

GOING DEEPER—TEXT-BASED LEARNING

AN INQUIRY—COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY



John Hattie (2015) has identified “collective teacher efficacy” as the top intervention that a school can implement that most impacts student achievement. The core of collective teacher efficacy is teacher beliefs about students, and even more important about teacher capabilities. Important to note, the interventions cited by Hattie are not classroom interventions but rather cultural interventions that focus on how teachers work together to build coherent knowledge. Essentially building collective teacher efficacy is a problem of practice for teams. Hence your job as a team is to inquire about collective teacher efficacy and to ask, “What can we learn from the research on collective efficacy so that we can apply it to our work in teams?” This inquiry asks: What can we learn from the experts? We now offer an expert view of the value of collective teacher efficacy. This reading would be a useful starting place for a collaborative inquiry.

In *Reclaiming Conversations* Sherry Turkle (2015) suggests that participants spend time alone thinking about what they do and do not know. This reflection serves a dual purpose. It allows members to bring ideas to the table with confidence and authority, and it also affords each member to examine points of vulnerability, an important disposition for this work. All of us have something more we can learn. Before reading further about collective teacher efficacy, take a moment to think about what you know about the topic “collective teacher efficacy.” Be honest: this is a fairly new construct, and so most have not figured out how to operationalize collective teacher efficacy. In other words, they might understand it, but they have not figured out how to meld it into the team culture.

Defining Collective Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy describes the teacher’s confidence in her ability to affect student learning (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000). Initially, psychologist Alfred Bandura (1982) studied how personal judgments affect human actions and impact the ability to accomplish a task. In other words, he asked, “How do teacher beliefs impact practice?” Roger Goddard and the Hoys, of Ohio State University, extended the application of efficacy to teams. They defined “collective teacher efficacy” as those teams who have confidence in their ability to affect student learning. It is no surprise that beliefs play a major role in how teachers approach goals, tasks, and challenges. Jerald (2007), from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, has identified the following teacher behaviors that demonstrate a strong sense of efficacy:

- Focus on organization and planning for student learning
- Open to new ideas and willing to adjust to better meet the needs of students
- Persistence even when things do not go as planned
- Less critical, more curious about student errors
- Demonstrates responsibility for student learning and is less inclined to refer difficult students to others

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In sum, teachers who set goals, who adapt, and who persist until they find effective learning paths have a high sense of efficacy and are more likely to have students who learn. This research is now 20 years old; however, it was not until John Hattie published his summary of research and identified collective teacher efficacy as the most significant intervention for student achievement that policy makers and school leaders began to take notice. (Hattie & Yates, 2014, and Hattie, 2015).

The Effect Size

John Hattie (2015) of the University of Melbourne published his synthesis of over 1,200 meta-analysis studies to create a comparative table of “effect size” for a multitude of factors that are thought to have an impact on achievement. With an effect size of 1.57, collective teacher efficacy was identified as the number one factor influencing student achievement. This was particularly important as collective teacher efficacy was almost three times more powerful and predicative than socioeconomic status. In other words, teacher efficacy is within educator’s collective control, unlike poverty or other blocks to learning. It should be noted that Hattie’s research challenges accepted beliefs supported by the Coleman report which found that teachers have limited impact (by some estimates only 14%) and that a child’s “out of school factors” control the other 86% of performance.

The result of Hattie’s work has been to push collective teacher efficacy to the forefront of the effective change work. Many still do not fully understand what this concept means, and more problematic, how to increase teacher efficacy. Lip service is given to the need for teacher efficacy. While researchers are saying that teachers must be directly responsible for taking control of learning and producing results, administrators, particularly in the lower-performing schools, are prescribing the what, how, and when of teaching. Learning is not a prescription but rather a process of coming to know. And to become expert, professionals need to put thoughts into action—professionals walk their talk. The primary way these authors know to produce collective teacher efficacy is to give teams control over their own learning and to help them learn to be accountable for producing actionable results.

Developing collective efficacy takes time, and to develop this mental discipline requires practice. It also requires that this work be done in community. Collective teacher efficacy cannot be produced in classrooms isolated from one another. It requires a school culture that supports professionals in their reflective practices by making more time for teacher talk in collaborative learning environments. The real payoff is when faculties can articulate how they make a positive difference in the learning of all students.

To conclude, teacher efficacy is the belief that a faculty can and will positively affect student learning. Jenny Donohoo (2017) in “The Learning Exchange” blog on Collective Teacher Efficacy is even more specific: “. . . staff’s shared belief that through their collective action, they can positively influence student outcomes, including those who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged.”

For another expert reading on collective efficacy go to: <https://miexcelresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Power-of-Collective-Efficacy-1.pdf>