questionnaire, The Enabling Conditions of Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. Definitions of Donohoo's six enabling conditions of CTE were provided to focus group participants prior to focus group interview conduction to help provide context to participants. Insight as to what conditions generate their perception of high CTE was gained, along with how the presence or absence of such conditions may help or hinder these perceptions and their

development of CTE. Through the qualitative data presented both in the initial questionnaire and educator interviews and focus group sessions, the researcher was able to analyze responses, drawing conclusions to best answer the research questions presented.

The schools and teacher teams chosen for participation of this study were located in the state of Missouri with a population make up of 300 or greater kindergarten through fifth-grade students. The researcher further narrowed this field by participant completion of Donohoo's (2017) questionnaire, The Enabling Conditions of Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire, seeking an overall score of 72 and above and seeking teacher teams with high levels of perceived CTE for further research. Follow up communication was made to encourage completion of questionnaires. Further control was confined by the researcher with the research questions presented bound by the enabling conditions of CTE and qualitative methodology used based in focus group interviews.

The researcher assumed honesty and integrity in completion of the initial questionnaire by participants by communicating with all participants that their names, as well as their school building names, would not be identified within the study. The same held true during focus group interview sessions with the sharing of narrative data gathered to determine overall educator perceptions in answering the research questions. Full intent of confidentiality was communicated to all participants ahead of time to encourage honest and candid answers and discussions.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Key terms have been defined to help readers better understand the study.

**Advanced teacher influence.** One of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves teachers in leadership roles with power to make decisions on school-wide issues.

**Cohesive staff.** One of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves teachers agreeing with each other on fundamental and organizational issues.

**Collective teacher efficacy.** Belief of teachers in a given school that together they can plan and execute a course of action needed to make an educational difference for their students more so than other outside circumstances (Goddard et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

**Effective systems of intervention.** One of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves instructional practices and targeted interventions to students with diverse needs to ensure all students are successful.

**Enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy.** Conditions that when put in place within a school building enable the realization of CTE (Donohoo, 2017).

**Goal consensus.** One of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves agreement on measurable and appropriately challenging goals that help to achieve purposeful results.

**Responsiveness of leadership.** One of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves leaders who demonstrate the ability to respond to the needs of their staff and cause teachers to feel supported.

**Self-efficacy.** "People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives,

determining how people feel, think, and motivate themselves, and behave” (Bandura, 1994, p. 2).

**Student achievement.** A multifaceted construct that addresses demonstration and accomplishment of specific learning goals, skills, or behaviors (Guskey, 2013).

**Teacher efficacy.** A teacher’s belief that he or she carries a sense of competence to perform the necessary activities to influence student learning (Protheroe, 2008).

**Teachers’ knowledge about one another’s work.** One of Donohoo’s (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE; involves having intimate knowledge about what goes on in other classrooms within the school in which one works (Donohoo, 2017).

## **Summary**

Self-efficacy plays a large role in determining one's success. Teachers who feel capable and confident in their abilities to impact student learning have the potential to influence student achievement at high levels (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017). Furthermore, teacher groups who hold shared beliefs in their collective abilities to produce successful student outcomes, holding high CTE, have the capacity for greater impact on student achievement. With the rising pressure to increase student achievement, teachers and teacher leaders must ensure that they are promoting the development of the CTE within their teachers and schools, in turn increasing student achievement. Sources of self-efficacy and conditions that promote CTE must be examined in order to maximize the overall efficacy of a school (Dobbins, 2016; Donohoo, 2017; Haderer, 2020). This research sought to fill the gap in current literature where teacher perceptions of these conditions and how they guide their work and their CTE on a daily basis present

themselves. Donohoo's enabling conditions of CTE provided a lens for which this research was conducted.

Chapter Two contains a review of literature, organized thematically around topics of self-efficacy, CTE, sources of such, and conditions that develop CTE important to this study. The literature review begins with an early history of self-efficacy and moves through current research centered around CTE. Chapter Three contains a detailed description of the methodology behind the research of the study including data collection and methods used to analyze the findings. Chapter Four contains a presentation of findings and conclusions based on analyzed results from the study, and Chapter Five gives conclusions of the study, implications, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Strong connections have been made about teacher self-efficacy as well as collective teacher efficacy (CTE) on student achievement. The effect size of CTE on student achievement is stronger than the direct link between socioeconomic status and student achievement, while also being easier to influence (Bandura, 1994; Hattie, 2016). During a period of both elevated school accountability and state standards, teachers have had little choice whether or not to work behind closed doors in isolation from one another and have had little control over the curriculum they have taught. Teachers need to work collectively as a collaborative organization with the belief that they, as a collective group, can improve student achievement. Teachers and building leaders are challenged to believe that this collective work will have a positive impact on student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

In exploring the conditions that develop CTE, this review of literature takes a thematic approach in examining the link between self-efficacy and CTE, and the sources and enabling conditions impacting CTE. The first section of the literature review will focus on teacher self-efficacy. This section will begin with the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as one's belief in their own capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that produce influence over events that affect one's life (Bandura, 1994). Building upon self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy describes teachers' beliefs in their abilities to influence student learning, even those who may be considered more challenging or less motivated (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Within this section, the researcher will build upon the concept of self-efficacy to shift to the more specific teacher

self-efficacy and the four sources that help to build both self-efficacy and in particular teacher self-efficacy. Four key sources have been known to shape self-efficacy beliefs within individuals: Mastery Experiences, Vicarious Experiences, Verbal/Social Persuasion, and Affective States (Bandura, 1986; Dewitt, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). These four sources, all based in experiences, can contribute to the development of teacher self-efficacy and will be detailed more throughout this Review of Literature. The next section explores the concept of CTE with the connection between self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and CTE. This section will detail the sources that foster CTE and detail the enabling conditions in regard to impacting high levels of CTE in educators. Collective teacher efficacy builds on self-efficacy to include the beliefs that as a whole building, staff can organize and execute cumulative efforts and actions required for positive effect on students (Dewitt, 2018; Kroner, 2017). Donohoo (2017) outlined six enabling conditions associated with CTE that will be detailed in this review of literature: Advanced Teacher Influence, Goal Consensus, Teachers' Knowledge of One Another's Work, Cohesive Staff, Responsiveness of Leadership, and Effective Systems of Intervention. The final section of the review of literature focuses on educational leadership and its connection to CTE, expanding on the promotion of CTE in both positive and negative manners.

This study attempted to inform educators on how to build a greater capacity for promoting CTE within themselves and their teaching teams, while building connections to sources of CTE and conditions that impact high levels of CTE. With CTE linked to student achievement, this study will provide information that will help educators best determine where educators should devote their time and resources for the greatest impact

on CTE, and therefore student achievement. Additionally, this Review of Literature will connect educational leadership and CTE in how leaders may both positively and negatively promote CTE within their building and teaching teams.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy**

The theoretical framework through which this study was viewed included the work of Bandura's study of Social Cognitive Theory and self-efficacy, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy's study of teacher self-efficacy, and Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy's study of CTE. The theory of self-efficacy in teachers, often referred to as teacher efficacy, has been well researched and explored. First explored by the Rand Corporation in 1976 (as cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), teacher efficacy was described as the degree to which teachers believed they could control the reinforcement of their actions despite environmental factors outside of their control. Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy possess a strong sense of confidence and competence in their teaching abilities (Goddard et al., 2000; Protheroe, 2008). This confidence and competence lead teachers to believe if they try their hardest, put forth their best effort and skill set, they can get through to even their most challenging students (Haderer, 2020; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Some additional characteristics are embedded in the behaviors of teachers who exhibit a strong sense of teacher efficacy. Teacher behaviors found to be related to efficacy include these: greater levels of setting high expectations and goals, planning and organization, openness and willingness to experiment with new ideas and methods to meet student needs, persistence and resilience to try another strategy when things do not unfold as planned, less criticism of students who make mistakes, and less inclination to

refer difficult students for special education services (Haderer, 2020). Dobbins (2016) conducted research examining the relationship between grit and teacher efficacy, finding that teachers with higher levels of efficacy have a greater sense of perseverance and passion to pursue long-term goals and reach their full potential, even when faced with challenges or setbacks. Teacher efficacy influences performance commitment, instructional efforts, and professional retention (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Campbell (2019) conducted research investigating what educational support structures affect teacher efficacy and impact teacher retention, finding that increasing teacher efficacy helps to retain teachers, while lack of teacher efficacy leads to teacher turnover. It can be concluded that if teachers have a strong sense of self-efficacy, they are more likely to expend effort in planning appropriate learning materials and activities to persist with even their most difficult students and overcome challenging behaviors and situations, while being considerably more optimistic than their peers and taking more personal responsibility for both success and failure (Dobbins, 2016; Haderer, 2020). Parsons (2017) explored program implementation on teacher efficacy as it relates to expected outcomes of students with challenging behaviors, indicating that teacher efficacy is positively related to teachers' perceptions of student outcomes and that teachers with positive perceptions of self-efficacy create positive results helping them maintain a positive atmosphere for learning and promote further self-efficacy for themselves and their students.

### **Sources of Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Hoy (2000) expanded on research by Bandura (1977), who first conducted research in connection to self-efficacy and behavioral change. Bandura connected self-

efficacy to four major sources: (a) performance accomplishments in the form of mastery experiences when one has been able to successfully make a difference; (b) vicarious experiences in the form of observing another teacher using effective practice, or even risk-taking tasks, and feeling confident that through the use of the same strategy, one could be successful in reaching their own students; (c) verbal and social persuasion in the form of feedback that highlights effective teaching strategies with constructive and specific suggestions for improvement that leads to belief they can succeed; and (d) affective states in the form of safety to take risks when removing feelings of fear and anxiety. Bloomberg and Pitchford (2017) recently redefined these as mastery moments, models of success, feedback, and safety. Hoy (2000) added that mastery experiences are most crucial during early years of teaching for long-term development of teacher efficacy and that these teachers should be surrounded by a culture where the norm is to ask for help to promote mastery experiences over failing attempts. Through mastery experiences, teachers grow from novice teacher to expert teacher, beginning to recognize features and patterns potentially important for improving instruction (National Research Council, 2000).

It is important to note that self-efficacy is something that is developed and not an attribute with which individuals are born. A newborn comes into the world without a sense of self. It is exploratory and observational experiences in which they see themselves reach success through their actions that provide the initial developments for their sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Just as adults develop in their sense of self-efficacy, young children engage in exploratory and creative play activities that provide opportunities for daily growth in their capabilities with basic skills, as well as their sense

of efficacy. As teachers develop a level of expertise in instruction, it is not simply their general knowledge or use of strategies that begin to differentiate, but their ability to reason and solve problems (National Research Council, 2000). It is through their successful experiences that individuals, young and old, begin and continue to build an expertise along with a robust belief in their personal sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1994; National Research Council, 2000). A resilient sense of efficacy requires experiences in not only successes, but overcoming obstacles through perseverance and effort to experience such successes (Bandura, 1994). Young and old, this sense of self-efficacy is built upon four main sources of influence: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and affective states.

**Mastery experiences.** Bloomberg and Pitchford (2017) concluded that experiencing success in given situations has the ability to influence perspective of one's abilities in a positive manner. Mastery experiences, or past experiences of success, are the most impactful of the four sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Furr, 2018; Hughes, 2015; Ryba, 2018). When success is experienced and success is attributed to influences within one's control, efficacy increases along with the expectancy that similar performances can be repeated with flexibility in approaching new situations (Donohoo, 2017; National Research Council, 2000; Rodriguez, 2019). Over time, as teachers experience success, with belief they have control over such successes, they become more willing to believe success can be achieved repeatedly, developing persistence in executing a plan of action needed to accomplish success (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017; Hughes, 2015). As teachers develop expertise, through mastery experiences, this builds their capacity to view, understand and solve problems, while also remaining flexible and adaptive to new

experiences (National Research Council, 2000). Challenges faced during a particular task and the amount of effort needed to accomplish the task influence the individual's efficacy beliefs (Daniels, 2018; Zambelli, 2019). Repeated successful experiences build a robust sense of efficacy, especially when the successful experiences occur after being faced with difficult setbacks that require extending perseverance and effort in order to accomplish the task (Bandura, 1997; Daniels, 2018; Hill, 2018; Zambelli, 2019). On the other hand, experiences interpreted as failures can undermine one's efficacious beliefs (Becchio, 2016; Hill, 2018). However, individuals who are faced with challenges and overcome them to meet success, develop a stronger belief in their own ability to face hardships and rebound when doing so (Bandura, 1997; Hughes, 2015). Teacher efficacy and resilience are often looked at through a similar lens. The concept of resilience refers to the positive ability to rebound from adversity, challenging tasks, or even failure. A strong sense of teacher efficacy is important for teacher resilience, while this level of efficacy can grow as teachers encounter and overcome tough challenges (Haderer, 2020; Kunnari, Ilomaki, & Toom, 2018).

**Vicarious experiences.** Bandura (1977) described vicarious experiences as observations of others performing challenging tasks without adverse consequences that in turn generate expectations in one's self that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts through similar tasks. As the second most powerful source of teacher efficacy, vicarious experiences provide observations and modeling in experiences in school environments similar to the one in which they serve (Donohoo, 2017; Furr, 2018). This allows teachers to see others who are faced with similar opportunities and challenges performing at high levels, creating beliefs that they too can achieve similar

outcomes despite these odds (Donohoo, 2017; Furr, 2018; Schneider, 2018). Vicarious experiences can take many forms, but center around observing others and discussing the experiences of others (Goddard et al., 2000; Morgan, 2019). When modeling is used to demonstrate successful performance of a task, observers believe themselves capable of performing a similar task and achieving similar results by imitation (Bandura, 1997; Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Daniels, 2018). Vicarious experiences can take many forms through modeling: site visits, viewing prerecorded video, networking with educators in facing similar challenges, and accomplishing goals and reading about such (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019; Schluntz, 2018). When teachers see successful examples of educators performing well or overcoming obstacles, efficacy is increased, believing when faced with similar situations, they can do the same. However, the opposite can also be true when observing those experiencing failure; efficacy levels can decrease (Becchio, 2016; Kroner, 2017).

Within vicarious experiences lies teacher mentoring and coaching based in observation and reflective discussion. Teacher mentoring is defined as a working relationship between mentee teacher and mentor teacher, educational specialist or educational leader in which the mentor provides personal and professional development on an ongoing basis, most effective when it is individualized, relationship based, and based on the specific needs of the mentee (Alemdag & Erdem, 2017; Camacho, 2020; Cipriano, 2019). Mentoring programs should include a variety of activities and be personalized to maximize the individuals' strengths and remediate weaknesses (Callahan, 2018; Cipriano, 2019). Teachers can spend time observing experienced teachers and being observed by their mentor teacher instructional specialists and school leaders.

Observations should then be followed by reflective coaching conversations (Cipriano, 2019). A strong mentor teacher will help their mentee develop strong reflective practices through dialogue centered around classroom management and instructional pedagogy (Callahan, 2018). Teacher mentoring and coaching are said to motivate mentee teachers to invest more in teacher professional development and job commitment, as well as have a positive impact on teacher retention (Cipriano, 2019). Highly effective teacher mentors have been connected to stronger academic achievement, improved student behavior, and increased teacher motivation (Callahan, 2018). These mentoring supports and outcomes can improve one's self-efficacy.

**Verbal/social persuasion.** Social, or verbal, persuasion is the source of self-efficacy that empowers a person through confident and positive conversation or action (Bandura, 1997; Beland, 2016). Social persuasion comes from feedback and reassurance from supervisors, mentors, or colleagues about one's performance or capabilities (Kudulich, 2018). The level of influence the feedback has on an individual's efficacy is often determined by the amount of credibility the individual holds with the receiver and how genuine the receiver feels the feedback is (Bushey, 2019; Kudulich, 2018). One is more likely to be influenced through persuasion when feedback is given by an individual that one respects as credible and trustworthy, as well as when one is confident in their ability (Bandura, 1997; Beland, 2016; Rodriguez, 2019; Schneider, 2018). Pairing vicarious experiences with social, or verbal, persuasion through modeling and peer coaching can enhance efficacy beliefs in those seeking alternative practices in their craft (Hill, 2018). In schools, teachers receive verbal persuasion in many forms: professional development in a new strategy and its effectiveness, specific feedback from supervisors,

solicited advice from colleagues, or even notes of encouragement (Hill, 2018; Morgan, 2019). Social persuasion is the most commonly used source of efficacy because it is readily available and simple to deploy (Bandura, 1977; Becchio, 2016; Morgan, 2019). Bloomberg and Pitchford (2017) described social and verbal persuasion as boosting self-efficacy through collaboration, as well as feedback and coaching, given with intention to guide and encourage learners to successfully complete a task.

Within verbal/social persuasion lies supervisor evaluation and feedback for the benefit of teacher growth. Teacher evaluation is a process by which to recognize and measure teacher effectiveness (Palmisano, 2017). A quality evaluation should be fair and effective in evaluating the performance of a teacher with intention to encourage improvement and continuous growth (Orange, 2018). While an evaluation system may be rooted in documenting teacher performance for accountability purposes, it should capitalize on teacher effectiveness and development (Orange, 2018). The dual purpose of the evaluation system combines holding teachers accountable for high-quality instruction and student learning with continuous developments within a teacher's instructional practice (Orange, 2018). Rooted in the evaluation process is evaluation feedback, which links to verbal persuasion. Evaluation feedback should serve to acknowledge instructional practice effectiveness and improvement while intending to support (Smith, 2017). Palmisano's 2017 qualitative research found that teachers are persuaded by their overall evaluation ratings, serving as an example of verbal persuasion in itself. When the measuring tool serves as a rating scale for teacher effectiveness, this impacts the teacher's self-efficacy levels. Narrative data from this study went on to detail that when evaluations took place in a less formal manner with feedback given more frequently, it

built more confidence in both knowing what they were doing well, as well as how one could improve (Palmisano, 2017). As a result of teacher reflection on their evaluation and feedback markings, a teacher's sense of efficacy can develop (Orange, 2018; Palmisano, 2017).

**Affective states.** Affective states, coined by Bandura (1977) as physiological states and emotional arousal, is the fourth and final source of self-efficacy. Although often referred to as the least influential because it is the source that is rooted in emotions, affective states refer to one's feeling of excitement or anxiety towards their ability or inability to do their job (Donohoo, 2017; Schneider, 2018). These physical and emotional states individuals look through when judging their own self-efficacy during specific situations can be both positive and negative. If an individual approaches a specific task with excitement and eagerness, self-efficacy is influenced in a positive manner. However, if an individual approaches a specific task with negative emotions, such as stress or anxiety, self-efficacy can be negatively influenced (Kroner, 2017). Increased heart rate, perspiration, and feelings of nervousness could be signs of lack of competence and could in turn lead to decreased self-efficacy, whereas positive experiences and feelings foster increased self-efficacy (Brouwer, 2018; Daniels, 2018; Hill, 2018). The way in which people interpret these feelings influence their efficacy beliefs, depending upon whether the situation is perceived internally as a challenge or a threat (Hill, 2018). When a task presents itself as a challenge, the task can bring about heightened levels of focus and energy, but when viewed as a threat with high levels of emotional stress, this may interfere with one's capability to achieve the task at hand. If individuals experience high levels of affective states leading to negative thoughts, people have a heightened fear of

failure and are less likely to expect success. When these affective states can be minimized, or individuals are able to reduce these feelings related to a given task, individuals are able to bring about positive outcomes (Becchio, 2016; Hill, 2018).

### **Overview of Collective Teacher Efficacy**

Mayer, Mullens, and Moore (2000) emphasized the importance of all staff within a school setting taking collective responsibility for the learning of all students. Comparable to self-efficacy, CTE refers to the belief of teachers in a given school that they together can plan and execute a course of action needed to make an educational difference for their students. Teachers in a school with high collective efficacy believe they can get through to even the most difficult students. These shared beliefs shape the environment of a school's culture, determining the power of the organization (Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018; Goddard et al., 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). In addition, high levels of CTE are associated with an elevated sense of purpose that helps groups view setbacks as temporary obstacles with the persistence to overcome them rather than allowing evidence confirming their inefficacy (Goddard et al, 2004; Hoy et al., 2002). Teachers will collaboratively come together through mutual commitment to the school, to share what they know and collectively make things happen, developing team capacity to create results (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Senge, 2006). When teachers collectively present themselves with a can-do attitude, believing that together they can make a difference, they are more likely to accept and persist in challenging goals than those who characterize themselves with perceptions of low collective efficacy who are less likely to accept responsibility for students' low performance and more likely to point to outside student risk factors. Bandura (1994) stated, "Schools in which staff

members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for development that promotes academic attainments regardless of whether they serve predominantly advantaged or disadvantaged students” (p. 81).

Not only encouraging teachers to collaborate effectively, but carving out time to do so is crucial when working towards the common goal of student achievement. Collaborating effectively over time through even the toughest times will result in a group’s collective belief in effecting positive change and building capacity through learning from one another (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017). Bandura (1986) proposed four sources of self-efficacy: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experience, (c) social persuasion, and (d) affective states, recently redesigned by Bloomberg and Pitchford (2017) as mastery moments, models of success, feedback, and safety. Although first presented by Bandura as sources of self-efficacy, further research has been conducted in how these same sources operate similarly at the group level and mastery experiences have been identified as the most successful (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Donohoo, 2017; Goddard et al., 2004). When teacher teams experience success in teaching experiences, they expect similar results can be repeated through similar actions, continuing to build belief in the capabilities of the faculty. Optimism, confidence, and resilience develops in teachers that evolves from successful experiences, setting the tone for learning and growing together (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Donohoo, 2017; Goddard et al., 2004; Senge, 2006). Eells (2011) connected teachers sharing the responsibility for leading to empowerment in the belief they can make a difference and

confidence in mastery experiences that not only build CTE but serve as models of success for others.

### **Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy**

Donohoo (2017) identified six enabling conditions that can help in realizing the possibility of CTE in schools. These characteristics were identified based on research on school characteristics associated with CTE to increase the chances of CTE being fostered within a given school building or teaching team (Donohoo, 2017). They are (a) advanced teacher influence, (b) goal consensus, (c) teachers' knowledge of one another's work, (d) cohesive staff, (e) responsiveness of leadership, and (f) effective systems of intervention. Although these school characteristics do not cause things to happen, they promote circumstances that foster CTE in schools. Small steps of action can be taken within each enabling condition to help guide the promotion of CTE (Donohoo, 2017).

**Advanced teacher influence.** Advanced teacher influence involves teacher voice and input in decision making on the small scale, while extending to teachers taking on meaningful leadership roles that include decision-making power guiding decisions on school-wide issues (Hood, 2018). When teachers are provided with this opportunity, decisions are better understood, communicated, and accepted by the staff as a whole. With this being said, change is more successful in producing the desired outcome and lasts longer because those involved feel a collective commitment and responsibility in the process and a sense of urgency is created in moving forward together (Donohoo, 2017; Kotter, 2012; Reeves, 2020).

When teachers feel entrusted to be involved and share input at this level, have the ability to make important decisions in curriculum, professional learning, assessment, and

other important school level issues, efficacy increases (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018). Shared leadership, leadership taking place at all levels within the system including teachers, brings greater awareness within the decision-making process, increasing the motivation to accomplish goals with a greater degree of urgency, participation, and effort, ultimately leading to a greater sense of empowerment for all involved (Donohoo, 2017; Kotter, 2012; Reeves, 2020).

Leaders are encouraged to find areas of school improvement in which teachers have the opportunity to not only provide input, but lead the charge in making decisions (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). A strong level of CTE can be developed when teachers are provided with opportunities for autonomy and influence at the school-wide level (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017; Eells, 2011; Hattie, 2016). When teachers experience positive influence in decision making and feel their collective ability contributed to carrying out the decisions, a greater sense of CTE is encouraged. A feeling of empowerment promotes CTE while resulting in a sense of longing to participate and be engaged (Donohoo, 2017).

**Goal consensus.** When a team collaboratively identifies and commits to measurable and appropriately challenging school goals, goal consensus is reached and teams are better able to achieve desired results (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019). Based on a synthesis of 31 research studies in 2009, Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd identified three key components required for successfully setting goals. First, the team must have the capability to reach the goals set forth. Second, the goals must be clear and specific. Third, the team must be committed to each of the goals set forth. Furthermore, Robinson et al. outlined processes involved when setting goals starting with first finding the

discrepancy between a school's current reality and their ultimate desired outcome. This process continues with encouraging behaviors aligned with the goals in mind; focused attention, persistence and determination, and sustained effort.

A high correlation between goal consensus and CTE was found when goals were collectively developed and team members held a strong belief in their capacity to improve as a staff through coordinated efforts (Kurz & Knight, 2004; Ryba, 2018, Senge, 2006). Along with an increased sense of CTE, teams that work towards common goals develop enhanced performance, learn alongside one another, develop a greater sense of purpose, and are more willing to take on challenging tasks in the future (Donohoo, 2017; Kurz & Knight, 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). Teams then develop relationships dependent of one another, relying on and complimentary of one another, building efficacy not only independently, but as a group (Senge, 2006).

School leaders that carry out school improvement practices must be committed to addressing specific common goals and influencing their teams to achieve these common goals (Leatherwood, 2019). In order for leaders to establish the importance of goal consensus, they must aim to connect goals to the vision of the school as a whole and encourage goal setting that becomes progressively more challenging (Donohoo, 2017; Robinson et al., 2009). High expectations must be kept at the forefront, while recognizing joint accomplishments where expectations were met, as well as celebrating wins big and small (Donohoo, 2017; Kotter, 2012; Nordick, 2017). Leaders must put value in teamwork and help teams to understand the role teamwork plays in accomplishing common goals (Leatherwood, 2019). Additionally, leaders must have a protocol in place in addressing individuals or teams who are struggling to meet

expectations toward the common goal, providing a safe place to ask questions and having constructive conversations when the need arises (Leatherwood, 2019; Nordick, 2017).

**Teachers' knowledge about one another's work.** Teachers gain a firm trust in their peers' ability to positively impact student learning when they have a more detailed knowledge about each other's instructional practice (Donohoo, 2017). Teachers' knowledge about one another's work is linked to how professional learning and collaboration are carried out, with opportunities for teachers to discuss planning, assessing, and teaching (Morgan, 2019). This is fostered by peer observation and meaningful collaboration rooted in deep dialogue. Peer observation is a learning strategy rooted in Bandura's (1977) observational learning theory, in which one teacher observes another, often more experienced teacher, with the intention of developing one's instructional practice. This often occurs with a more novice teacher observing a veteran teacher, learning in this capacity (National Research Council, 2000; Schenk, 2016; Vincent, 2018). After observation is completed, teachers then engage in dialogue with one another about the instructional practices observed, creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, which in turn allows teachers to discuss new ideas and grow professionally from one another (Schenk, 2016; Senge, 2006). This productive dialogue allows teacher teams to acknowledge new ideas and build above them, building access to a large pool of knowledge from one another (Schenk, 2016; Senge, 2006).

Professional learning through modeling and peer observation promotes positive changes in lesson planning, classroom management, and instructional strategies, promoting with that teacher self-growth (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Vincent, 2018). As teachers improve their skills through modeling peer observation and enriched

dialogue about such, they learn how to best respond to students, in turn increasing student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Vincent, 2018). When teachers are provided opportunities to learn together and from one another, these opportunities will likely foster CTE (Donohoo, 2017).

Educational leaders can work to provide opportunities for teachers to build their knowledge about one another's work by encouraging peer observation, as well as videotaping instruction, developing common assessment, and sharing teaching practices and student work in which collaboration takes place to gain knowledge about one's practice as well as the practice of others (Donohoo, 2017). One of the main goals of educational leaders in supporting this work is to establish a trust-based collaborative culture within teaching teams where individuals feel comfortable and safe in sharing their vulnerable teaching experiences with others (Schenk, 2016; Vincent, 2018). Teachers must not feel judgment from their team members, but feel as though they are all there to help ensure the success of each individual team member and their students (Vincent, 2018).

**Cohesive staff.** Cohesion is defined as a deeply rooted understanding about the purpose with which a team approaches all organizational issues in a unified manner (Donohoo, 2017; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017). Building cohesion among a school staff contributes to many different factors: shared purpose and vision, a collective sense of belonging, and meaningful relationships in which people feel connected in some way (Donohoo, 2017; Hood, 2018). When cohesion is built among a school staff, staff members hold unified beliefs about common goals and school priorities, student needs, instructional practices and assessment strategies, and student performance expectations

(Donohoo, 2017; Summers, 2017). Teams that get along with one another are more likely to come to agreement about the work that needs to be done and support one another through this work (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018).

Cohesion of a staff is deemed effective when school staff and collaborative teams agree on the fundamental issues impacting student learning (Donohoo, 2017; O'Quinn, 2018). Cohesion is a vital component needed as schools work to build instructional practices and foster CTE, both resulting in increasing student achievement outcomes (Summers, 2017). When there is cohesion among school staff, staff members are more open to social persuasion, increasing efficacy among individuals and teams collectively (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019).

Educational leaders play an important role in helping to build a cohesive staff. Fullan (2016) laid out four key components in which leaders must connect in order for cohesion to be built: focused direction, collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and secure accountability. A focused direction is driven by a shared vision in which clear goals are established, along with action steps for achieving these goals (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017). For collaborative cultures to be the norm and be successful, educational leaders need to intentionally create opportunities for meaningful collaboration in which the work connects back to the focused direction, vision, and goals, and instructional practices are enhanced (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017). Strategies on which educational leaders need to focus for deepening learning among their staff include planning or seeking out high-quality professional learning and maintaining a focus on learning and student achievement data during all planned collaboration and professional learning (Donohoo, 2017; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017). When

securing accountability, leaders need to create a culture in which staff members are accountable to themselves, as well as their team members in terms of student achievement. Leaders should be transparent in sharing this data and this data should drive decision making for future goals and action steps (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017).

**Responsiveness of leadership.** School leaders are responsible for setting the tone of the school, fostering collaboration, professionalism, and trust (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Willingham, 2019). Responsive leaders exhibit care, respect, and trust in their staff while working to protect teachers from issues that may distract from instruction and learning (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). By consistently showing consideration for staff members and working to meet their needs, responsive leaders work to minimize their staff's affective states (Morgan, 2019). Responsive leaders must be aware of teacher responsibility and situations that may detract from these responsibilities, helping to limit and support through these issues (Donohoo, 2017; Filppula, 2016).

When care and respect for teachers are evidenced by the leader, as well as being aware of teachers' professional needs, teacher efficacy is increased (Wendland, 2018). When teachers feel supported by their leader, they have a greater sense of collective ability increasing their CTE (Donohoo, 2017). Teachers become more committed to their professions when principals work to ensure a positive school climate built around staff collaboration and reflection (Dueno, 2018). When leaders are able to respond to the needs of their staff, there is a greater sense of support and belief in positively impacting student outcomes (Donohoo, 2017).

When school leaders consistently function with the assumption that it is their responsibility to support others as they carry out their duties effectively, leaders are responsive while showing genuine concern and mutual respect for their staff (Donohoo, 2017; Hood, 2018; Norris, 2018). Educational leaders can support their staff through social persuasion by providing their staff members with feedback, reassurance, and encouragement (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018). Showing genuine concern for staff members through positive encouragement increases the likelihood staff members will continuously work towards the school improvement goals (Norris, 2018). Responsiveness of leadership also includes providing teachers with the needed materials: professional learning, tools, and resources needed to feel successful (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017; Hood, 2018).

**Effective systems of intervention.** Effective systems of intervention help make certain that all students are experiencing success at school both behaviorally and academically. Systems of intervention help ensure processes are in place for the differentiation needed to meet students' individual needs based on their ability (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019). This condition is not always easily executed because it often comes with financial challenges, support personnel challenges, and encouraging community partnerships (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018). A familiar process used by educators to create an effective system of intervention comes from the response to intervention (RTI) model. The RTI model is a framework for providing early intervention for students identified as at risk based on a universal screener, targeting those students with early interventions while monitoring progress, through a three-tiered approach (Nelms, 2019). Through RTI, teachers are provided a way to deliver high

quality instructional practices based on students' needs, preventing student failure by providing consistent intervention, progress monitoring, and adjusting instructional practices based on student response (Nelms, 2019). Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is another term that is often used interchangeably with RTI, but holds a different meaning. While a layer within the general education model, MTSS supports all students' academic and behavior needs. The purpose established for MTSS is to produce a school-wide culture where educators adjust supports based on student data to provide immediate support at the appropriate levels to prevent significant problems from arising (Pullen & Kennedy, 2019). While many overarching principles of RTI and MTSS are similar, MTSS is much more comprehensive in focusing on school-wide reform over intervention provided to a small group of students.

When teachers believe that these intervention systems are in place from the very beginning, they are more likely to hold a strong sense of efficacy. When the intervention systems are approached in a systematic manner throughout the whole school, from teacher to teacher, grade-level to grade-level, CTE is fostered in a greater sense (Daniels, 2018). Each individual teacher plays a vital role and carries out responsibilities in the various aspects of ensuring high levels of learning for all, believing their collective efforts can make a difference (Donohoo, 2017). Teachers with high levels of efficacy are more likely to be intentional in planning and executing instruction and intervention (Wendland, 2018).

Educational leaders need to start by evaluating their current reality in regard to intervention, as well as the various aspects of intervention plans available, and determining which aspects might best fit the need for their staff and students and what is

transferable to their current school system (Donohoo, 2017). This starts first in leaders evaluating and addressing any issues recognized with classroom instruction as no level of intervention can make up for inadequate core instruction (Richardson, 2016). This work continues with bigger shifts, including reconfiguration of the master schedule and staff to best support the intervention model (Hales, 2017; Richardson, 2016). Leaders must be able to best facilitate a building-wide intervention approach while making decisions rooted in what is best for the students involved (Hales, 2017). Facilitating this approach includes providing collaboration time among staff, planning and supporting appropriate professional development, and modeling best practices through mentoring and coaching (Hales, 2017).

### **Educational Leadership and Collective Teacher Efficacy**

Bandura (1993) found that those with strong leadership skills are able to encourage their staff to develop a collaborative effort to overcome the difficulties encountered in improving student achievement. Researchers have suggested that educational leaders need to spend time building CTE within their teachers and building culture. They have advised that educational leaders provide their teachers with opportunities to build their knowledge, collaborate with colleagues on collective tasks, participate in shared decision making, receive feedback that is purposeful, and be treated as experts in their field with leader confidence (Lee, 2016; Malally, 2016). Lee (2016) went on to recommend the following five leadership actions: create leadership opportunities for teachers, provide open communication and transparency, facilitate a positive school culture, provide resources and meaningful professional development, and trust teachers. Kouzes and Posner (2017) found that teachers seek leaders who demonstrate confidence in both

individual and group capabilities and provide the means to achieve collaborative goals while remaining passionate despite hurdles they encounter. Donohoo (2017) added to this thinking when naming the six enabling conditions for promoting CTE. Donohoo (2017) stated, “While enabling conditions do not cause things to happen, they increase the likelihood that things will turn out as expected” (p. 28), reasoning that if leaders can attend to these six enabling conditions increasing CTE is likely.

### **Educational Leadership's Role in Positively or Negatively Promoting Collective Teacher Efficacy**

Research has found that CTE is influenced by the building principal, but studies have shown great differences in determining what factors or behaviors contribute to the promotion of CTE at the highest levels (Bryson, 2019; Fackler & Malmberg, 2016). School leaders have the responsibility to enhance the CTE of a school because schools that are highly efficacious have high expectations for student achievement (Wells, 2018). Teachers’ beliefs in their students’ abilities have a direct impact on students’ level of mastery; when teachers have positive expectations for students, students in turn exhibit positive outcomes (Hattie, 2012; Wendland, 2018). When principals focus on truly developing the CTE of the staff as a whole, they are investing in their team as well as their students entrusted to their daily care at school. Therefore, collective efficacy reflects positive self-efficacy for teachers and students alike (Donohoo, 2017; Wendland, 2018).

With mastery experiences found to be the most powerful source of efficacy, educational leaders need to lead in ways that provide these experiences for teachers through thoughtfully designed staff development activities and action research projects.

When teams experience mastery, they attribute success to causes within their control, thus increasing their collective efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Goddard et al., 2000; Hoy et al., 2002; Wells, 2018). When teachers see or hear about other teachers performing well, expectations are generated that they too can succeed (Bandura, 1977). In 2019, Banks conducted research to determine how the self-efficacy of a principal could contribute to the school's overall collective efficacy, with two themes emerging during this research: capacity building and leading by example. Within the theme of capacity building, smaller themes emerged, including creating a collaborative environment and relationship building. Small wins within this theme included celebrating small successes, that of individuals and the school as a whole, knowing strengths of staff members, and providing positive feedback (Banks, 2019). Within the theme of leading by example, actions that were consistent included modeling being a team player, strong communication and collaboration, and relationship building. These actions modeled the self-efficacy of the leader, while also impacting the efficacy of teachers and the teaching team as a whole (Banks, 2019).

Teachers' efficacy perceptions can be reinforced as teachers' collective beliefs develop with strong collaboration among colleagues and positive interactions occur in the school setting (Cansoy, 2020). Educational leaders need to foster a safe sense of collaboration where groups of teachers work alongside the leader with goal setting, decision-making, and problem solving (Bozman, 2011). Teacher collaboration focused on instructional improvement stands apart as crucial for producing CTE in schools (Willingham, 2019).

Leaders that formally turn over instructionally relevant school decisions to teachers tend to have higher levels of CTE, raising commitment to school goals and gains in student achievement (Goddard et al., 2004). Thus, transformational and organizational leadership may have a positive effect on CTE through not only promoting self-efficacy, but a collaborative culture. Leader responsibilities should include fostering a culture where the norm is developing and ensuring the success of organizational goals, important to all members' strengths and aspirations through an agreed upon process (Daniels, 2018; Marzano et al., 2006; Reeves, 2020).

In 2016, Gray and Summers examined the link between collective efficacy, collegial trust, and enabling structures of a school. They determined that enabling school structures was moderately and positively correlated with collective efficacy. One of the major findings in their research was that if enabling structures are in place within a school setting, the development of collaborative structures would be more likely to occur among that staff, allowing the staff, including the principal, to work collaboratively (Gray & Summers, 2016; Willingham, 2019). Morales (2016) conducted a study to examine enabling school structures from principals' perspective, finding themes linked to CTE. Some of these themes included principals who led teachers to challenging school goals and persistence in meeting these goals, shared decision making, and dialog, increasing CTE among staff (Morales, 2016; Willingham, 2019). Qualitative research conducted by Willingham (2019) identified some principal behaviors that influence CTE in a positive manner such as clear expectations, mutual respect, and communication behaviors, as well as structures to facilitate shared decision making, one of the main sources influencing CTE within schools that principals can set forth. The study also identified three principal

practices that can increase CTE in a school. The first practice was the development of teams for collaboration, examples being grade-level teams, vertical teams, leadership teams, and advisory councils. The second practice was clear, transparent, and timely communication, both face-to-face and electronic communication. The third practice was shared decision making, allowing teachers to better understand rationale for decisions (Willingham, 2019). Wells (2018) conducted research on the influence school leaders had on CTE within schools labeled as low achieving, finding items that made a significant difference regarding collective efficacy falling into three overarching categories: culture, input, and affirmation. Within these schools, principals created an environment of teamwork with shared goals for student success, provided opportunities for teachers to be involved in school-wide decisions, and recognized and celebrated accomplishments of students, staff, and the school as a whole (Wells, 2018).

Researchers have agreed that principals influence CTE within their schools through their leadership (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Bryson, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Principals who are approachable and supportive can contribute to the overall CTE level throughout the building (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Bryson, 2019). Therefore, it can be noted that increasing principal support for teachers could assist in improving overall CTE (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Bryson, 2019). Principal support for teachers that contribute highly to CTE often comes in the area of affective states.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that advocates for the promotion of followers' needs, values, preferences, and aspirations from a self-interest lens to a collective lens, creating followers who are highly committed to the achievement of organizational goals (Ryba, 2018). Transformational leadership behaviors form and

strengthen groups' beliefs, putting more of an emphasis on similarities than differences in a group (Cansoy, 2020; Ryba, 2018; Wells, 2018). Principals that are transformational leaders rally teachers around common action steps to achieve school-wide goals and strengthen teachers in a manner that brings them to believe that they can ensure student learning and success. Transformational leaders ensure that concepts of individuals self-align to the group's mission (Cansoy, 2020).

Bandura (1997), through research based in self-efficacy sources rooted in mastery experiences, discovered that repeated failures, especially early on in one's teaching career, can lead to negatively impacting CTE. Repeated failures can play a heavy role in decreased efficacy. If a teacher conducts a lesson they feel went poorly or has a negative experience within their instruction, their efficacy level could easily decrease (Bandura, 1977; O'Quinn, 2018; Rodriguez, 2019). Teachers need to have support early on and be encouraged to ask for help to avoid instructional failures and encourage risk-taking.

Lee (2016) discovered that continuous changing of programs from the district and state levels and irrelevant mandated professional development were negatively impacting teachers' levels of CTE. Although partly beyond building leaders' control, it is important for leaders to have an understanding of this negative impact. Leadership turnover can also be detrimental to the CTE of a staff. When responsiveness of a leader reigns heavily on the level of CTE of a staff, leaders that do not know their staff well do not show consistent consideration for the needs of their staff or meet the affective states of their staff may find it difficult to impact CTE in a positive manner (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019). Novice leaders who have yet to build an awareness of the intricacies of teaching and learning may find it difficult to support the CTE levels within

their school (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). Furthermore, the ability of a principal to lead a staff to develop coherence in all aspects of the school community is crucial in impacting CTE (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017). Staff coherence, the intention of forming a unified whole, can be approached through staff interaction and collaboration with principals providing structure for effective collaboration (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Summers, 2017).

### **Collaboration**

In addition to her six enabling conditions set forth to positively impact CTE, Donohoo (2017) also set forth four successful leadership practices including creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Collaboration is an approach that allows professionals to come together to contribute individual expertise to develop a shared expertise (Mofield, 2020). Collaboration is a broad term that encompasses many structures and processes for educators to come together to problem solve, consult with one another for advice, and plan instruction for co-teaching and peer coaching purposes (Donohoo, 2017; Mofield, 2020). Collaboration creates opportunities for teacher teams to learn together and take collective action to make a difference for their learners (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Dewitt, 2018). These teams can take on many forms: common grade-level teams, common course teams, departmental teams, vertical teams, leadership teams, and intervention teams (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017).

Donohoo (2017) spoke towards the positive connection between teacher collaboration and increased efficacy. However, she also spoke to the pitfalls that may occur. To some educators, collaboration means rolling up your sleeves together to come up with the best possible solutions, where together they are making the ideas of the group

stronger, but to other educators the idea of collaboration makes them cringe as they think of it as yet another waste of time where they are asked for input but decisions have already been made (Dewitt, 2018). Sunstein and Hastie (2015) also spoke to the cascade effect of collaboration in which followers fall victim to whoever speaks or acts first even if leading the group in the wrong direction. Other negative complexities of collaboration that can come into play are feelings of frustration and isolation with teachers who feel strongly set in their ways, often allowing a group to become more polarized and leading to a more extreme position of one individual instead of for the good of the group (Donohoo, 2017; Mofield, 2020; Sunstein & Hastie, 2015). Some view collaboration as a vehicle to quiet those who are likely to disagree or debate the issues, while others view collaboration as a vehicle to push others to conform to the beliefs of the majority (Mofield, 2020). When collaboration is imposed on teachers, it is seen as a threat to their teaching autonomy, imposing on their right to teach in isolation, protecting themselves from outsiders. When teachers enter their classrooms and shut their doors, this may be protection from judgement or unwillingness to take risks (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016). Overall, if educators feel as if they are being forced to collaborate, and even possibly forced to engage in instructional practices that may go against their teaching philosophy, friction may arise within the group and some may feel their professionalism and teacher autonomy are being threatened (Barrett, 2017).

Fullan (2010) stated, “Collective capacity generates emotional commitment and the technical expertise that no amount of individual capacity working alone can come close to matching” (p. xiii). Collaboration at its best increases the culture of learning at a school, improves teacher quality, strengthens teacher relationships, and increases student

performance (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017). When collaborative structures are in place, it allows teachers to try creative teaching strategies with a reduced fear of risk-taking, problem-solve with one another to find creative solutions to instructional challenges, and build teacher confidences, therefore, impacting CTE in a positive manner (Blazieko & Squires, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). When proficient in collaboration, teachers are exposed to improved practices, which leads to higher levels of pedagogy improving teaching and having a positive impact on student learning (Blazieko & Squires, 2018). For teachers, collaboration can lead to a sense of shared responsibility for student success. Collective educational commitment and capacity grow when teachers share their expertise with one another by sharing effective instructional strategies (Barrett, 2017). Collaboration increases capacity among all team members, creating new knowledge through tacit and explicit knowledge rooted in the knowledge creation (Muniz, 2020; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Organizational knowledge creation theory, developed by Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi (1995) in the mid-90s, connects the idea of knowledge creation to collaboration. The organizational knowledge creation theory states that all individuals bring prior knowledge with them that can in turn be helpful in the creation of new knowledge for themselves and others. This occurs best when individuals collaborate with one another combining their prior knowledge to create new knowledge (Muniz, 2020; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This theory is based on making knowledge available to individuals within a given organization, increasing knowledge capacity for others through collaboration in a way that will connect and solidify new knowledge. This theory

highlights learning from professional collaboration as a valuable impact for one's self, colleagues, and the organization as a whole (Muniz, 2020; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Knowledge creation occurs through the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge are embedded in the organizational knowledge creation theory (Anderson, 2016; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This is exhibited when people create new knowledge in recognizing the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge (Muniz, 2020). Tacit knowledge can be defined as knowledge gained from personal experience and social interactions that is more difficult to express because of its subjective nature (Muniz, 2020; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge is best described as knowledge of how to do something (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Explicit knowledge can be defined as knowledge that is much easier to explain, write down, and share, easily communicated because of its more objective nature (Muniz, 2020; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Where tacit knowledge relates highly to experienced-based knowledge, explicit knowledge is the formal element resulting from the shared tacit knowledge (Adams, 2016). This conversion, from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge, can serve as a catalyst for new ideas and creative approaches, in turn creating new knowledge within a system (Adams, 2016; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

The sharing of tacit knowledge is important in the educational arena, but requires strong social networks, regular interaction, strong relationships, and trust (Mohajan, 2017). Providing collaborative structures for collaboration of teams with varied experience levels brings about knowledge creation through the sharing of tacit knowledge. Teachers can improve their instructional practice and teaching abilities by the sharing of tacit knowledge (Mohajan, 2017). When groups of teachers share ideas,

methods, and experiences, creative ideas and productive problem-solving can often occur (Mohajan, 2017). Schools should utilize teachers' tacit knowledge by promoting sharing of this knowledge through collaborative processes, in turn becoming more creative and innovative capabilities (Asbari, Wijayanti, Hyun, Purwanto, & Santoso, 2019). A collaborative learning culture where teachers routinely interact with one another will allow for successful transfer of current knowledge and new knowledge among one another developing greater knowledge capacity (Asbari et al., 2019).

### **Summary**

Through the lens of Donohoo's enabling conditions for CTE, it can be seen that certain factors have the potential to increase the efficacy of a collective group of teachers working together to increase student achievement. Advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teacher's knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention each present conditions that if put in place and fostered within a building, could increase the likelihood of CTE. With a strong connection between CTE and student achievement, it is imperative that educational leaders spend time fostering conditions for their teachers to promote growth in CTE. The research sought to capture the gap in literature in which teacher perceptions of these conditions and how they guide their work and their CTE on a daily basis is connected.

Chapter three contains a detailed description of the methodology behind the research of study. Chapter four contains a presentation of findings and conclusions based on analyzed results from the study, and chapter five contains a conclusion of findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

Students today often come to school with the disadvantages beyond their control: difficult home environments, single parent homes, low socioeconomic status, lack of resources including food, and poor family involvement. Although there has been much research on the topics of self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and CTE individually, further information, including educator perceptions, about the conditions that can be fostered with staff in a building to promote CTE needs to be explored. Many educators come to work feeling as though students' lives outside of school are hindering their work. In additions, there is increased emphasis on mandated state teaching, large class sizes, lack of teacher training and resources, outdated curricula, and challenging student behaviors. With this current reality of schools, it is important that we work continuously to allow teachers to feel efficacious in their daily work with one another (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2016; Donohoo, 2017; Hattie 2016). Eells' (2011) meta-analysis exhibited a strong correlation between CTE and student achievement with an effect size of 1.57. With continued research and updates to his synthesis, Hattie (2016) ranked CTE as the number 1 factor in influencing student achievement. Being an influence that comes from within the school setting, CTE is controlled by the very people charged with educating our youth. Furthermore, Hattie concluded that if educators' beliefs stemmed from thinking they could do very little to contribute to student achievement, then it would be likely they would be accurate, but on the contrary, if educators' beliefs stemmed from a belief they could make a difference, they would have a greater impact on student learning.

This qualitative narrative study of current public-school educators serving in kindergarten through fifth-grade buildings with a student population of 300 or greater in the state of Missouri was designed to investigate educators' perceptions about the conditions that matter most in the development of CTE. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate how these conditions are developed within the working environment of a school to contribute to CTE within teams. This study sought to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. The relevant research questions for this study included the following:

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to explore the following research questions:

1. What are educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?
2. What are educators' perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?

Within this chapter, the researcher describes the methodology utilized within this study. The researcher also details the participants of the study, the research setting, and research design. The instrumentation used within this study is also discussed, as well as a description of how the data analysis was conducted.

## **Participants**

Participants in this qualitative narrative study were teacher teams in Missouri that exhibited high levels of CTE. A request of participation and initial questionnaire, The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017), was emailed to current public-school leaders serving in kindergarten through fifth-grade buildings in Missouri with a student population of 300 students or greater. Once the initial questionnaire was completed by willing leaders, those with an overall score of 72 or higher signifying high CTE within their schools were contacted for additional research. The educational leaders from the schools meeting these criteria were asked to identify grade-level teacher teams within their building they felt exhibited a high sense of CTE and would participate in the research study, as well as provide email contact information for communicating with these teachers directly. These teachers were sent a request to participate through email communication, as well as The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017) for completion and return to researcher. Focus group interviews were scheduled and participants were provided with a question guide of open-ended questions derived from the initial questionnaire prior to the scheduled focus group interviews. All participants in this study were informed that their participation was completely voluntary within the request to participate document sent when initial contact was made. Participant names and school building and district names were not used in this study and were kept confidential.

## **Sampling Procedures**

Purposeful sampling through an initial questionnaire was used by the researcher to begin to identify and select groups of individuals targeted for this research approach. Purposeful sampling is often used in qualitative research to select participants that will provide the most information-rich data from participants that are articulate around the topic, expressive, and reflective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts, 2018). Utilizing the school database obtained through the directory from the Regional Professional Development Center, a list of schools within the state of Missouri, with the makeup of kindergarten through fifth grade and student population of 300 or greater, was populated. All superintendents from these districts were emailed requesting permission to contact the elementary school leaders within their school district. Once permission to contact leaders within the district for the study was granted from the superintendent of a school district, the researcher then invited elementary school leaders to participate in the study by completing a brief questionnaire on their perception of level of CTE within their school and indicate what conditions of CTE they felt were currently in place within their building. The researcher wanted to gain understanding of educators' perceptions of the conditions put in place that develop CTE, and therefore selected a sample that allowed for the best insight to this overarching research. A unique sample of teacher participants was produced from the initial questionnaires completed by educational leaders serving in schools with perceived high levels of CTE within their buildings. From there, Jenni Donohoo's The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire was sent to the selected teachers in each of these buildings.

Criteria for possible interview candidates was based upon responses to The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire and responders' willingness to participate in the interview process based on identifying themselves and providing the researcher with their contact information on the questionnaire. The researcher was looking for a group with a perceived CTE score of 72 or higher to interview for further insight as to their specific sources of CTE and conditions in place within their school that generated this perceived feeling of high CTE. Of the groups scoring 72 or higher, the five groups with the highest scores were first asked to participate in focus group interviews for the purpose of this research. After agreement was reached, research was conducted with these five groups because the researcher wanted to investigate perceptions from those with the highest degree of collective efficacy. If agreement is not reached, participant selection will move to the next highest scoring group. Although the researcher plans to begin with these five schools, the number of participants cannot be determined until the research process begins. In qualitative research it is difficult to determine the number of participants needed for a valid study as focus group interviews may continue based on need, occurring until the researcher has reached data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

### **Research Setting**

Interviewees were offered many location options and means by which to participate in the interview process. Interviews took place in person, by phone, and through other online platforms based on the convenience of the participants.

Interviewing is crucial when the intent is to discover perceptions, allowing a researcher to gain insight into one's perspective (Hennick, Hutter, & Bailey; 2020). In looking at

select schools within the state of Missouri with the makeup of kindergarten through fifth grade and the population of 300 or more students, semi-structured focus groups with educators with perceived high levels of CTE working within these schools where the leader also perceived their school had a high level of CTE were interviewed for the purpose of this study. Semi-structured interviews contain several planned questions to ask all participants, knowing that additional open-ended questions could follow when wanting to know more about a participants' comments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Research Design**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Focusing on people's experiences from their perspectives, qualitative researchers seek a comprehensive understanding of questions they are investigating. Thorough interviews made up of open-ended questions render data based on people's opinions, perceptions, and feelings within their world (Roberts, 2018). The researcher utilized a qualitative research approach to discover what sources and conditions played part in generating CTE in Missouri elementary schools rooted in educator's perceptions of such.

Beginning with elementary schools in Missouri with a makeup of kindergarten through fifth grade and a student population larger than 300, schools were identified where the leader perceived their staff as having a high level of CTE. Educational leaders selected educators in these schools to be invited to be a part of the continued study by completing Donohoo's (2017) The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. This questionnaire helped the researcher gain insight into the perceptions

of participants on the presence or absence of the enabling conditions, as well as the perceptions as to whether each enabling condition positively or negatively affected the development of CTE. These enabling conditions allowed for a starting point for open-ended interview questions to be included on the interview guide, providing focus for the study and a lens for which to evaluate participants comments through. The researcher conducted five semi-structured group interviews starting with five selected groups of individuals to dive deeper into their perceptions of the conditions, both presence or absence of, that lead to the promotion of high levels of CTE and additional insight into the why and how these conditions result in the development of CTE in their schools. The size of each of these groups varied based on how many people made up each teacher team. Semi-structured interviews allow for a less structured process guided by a list of flexibly written questions to be explored ahead of time but allow the researcher the flexibility to respond to the viewpoints of the participants as the interview unfolds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured interview process allows a researcher to explore further without explicitly asking each participant about their perspective.

Beginning with several specific questions to ask everyone, as well as open-ended follow-up questions that guide the researcher in what they may want to know more about, the semi-structured interview process was conducted in this manner (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The semi-structured interview questions included the sources and conditions of CTE allowed for in each school, followed by open-ended questions that served as a guide for discussion regarding the perceptions of how and why these sources and conditions contribute to the development of such perceived CTE within their

building. Interviews took place either in person at a location determined by the participant, over the phone, or via an online platform.

The goal of this study was to analyze the specific feedback given by participants, rendering common themes to best answer the research questions presented. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that triangulation of data is a powerful strategy for increasing credibility and internal validity of research. The research utilized information from Donohoo's (2017) *The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy* Questionnaire of participants scoring 72 or higher and conducted multiple focus group interviews in multiple settings to render a multitude of perspectives to allow for the triangulation of data from these various sources. Responses collected from the completion of focus group interviews were used to best answer the research questions contributing to the triangulation of all data collected by comparing and cross-checking answers to the research questions. Utilizing multiple sources of data collection, both from initial insight gained from the completion of Donohoo's (2017) *The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy* Questionnaire and the conduction of multiple focus group interviews, helped the researcher to evaluate the comprehensive perception of teachers on the conditions that develop their CTE. The researcher was able to draw upon common themes presented by interviewees during focus group interviews to check for reliability and validity in the perceptions shared and draw further information from these commonalities.

The researcher also worked to collect documentation from the teaching teams interviewed to gain further perspective of their collaborative work. Documents requested and analyzed for this purpose include collaboration schedules, Professional Learning

Communities (PLC) or team norms, meeting agendas, and notes, and documented PLC goals and action steps. This inquiry further helped the researcher to gain perspective on the amount of time collaboration took place, the topics and goals discussed during these meeting times, and the overall feel for how the team worked together and how they valued this work.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire used by the researcher was found in conjunction with the review of literature performed for the background of this study. Through researching CTE, Donohoo's (2017) book *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning* was read. Within this text, Donohoo presented The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to measure the degree to which each of the six enabling conditions are in place at a given school providing information for determining priority conditions that need to be addressed to better develop CTE. This questionnaire poses 18 Likert-scale statements about school rating participants' level of agreement including the following: *strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6)*. This questionnaire gives an overall scale score taking the sum of the scores for all 18 items divided by 18, as well as provides a scale score for each of the six enabling conditions presented. The researcher received permission via email from Donohoo and the Corwin Publishing Company to use this questionnaire for the purpose of this study on March 21, 2019.

The researcher wanted to determine which teacher teams had a high sense of CTE based on the Donohoo questionnaire. Based on participants' overall scale score, the

researcher followed up with teacher team participants scoring 72 or above for interviewing purposes. This score indicates a high sense of CTE according to the researcher. From there, the researcher conducted focus group interviews with the top five teacher teams as selected participants.

Interviews allow a researcher to navigate open-ended questions further by presenting probing follow-up questions to gain insight on each participant's attitudes, feelings, concerns, and values (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Open-ended interview questions were provided to interview participants ahead of time and used during the interview as a guide to gain insight into each participant's perspective around the topics presented. Based on the responses, follow-up questions were included if the researcher felt the need to dive deeper into perspectives given. The responses from both the initial questionnaire and the semi-structured interview instruments provided the researcher with narrative data to shed light upon the research questions. The researcher was then able to analyze the data presented to develop themes centered around each research question.

### **Data Analysis**

When analyzing qualitative data, a researcher must spend time immersing themselves in data to best make sense of what individuals said and correlate themes from one respondent to another (Roberts, 2018). This approach requires the researcher to read through all interview notes and transcripts, and then the researcher must work to allow themes and patterns to develop from within those responses to determine what is significant in answering the research questions (Roberts, 2018). While the process is difficult, time-consuming, and challenging, it is also the most important part of this process so that in turn the researcher can process the information gathered to discover

what comes to light from the investigation process (Gay et al., 2009). This process helps to ensure that personal bias of the researcher is minimized as listening, reading through transcripts multiple times, and exploring all angles of participants' comments regardless of feeling a sense of high CTE or if CTE is lacking within the group.

After the data collection period, receiving completed questionnaires, and conducting focus group interviews based on the interview guide presented, the researcher began to develop themes from within the qualitative data. After the completion of each focus group, the researcher immediately sat down to take note of any observations made during each setting focusing on the feel of the interview overall and the participating group. The researcher attempted to gain an overall feel for the CTE of the group and the words and actions that led to such feelings. Focus group interviews were recorded while conducting interviews with each group and the researcher used these recordings to then transcribe into written form to better begin to understand and divide them into sensible themes. After transcribing, the researcher listened to the recordings again, noting any specific information not gained from the words of the interviewees, but insights gained from interviewees' voice tones, inflections, and emotions that were heard. Transcripts of these interviews were given a focused first read with no note-taking for the researcher to take in a full picture approach to the information shared and collected. Upon second read of the focus group interview transcripts, the researcher took general notes on different perceived notions teachers had on impacts that may influence their CTE. Pulling out this specific information helped the researcher to distinguish between information shared that was imperative to the research and bringing it to the forefront, while being cognizant of

other valuable information shared. Gay et al. (2009) stated that making note of themes can be helpful during the first reading of data.

After a second read of interview notes and transcripts and general note-taking, the researcher proceeded with multiple reads of the transcripts and the process of coding narrative data into usable categories. The researcher categorized all narrative data by labeling and color-coding themes presented in common responses, looking deeply for themes rooted in the six Enabling Conditions developed through the research of Jenni Donohoo (2017). During the coding process, the researcher continued to take notes not only on the number of times each enabling condition was discussed, but also the magnitude of their influence based on the comments shared around the impact of each enabling condition. The process of coding qualitative data reduces the abundance of narrative data gathered during the investigation into a more manageable form, allowing the researcher to compile data into categories (Gay et al., 2009). As the researcher read through all interview notes repeatedly, new themes began to present themselves as the researcher examined the transcripts for other perceptions that might be relevant to the research topic. This multitiered approach allowed underlying themes to produce themselves as the researcher dove deeper into the data with each read and continued coding.

After several reads of the focus group interview transcripts and completion of the note-taking and coding process, the researcher again listened to the interview recordings to continue to investigate any additional underpinnings that may be heard from the interviewees not noted during the first listen. Additional notes were made on interviewee voice tones, inflections, and emotions that were heard that added further relevance to

interviewee perceptions. Recordings were also listened to again to ensure that nothing was missed when the researcher was more familiar with the information shared and insights gathered from each focus group interview. Several listening attempts of recordings and several readings of transcripts and notes ensured that the researcher investigated information shared from all angles in an attempt to not miss anything relevant to the research. In addition to multiple reads of the transcripts, researcher notes were transcribed apart from the interview transcripts. This process provided the opportunity for the researcher to read through these notes apart from transcripts to continue to develop notes specific to the interview questionnaire, all while continuing to code for the six enabling conditions set forth by Donohoo. This continuous process allowed the researcher to examine the data provided through focus group interviews from as many angles as possible, cross-referencing data shared most important to the body of research.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to analyze educators' perceptions of the conditions that develop CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can best work to implement and foster these conditions within their buildings. The researcher utilized The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire to gain insight into leaders' perceptions of the CTE within their schools and then educators' perceptions of such within those schools. Educators' with high levels of perceived CTE, determined by completion of the questionnaire, were then contacted further. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with selected participants. Interview and focus group notes and transcripts were collected and analyzed

for common themes within the narrative data in order to best answer the research questions presented.

In Chapter Four, the researcher provides an analysis of the qualitative data collected from the interviews and provides a presentation of findings and conclusions based on analyzed results. In Chapter Five, the researcher provides a conclusion of findings and recommendations based on the data analysis, sharing key findings as well as recommendations for future study on the topic being investigated.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

Chapter Four presents the findings gathered through focus group interviews in an attempt to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate collective teacher efficacy (CTE) within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. This study explored how these conditions might be developed within the working environment of a school to best contribute to CTE within teaching teams. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Through a narrative inquiry approach to qualitative research, this study sought to add to the existing body of research outlining Jenni Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions associated with high CTE in schools and fill the gap in research by understanding educators' perceptions on conditions that work towards the development of CTE and the presence or absence of these conditions that may help or hinder this development. The researcher conducted five focus group interviews with teacher teams from five different sites in small group format. The teacher teams that participated in the study were identified by their current building leader as exhibiting high levels of CTE based on Jenni Donohoo's The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire and their willingness to participate. This chapter encompasses the focus groups' responses from within the interviews to best examine their perceptions of the conditions that positively work towards the development of CTE in schools.

The research was theoretically grounded initially in Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory, later updated to social cognitive theory (SCT). According to SCT, a person's behavior is a result of choices to act based on cognitively processed information about oneself, the environment, and the perceived consequences of behavior, recognizing both internal and external factors influencing behavior (Bandura, 1986). In 1977, Bandura introduced self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations, producing desired outcomes, powerfully affecting people's behavior, motivation, and ultimately their success or failure. In 1997, Bandura identified, more specifically, teacher self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's confidence and capabilities in the promotion of student learning despite outside factors that may be out of their control (Goddard, et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Through initial research on self-efficacy and teacher efficacy, this study was further grounded in research centered around CTE. Collective teacher efficacy is based upon the shared beliefs within a school to produce desired student learning outcomes. Goddard et al. (2004) built upon the concept of teacher efficacy, defining CTE as the perceptions of teachers in a school so that they themselves can collectively organize and carry out the course of action required to produce given accomplishments and levels of achievement. Donohoo (2017) further identified six enabling conditions to attend to in order for CTE to flourish within schools: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention. Donohoo suggested that school

leaders attend to these six enabling conditions to help foster CTE within their school to ultimately work towards positive student achievement.

The focus group interviews for this study were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. To best ensure the health and safety of all the interview participants and the researcher, all focus group interviews were conducted virtually utilizing Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. Since the study was aimed to explore educator perceptions of conditions that generate CTE, the interviews and resulting data are as valid and reliable as they would have been had the focus group interviews been conducted in person. The analysis of the data was divided into four different sections. The first section outlines the participants of the study, which included five grade-level teaching teams from five different kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary buildings in Missouri. The second section describes the process used to verify methods and the trustworthiness of the research. The third section explores specific themes that evolved from the interview process, researcher observation, and analysis process. Lastly, the fourth section discusses the data found in regard to the research questions set forth in the beginning by the researcher.

There were two overarching research questions used for this qualitative narrative study:

RQ 1: What are educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?

RQ 2: What are educators' perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were teacher teams in kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school buildings in Missouri with student populations of 300 or greater that exhibited high levels of CTE as recognized by their school leader. High levels of CTE were determined by The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017), found in Appendix C. Teaching teams with an overall score of 72 or higher were considered meeting these criteria. These teams were sent a request to participate through email communication and focus group interviews were scheduled. The requests for participation are located in Appendix A and Appendix B. The researcher provided each group a set of open-ended questions derived from the initial questionnaire prior to the scheduled interview time. This interview guide can be found in Appendix D. Focus group interviews were conducted utilizing the Zoom platform. Small group interviews were conducted based on the collective efficacy of the team and not that of one individual, bringing a collective voice to the responses.

Focus group participants were identified as Focus Group (FG) 1, FG 2, FG 3, FG 4, and FG 5. Focus Group 1 included three individuals, FG 2 included three individuals, FG 3 included four individuals, FG 4 included four individuals, and FG 5 included four individuals. Teachers are identified as T1-T4 with their appropriate focus group number. For example, Teacher 3 from Focus Group 2 will be labeled as FG2 T3. All participants in this study were informed that their participation was voluntary and participant names and school building and district names were not used within this study and were kept confidential. This information is represented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Record of Participants*

Focus Group 1 (FG1)	Focus Group 2 (FG2)	Focus Group 3 (FG3)	Focus Group 4 (FG4)	Focus Group 5 (FG5)
T1	T1	T1	T1	T1
T2	T2	T2	T2	T2
T3	T3	T3	T3	T3
		T4	T4	T4

**Focus Group 1.** Focus Group 1 was a team of teachers from a kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school building in Missouri. This school had a current student population of 395 students with 52% of their student body eligible for free and reduced meal prices. This school building had an average student-to-teacher ratio of 1:23. The teacher team from this school building currently taught fourth grade with one another in three self-contained fourth-grade classrooms. The Zoom interview with this group took place on a district snow day. All members of the team were at their homes signing onto Zoom through their own devices from the comfort of their own homes. Time restraints did not seem to be a worry as they were on their own schedules from home during an unexpected snow day. While reviewing field notes taken during the interview with FG 1, the researcher noted that this group of teachers took turns sharing. They would take turns speaking up first and then always build upon one another with each question. Everyone spoke at some point and shared their perceptions for each question asked. It was evident through the interview process that the team members valued what one another has to share and fed off each other to create a positive energy. They seemed to lean on one another for support and encouragement and often complimented one another throughout the interview process.

**Focus Group 2.** Focus Group 2 was a team of teachers from a kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school building in Missouri. This school had a current student population of 488 students with 66% of their student body eligible for free and reduced meal prices. This school building had an average student-to-teacher ratio of 1:22. The teacher team from this school building currently taught second grade in three self-contained classrooms. The Zoom interview with this group took place on a district snow day. All members of the team were at their homes signing onto Zoom through their own devices from the comfort of their own homes. Time restraints did not seem to be a worry as they were on their own schedules from home during an unexpected snow day. While reviewing field notes taken during the interview with Focus Group 2, the researcher noted that this group of teachers seemed to be more on the quiet side when compared with other group interviews. One specific team member often spoke first while the others seemed to look to her to do so. Another team member would then build on her thinking or reiterate the same thought shared. The third team member was more hesitant to contribute to the conversation and spoke very little. Despite the team's equality when sharing, they seemed to have a strong love of learning, professional development, and trying new strategies.

**Focus Group 3.** Focus Group 3 was a team of teachers from a kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school building in Missouri. This school had a current student population of 437 students with 52% of their student body eligible for free and reduced meal prices. This school building had an average student-to-teacher ratio of 1:17. The teacher team from this school building currently taught third grade with one another in four self-contained third-grade classrooms. The Zoom interview with this

group took place on a district snow day. All members of the team were at their homes signing onto Zoom through their own devices from the comfort of their own homes. Time restraints did not seem to be a worry as they were on their own schedules from home during an unexpected snow day. While reviewing field notes taken during the interview with Focus Group 3, the researcher noted that this group of teachers all seemed to be eager to speak up and share. They equally contributed to the conversation, but oftentimes their thinking varied from others' thinking when answering questions. However, they did at times compliment each other's responses. As a group, they seemed very confident in their knowledge, abilities, and way of doing things both in a positive manner, and in a way that sometimes seemed to lack humility.

**Focus Group 4.** Focus Group 4 was a team of teachers from a kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school building in Missouri. This school had a current student population of 671 students with 26% of their student body eligible for free and reduced meal prices. This school building had an average student-to-teacher ratio of 1:17. The teacher team from this school building currently taught fourth-grade with one another in four self-contained fourth-grade classrooms. One grade-level team member was not included in this focus group interview, but no explanation was given as to why she was not present. The Zoom interview with this group took place during the school day during the teachers' plan/release time. All members of the team were sitting around a small group table and signed into one device collectively from one of the member's classroom space. A time restraint was present as the interview took place in between the teachers dropping their students off at related arts classes and needing to leave to retrieve them from these same classes 50 minutes later. While reviewing field notes taken during

the interview with Focus Group 4, the researcher noted that this group of teachers seemed to look towards one team member to begin sharing in response to every question. This team member seemed to speak up far more than others and shared more detailed information. It was evident that she was the leader of the group. However, there was a lot of laughter and informal teasing with this group of teachers. They seemed to be comfortable with one another and a friendship was evident.

**Focus Group 5.** Focus Group 5 was a team of teachers from a kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school building in Missouri. This school had a current student population of 623 students with 33% of their student body eligible for free and reduced meal prices. This school building had an average student-to-teacher ratio of 1:18. The teacher team from this school building currently taught second grade with one another in four self-contained second-grade classrooms. The Zoom interview with this group took place during the school day during the teachers' plan/release time. All members of the team were sitting around a small group table and signed into one device collectively from one of the member's classroom space. A time restraint was present as the interview took place in between the teachers dropping their students off at related arts classes and needing to leave to retrieve them from these same classes 55 minutes later. Some technical difficulties in the beginning also got the interview off to a later start time than expected. While reviewing field notes taken during the interview with Focus Group 5, the researcher noted that this group of teachers seemed to be playful and having fun with one another during this process. They seemed to be very respectful and supportive of one another, looking at one another instead of the researcher and focusing

on the particular team member who was sharing. They were very complimentary of one another when someone presented a response.

Table 2 outlines the amount of time each focus group interview lasted. The timing of the interview represents the amount of time in minutes and seconds recorded from the beginning of the first interview question by the researcher to the answer of the last interview question by the participants. This interview timing ranges from 15:48 to 43:57.

Table 2

*Focus Group Interview Timing*

Focus Group	Timing of Interview (minutes:seconds)
Focus Group 1	43:57
Focus Group 2	30:56
Focus Group 3	28:39
Focus Group 4	30:14
Focus Group 5	15:48

**Verification/Trustworthiness**

A basic narrative qualitative approach was used for this study. Data collection took place through focus group interviews, the review of interview recordings, and transcripts, researcher observations, member checks, and the researcher's field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These methods within the data collection process were designed to allow for participants to share their practices, experiences, and overall perceptions in regard to certain conditions within their school building that worked to develop a team's CTE. The small group interview experience allowed the researcher to understand participants' collective perceptions in regard to the conditions present in the development of CTE.

**Triangulation.** The research utilized triangulation of data to analyze and build a better understanding of the different themes that presented themselves throughout the full research process. Data collection included the conducting of focus group interviews, review of interview videos and transcripts, and researcher's field notes. The researcher maintained electronic notes on observations and insights throughout the interview process and added to these notes each time interviews were watched and/or transcripts read. This triangulation of data sources and repeated process of note-taking met the criteria of validity necessary in qualitative research, which requires the continual and careful attention to the ways in which data were collected and analyzed. Thus, following this process was one of the ways validity of this study was ensured.

Focus group interviews were conducted with five grade-level teacher teams from five different kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school buildings in Missouri. These interviews were conducted as small groups, and were scheduled with participants at their convenience. All interviews were conducted utilizing Zoom, an online video conference platform, and recorded with the participants' consent. The interview recordings were then turned into written transcripts. The recorded interview videos and transcripts allowed the researcher to best discover themes that emerged from discussions with each small group. These themes emerged from field notes the researcher collected during the interview process, as well as during subsequent repeated viewing of the recordings and reading of the transcripts. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings.

**Member check.** Member checking provided participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to verify and make any changes or additions to their statements. Each individual interview was digitally recorded utilizing the recording feature available on Zoom. Each recording was then uploaded to Rev.com, an online platform that converts video to text, and transformed into written transcripts. Copies of the transcripts were emailed to a participant representative on each teacher team for the team to review to ensure accuracy of statements made and participants were able to review transcripts for changes, additions, or clarifications needed. Upon completion of this process, statements were verified and no requests for changes or additions to the original transcripts were made.

**Peer review.** Peer reviews were conducted as a step in increasing the internal validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The peer review process included a dissertation committee composed of three Southwest Baptist University graduate professors with backgrounds in education and research. One of the dissertation committee members served as the researcher's advisor. The advisor supervised the progress of the research process and communicated with the other committee members to seek additional input and feedback for the researcher. The dissertation committee reviewed the research questions, theoretical framework, literature review, and research methodology implemented throughout the study. This peer review process made it possible for the researcher to gather additional input and constructive feedback from the committee to ensure focus of the research questions, strengthen the literature review alignment to the research questions, and implement the most appropriate methodology for the research process.

**Clarifying bias.** In qualitative research it is important that researchers disclose their understanding of bias and experiences related to the study in order for bias to be monitored throughout the research process. The first step in understanding bias is to realize that it exists, to be aware of where it exists, and to mitigate its impact on the directed study. The researcher needs a clear understanding of how such bias may influence the findings presented in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher was employed as a Missouri elementary principal for all of this study. Part of this time was spent at a kindergarten through fifth-grade building, while the final time was spent at a second- through third-grade building. Through the researcher's professional relationships, she knew individuals on three of the teacher teams. These relationships could have unintentionally impacted the participants' sharing of information with the researcher with their truest feelings and viewpoints. By understanding the presence of bias, the researcher was intentional in portraying all aspects of the perceptions of the interviewees, both positive and negative, concerning the topic being examined.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Creswell (2012) described qualitative research as a process of interrelated and simultaneous data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Qualitative narrative research begins with personal experiences as told by the individuals immersed in rich encounters in which perceptions are created (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of research is about both the nature of the narratives shared and the method by which the narratives were gathered and explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose at hand was to learn about the experiences of others, the meanings behind these experiences to the individuals, and their given perceptions about the topics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Creswell (2012) suggested a research process in which the researcher is able to view the data in analytic circles rather than taking a linear approach, allowing multiple facets of analysis to take place (Creswell, 2012). This approach allows the findings to unfold and evolve as the research process occurs. The researcher watches the interview recordings and reads through the interview transcripts multiple times to best comprehend the data first as a whole before dissecting the data into discrete parts. Coding and categorizing processes are used to then develop themes that evolve from this process (Creswell, 2012). The complex and reiterative process of gathering words and phrases into themes allows the data to be better understood and conclusions to be drawn. Once the data have been interpreted, they can be represented in narrative text, tables, or figures, and better understood in a visual framework (Creswell, 2012).

### **Coding Procedures and Theme Development**

Once the researcher completed focus group interviews with five different teacher groups, made up of a total of 18 teachers, the researcher was able to analyze each interview recording and transcript. Each interview was completed utilizing Zoom, an online video conferencing platform, and then uploaded to Rev.com, an online platform that converts video to text. From here, five separate transcripts were created and member checks were completed by each group based on the written transcripts. The researcher analyzed each recording and transcript through multiple viewings and readings utilizing multiple note-taking strategies. The researcher highlighted text and made annotations with each in-depth reading of the transcript and continued to add to these annotations continually throughout the reading process to identify key words and phrases presented within transcripts. These key words and phrases spoken in multiple interviews by

multiple participants helped to then identify themes presented within the study. The researcher gave names to each of these specific themes. Note-taking and annotation markings were continuously made through multiple reads of each transcript onto the printed copy of each transcript. From there, these notes were typed and organized by both the interview groups and themes presented. This process, which allowed for repetitious reading of transcripts and note-taking, made certain that both responses at the surface were gleaned as well as deeply rooted perceptions of participants.

The compilation of annotations and notes allowed for consolidation and deep analysis of data in order for themes to begin to emerge. The researcher identified 11 key words or phrases from the five interview transcripts from the participants' responses that were collectively repeated. The 11 key words and phrases were then used to best represent the data and were grouped together to help establish two overarching themes. Once these two themes were determined, the transcripts were again examined to determine if any additional data emerged to support the themes established. Table 3 displays the 11 coded key words and phrases from the five interview transcripts. The table demonstrated the frequency of each coded key word or phrase and from there two major themes were developed.

Table 3 lists each of the 11 coded key words and phrases in order to best represent how the researcher sorted them into categories and then assigned them to a collective theme. The 11 key words and phrases portray the data in a holistic manner and were grouped together to illustrate connections and similarities within each of the two themes. The first theme involving time for collaboration was mentioned 60 times by participants in relation to five key words and phrases: (a) common planning, (b)

embedded into the school day, (c) plan time, (d) PLC time, and (e) informal check-ins. The second theme involving support was mentioned 155 times by participants in relation to six key words and phrases: (a) team support/encouragement, (b) sharing of ideas, (c) sharing of workload, (d) administration support, (e) interventionist/coach support, and (f) trust.

Table 3

*Record of Coded Information*

Coded words/phrases	Record of occurrence	Theme
Common Planning	20	Time for Collaboration
Embedded into the School Day	4	
Plan Time	9	
PLC Time	15	
Informal Check-Ins	12	
Team Support/Encouragement	46	Support
Sharing of Ideas	26	
Sharing of Workload	10	
Administration Support	29	
Interventionist/Coach Support	27	
Trust	17	

**Analysis of Theme 1: Time for Collaboration**

The first theme determined from the interview and data analysis processes was time for collaboration. The major theme of time for collaboration was determined in a variety of ways. One of the most significant ways, as evident by the participants' responses, was how the CTE of the group was directly impacted by the time set aside for their respective groups to collaborate. Time for collaboration had five key words and phrases connected to it: (a) common planning, (b) embedded into the school day, (c) plan time, (d) PLC time, and (e) informal check-ins.

Each of the five focus groups identified time for collaboration as a factor contributing to their high level of CTE. Table 4 represents the number of focus groups, based on the data collected from interview transcripts, identifying each of the key words and phrases incorporated into the major theme of time for collaboration.

Table 4

*Record of Coded Information: Time for Collaboration*

Theme: Coded word/phrases	Number of focus groups identifying theme	Percentage
Time for Collaboration: Common Planning	5/5	100%
Time for Collaboration: Embedded into the School Day	3/5	60%
Time for Collaboration: Plan Time	4/5	80%
Time for Collaboration: PLC Time	4/5	80%
Time for Collaboration: Informal Check-Ins	4/5	80%

Table 5 represents the major theme of time for collaboration and the number of participants' responses that were coded as common planning, embedded into the school day, plan time, PLC time, and informal check-ins. These key words and phrases were used to identify this theme.

Table 5

*Record of Coded Information: Time for Collaboration*

Coded words/phrases	Record of occurrence	Theme
Common Planning	20	Time for Collaboration
Embedded into the School Day	4	
Plan Time	9	
PLC Time	15	
Informal Check-Ins	12	

Time for collaboration was determined as a factor that, in teachers' perspectives, yields a high impact on CTE because of common grade-level team planning (common planning). Focus Group 5, Teacher 1 shared, "...then having time to meet weekly, like we do during our plan times, or then during PLC time, just to feel comfortable and confident with the plans we have." Focus Group 3, Teacher 3 added,

I think it is important to make sure there is time to have collaboration and grouped plan time together to make sure that we are prepped enough, so that we feel like we have the skills to do our job well and we can build each other up and help each other whenever it's necessary.

Participants from Focus Group 2, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3, jointly commented on the planning meetings they would have where they were able to not only plan with one another, but then revisit and reflect upon the execution of their planning in asking, "Where are you with this?" or "Did you get to this?" and "When you get to this, remember this worked, this didn't, and don't forget to tell them about this." Mirroring this, Focus Group 4, Teacher 3 spoke to common planning by saying,

We make a point to meet during the school day at least once a week to plan together so we know we are all on the same page and that we are all focusing on the same things. And then if somebody is off or if something didn't work, then during PLC time we know we all focused on roughly the same things and we can ask what one another did and how it may have worked better for one than another so we can adjust for next time.

Participants from some focus groups also reported the importance of this collaborative plan time being embedded into the school day and not having to make time

or give up time in order to collaboratively meet and plan with their team. Certain groups spoke specifically to designated times within the school day, such as their common plan time or PLC time that allowed for team collaboration to occur within their contracted time at school and not before or after hours. Focus Group 5, Teacher 1 spoke of having time set aside consistently and continuously revisiting their thinking, like they do during both their plan times and their PLC time, as crucial to “...feel comfortable with the plans we are implementing.” Teacher 2 from this same group spoke to the importance of early release time (PLC Time) when students are released from school an hour early:

...I feel like we are always trying to fit the time in somewhere in our schedules, giving up our plan time, staying after school, coming in before school. I don't think the bond of our teachers would be the same as it is without this time set aside.

Additionally, Focus Group 3, Teacher 2 spoke about the importance of collaboration during PLC time, discussing this as the time when as a team they think through what worked within their planning and instruction, what didn't work, and how they are going to adjust for the following year. Further, Focus Group 3 also attributed its successful collaboration and planning to both their embedded PLC time and weekly plan time meetings.

Another way that the theme of time for collaboration was identified was when the time for collaboration occurred during less formal times (informal check-ins) such as lunch time or after school hallway conversations. Focus Group 4, Teacher 1 noted, “...so just being able to have those off the cuff conversations.” Focus Group 1, Teacher 2 stated,

We have formalized time set aside with this group, but a lot of our learning, sharing of ideas and support mentioned happens in the informal check-ins. When we take the time to check in after school or at lunch, checking in about our day, that's where some of our best ideas and willingness to try new things come out.

Focus Group 3, Teacher 3 spoke about a more unconventional informal check-in in group chats that take place through text, saying, "We have our after-school group chats going on all the time, making sure we are united and always on the same page." Focus Group 1, Teacher 3 added,

I agree that a lot of that collaborative conversation comes in the informal time like lunch when we talk about the math lesson we just taught. Did it bomb for you? Because it did for me. Let's try it differently. How did your kids respond to this? What did you do? Those conversations are really helpful. And talking together about what our kids are doing and how we are going to monitor their goals. Just those things we are working together on.

The first major theme, time for collaboration, was presented through the lens of several different key words and phrases. These key words and phrases were intertwined into the various responses of teacher participants from all five focus groups. The responses of these teacher participants outlined their perspectives on time for collaboration within common planning, embedded time within the school day found in either common plan time and/or PLC time, and informal check-ins. Each of these key words and phrases was represented in supporting time for collaboration as impacting teaching teams' high levels of CTE.

## Analysis of Theme 2: Support

The second theme determined from the interview and data analysis processes was support. The major theme of support was determined in a variety of ways. One of the most significant ways, as evident by the participants' responses, was how the CTE of the group was directly impacted by the support and encouragement of adults in their building, whether that be their respective team members, support staff such as interventionists and instructional coaches, or their building administration. Support had six key words and phrases connected to it: (a) team support/encouragement, (b) sharing of ideas, (c) sharing of workload, (d) administration support, (e) interventionist/coach support, and (f) trust.

Each of the five focus groups identified support as a factor contributing to their high level of CTE. Table 6 represents the number of focus groups, based on the data collected from interview transcripts, identifying each of the key words and phrases incorporated into the major theme of support.

Table 6

*Record of Coded Information: Support*

Theme: Coded word/phrases	Number of focus groups identifying theme	Percentage
Support: Team Support/Encouragement	5/5	100%
Support: Sharing of Ideas	5/5	100%
Support: Sharing of Workload	3/5	60%
Support: Administration Support	5/5	100%
Support: Intervention/Coach Support	5/5	100%
Support: Trust	5/5	100%

Table 7 represents the major theme of support and the number of participants' responses that were coded as team support/encouragement, sharing of ideas, sharing of workload, administration support, intervention/coach support, and trust. These key words and phrases were used to identify this theme.

Table 7

*Record of Coded Information: Support*

Coded words/phrases	Record of occurrence	Theme
Team Support/Encouragement	46	Support
Sharing of Ideas	26	
Sharing of Workload	10	
Administration Support	29	
Interventionist/Coach Support	27	
Trust	17	

Support was determined as a factor that, in teachers' perspectives, yields a high impact on CTE because of a grade-level team's support and encouragement provided by one another within the team, supporting one another in various ways, and working to lift or build one another up in a positive manner. Of all the key words and phrases captured throughout this study, team support and encouragement was the most mentioned response with 46 total mentions. Focus Group 2 spoke of teacher support and encouragement, describing it as "...we all had each other's backs." Focus Group 5, Teacher 4 stated,

I want to say, it goes with relationships within the team for sure. That we're all there to lean on each other, and we're that positive morale to work together. We know that we can come to each other to build that. If I have a student who is struggling, I can count on my team to really lift me up. And it's nice to have that. There is a team in place at school to meet the needs that we might be having

as a teacher. I think the morale of positive teacher relationships goes a long way with teachers being successful. It's not just one person making gains in the classroom, it really takes a village to make those strides with students. The time that we have together as a team, we use that to always make sure we put a positive twist to it, looking on the other side of the fence in times that we're struggling or needing someone to support us. We're always there to lean on each other.

Teacher 3 from this same focus group added, "I feel like we make an effort to care about each other and know about one another, so this helps us collaborate and work as a team even better," when the team was discussing building their relationships with one another on the team and making the effort to reach out to one another to build those positive relationships.

Focus Group 1 mentioned team support in a variety of ways as well in contributing to high levels of collaboration and CTE. Teacher 3 mentioned, "...just those day-to-day things when you see another teacher struggling and offering to jump in to help." Teacher 1 added, "I think it shows that we are all there for the same reason, the kids, to make sure everyone is safe and kids are getting what they need. We're here to help." This team consistently discussed positive teacher morale and emotional support of one another. Teacher 2 stated,

...if I can hear a positive story from a teammate about something that worked, it gives me hope that next week I might see that in my own class and I can approach the week with the positive energy to do so." To solidify the idea of teacher support and encouragement, Teacher 1 stated, "...and so in the end you just feel

everything is going well and you can do anything and that continues towards student success.

Within team collaboration and support from one another also emerges sharing of ideas and the workload at hand. Teaching teams, through collaboration, feel as though they can support one another by sharing their individual ideas for behaviors and academics with one another for the team to benefit from and the students to gain from. “People to bounce ideas off of is very helpful” (FG 5 T2). They also feel as though they can lessen the workload of each individual by collaborating together and supporting one another in this manner. Focus Group 5. Teacher 1 stated, “...outside of other things, just that collaboration to where you feel comfortable to talk with one another about students to help you grow and to help students grow,” continuing with “you’re able to pull on each other’s knowledge and experiences to find other ways to work with kids and meet their needs.” Focus Group 4, Teachers 1 and 4 jointly discussed the benefit of collaboration and sharing ideas with one another: “It’s a time saver too, even just the simple things like making copies” and continued with, “...and if someone wants to try something new, they will and then share how it went, and we start to build on people’s strengths then” (T4). In conclusion, when discussing the determining factors needed for high levels of CTE to exist and the importance of support, Focus Group 3, Teacher 1 stated,

I think that each individual teacher has to come to the table with that belief (the belief of high teacher efficacy) that they can make a difference no matter what, even in the smallest way. I think we have that, I think our team has that, I think our building as a whole has that.

Another way the theme of support emerged as highly impacting the CTE of these groups was found in that of support that comes directly from the administration, or building principal, working with the team. The idea of support coming from the administration or principal comes in several different manners according to the focus group interview participants and data analyzed. There was significant mention of support in terms of responsiveness toward student behavior, the providing of teacher feedback, and the overall idea of valuing teachers as professionals. In terms of administrative support presenting itself in the form of support with student behavior, Teachers 1 and 2 from Focus Group 1 commented collectively on administration responding to behavior in a timely manner and how this is a huge factor in feeling successful in a classroom, lessening distractions from learning and helping to create a safe environment for learning. Teacher 1 went on to state, “I have been able to really rely on my principal to respond to a situation quickly. If there’s a behavior, I can say, hey, this is what’s going on, and I know there’s going to be that support immediately.” Focus Group 3, Teacher 3 commented, “...even when I just need to contact someone to rescue me or the student, within 60 seconds I have admin right there saying what can I do to help.” In terms of administrative support presenting itself in the form of positive teacher feedback Focus Group 1, Teacher 3 commented,

Additionally, I know that it is a very small piece, but I will say one thing, and specifically last year because it was my first year and I was just constantly in the place of, I don’t know what I’m doing, am I doing this right, am I going to screw these kids up forever, just constant self-doubt in my head, with formal observations that I would go through or just small check-ins, it really made a

difference mentally in my attitude of how I was doing and what was going on to hear those small, “I saw this and it was great” comments. Or something I saw happening in your classroom today that was awesome. Those are such small things, even just small sticky notes set on my desk that I felt truly made a difference in my overall attitude. Just, I’m doing something right. It made a huge difference and still does even now.

Teacher 1 from Focus Group 4 reiterated the importance of positive feedback from administration as an effective way to provide support in saying, “We’ve always gotten positive feedback. Even if you have an area that you need to work on, it is presented to you in a positive manner. It’s motivational and encouraging to everyone.” Focus Group 2 spoke of administration from a perspective of valuing teachers as professionals, trusting teachers, and advocating for teachers. Teacher 4 said, “...because I feel like we all feel valued by our administrators. I feel like they are very in tune to us and know what we have on our plates. Our administrators advocate for teachers and just have our backs.” Focus Group 2, Teacher 4 commented regarding administration support overall and said, “I felt like we could go into the office and we were supported. I trusted and appreciated that support so much, knowing that my principal had my back at all times.” Teacher 2 added,

I think just knowing that when you’re in a situation where you’re needing guidance or suggestions on how to proceed, you’re comfortable in saying you’re struggling with something and need help and knowing that you will have that support without a fear of impacting the security of your position.

Focus Group 5, Teachers 3 and 4 spoke to the importance of administration listening to teachers and having open communication with staff. Teacher 4 commented, "...like an open-door policy, that is always in place and we feel like we're allowed to go in to collaborate or ask questions." Teacher 3 added, "...always listening, hearing us out and that's super important." Teacher 4 from Focus Group 5 wrapped this perspective up by saying,

I feel like it is important that administration is highly responsive in the sense that we have high expectations set for us, but there's a really high level of encouragement that goes hand and hand with that, so that we don't feel like we're just alone on an island with these expectations. We know that we're being walked hand and hand and it's very encouraging.

Another way the theme of support emerged as highly impacting the CTE of these groups was found in that of support that comes from interventionists and coaches in the building working with these highly efficacious teams and their students. All focus group teams spoke to specific people in their building, other than their grade-level team or principal, who added support to their students and added value in impacting their CTE. Some of these key support people were interventionists who provided additional small group or individualized instruction to their caseload of students and some of these key support people were coaches or specialists who purposefully provided professional learning and guidance to teachers that furthered their knowledge in instruction and utilizing data to inform decisions. Focus Group 1 spoke specifically about English Language Learner (ELL) support and Behavior Interventionists. Teacher 2 expanded on this support with,

...that consistency and routine is not solely being held up by me. A person will arrive at this time. I'm encouraged by the ELL teacher who's supporting my ELLs because that's happening like clockwork without me having to do it and I see the benefit of this in some of those students whose confidence is especially low, just being able to really connect with those smaller groups and an adult who is tuned into them.

Focus Group 2 also mentioned Academic Interventionists as a support they felt impacted their classroom in a positive manner, providing additional support to students who were struggling academically. Teacher 1 stated,

Having that extra person in the building to help those struggling students, to help give them some extra attention, helped in that way, because I was able to focus on other students to help them become more developed in their skills.

Focus Group 3, Teacher 2 reiterated the support brought on by interventionists stating,

I've relied a lot on interventionists this year in both math and reading. I've appreciated it because they've definitely carved out quite a bit of time for me to come down and see some of the activities that they've been doing, or give me suggestions for things to try with them. I didn't have the information or knowledge behind what my kids truly needed as far as reading deficits go and activities and things to try with them to give them more intervention within the classroom as well as what they were receiving with the interventionists.

Coaches and specialists help provide both knowledge and confidence in teachers that impact their overall CTE. Focus Group 1 spoke specifically to the newly added position of a Math Coach. Teacher 1 commented,

He helps us a lot in helping us to see successes and celebrations within our district assessment data when we were feeling defeated with math. He was able to point out, look at this and look at this, look how much growth there is.

Teacher 3 added,

...he has made me feel supported. Sometimes people are just thrown in to say they are providing support and it doesn't add much value, but he really does. He's showing us how to make the most of our lessons and helping us plan and pace and all these things that are taken off our plates and helping to relieve some of the stress we are feeling.

Focus Group 3, Teacher 3 spoke of both their Math Specialist and Literacy Coaches and the work they did behind the scenes that help their team feel unified and aligned on the same page.

The final way the theme of support emerged as highly impacting the CTE of these groups was found in that of trust. All teams spoke to the need for trust and safety within the team with which they work alongside daily. Focus Group 1, Teacher 2 stated, "...the three of us seem to be willing and able to consistently not have ego be in between us as we share and be vulnerable about what we need for our day." Focus Group 2 spoke specifically about trust, relationships, and willingness to be vulnerable. Teacher 3 spoke to this in detail saying, "You have to be willing to say what's working, what's not, and ask for help, I guess, and feel comfortable enough to feel open enough to be okay with reflecting on yourself as a teacher." Teacher 2 expanded on this saying,

With relationships and having that safety, vulnerability. But there's an element that allows risk-taking and that you can take a risk, and looking at that risk, even

if something doesn't necessarily go the way you thought it would, it's not necessarily a failure, it's being able to have somebody to come back and say, "Hey, this is what I did. It was what happened. And how can I make it better? How would you have done it?" So, you have those feedback loops as well that go with being able to take risks.

Focus Group 3, when talking about sharing ideas with one another, Teacher 1 stated, "...just that collaboration to where you feel comfortable to talk with one another about students to help you grow (as a teacher) and to help them grow (as learners)." Teachers 1 and 4 from Focus Group 4 mirrored this perspective talking about the importance of a comfortable environment to share what they tried and did not go well or as planned and asking for support in this without judgment. Focus Group 5, Teacher 1 added to this perspective by saying, "...admitting if you don't have it all together so that you can learn best practices from each other, instead of just thinking that you have it all figured out."

The second major theme, support, was presented through the lens of several different key words and phrases. These key words and phrases were intertwined into the various responses of teacher participants from all five focus groups. The responses of these teacher participants outlined their perspectives in support within team support/encouragement, sharing of ideas, sharing of workload, administration support, interventionist/coach support, and trust. Each of these key words and phrases was represented in reinforcing support as impacting teaching teams' high levels of CTE.

### **Analysis of Research Questions**

The purpose of Research Question 1 was to determine, "What are educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?" The

purpose of Research Question 2 was to determine, “What are educators’ perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?” The researcher conducted focus group interviews to best capture the perceptions of teachers about the conditions present in their own school buildings and within the teacher teams that aid in the development of CTE. The interview process started with an open-ended question, “What conditions do you believe help to develop collective teacher efficacy?”, but then broke this question down further with additional follow-up questions detailing Donohoo’s (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE independently:

- Advanced Teacher Influence
- Goal Consensus
- Teachers’ Knowledge About One Another’s Work
- Cohesive Staff
- Responsiveness of Leadership
- Effective Systems of Intervention

The researcher then followed up with another overarching question to best gauge what conditions teachers felt had a greater influence: “In what ways do you feel some of these conditions may work towards the development of collective teacher efficacy over others?” After multiple viewings of the interview recordings and multiple readings of the interview transcripts, the researcher highlighted text and made annotations with each read. The researcher took notes during both the viewings of recordings and readings of transcripts to best answer the research questions set forth. From this process emerged keywords and phrases that assisted in answering the research questions presented. The

common theme that once again presented itself throughout the interview process was that of overarching support.

When asked the first initial interview question, Focus Group 1, Teacher 1 stated, “Just support from teammates. Even though we have a difficult group of kids, we are making progress with them because we have the support of each other.” Teacher 2 from this same group echoed this sentiment by sharing, “I would not have been able to picture this year without being able to lean on these people.” Focus Group 2, Teacher 1 answered this question with one single word, “trust.” Teacher 2 added, “relationships.” Teacher 3 follow-up with, “That’s what I was going to say, trust, relationships, and just knowing we’re safe, safety (speaking of vulnerability, risk-taking, and comfort in reflecting with one another).” Focus Group 2 elaborated more on this topic specifically. Teacher 2 noted the importance of being able to ask for help without judgment saying,

I think it’s knowing that when you are in a challenging situation, knowing that you can say, “Hey, I’m struggling with this and I need help here.” Knowing that you can have that support without fear of it impacting the security of your position. Knowing that I can ask for help, but that it does not mean that I am an ineffective teacher. Knowing that I can ask for help and that I’ll have the support to help me be a better and more effective teacher in handling whatever the situation is.

Focus Group 3 reiterated the importance of support, but from various avenues across the school building. Teacher 3 stated,

I think it's an important condition to know that your administrator has your back, your support staff has your back, you have the support of your team and the other teams in your building to bridge the gap between grade levels.

Teacher 2 added to this by stating, "Just being supportive of one another. Knowing that we're all in kind of a difficult situation and trying to lend a hand whenever we can." Teacher 2 answered this question directly with, "I'd say the climate of the building." Teacher 4 spoke further to this, referencing a building climate of support, in creating a family-like atmosphere: "We all do truly feel like a family and like we are all there for each other, no matter what."

Focus Group 4 spoke more specifically to the support of administration being an important condition to help foster high levels of CTE. They discussed more of a top-down approach when needing to be "collective" on different aspects of the school building. This seemed to be more of a hindrance, or roadblock, with this team. Teacher 1 stated, "If we're trying to be collective on something, it would have to go through her, so we can't do what we need to do because we don't have that open line of communication." Teacher 1 simply answered this question with, "open communication with the principal" as being the condition she felt was most important in the development of CTE. Focus Group 4 did later elaborate on the importance of the support they provided one another in both sharing ideas and having trust in one another to do so regardless of the outcome and building on people's strengths. Teacher 4 stated,

That's what makes it good. We know what works and we have worked together long enough that we can start playing with it, trying new things, and if it works,

great. And if not, okay. We have a comfortable enough environment to know no one is going to judge me.

Focus Group 5 also spoke of support right away in answering this question with administrator support included. Teacher 3 answered, “Teacher support for sure. Whether that be with teachers that teach alongside you, administrators, or anyone else in the building.” This group elaborated on the importance of support and open communication of the administration. Teacher 2 spoke to the visibility of the principal “checking in that builds that communication where you feel like you can go and talk to your leader at any time” and “being on a level playing field where it’s comfortable to communicate.” Teacher 4 added to this, answering, “I think it’s open communication, an open-door policy, that is always in place to where we feel like we’re allowed to come collaborate and ask questions.” Furthermore, this group spoke to the importance of team support, morale, and positive teacher relationships accounting for teacher success.

What are educators’ perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE? Although each of the different groups mentioned many intervention programs and building support personnel specific to their buildings, all teams spoke to an overarching theme of support. This support may be provided or prioritized in various ways, but it is about leaning on one another, trusting one another, and being vulnerable to grow with one another, all while feeling supported by the people that work alongside you on a daily basis - support.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four outlined the findings of the focus group interview data collected, the goal of which was to explore educators’ perceptions of the conditions that might generate

CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Chapter Four contained the findings of the study and the analysis of the focus group interview videos and transcriptions including participants' key phrasing and quotes most relevant to the participants' perspectives staying focused on the purpose of the study. Data collection took place through the completion of five focus group interviews with teacher teams who were said to have exhibited high levels of CTE, the spiral review of interview videos and interview transcripts, member checks, and the researcher's field notes collected during the interview process. The researcher analyzed each interview video through multiple viewings and the interview transcript through multiple readings utilizing various note-taking strategies. Tables were displayed to easily represent key words and phrases evident within each of the two major themes associated with those key words and phrases. The themes were then used to illustrate the data from a holistic perspective. Triangulation of the data presented was used to best understand the themes that emerged throughout the completion of this study. Triangulation of data also provided validity and reliability for the two major themes presented within the data.

Two major themes were established as a result of the completion of the focus group interview sessions and the analysis of the data collected throughout. The two major themes were identified by the researcher in corresponding with high levels of CTE and the conditions that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster within their buildings. The two major themes were time for collaboration and support. Time for collaboration was the first theme presented, discussed by all five focus groups with a total

of 60 mentions. Support was the second theme presented, discussed by all five focus groups with a total of 155 mentions.

Chapter Five contains a brief review of the research questions and limitations presented in this study. Chapter Five outlines the findings presented in this study and the conclusions drawn from these findings. The researcher's opinions on the findings of the study based on the analysis of the focus group interview videos and transcripts are shared and discussed. Chapter Five concludes with discussion of the educational implications, recommendations for educators in the field, and suggestions for future research, followed by a summary of the chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. This study explored educators' perceptions of the conditions building leaders or teaching teams can put in place that influence the positive promotion of CTE within a group of educators working together for the benefit of student academic growth. The participants selected for this study were teams of teachers in Missouri currently teaching in kindergarten through fifth-grade buildings with a student population of 300 or greater that exhibited high levels of CTE as recognized by their school leader and with an overall score of 72 or higher on The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017). Focus group interviews with five separate teacher teams of three to five teachers were conducted. This process encouraged interaction among teachers and allowed for the group dynamics to be apparent in discussion throughout the interview with comments from individual participants fueling additional thoughts and comments from other participants present.

The theoretical framework for this research stemmed initially from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which examined both internal and external factors influencing one's behavior and motivation. Within SCT, Bandura introduced self-efficacy and its link in determining success. Further expansion of self-efficacy came in teacher efficacy, referring to teachers' perceptions of their own abilities to influence student achievement (Hughes, 2015; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Bandura later

described group efficacy as a shared belief in a group's abilities to plan and execute actions needed to produce desirable outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017; Furr, 2018). CTE is based upon a shared belief of a group of teachers that they themselves can collectively organize and carry out the course of action required to produce given accomplishments and levels of achievement success (Goddard et al., 2004). Additionally, this study included Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention. Teacher perceptions on Donohoo's enabling conditions of CTE were investigated through the lens of this theoretical framework.

Chapter Five consists of a brief summary of the problem while examining both the limitations and delimitations of the study. The researcher discusses how focus group interview video and transcripts were examined and the process by which triangulation was utilized to best analyze the data presented. Chapter Five also provides a description of the research methods applied throughout completion of the study. In addition, implications for educational practice are considered along with recommendations for further research. Following Chapter Five, a list of references is provided along with appendices of the documents used throughout the study.

### **Research Questions**

Two overarching research questions were used for this qualitative narrative study:

RQ 1: What are educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?

RQ 2: What are educators' perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

According to Roberts (2018), limitations are particular attributes of the study that have a possible negative effect on the conclusions over which the researcher has no control. Within this research study there were factors that were both within the researcher's control and those that were not. Although no research method is perfect, the researcher's intentions were to limit variables when possible. Intentional efforts were made to reduce the possible effects of delimitations of this study. However, limitations remained and are included as variables outside the researcher's control. Within this qualitative narrative study, the following limitations were identified:

1. This study did not consider all variables that may influence perceptions related to an educator's thoughts of personal self-efficacy and/or CTE, such as past experiences or other outside factors.
2. This study was limited by the knowledge and understanding of the topics presented in this study.
3. This study was limited by a lack of control over the number of questionnaires completed in a timely manner.
4. Any preconceived perceptions or bias of participants towards that of their current teaching team and/or building staff could not be considered.
5. Integrity and honesty in completion of the questionnaires and willingness to share within interview and focus group sessions could not be controlled.
6. Researcher bias is possible in a qualitative narrative study.

7. The researcher attempted to add reliability by triangulating data through multiple reviews of session recordings and notes to draw upon common themes presented by interviewees.
8. Student demographics, including socioeconomic status and ethnicity, were not considered within this study.
9. The researcher did not look at student academic data, including standardized test results.
10. This study did not consider impacts the Coronavirus and school closures, Spring 2020, had on teachers and their perceptions of efficacy.

Roberts (2018) defined delimitations as parameters of the study set forth by the researcher to narrow the extent of the study. Delimitations of this study included the following:

1. This study was limited to the research problem, methodology used, and the participants and setting of the study.
2. Participants meeting the criteria for this study were current elementary educators in the state of Missouri serving in buildings with the makeup of kindergarten through fifth grade with a student population of 300 or greater.
3. Participants meeting the criteria for this study were classified as either having high CTE or non-high CTE based on The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017). Participants completing the questionnaire with an overall scale score of 72 or above were considered as having high CTE.

4. The theoretical framework of this study was based on the work of Bandura's (1986) study of social cognitive theory and self-efficacy; the study conducted by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) of teacher self-efficacy; and the study conducted by Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) of CTE.
5. This study was bound by the enabling conditions of CTE: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge of one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention.

### **Summary of Methods**

The participants in this study were teacher teams in kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school buildings in Missouri with student populations of 300 or greater that exhibited high levels of CTE as recognized by their school leader. High levels of CTE were determined by teaching teams scoring 72 or higher on The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire developed by Donohoo (2017) found in Appendix C. Teams were sent a request to participate through email communication and focus group interviews were scheduled. The requests for participation are located in Appendix A and Appendix B. The researcher provided each group a set of open-ended questions derived from the initial questionnaire prior to the scheduled interview time. This interview guide can be found in Appendix D. Focus group interviews were conducted utilizing the Zoom platform, and were recorded utilizing this online system. Small group interviews were conducted based on the collective efficacy of the team and not that of one individual, bringing a collective voice to the responses.

The interview videos were sent to Rev.com and transcripts of each interview were created. Once transcripts were returned, member checks were completed. The researcher analyzed each recording and transcript with attention to both the quantity and emotional tone of the responses through multiple viewings and readings. The researcher highlighted text and made annotations with each in-depth reading of the transcript and continued to add to these annotations throughout the reading process to identify key words and phrases presented within transcripts. Key words and phrases spoken in multiple interviews by multiple participants were identified and named. Subsequently, these notes were typed and organized by both the interview groups and themes presented. This process that allowed for repetitious reading of transcripts and note-taking made certain that both responses at the surface were gleaned as well as deeply rooted perceptions of participants.

The compilation of annotations and notes allowed for consolidation and deep analysis of data in order for themes to begin to emerge. The researcher identified 11 key words or phrases from the five interview transcripts from the participants' responses that were collectively repeated. The 11 key words and phrases were then used to best represent the data and were grouped together to help establish two overarching themes. Once these two themes emerged, the transcripts were again examined to determine if any additional data emerged to support the themes established. Table 3 displays the 11 coded key words and phrases from the five interview transcripts. The table demonstrated the frequency of each coded key word or phrase and from there two major themes were developed.

The research utilized triangulation of data to analyze and build a better understanding of the different themes that presented themselves throughout the full research process. Data collection included the conducting of focus group interviews, review of interview videos and transcripts, and researcher's field notes. The researcher maintained electronic notes on observations and insights throughout the interview process and added to these notes each time interviews were watched and/or transcripts read. This triangulation of data sources and repeated process of note-taking met the criteria of validity necessary in qualitative research, which requires continual and careful attention to the ways in which data were collected and analyzed. Thus, following this predetermined process was one of the ways validity of this study was ensured.

Member checking provided participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to verify and make any changes or additions to their statements. Each individual interview was digitally recorded utilizing the recording feature available on Zoom. Each recording was then uploaded to Rev.com, an online platform that converts video to text, and transformed into written transcripts. Copies of the transcripts were emailed to a participant representative on each teacher team for the team to review to ensure accuracy of statements made and participants were able to review transcripts for changes, additions, or clarifications needed. Upon completion of this process, statements were verified and no requests for changes or additions to the original transcripts were made.

Peer reviews were conducted as a step in increasing the internal validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The peer review process included a dissertation committee composed of three Southwest Baptist University graduate professors with

backgrounds in education and research. One of the dissertation committee members served as the researcher's advisor. The advisor supervised the progress of the research process and communicated with the other committee members to seek additional input and feedback for the researcher. The dissertation committee reviewed the research questions, theoretical framework, literature review, and research methodology implemented throughout the study. This peer review process made it possible for the researcher to gather additional input and constructive feedback from the committee to ensure focus of the research questions, strengthen the literature review alignment to the research questions, and implement the most appropriate methodology for the research process.

### **Summary of Findings**

The researcher was able to make significant conclusions based on interviews conducted with five separate small groups of teacher teams from five separate elementary school sites. Interviews conducted with each group revealed 11 key words and phrases falling under two major themes. Key words and phrases were shared throughout the five focus group interviews contributing to the two major themes developed throughout this research process. This study established educators' perceptions of the conditions that generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teacher teams can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings, therefore, yielding high levels of CTE within their team and school building, ultimately positively affecting student achievement.

**Research Question 1.** Research question 1 asked, "What are the educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?" As the data from each interview session were analyzed, key words and phrases were identified

and themes were developed. From Research Question 1, the researcher concluded that both major themes—time for collaboration and support—greatly influenced educator perceptions about the conditions that generate CTE within teacher teams.

**Time for collaboration.** The theme, time for collaboration, played a significant role in teacher perceptions regarding the conditions needed within a teacher team or school building to generate high levels of CTE, and therefore, positively impacting student achievement. Teacher teams discussed the need for this time to be embedded into the school day where they are not having to schedule collaborative time outside the school day on their own time, interfering in their own personal schedules. Teachers shared that when time is embedded into the school day, set aside for the specific purpose of teacher collaboration, it makes it easier to be on the same page as one another, planning together, problem solving together, sharing ideas with one another, and reflecting on lessons together. When all of this is possible, ultimately, teachers are then able to share and discuss student data, what worked, what did not work, and how they may adapt lessons and instructional strategies to best meet the needs of their students for reteaching or covering the specific topic the next time. Time embedded into the school day may include common planning time, PLC time, and informal check-ins before or after school. With teachers having various obligations before and after school with family, sporting events, after school clubs and sports, and second jobs, time devoted to teacher collaboration that occurs and is protected during the school day is the only way all members of the team can be expected and able to be a willing and productive participant for this collaborative work. Teachers shared that they need the ability during this time to set their own agenda, without a to-do list coming from outside of the team,

for the work they feel is meaningful to them and their students in real time. They discussed that often they are given embedded time within the school day, but with an agenda prepared by administrators, coaches, and/or specialists. Although many of them discussed this too as important work, they also saw an important value in time in which they go to drive their own agenda to discuss curriculum and instructional planning in detail for the days and weeks ahead, common planning. Teachers shared that during this time, they can sit down with one another and discuss required learning targets and curriculum resources and plan upcoming lessons. This allows them to talk through learning standards for common understanding, and discuss best instructional practices for delivering the content, as well as strategies for the assessment of student learning. When teachers are teaching the same learning standards and assessing student work in a similar manner, it creates an atmosphere where the teaching team can sit down and analyze data with one another. This Teachers shared that they are able to reflect on learning by asking questions such as, “What worked?”, “What did not work?”, or “How did you teach this?”, sharing ideas for reteaching or next time visiting the topic.

***Support.*** Teacher perceptions regarding the conditions needed within a teacher team or school building to generate high levels of CTE were also evident and concluded with the theme of support, the second theme discovered within this study. Teachers discussed support in many different ways, sharing that this support comes from many different individuals or groups within the school building and presents itself in many different ways. Teachers discussed the importance of support coming from the group of individuals they work most closely with every day, their grade-level team. Support from this group looks different, but always includes a vital level of trust and safety. Teachers

mentioned the importance of trust and safety with this team because this is the support group they most often talk with, discuss what went well and what did not within their own classroom setting, share ideas with, take risks with in trying something new knowing the possibility of failure, but then reflecting with to better themselves as teachers. Teachers shared that this team is most often who they talk with when their level of efficacy may be floundering, and they need people to lean on and people who will ultimately lift them up and encourage them in a positive manner. Teachers spoke to this team, with which they worked closely on a daily basis, as also being the team with which they collaborate most often. Because of this collaboration, they were able to share ideas with one another and share the workload with one another, whether it was planning lessons together or preparing materials. Teachers shared that they were able to plan lessons with one another, discussing learning standards, sharing instructional strategies and lesson ideas, and reflecting together on what might have work and/or what may need adjustment in moving forward to best meet the needs of their students. The collaboration and support that came from this group also allowed teachers to discuss student data in a safe and trusting environment free of judgment, where teachers can learn and grow in their own practice. Teachers shared that often they are able to “divide and conquer” lesson planning that needs to be done, copies that need to be made, materials that need to be prepared, making the most of their time, supporting one another in this manner.

Support, connecting back to generating high levels of CTE, also comes from various other individuals inside the school building including administration, learning coaches/specialists, and interventionists. Teachers spoke of their administration’s support in various ways. This support presents itself anywhere from responding to

student misbehavior to protecting the instructional environment, to providing the materials needed to support their students, to creating time for teacher collaboration, and encouraging professional learning to further teacher growth. Teachers shared that when they felt their administrator believed in them, they were more likely to believe in their ability to positively impact students and that this became easier when they were supported and encouraged by their administrator. Teachers talked about the importance of their administrator “having their back,” supporting them with students and parents, and understanding that their job comes with challenges and working to protect them from those challenges. Trust was mentioned again with the teacher-administration relationship in mind, and the need for mutual respect and support. Some teachers, those who had these supports, also spoke of support that comes from learning coaches/specialists and interventionists.

Teachers spoke of learning coaches/specialists as professionals who are able to support them in implementing new curriculum, learning and exploring new instructional strategies, and looking at student data in a way that best supports the collective whole of the student population. Teachers shared that these individuals are able to bridge the gaps from classroom to classroom and grade level to grade level. They also provide meaningful and on-site professional learning and coaching that grows a teacher in his/her instructional practice. Some teachers were able to speak to the support of interventionists whether it be in certain content areas like reading or math, special education, English Language Learners, or others. Teachers spoke of these individuals as people who were able to support some of their students in a small group or individual manner with additional targeted instruction. Whether pushing into their classroom or pulling students

out of the classroom for additional time and attention, these individuals helped to grow students academically where they needed it most, supporting the classroom teacher in this manner. A mutual collaboration between teachers and interventionists also creates support for teachers by growing their instructional practices in differentiation to best meet the needs of students.

**Research Question 2.** Research question 2 asked, “What are the educators’ perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE?” As the data from each interview session were analyzed, key words and phrases were identified and themes were developed. From Research Question 2, the researcher concluded that both major themes—time for collaboration and support—greatly influenced educator perceptions about the conditions that generate CTE within teacher teams.

***Time for collaboration.*** The theme, time for collaboration, played a significant role in teacher perceptions as they relate to how the presence or absence of the conditions can help or hinder the development of CTE. Teachers shared that they need time to collaborate at meaningful and impactful levels with all teachers on their grade level team. When this time is not embedded into the school day, the time for collaboration becomes tough to schedule as certain individuals have commitments outside of school hours. Teachers spoke of trying to schedule time on their own as a group before or after school to meet, but shared with various personal schedules with families, children, other school commitments, continuous education, and other factors, this can prove to be quite challenging. Teachers shared that it is often the same smaller group, not everyone on the team, that attends these meetings, and while these can still prove to be beneficial, it also

causes the collective efficacy of the group as a whole to decrease because the collaboration is not unified across all teachers and within all classrooms. This can also cause breakdowns in communication and trust, which then can prove to have additional negative effects. Teachers spoke to many different ways either building administration or their teaching team have devoted time, embedded into the school day, for this meaningful team collaboration to take place. However, similar to working with any team, they spoke to the importance of all team members coming to the meeting times with an open mind and positive attitude as well as the trust, safety, and lack of judgment needed in this environment for this collaborative nature to be a success. They spoke also to the importance of all individuals feeling as though the time spent working with one another is a beneficial use of time. Teachers spoke of common plan time (or release time), created by their students attending special classes such as art, music, and PE, and the importance of the building master schedule being created in such a way by building administration that it allowed this to occur as a time they can devote scheduled time with one another at least once a week. Some teachers spoke specifically of PLC time, created by students being released from school early one day a week, allowing for teacher collaboration. Many teachers spoke of PLC time as crucial to their team collaboration success, but only when an agenda was driven by the members of the team themselves, and not outside individuals such as building administration or instructional coaches. Many teachers spoke of these individuals often handing down a to-do list of tasks that need to be the focus of this time, and in turn being counteractive and counterproductive to the meaningful collaborative work they had hoped to focus on. Teachers spoke of their PLC focus needing to be on instructional practice and student

data, but often focusing on housekeeping tasks and information or continuous professional learning. Many teachers spoke to their informal check-ins that took place at lunch or before or after school in the hallway outside of their classroom doors, as some of the most productive discussions their team has. However, because of the informal nature of these encounters and the spontaneous way in which they occurred, not all members were always present for these discussions when decisions may be made, and again a breakdown of communication and trust can occur, having the opposite effect intended.

*Support.* The second theme, support, also provided insight connecting back to how the presence or absence of certain conditions can help or hinder the development of CTE, from various individuals inside the school building including one's teacher team, administration, learning coaches/specialists, and interventionists. Teachers spoke of both how these individuals in their particular roles could help or hinder the development of CTE within their school building and how they are able to successfully work together as a team. Most teachers spoke very highly of the teacher team they were currently working within and contributed their high level of efficacy to these teams specifically, attributing high levels of trust, sharing of ideas, and reflection with one another as key factors in their collaborative work. Teachers spoke of teams they had worked with previously where this was not the same and how this hindered both individual outlooks and team outlooks on student achievement. Teachers shared that in order for them to feel supported by their team, they need to feel mutual respect and as though they can lean on those individuals when needed, but as though all individuals are able to "pull their own weight," bring ideas to the table, and contribute at high levels to the common workload of the team.

Teachers spoke of supportive administrators in a positive manner, administrators they felt supported teachers with both students and parents, understood the workload and expectations put on teachers, and tried their best to protect instructional time within the classroom to limit distractions while increasing student learning. Teachers spoke of administrators that provided resources needed for teachers to do their jobs well and set aside time for teachers to work in their classrooms and collaborate with their teams without top-down agendas and to-do lists. Teachers spoke highly of administrators who responded to student misbehavior in a manner that keeps the instructional nature of the classroom safe and free of distraction, or even fear of harm. However, teachers also spoke of the opposite, administrators they experienced in the past as hands-off, not visible to teachers or students, and those who managed in a very top-down approach. Teachers shared that when an administrator operates in this manner, assigns additional tasks without stakeholder feedback or understanding, or ignores situations that take away from the positive learning environment teachers work hard to create with their students and ensure their students they are a part of, this can have a very opposite effect, hindering the efficacy of individual teachers and the overall feeling of CTE within a school building. The same was said of instructional coaches/specialists. Teachers spoke of seeing their impact in support that comes in prioritizing learning standards, working with grade cards, and navigating curriculum, work they felt in some way takes something off their already full plates. Teacher perspectives shared that the hindrance came in the form of unnecessary meetings, meetings that could have been emails, often taking teachers' time away from tasks they feel are important to their teacher team and ultimately student learning tied to both schoolwide and district achievement

goals. Interventionists, those who support student learning, in conjunction with the classroom teacher, whether that be math, reading, or another targeted learning area, were seen by teachers as a personnel support that benefitted student learning and in turn worked towards the CTE of the classroom teachers in having support with some of their most struggling students, and not feeling alone. However, teachers shared the importance of communication and collaboration with this instructional pairing so that they knew what was occurring during intervention time and could continue that work inside their classroom seamlessly to best meet the needs of the students to have the greatest impact. Teachers shared that they were often able to learn from the interventionists that work with their students if open communication and collaboration is possible and encouraged.

This study utilized Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy—advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention—as a guide for discussion in order to best answer the research questions. Although not all were spoken about in direct terms, many of these conditions served as underpinnings for the two main themes that were represented. Advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, and cohesive staff all presented themselves during discussion centered around time for collaboration and topics relevant during collaborative conversations. Teachers spoke of the importance of driving their own agenda during their time to collaborate (advanced teacher influence). During team collaboration time, teachers are coming together to work towards common goals (goal consensus and cohesive staff). During discussion time for

collaboration, teachers often mentioned sharing of ideas and reflection on their teaching with one another (knowledge of one another's work). Responsiveness of leadership and effective systems of intervention both presented themselves during discussion centered around the importance of support. Teachers spoke of the importance of feeling supported by their building leader, entrusting them to encourage them and provide necessary materials and training, as well as support teachers with students and parents (responsiveness of leadership). Teachers spoke of both instructional coaches/specialists and interventionists, who help provide professional learning for differentiating instruction with their most hard to reach students, look at data to guide instruction, and intervene with students one-on-one or in small group to provide additional layers of intervention (effective systems of intervention).

## **Discussion**

The researcher interviewed five teacher teams of three to five teachers from five different elementary schools, kindergarten through fifth grade, in the state of Missouri. The purpose of the focus group interview sessions was to gather perceptual data from teacher teams to gain significant conclusions and analyze themes and supportive data regarding conditions needed to yield high levels of CTE. Additionally, the researcher sought to examine teacher perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Interviews from the five focus groups revealed two common themes regarding teacher perception of conditions that contribute to high levels of CTE: time for collaboration and support. This study established school leaders must be purposeful and intentional when planning for team collaboration and

systems of support within their buildings to increase CTE within their teacher teams. High levels of CTE within a school setting leads teachers to believe they can positively impact student achievement; therefore, they are more inclined to invest time, effort, and resources into executing school goals (Bandura, 1997). This section discusses the interpretation of findings and their connection to the theoretical framework body of research.

The research for this study was theoretically grounded in Bandura's (1986) SCT and the introduction of self-efficacy. The progression of self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, and group efficacy worked to define CTE as shared beliefs of a group within a school to reach desired outcomes with student achievement (Goddard et al., 2004), and served as the lens through which the researcher analyzed and interpreted the findings. Collective teacher efficacy is based upon shared beliefs within a school to collectively organize and carry out a planned course of action to produce given accomplishments with student achievement at the forefront (Goddard et al., 2004). The stakes are high; self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, and particularly group efficacy play an integral role in the work within the school setting. In this study, teacher interviews revealed high levels of both self- and collective efficacy through repeated comments and attitudes about the way they worked together. Also rooted in this study were Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for CTE: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge of one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention. The link to this theoretical framework reinforces the reliability and validity of the study, as well as the integrity and trustworthiness of the

researcher. The theoretical foundation also generates a deeper understanding of the research provided.

Overall, participants of this study linked the development of their high levels of CTE to certain conditions present within their schools. Although there were differences from team to team, and school to school, in what conditions were present or more prevalent, teachers confirmed that certain conditions set in place by a teaching team or building administration can work to develop CTE and therefore should be attended to and fostered in a specific way. Creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration allows teachers to grow professionally from one another (Schenk, 2016; Senge, 2006). Participants confirmed this research by identifying two conditions they felt had the biggest impact on their CTE: time for collaboration and support. The researcher assumed that when looking through the lens of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions, some would present themselves as more crucial than others, but did not predict how the six conditions would integrate fully into the concluding themes that presented themselves.

**Time for collaboration.** From participant interviews, the researcher identified the crucial link in the development of CTE and time for collaboration. Time for collaboration is aligned to Donohoo's (2017) conditions of teachers' knowledge of one another's work, goal consensus, and cohesive staff. Teachers' knowledge about one another's work is linked to how collaboration is carried out with opportunities for teachers to discuss planning, assessing, and learning (Morgan, 2019). Collaboration allows teacher teams to break down learning standards, plan meaningful lessons that incorporate multiple instructional best practices, discuss assessment and student data, and

reflect on the teaching and learning that occurs inside individual classrooms while maintaining focus on schoolwide and district level goals. Productive dialogue with one another allows teacher teams to share and learn new ideas and build upon them to access a larger pool of knowledge from one another (Schenk, 2016; Senge, 2006). Donohoo (2017) spoke towards the positive connection between teacher collaboration and increased efficacy.

Goal consensus and cohesive staff are linked to how collaboration is carried out when teams collaboratively identify and commit to measurable and challenging school goals and are working together to achieve desired results (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019). A high correlation is found between goal consensus and CTE when goals are collaboratively developed and team members believe in their ability to obtain goals through a coordinated effort (Kurz & Knight, 2004; Ryba, 2018; Senge, 2006). Unified beliefs about common goals and shared priorities help to build a cohesive staff (Donohoo, 2017; Summers, 2017). A more cohesive staff can be built through avenues of collaboration based on a shared vision and meaningful and connected relationships (Donohoo, 2017; Hood, 2018). This collaboration brings consensus and cohesion within a staff when focused on the building and district mission and goals, working towards the great good of all students.

Additionally, participants revealed how collaboration time is most impactful when embedded into the school day so that all stakeholders are involved and invested without distraction. Participants described this time occurring during common plan time, PLC time, and informal check-ins such as lunch or quick hallway conversations. Although Donohoo (2017) did not speak directly to this facet of collaboration, she spoke

specifically to teachers being provided opportunities to learn together and from one another and the elevated levels of CTE this can develop. Participants also revealed the benefit of embedded collaboration time being escalated even more so when they have the ability to create their own agenda. This loosely ties to Donohoo's condition of advanced teacher influence involving teacher voice and input in decision making. With teachers feeling entrusted to be involved and share input on curriculum, professional learning, and assessment, efficacy increases (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018).

**Support.** Also identified through focus group interviews was the link between the development of CTE and support. Support is aligned to Donohoo's (2017) conditions of cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention, as imperative in the development of high levels of CTE. Participants identified levels of support coming from many different individuals in many different ways specific to their school and personnel available, but strong consensus was reached in the need for support coming from within their teacher team. Participants described this support as encouraging one another, sharing ideas with one another, and sharing the workload with one another as ways that have a positive impact related to CTE. A trust-based collaborative culture is reached when individuals feel comfortable and safe in sharing their ideas, as well as more vulnerable teaching experiences with one another without judgement (Schenk, 2016; Vincent, 2018). Teams that get along, help, and encourage each other are more likely to come to agreement about the work that needs to be done and support one another through the work (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018).

Responsiveness of leadership and effective systems of intervention are linked to how support is carried out by other individuals within the school that work to elevate

levels of CTE within teacher teams. Responsiveness of leadership is linked to how support works towards the development of CTE when care and respect for teachers by the leader are evident, as well as awareness of teachers' professional needs (Wendland, 2018). Participants believed there is a need for administrators to be responsive and encouraging. Showing genuine concern for staff members through positive encouragement increases the likelihood staff members will continuously work towards school improvement goals (Norris, 2018). When leaders are able to respond to the needs of their staff, there is a greater sense of support and belief in positively impacting student outcomes (Donohoo, 2017). Effective systems of intervention are also linked to how support develops CTE when these processes are in place for the differentiation needed to meet students' individual needs based on their ability (Donohoo, 2017; Morgan, 2019). Participants discussed how interventionists can help to intervene with students who struggle most. When intervention systems are approached in a systematic manner throughout the whole school and in place from the beginning, CTE is fostered in a greater sense (Daniels, 2018).

The limitations in this study were created to limit participants to only teaching teams in kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary buildings in the state of Missouri who exhibited high levels of CTE. Additionally, teacher teams asked to participate in focus group interviews came from recommendations based on their leaders' perspectives of their high level of CTE as a team within their buildings with the understanding that there are differing perceptions of levels of collective efficacy. The study relied on participants' integrity and honesty in completion of the survey and truthful and authentic answers to interview questions and further discussion. This study occurred during the

COVID-19 pandemic, which created challenges for all. The COVID-19 pandemic did not disrupt the interview process, but could have affected the overall efficacy of teachers.

Overall, the findings from this study provided informational and enlightening perspectives from teacher teams with high levels of CTE. The study deepened the existing research by guiding an organized explanation from teacher teams' perspectives on what conditions educational leaders and teacher teams can be put in place and fostered in a manner to best increase the CTE of teachers within their building. This study helped to fill the gap in research about what conditions have the most impact in the development of CTE from teachers' perspectives to allow teachers and educational leaders to focus on and foster these conditions to best increase and sustain this feeling of CTE and the education impact teachers can have on student achievement. Despite the fact that this qualitative study is not transferable to the larger population, it does provide real-time information directly reported by five groups of teachers. Conclusions drawn from this study can be generalized across elementary schools where grade-level teams are established and encouraged to work together in a collaborative and supportive manner.

### **Educational Implications**

The educational implications of this research were explicitly connected to the research questions that directed this study. Throughout this qualitative research process, this study sought to fill the gap in research by exploring educators' perceptions of the conditions that might help to develop CTE within teacher teams to better understand how educational leaders and teachers could attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Thus, this study was important because, according to Hattie's (2012) research, high levels of CTE are directly linked to schools' academic

achievement. Hattie's research showed that CTE ranked above all other factors, including student socioeconomic status, student motivation, parental involvement, and prior achievement. Therefore, educational leaders have the need to explore teacher perceptions regarding these conditions in order to work to best implement and foster conditions necessary for the development of high levels of CTE.

Collective teacher efficacy is rooted in a group's shared belief in its abilities to plan and execute actions necessary to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Donohoo, 2017; Furr, 2018). The conclusions drawn from this study determined teachers feel as though time for collaboration and support were the two most common themes. Educational leaders and teacher teams who work together with the common goal of student achievement should be aware of the way teachers feel about the conditions needed to better support high levels of CTE and their belief, as a team, that their shared abilities will create successful outcomes within their students and school (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2017; Donohoo, 2017). Educational leaders should work to understand that teachers perceive there to be conditions that are put in place that have the ability to either help or hinder the development of CTE within their schools, therefore affecting their overall student success. It is important to note that throughout this research process, it was evident that many educator participants exhibited a lack of understanding around the meaning of CTE and its protentional impact. When working to develop high levels of CTE within teacher teams, it would be vital to frame this work with education on CTE; its meaning and protentional impact.

The first major theme rendered through the focus group interviews conducted during this study was time for collaboration. This theme is associated with educators'

perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE and was identified by participants 60 times as a key condition that should demand attention from educational leaders and teacher teams and be fostered throughout a school building culture. District and building leaders should be mindful of teachers' perceptions about the benefit of time to collaborate with their team. District and building leaders need to make team collaboration a priority and encourage it to happen in a routine manner. Leaders can work to provide opportunities for teachers to share teaching practice and student work in which collaboration takes place to gain knowledge about one another's practice (Donohoo, 2017). They need to create district calendars and school building master schedules in a way that allows for this team collaboration to occur during these hours. Teachers' perceptions about collaboration that takes place outside of the contracted day can cause teachers to feel overwhelmed, and are often difficult to coordinate with team members' varying schedules. Team collaboration time, if going to be held as an expectation and encouraged for the proper reasons, should be embedded into the contracted hours teachers are required to work. With this comes the need for purposeful and intentional planning with this time in mind. District leaders have to think about creating district calendars that support this work, allowing for professional work days built into the calendar where students are not present, or a weekly PLC time where students arrive late or are released early to allow for this team collaboration time in a routine and embedded manner. Building leaders can also work to create some of this time when creating their master schedule and planning for teachers on a particular team to have plan/release time at the same consistent time in order for teachers to get together

during this time with the expectation of team collaboration time built into this time weekly.

It is important, too, that building leaders remember that not all collaboration time needs to be driven by a top-down approach. Teacher teams need some of this time to drive their own agenda and collaborate around what they feel is important at that time. This may look different from one grade-level team to another and building leaders need to be encouraged by this work rather than questioning the purpose behind the topics of discussion, trusting their teachers and their collaborative work. Leaders should be encouraged to find areas in which teachers are able to provide input (Daniels, 2018; Donohoo, 2017). However, it is important that teachers are aware of the mission and goals at the building and district levels, ensuring that their collaborative conversations and work align to both the mission and goals of the greater good. Leaders can give teacher teams the autonomy to determine their roles and responsibilities at the classroom teacher and grade-level team position when the greater mission of the school and district are kept at the forefront of all work being discussed and accomplished.

Additionally, it is essential that teacher teams work to create specific times for collaboration. Teachers shared that some of their most meaningful collaboration times came from those informal check-in moments that they had created for themselves as a team, whether it be standing outside their classroom doors in the hallway each morning to check in with one another or eating lunch together each day. These moments are created by the teachers themselves, and it is important that all teachers serving as a part of the team see this collaboration time as valuable and serve as a willing team member. Time for collaboration, especially time that is embedded into the school day, allows for

teachers to work together with one another and build upon the CTE levels of the group.

The second major theme rendered through the focus group interviews conducted during this study was support. This theme was associated with educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE and was identified by participants 155 times as a key condition that should demand attention from educational leaders and teacher teams and be fostered throughout a school building culture. District and building leaders should be mindful of teachers' perceptions about the benefit of feeling supported at various levels and from people serving in different roles within their school building. Teachers shared that when they feel supported by their fellow team members, there is a level of safety and trust present that allows them to share ideas with one another and reflect with one another even in times of struggle. Building leaders need to keep teacher perceptions in mind as they work to create and foster a collaborative culture inside their school building that encourages working together, leaning on one another, sharing ideas, and cultivating a culture of safety and trust where all members of the team are valued. This starts at the school building level and is the responsibility of the building leader to establish a trust-based collaborative culture within teaching teams where individuals feel comfortable and safe in sharing ideas and vulnerable teaching experiences with others (Schenk, 2016; Vincent, 2018). A safe and supportive collaborative environment is created by the people serving on the team. They must be able to not only be vulnerable themselves, but also come to collaborate in a supportive space free from judgment, and both provide help when needed as well as accept help when needed in the form of support. Leaders need to create a culture of mutual

accountability within collaboration. This comes in creating a culture in which staff members are accountable to themselves, as well as their team members in terms of student achievement.

Support also comes from many different supportive roles within a school building, including administrative leaders, instructional coaches/specialists, and interventionists. The relationship between a building leader and teachers needs to be grounded in safety and trust. Leaders need to consistently function with the understanding that it is their responsibility to support others as they carry out their daily duties, show genuine concern, and demonstrate mutual respect for their staff (Donohoo, 2017; Hood, 2018; Norris, 2018). Leaders can support their staff by providing them with feedback, reassurance, and encouragement (Donohoo, 2017; Norris, 2018).

It is important for district and building leaders to also be aware of teachers' perspectives on the additional support personnel they may have the ability to put in place in a school district or building and the role these positions can play in supporting classroom teachers. Roles such as instruction coaches/specialists and interventionists can provide targeted professional learning, help to navigate new curriculum and introduce best instructional practices, help to analyze student assessment data, and provide additional academic support to some of a teacher's most struggling learners. Leaders must be able to facilitate a building-wide intervention approach while making decisions rooted in what is best for all students involved (Hales, 2017). Leaders need to start by evaluating their current reality in regard to intervention, as well as the various aspects of intervention plans available, and determine which aspects might best fit the need for their staff and students and what is transferrable to their current school system (Donohoo,

2017). Districts must look at utilizing funds appropriately to provide buildings with the level of personnel support and intervention programs most beneficial to them.

The results from this study were affirming in identifying conditions that work to develop CTE within teacher teams. The findings in this study verified that certain conditions have greater impact in the development of CTE. Teachers identified time for collaboration and support as the two conditions viewed as the greatest impact, but are both terms based in generalizations. When dissected more in depth, each of Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions presented themselves within one or both of those two major themes. The research based on the theoretical framework presented ties closely to the perceptions of teams of educators today. Conclusions and recommendations from this study should assist leaders in planning for conditions appropriate for developing high levels of CTE and fostering these conditions once in place, while encouraging and supporting their teachers in the journey to student achievement. Although this study was limited to elementary schools in the state of Missouri, it does provide conclusions that can be generalized across elementary schools where grade-level teams are established and encouraged to work together in a collaborative and supportive manner. Educational implications could be utilized by educational leaders throughout the country.

Overall, building leaders hold a vital position for working to increase the CTE within the teaching teams and whole school staff of their building. It is important for building leaders to consider teachers' perceptions about the conditions that aid in the development of CTE in order for them to work to implement and foster these conditions appropriately. The understanding of these perceptions will help work towards the creation of teams that work together collaboratively and in a supportive manner to impact

student achievement success in a positive manner while believing that they, collectively as a team, have the joint ability to plan and execute actions necessary to produce successful student outcomes. School-building leaders are responsible for cultivating a culture of collaboration and support, by creating time for teams to collaborate with one another, and to work together towards common goals, all while supporting one another and providing the resources needed to do so. The understanding of these teacher perceptions will help building leaders better understand the conditions that work toward the development of high levels of CTE within their schools.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher limited this study to five small groups of teachers who worked together in teams on a daily basis from five different elementary schools, serving kindergarten through fifth grade, in the state of Missouri with populations of 300 students or more students. Teacher teams were selected by their building leaders and scored greater than a 72 on Donohoo's (2017) The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire, signifying high levels of CTE within their team. However, future research should consider widening the school participant pool and increasing the number of teacher team participants with representation throughout the country.

The researcher also recommends additional research examining teacher perceptions from different size school districts, both larger and smaller, looking at schools that possibly only have one to two teachers teaching a grade level versus five to six teachers teaching a grade level, and/or looking at districts that have teams of grade-level teachers teaching the same grade, but in various school buildings across the district. The researcher recommends a more in-depth look at districts that have various

breakdowns of populations, number of teachers teaching a particular grade level in one building versus multiple buildings across the same district, and districts that are broken into attendance centers versus neighborhood schools. For example, it would be recommended to further research schools who only have one teacher at each grade level and how they encourage collaboration and teacher support within their buildings, and the teacher perceptions of the conditions that promote high levels of CTE. It would be recommended to further research schools who have multiple teams of teachers teaching a particular grade level across a district in different buildings and how they encourage collaboration and teacher support across their district, and the teacher perceptions of the conditions that promote high levels of CTE. The various scenarios may provide a researcher with additional information about teacher perceptions of the conditions that support the development of CTE, and how building leaders and teacher teams in these various situations can work to develop and foster conditions to encourage high levels of CTE.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends future studies examine teacher perceptions of the different levels of support for collaboration districts and school buildings provide, including looking at various time devoted to team collaboration within the school day and within a district academic calendar. Thus, continued research could examine the influence of teacher teams that have scheduled common plan/release time (when students are supervised by other teachers within classes such as art, music, PE, etc.), districts that have PLC time or time created by early release of students or late start of students, and professional learning days built into a district calendar devoted to team collaboration. Additional research could provide information regarding teacher

perceptions on different makeups of collaboration time and what deems as most beneficial in the development of CTE.

Lastly, the researcher recommends additional research be conducted on teacher perceptions of how building leaders and teacher teams can work to provide a more supportive culture inside their school building and the different kinds of supports available to teachers. The researcher suggests studies that examine personnel supports such as instructional coaches/specialists and interventionists, and the type of support these particular personnel roles provide to their teachers that work to develop CTE with their respected school buildings. Research on these personnel positions could help district and building leaders know what roles could be most beneficial in creating and how best to utilize these positions in supporting teachers and classrooms.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore educators' perceptions of the conditions that might generate CTE within teacher teams so that educational leaders and teachers can attend to and foster these conditions within their buildings. Two main research questions were used to fulfill this purpose: (a) What are the educators' perceptions about the conditions that are present in the development of CTE?, and (b) What are the educators' perceptions on how the presence or absence of these conditions help or hinder the development of CTE? The theoretical framework that guided this research stemmed initially from Bandura's (1986) SCT, which examined both internal and external factors influencing one's behavior and motivation. Under this construct, self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, group efficacy, and eventually CTE were developed and examined. Collective teacher efficacy is defined as the perceptions of

teachers in a school that they themselves can collectively organize and carry out the course of action required to produce given accomplishments and levels of achievement success (Goddard et al., 2004). Additionally, this study included Donohoo's (2017) six enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy: advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention.

Through this qualitative process, this study intended to fill the gap in research by understanding the conditions teachers feel are needed in order for them to collectively feel as though they are capable of impacting student achievement in a positive manner despite outside factors that may be present. Although CTE has been studied extensively, the conduction of focus group interviews and review of recordings and transcripts from these interviews uncovered that teachers hold high value in team collaboration, especially collaboration that is embedded into the school day with agendas driven by the members of the team, and support of colleagues centered around encouragement and trust.

This study recognized building leaders and teams of teachers must be intentional in implementing and fostering certain conditions in order to work towards high levels of CTE within their teams and schools. This study identified teacher perceptions about what conditions hold value in developing high levels of CTE over others, providing insight to how certain conditions can help or hinder this development. The perceptions of teachers as to what conditions render as important to the development of CTE are an important factor to be considered when educational leaders are working towards creating this collaborative outlook in their team, ultimately increasing student achievement. This study revealed that teachers find it necessary to collaborate with their colleagues at

various levels (formal and informal) in order to feel efficacious in their work together as a team and their work with their students in their individual classrooms. Because of this, it is crucial that educational leaders provide intentional and protected time for grade-level teams to collaborate. This study also revealed that teachers need to feel multifaceted support from their colleagues. This support comes from an encouraging team of individuals that work together to provide a level of safety and trust, while sharing ideas and a workload with one another, as well as support from administrators, instructional coaches/specialists, and interventionists. Therefore, it is important that educational leaders work to foster a supportive school culture where people work to build one another up and feel as though they can lean on one another, while also providing intentional personnel to support both adult and student learning. Teacher perceptions about the conditions important to the development of CTE should be assessed and supported to increase the likelihood of teachers feeling that they can collectively have a positive impact on student achievement.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Request for Participation - School Leader

Fall 2021

Participant Name

Participant School

Dear Participant,

I am a current doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University and currently working on my doctoral dissertation. My doctoral dissertation will be a qualitative narrative study focusing on educator perceptions of conditions that influence collective teacher efficacy in the elementary school setting. Your school building has been identified as meeting the criteria set forth within my study; located in Missouri with the makeup of kindergarten through 5th grade with a population of 300 students or more.

I am requesting your assistance in identifying current teaching teams within your building which whom you feel exhibit high levels of collective teacher efficacy according to Jenni Donohoo's (2017), *The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire*, while also producing student academic growth from year to year. Attached is a copy of the questionnaire for you to utilize in making this determination.

These teaching teams may be contacted to participate in further research. If so, a Request for Participation will be sent to them asking for their willingness and ability in setting aside time convenient for them to participate in focus group interviews either in person, over the phone, or through an optional online platform such as Zoom to best answer my research questions.

This study will help in determining what elementary school leaders can do, the conditions they can ensure are in place, to best influence collective teacher efficacy in their schools among their teacher teams. The research will also help determine which conditions have a greater influence over others to maximize educator and leaders time and efforts in building greater collective teacher efficacy in their school setting.

Your commitment to participate will involve you and your teaching team

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research study. Please contact me via phone or email. Brittany Payne, Doctoral Student, SBU, (417)425-325, [bpayne@logrogstudents.net](mailto:bpayne@logrogstudents.net).

## Appendix B

### Request for Participation - Educator Team

Winter 2021

Participant Name

Participant School

Dear Participant,

I am a current doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University and currently working on my doctoral dissertation. My doctoral dissertation will be a qualitative narrative study focusing on educator perceptions of conditions that influence collective teacher efficacy in the elementary school setting. I would like to request your participation in this research process because your school and current teaching team meet the following established criteria for the base of my research. Your school is located in Missouri and has the makeup of kindergarten through 5th grade with a total student population of 300 students or more. Your principal identified your teaching team as one with high collective teacher efficacy according to Jenni Donohoo (2017), *The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire*.

This study will help in determining what elementary school leaders can do, the conditions they can ensure are in place, to best influence collective teacher efficacy in their schools among their teacher teams. The research will also help determine which conditions have a greater influence over others to maximize educator and leaders time and efforts in building greater collective teacher efficacy in their school setting.

Your commitment to participate will involve you and your teaching team setting aside time that is convenient for you all either in person, over the phone, or through an optional online platform such as Zoom.

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this research study. Please contact me via phone or email. Brittany Payne, Doctoral Student, SBU, (417)425-3250, [bpayne@logrogstudents.net](mailto:bpayne@logrogstudents.net).

## Appendix C

### Initial Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire: The Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire (2017)

Retrieved from Jenni Donohoo's book *Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning* (2017).

Permission to use from author Jenni Donohoo and Corwin Publishing Company on March 21, 2019.

#### RESOURCE J. THE ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY QUESTIONNAIRE

**Directions:** Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.

	1 = Strong Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Somewhat Disagree	4	5	6
1. Teachers are entrusted to make important decisions on school-wide issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Improvement goals are established and understood by all faculty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Administrators help us carry out our duties effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The staff holds shared beliefs about effective instructional approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers are provided authentic leadership opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I know about the classroom management strategies my colleagues use in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. There is consensus on school goals among staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The staff agrees about what constitutes effective classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The leaders show concern for the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. There is a system in place to ensure high levels of success for all students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The staff agrees about assessment strategies that are the most effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring at-risk students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know about the feedback my colleagues provide to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The leaders protect the staff from issues that detract us from focusing on learning and teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers have a voice in matters related to school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Continued)

1 = Strong Disagree      2 = Disagree      3 = Somewhat Disagree  
 4 = Somewhat Agree      5 = Agree      6 = Strongly Agree

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. | Students meet with success because of interventions that are in place.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. | I am aware of the teaching practices used by others on staff.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. | Teachers actively participate in setting school-wide improvement goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

**Scoring:**

Overall Score—sum of the scores for all 18 items divided by 18.

**Advanced Teacher Influence Scale**

Sum of items 1, 5, and 15 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

**Goal Consensus Scale**

Sum of items 2, 7, and 18 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

**Teachers' Knowledge About One Another's Work**

Sum of items 6, 13, and 17 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

**Cohesive Staff**

Sum of items 4, 8, and 11 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

**Responsiveness of Leadership**

Sum of items 3, 9, and 14 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

**Effective Systems of Intervention**

Sum of items 10, 12, and 16 \_\_\_\_ divided by 3 = \_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

1. Your principal, as well as your teaching team, have identified your team as a team with high collective teacher efficacy. What conditions do you believe help to develop collective teacher efficacy?
2. What conditions, put in place by your building principal or your teaching team, do you feel develop your team's collective teacher efficacy?
  - a. As a staff, what are some ways you are involved in school-wide decision making? (Advanced Teacher Influence)
  - b. What are some of the ways your team works towards collective goals and progress monitoring? (Goal Consensus)
  - c. What is your level of knowledge of the work your colleagues within your building are doing? (Teachers' Knowledge About One Another's Work)
  - d. In what ways does your staff work to create a united front? (Cohesive Staff)
  - e. In what ways does your leader interact and respond to you? (Responsiveness of Leadership)
  - f. What forms of effective intervention do you currently have in place? (Effective Systems of Intervention)
3. In what ways do you feel some of these conditions may work towards the development of collective teacher efficacy over others?
4. What are your feelings on how the Coronavirus, school closures, and virtual teaching has impacted your collective teacher efficacy?