

DISPOSITIONS OF EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN AN URBAN DISTRICT
IN SOUTHEASTERN VIRGINIA

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Abstract

In an attempt to staff every classroom with a highly qualified teacher, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) mandated that only “highly qualified” teachers be hired to teach beginning in the 2005 school year (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Highly qualified is defined by a teacher’s background characteristics that include state certification, a bachelor’s degree and subject area competence for secondary teachers. Researchers Palardy & Rumberger (2008), determined that a teacher’s background characteristics alone are not sufficient in determining the effectiveness of a teacher but that it is the teacher’s attitudes, beliefs and practices that should be considered, as these attributes have a greater impact and are most malleable.

This study aimed to increase the body of research in the area of teacher effectiveness and how teachers’ dispositions impact students’ math achievement at the elementary level in an urban school district. Descriptive statistics were used to report the findings. The participants in this study were all full-time, general education teachers who worked with students in grades three, four and five in an urban school district. The data collected demonstrated that effective teachers in an urban school district believed it was their ability to reach students through their sense of efficacy and belief system that makes the difference in students’ positive outcomes on high stakes tests. Findings revealed that effective teachers have high teaching efficacy, they are able to build personal relationships with their students and they are able to motivate their students to do well in school. This study confirms that effective urban teachers share a set of common dispositions and beliefs that make a difference in student achievement when all factors are considered.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. The purpose of the Act was to raise student achievement and close student achievement gaps. This Act has been reauthorized several times and was most recently renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, enacted in 2002. Despite the efforts of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act of 1965 (ESEA) and (NCLB), American student achievement still falls short when compared to the achievement rates of foreign students (U. S. Department of Education, 2002; Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessmann, 2012). The Educational Testing Service (ETS) reports that the U.S. has not done much in the six year span of 2003-2009 to reduce the disparities that keep poor and minority students from achieving when compared to their White and more affluent peers (Viadero, 2009).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has placed increased accountability on the nation's schools. Acknowledging the gap between White and minority students, students of low and high socio-economic status (SES) and students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers (U. S. Department of Education, 2002), the hope is that NCLB will change the culture of schools in the United States by increasing the effort constituents put into place to increase student achievement for all. NCLB's four key principles focus on 1) stronger accountability to promote better results, 2) greater flexibility in how schools, districts, and states use their federal funds, 3) increased choice for parents and, 4) the use of research-based teaching strategies and programs (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). The law is insistent on imposing school accountability in order to improve the organization of schools, instructional delivery, and ultimately student performance outcomes (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Much attention has been given to school accountability so that our nation's children are afforded a "fair, equitable, and

significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education” (Quinn, 2005, p. 2), particularly low-income and ethnically diverse students who tend to be educated in urban schools (Talbert-Johnson, 2006).

This chapter details the background for this study and is followed by the statement of the research problem. The next section of the chapter provides the purpose for undertaking the study and concludes with the definitions of the key terms used throughout the study.

Approximately 30% of the K-12 population in the United States, representing about 15 million students, attend schools in urban districts around the country (U. S. Department of Education Sciences, 2014). Urban schools are known to be located in large metropolitan areas. School facilities in urban areas have a reputation of being dilapidated with insufficient resources, where poverty and cultural diversity are high and parental involvement is low (Adams & Adams, 2003). Schools in urban areas have the highest dropout rates, educate 40 percent of the country’s low-income students and 75 percent of its minority students (Adams & Adams, 2003). Urban schools battle with preparing its students for the demands that high-stakes testing and accountability present given the academic, professional, financial, and instructional disparities they have endured over time (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). More specifically, urban schools are associated with (a) low student achievement; (b) inadequate school readiness; (c) low parental involvement; (d) poor access to learning resources; (e) poor discipline; (f) language barriers; and (g) poor student healthcare (Sachs, 2004).

Students in urban school districts face challenges that impact students’ achievement, some of which are tough to overcome and often contribute and lead to

discipline problems, decreased attendance, referral and placement in special education and even dropping out of high school before graduation. Urban students come to school with specific culture orientations and practices that include diverse patterns of language and socialization (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005). Urban students often start school with minimal school experience from preschool and lack the minimal social skills necessary to participate in a kindergarten setting (Kozol, 2005).

Since the signing of NCLB, considerable focus has been put on schools to provide all children the opportunity to receive the “fair, equitable,” and “significant, high-quality education” they are entitled to (Quinn, 2005, p. 2). In order for students to receive this high quality education, qualified and effective teachers must be employed in urban districts as they are the most important building blocks for improving student achievement, especially that of at-risk students (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Another goal of NCLB is to improve the quality of teacher preparation and use of effective teaching practices. Therefore it is imperative that higher education programs responsible for training pre-service teachers design a common, cohesive framework that defines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers and leaders are expected to possess and apply once they are in-service as full-time teachers (Quinn, 2005). Talbert-Johnson (2006) posits that future teachers must be adequately prepared with the appropriate dispositions in order to work in urban schools that have unique factors that differentiate them from suburban and rural settings. Researcher Darling-Hammond has labeled NCLB as problematic as it does not support dispositions, practices, instruction, curriculum and policies (Darling-Hammond, 2000), the strategies needed to build

effective teachers. Additionally, there is little evidence to support that the efforts of NCLB have increased teacher effectiveness (Spellings, 2008).

Standardized assessments are one of the vehicles used to measure teacher effectiveness and student performance (Rand Corporation, 2012). Additionally, standardized assessments aid in holding, schools and school districts accountable for what students know and should be able to do. The assessments are used for a variety of reasons: student promotion and placement, teacher remuneration, accreditation ratings at the state and federal level, amount of district funding and monitoring of graduation rates (Smyth, 2008). Most states reward schools that meet or exceed state benchmarks and threaten schools through tough sanctions when they don't meet or if they fail to improve. Some states place labels on school based on their outcomes on standardized assessments. In Florida, for example, schools are graded A-F (Rhone, 2006). Labeling of schools is an unintended consequence and may dissuade highly qualified, experienced teachers and administrators from working in disadvantaged schools. In addition, students are left to cope with the belief that they and their schools are failures (Rhone, 2006).

NCLB does not take into account the evidence that students of low SES tend to perform more poorly than their higher status peers, but instead asks all schools to meet the same standard, regardless of whether they serve high or low SES students, minority and different subgroups of students (Ladd, 2012). Students of low SES are measured and compared to students from wealthier suburbs and are held to the same testing standards (Kozol, 2005). Ladd in her 2012 article noted that students from disadvantaged homes do not perform as well on standardized tests as students from non-disadvantaged homes. Unfortunately, high stakes tests do not paint the entire picture of students of low SES. Kozol (2005) makes the argument that:

Nobody tells the children that their test results define their worthiness or that these numbers measure their identities, or that the limited forms of learning that are tested by a standardized exam are more important than the ones to which a governmental number cannot be attached (Kozol, 2005, p. 287).

Ladd drives this point further stating that these high-stakes tests may cause more harm than help, as standardized tests do not take into account the educational challenges of urban and at-risk students. In spite of these disparities and challenges, all students still have to take standardized exams (Kozol, 2005).

A student's success can be marginalized based on the social composition, student (SES) and the students who attend schools in urban neighborhoods (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). In an attempt to increase the achievement of all students, researchers have hypothesized and continue to research the single factor or combination of factors that have the greatest impact on student achievement. Urban schools are challenged with meeting rigorous benchmarks set by local, state and federal mandates that aim to close achievement gaps and increase overall student achievement (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007). Researchers Stotko, Ingram & Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) assert that attracting and retaining effective teachers who have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to be successful in urban schools as the solution to the problem.

Statement of the Problem

As we strive to increase the graduation rate, close the achievement gap between all subgroups of students, reduce the number of discipline referrals as well as the over-identification of special education students, we must strive to find individuals that are able to reach students through a variety of ways that will encourage students to remain in school, achieve at a high rate

and demonstrate their abilities regardless of the obstacles that may stand in their way. Many affluent young Americans are receiving a world-class education, while students that attend schools in high-poverty, urban areas are receiving an education similar to that of students in third-world countries (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Students with weak skills are more likely to drop out of school before earning a diploma and may be referred for special education services (Rebora, 2011). We were once a country that could boast of high graduation rates that exceeded that of many other countries; however, other countries have seen rising rates and the U.S. has documented abysmal test scores tied to disadvantaged students, particularly from large, urban school centers (Ladd, 2012). Data suggest that the United States needs to do a better job educating its disadvantaged students (Ladd, 2012).

In a report prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics and Education Statistics Services Institute – *American Institutes for Research for the U.S. Department of Education*, the average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) is 78.6% across the United States, with rates for subgroups as low as 71.4% for Hispanic students, 69.1% for American Indian/Alaska Native and 66.1% for Black students. This is consistent with the report, *A Nation Accountable: Twenty-five Years After A Nation at Risk*. It is noted that graduation rates for the class of 2000 was 70%, although minority groups were given less than a 50/50 chance of graduating on time (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). These numbers contribute to an overall dropout rate of 3.4%. The dropout rate is higher for males at 3.8% and 2.9% for girls, with males having the highest dropout rate in every state (Stillwell & Sable, 2013).

Urban students come to school with unique needs and habits. Their cultural orientations and practices include diverse patterns of language and socialization; of which many of these cultural nuances new and pre-service teachers have limited

experiences with (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005). This lack of experience with urban students often results in the misidentification of students with special needs, giftedness, unfair disciplinary actions, and the shrinking of student self-esteem; these are characteristics that brand students as at-risk (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005). Thus, large numbers of at-risk students are referred and receive special education services, although they do not have true disabilities (Rebora, 2011).

Urban Schools

Students in urban schools are confronted with a plethora of in-school and out-of-school factors that impact their achievement when compared to non-urban students. Children that attend urban schools are more likely to be attending a school that is underfunded and in disrepair (Kozol, 2005), their teachers are less experienced, community resources are fewer, parent participation is poor and they are more likely to be from minority families (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Urban schools have the highest dropout rate, 40% of the students are from low income households and 75% are minority students as compared to all public schools (Adams & Adams, 2003). These urban schools are located in high areas of poverty, made up of mostly Black and Hispanic students (Gardner & Miranda, 2001); (Glazer, 1992) resulting in involuntary segregation (Kozol, 2005). Urban districts with a high number of poor and minority students face the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers (Stronge, 2007). Additionally, poor student outcomes on high-stakes assessments are attributed to an inadequate pool of highly qualified teachers in urban schools (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007). The combination of these factors puts students at risk of academic failure.

In-school factors may impede a student's success in an urban school setting. There may be a less rigorous curriculum, low expectancy rate from teachers and staff (Barton, 2003;

Stronge, 2007) and involuntary segregation of poor and minority students (Kozol, 2005). A key risk factor is teachers in urban school settings are inexperienced, ill-prepared and less qualified to teach (Stronge, 2007). In urban school districts with higher numbers of poor and minority students, schools are faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers (Stronge, 2007). These factors all present surmountable barriers that impact student achievement.

The 2008 report, *A Nation Accountable: Twenty-Five Years After A Nation at Risk*, highlighted the importance of a need for a more rigorous curriculum as recommended in the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*. At a minimum, states had to implement graduation standards that included more rigorous and measurable standards in English, math, science and social studies for a general diploma along with a foreign language for those pursuing the college path. By 2005, 65% of high school graduates had met this goal; an increase of four times that of 1983. However, one-third of our high school graduates still fall short of these more rigorous expectations (U. S. Department of Education, 2008).

According to Pajares (1992), teachers across the nation come to school with their own set of beliefs, ideologies and attitudes about themselves and others. Ladson-Billings (2009) believed that teachers in urban schools should have the desire to work with urban students and must be prepared to teach in a culturally relevant manner. Ladson-Billings goes on to write that teachers should be afforded educational experiences that will help them understand the role of culture in their teaching. In addition to those experiences, teachers should be required to take a content-rich course on one or more ethnic groups (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Lastly, Ladson-Billings encourages student teachers who have a desire to work in urban areas to take advantage of extended student-teaching experiences in more controlled environments so that they are able to get to know students, the school and the community.

There is evidence to support that students from disadvantaged homes perform on average less than their more advantaged peers (Ladd, 2012). Based on data from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), the gap between low and high-income families now exceeds the gap between Black and White children. In addition to poverty, being a member of a minority is also associated with patterns of student achievement across states (Ladd, 2012). Ladd went on to say that educational outcomes are largely based on the quality of a specific school, district or state along with the student's socio-economic background, the family's commitment level as well as their culture. Based on these claims, a student's zip code and economic status could be factors in determining a student's success in school and on standardized tests (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

Urban schools have the reputation of being located in poor inner-city neighborhoods with mostly Black and Hispanic students attending its schools (Jacob, 2007). Dilapidated and disrepair are often terms used when referring to urban schools. As recent as 2005, some urban schools still lacked air conditioning as well as state-of-the-art technology when compared to more affluent schools in suburban neighborhoods (Leland & Harste, 2005). Kozol writes that crowded conditions, leaking roofs, and indications of decay and disrepair are usually associated with urban school facilities (Kozol, 2005). When these school characteristics are present, they contribute to a students' academic risk factors.

According to DeMonte and Hanna (2014), many economically disadvantaged and students of color are very unlikely to have expert teachers teaching them. It is documented that urban schools performing lower than their more affluent neighbors employ teachers that are less qualified and even have administrators assigned to these buildings that are not of the highest quality (Murnane & Steele, 2007). Ladd (2012) contends that policymakers need to and must

assure that children in schools that serve large proportions of disadvantaged students or at-risk students have access to the highest quality teachers and administrators. Ladd goes on to state that policymakers could make hard to staff schools in impoverished neighborhoods more attractive to high quality teachers by adding incentives, staffing high-poverty schools with strong leaders and support services and by balancing the SES and racial mix of students across schools by implementing school assignment policies. States and districts are responsible for ensuring these quality inputs and therefore should be held accountable for any shortfalls (Ladd, 2012).

A key risk factor for students in urban schools and high poverty neighborhoods is the teacher who is less experienced (Jacob, 2007), less prepared (Gay, 2010), less qualified (Stronge, 2007) and has sub-par academic credentials (Murnane & Steele, 2007). Students of low SES are assigned the least qualified teachers and are six times more likely not to have a highly qualified teacher than students in more affluent areas (Betts, Rueben, & Danenberg, 2000). In addition, low SES schools tend to employ less-than-effective teachers and they are assigned to students with the greatest need (Rothman, 2008). Students in urban neighborhoods need effective teachers of the same high quality as children in more affluent suburban neighborhoods in order to begin to close the achievement gaps that have existed for decades (Haycock, 2001).

Teachers matter when it comes to student achievement (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003). One of the provisions of NCLB, highly qualified teachers, requires that teachers be degreed and certified in the content area that they teach and have at least a bachelor's degree. The goal is to have effective teachers leading each classroom who are able to increase student achievement (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Despite the NCLB provision of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, research by Palardy and Rumberger has determined that a teacher's background qualifications are not sufficient in determining the effectiveness of a

teacher. Jacob (2007) cites that a teacher's background characteristics have little bearing on student outcomes. Background characteristics consist of a teacher's college experience, licensure, pedagogical knowledge and grades. A teacher's attitude and practices play a much more significant role than qualifications when it comes to determining teacher effectiveness (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Background characteristics tend to have less of an impact on students due to the fact that these items are less likely to change. However, a teacher's attitude, dispositions and practices may be altered or improved through professional development and experience (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008).

Researchers Buddin and Zamarro completed a 2009 study on teacher quality and student achievement in urban elementary schools. They determined that teacher quality would encompass teacher licensure test scores and other teacher attributes. The researchers used the Los Angeles Unified School District, which is the second largest school district in the nation, hosting around 730,000 students per year. A sample of over 300,000 elementary students in grades 2 through 5 taught by over 16,000 teachers was used in their study. Buddin and Zamarro collected longitudinal data over a five year period to track students' achievement progress from year to year in different classrooms and with different teachers. A value added approach that adjusts for both student and teacher fixed effects was used to complete student achievement analysis. The study revealed that the district had teachers of varied quality, however, measured teacher characteristics explain little of the difference (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009). The researchers encouraged future research to include identification of specific teacher attributes or practices that would enhance student achievement (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009). Based on this finding and findings that concur with Buddin & Zamarro, one could surmise that education policy leaders should require, recommend and seek teachers that possess specific attitudes, dispositions and

practices rather than degrees and certifications which are the characteristics that states and districts use to determine teacher quality.

It is well documented that teachers have an impact on student achievement (Rand Corporation, 2012). High quality, effective teachers have an even greater impact (Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Hattie, 2003). In the context of high-stakes testing, it can be reluctantly concluded that effectiveness is measured by a teachers' ability to develop students academically (Walker, 2011). Test scores determine student, teachers, school and district success. Educators generally agree that effective teaching requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Brown, 2007). Stronge, in his book, *Effective Teachers=Student Achievement*, shared empirical evidence that teachers matter inordinately to students' lives (Stronge, 2010). The author noted that if we are to change the quality of our schools and the impact they have on our students' lives, we must change the quality of our teaching (Stronge, 2010). In order to be effective, teachers must possess both content knowledge and effective characteristics (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Effective teachers master their craft, believe their students can be successful and invest in their own professional development (Stronge, 2007). Unfortunately, the literature is not rich in defining what teacher effectiveness is or how teacher preparation positively effects K-12 student achievement (Talbert-Johnson, 2006).

Aaronson, Barrow, & Sander (2007) affirm that successful teachers are effective with both low-and high-ability students, however, an ineffective teacher is ineffective regardless of the students' academic ability. The difference between effective and less effective teachers is not how smart they are, but what they do (Whitaker, 2012). Brown (2006) cited the following:

I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in my classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the

weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized (p, 23).

Finding effective teachers is just part of the challenge. Retaining teachers that are effective is also challenging, especially in high poverty, urban areas. Teachers in urban areas are more likely to leave the field of education in the first five years of service and those in high-poverty schools are 50% more likely to leave than in low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2003; Hunt & Thomas, 2003). The turnover rate for teachers in urban school settings is noted at 14.4%, with 5.7% leaving the profession and 8.7% moving on to other areas (Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). Moreover, schools with higher pay and better working conditions usually attract the best of the teacher population, minimizing the randomness in which teachers are assigned to urban schools (Stronge, 2010). Additionally, the bulk of teaching positions are often available in schools considered to be in the greatest need, resulting in an influx of new teachers in the neediest schools (Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair, 1996). Urban schools are in need of effective teachers who are willing to invest and make a difference in the quality of teaching and achievement of students (Ingersoll, 2003; Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Driving this point further, Barber & Mourshed (2007) reported that three things matter most when it comes to student achievement and teachers; putting the right teacher in the right place, developing them into effective instructors and ensuring that they are able to deliver the best possible instruction to every child.

Familial and societal factors may impede the success of students in urban schools (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). These factors may include but are not limited to high poverty, discrimination based on a variety of characteristics, the level of parents' education, higher than average student mobility, television watching, exposure and availability of reading material at home, and many other factors. Helm, in his 2007 study, shared that students in urban neighborhoods often have limited experiences outside their neighborhood and that their parents' own school experiences with teachers may not have been positive. Further magnifying the problems of urban schools is the influx of students and families that do not speak or minimally speak English.

Kozol's 2005 book, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, states that "urban schools, for the most part, are segregated; Black and Hispanic students make up the majority in most of our urban schools" (Kozol, 2005, pp. 8-9). According to the Council for Great City Schools, there are 7.1 million students educated in America, with Hispanic students making up 39% and African-American students making up 31%. (Council of the Great City Schools: The Nation's Voice for Urban Education, 2013-2014).

Another characteristic of school districts in urban areas is that they often have disproportionate shares of students with low SES who are at-risk (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009). At-risk students often require remediation, are likely to be retained, lack basic skills and are of a high risk of dropping out of high school (Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989). At-risk students carry the additional burden of one or more factors that impact their achievement. These students are considered to be at risk because of lack of support in one or more of the following areas: societal, familial and school (Popp, Stronge, & Grant, 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau defines

an at-risk student as a student with one or more of 22 possible factors: (Kominski, Elliott, & Clever, 2009). Table 1 outlines the domains that at-risk students are characterized by.

Table 1

Domain Factors

Individual	Familial	Economic	Physical Environment
Presence of disability	Single parent household	Receives food stamps	Overcrowded household
Presence of multiple disabilities	Linguistically isolated household	Household receives public assistance	Household lacks complete kitchen
Not enrolled in school	Non-English speaking household	Household below poverty	Household lacks complete plumbing
Speaks English less than very well	Parent(s) foreign born and in U.S. for 5 years or less	No employed parent in household	Rented home
Child is foreign born and in U.S. for 5 years or less	Parent(s) has/have less than high school education	Chronic unemployment in household	Not a single family home
	Cared for by grandparent		
	Cared for by grandparent for 3 or more years		

Note. Adapted from “Risk Factors for Children in the U.S., States, and Metropolitan Areas: Data from the 2007 American Community Survey” by Robert Kominski, Diana B. Elliott, and Molly Clever, 2009, U. S. Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau’s research notes that 31.5% of children under 18 have no risk factors. However, 32.5% of children under 18 have 1 or 2 risk factors that places them in the category of being at-risk. According to Payne (1998) students of low SES are more at risk of being developmentally delayed, dropping out of high school, being victims of child abuse or neglect,

come from single family homes and more likely to experience teen pregnancy than their middle-class peers. As the number of at-risk students continues to increase, school leaders are desperately seeking personnel, strategies and the means to increase student academic achievement and evidence of demonstrated growth on standardized achievement tests.

Urban schools often have high rates of student mobility that may adversely affect performance of young students (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Students are considered to be mobile when they move into or out of a school during the school-year for any one or combination of reasons (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990). High rates of mobility not only causes a hardship on the students that move, it causes hardship on students who remain and the teacher who has to constantly adjust to accommodate an ever-changing set of students (Jacob, 2007). Mobility is especially high within large, predominantly minority, urban school districts (Rumberger, 2003). Students who experience high mobility may be homeless, have parents who are migrant workers, be in foster care or have parents in the military (Popp, Stronge, & Grant, 2011). It is not uncommon for these students to experience frustration, isolation, and lack of motivation to succeed. Additionally, research shows that students who are highly mobile suffer psychologically, socially and academically (Rumberger, 2003).

Gardner and Miranda (2001) state that students in urban school districts face challenges such as low SES, underfunded schools, less experienced teachers, poor parent participation, fewer community resources and student mobility, all of which negatively impact a student's achievement. When students are confronted with a combination of these factors, their school success is further inhibited. These factors also contribute to the student achievement gap that exists and has existed dating back to achievement tests given during World War I (Gardner, 2007). Despite the multitude of risk factors associated with urban and low SES students, Helm

posits that at-risk students are still able to succeed at high rates if teachers exhibit the disposition of caring, have a positive work ethic, and are able to help students think critically (Helm, 2007).

Significance of the Study

Scholarly Significance. Cartledge and Kourea (2008) state, “as our society increases in diversity, teachers and other school personnel have a corresponding need to increase in their understanding of the integral relationship between culture and social behavior and the need to view students’ behaviors within a cultural context” (p 352). With the increase in our nation’s diverse student population, the research resulting from this study may be utilized in teacher preparatory programs that educate future educators of at-risk youths in urban school divisions. In addition, this research could add to the body of knowledge where there is a lack of definitive research on the topic of teacher effectiveness (Guarino, Hamilton, Lockwood, & Rathbun, 2006). According to Guarino, et al. (2006) the reason for limited research on teacher effectiveness in urban school settings is the scarcity of data that can be used to connect student test scores to the characteristics of their teachers.

Practical Significance. According to Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007), “as more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate 21st century classrooms and efforts mount to identify effective methods to teach these students, the need for pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive intensifies” (p. 64). By exploring the results of this study, education stakeholders at the federal, state, division, and school level could be provided with insight into the dispositions and qualities that are needed by teachers in order to ensure academic success for students in urban school divisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the dispositions of teachers of students in grades three through five who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. The researcher used a combination of three surveys. Survey Part A, Teacher Efficacy, is from the original work of Sherri Gibson of the Clovis Unified School District and Myron Dembo (1984) of the University of Southern California. Survey Parts B and C were developed by Meghan Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) to measure Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Beliefs. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Survey is based off of the original work of Gibson & Dembo (1984). The combined surveys were presented to respondents as one survey addressing teacher dispositions. The results reported on how strongly effective teachers of elementary students in grades 3 through 5 feel about the impact they have on urban students who took the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) math assessment during the 2011-2012 school-year.

Research Questions

Three research questions helped to guide the review of the scholarly research of this study in order to fully understand the dispositions successful teachers in urban schools should possess in order to increase academic outcomes for at-risk students. The research questions supported the development of this study and are as follows:

1. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Efficacy scale (Survey A)?
2. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Beliefs scale (Survey B)?

3. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale (Survey C)?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework model presented below outlines the basis for this research study in which the researcher illustrates the fundamental concepts needed in order to successfully assist with the teaching of students who are attending urban schools and who are identified as being at-risk. Figure 1 outlines the significance of the dispositions successful teachers should be taught through teacher preparatory programs as well as attributes needed by teachers in order to reach urban, at-risk youth.

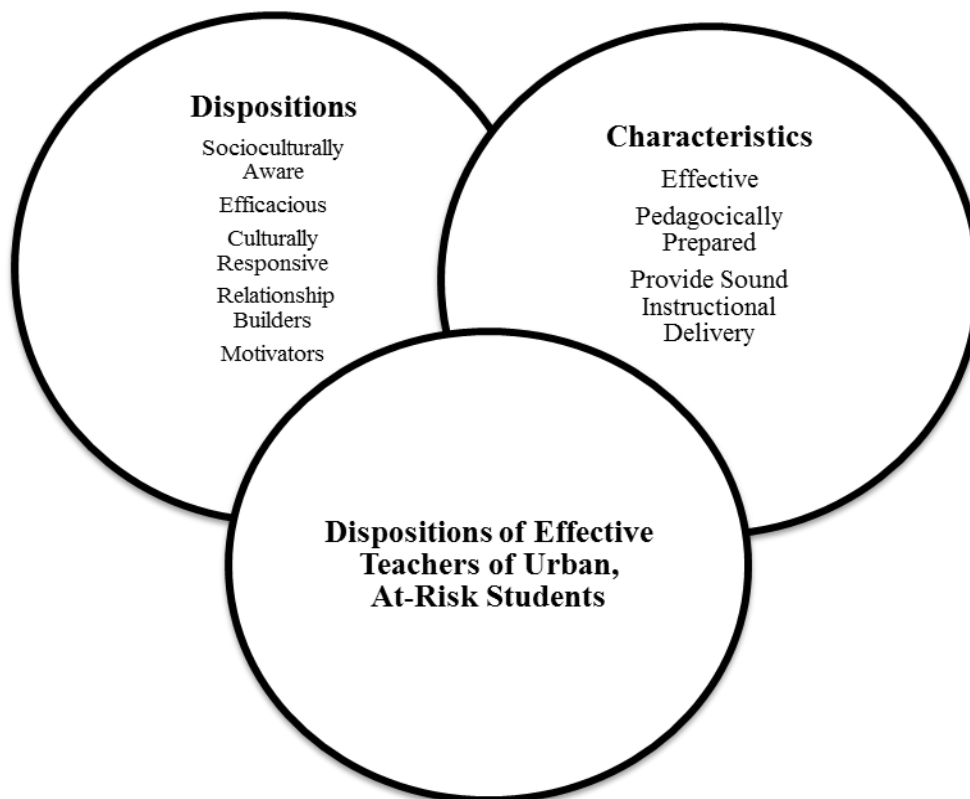


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework model of Dispositions of Effective Teachers of Urban, At-Risk Students. This figure illustrates what teacher preparatory programs should be teaching pre-service teachers during their college experience in order to be successful with urban, at-risk youth.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms along with their definitions have been provided to assist the reader with understanding the suggested terminology used throughout this study.

At-risk-Indicates the likelihood of experiencing difficulties in attending, succeeding, and remaining in school (Popp, Stronge, & Grant, 2011). Being at-risk is not an explanation for why difficulties occur (Croninger, 2001).

Culturally Responsive Teaching-Using the culture, knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2010).

Dispositions-Perceptions or beliefs that guide actions. A way of behaving; a person's values, beliefs and attitudes; qualities that can be learned (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000).

Effective Teachers-Teachers whose students were academically successful based on state standardized test scores (Thompson, Ransdell, & Rousseau, 2005).

Efficacy-The belief a person has about ones capabilities that allow the person to exercise control over their level of functioning and over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1993).

Mobility- When a student moves into or out of a school during the school-year for any one or combination of reasons (Lash & Kirkpatrick, 1990).

Socio Economic Status-Governmental measures used to calculate family income or poverty level; education level of parents, particularly of the head-of-household; employment status and even classifications of blue or white color (Ladd, 2012). As of September 2014, the poverty threshold for a family of four is \$23,834 (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Standards of Learning (SOL)- describe the Commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education (Virginia Department of Education, 2015).

Teacher quality-The characteristics that enhance a teachers' effectiveness in the classroom (Thompson, Ransdell, & Rousseau, 2005).

Teacher Efficacy- A teacher's belief that he or she can have a positive effect on student learning. Teacher efficacy combines two separate dimensions of constructs; general and personal efficacy (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990).

Title I Schools- Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of children from low-income families. These schools may use Title I funds for school-wide programs designed to upgrade their entire educational programs to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest-achieving students (Dillow & Snyder, 2011). Students eligible for Free and Reduced priced lunch determine a school's Title I status.

Urban Schools-Schools that are located in a central city of a metropolitan area (Adams & Adams, 2003).

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study focused on elementary teachers in an urban school district that were identified as being successful in mathematics as determined by student outcomes on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. The SOL assessments measure the success of students in meeting the Virginia Board of Education's expectations for learning and achievement. Proficiency is measured by reaching a score of 400 or more out of a possible 600 (Virginia Department of Education, 2015). The teachers in this study administered the

assessment during the 2011-2012 school-year to elementary students in grades 3, 4 and 5. All teachers were employed in one urban school district in southeastern Virginia. Data were collected from the results of the 2011-2012 SOL test administration.

Limitations of the study. The limitations of this study are listed below and are factors that were out of the researcher's control:

1. The willingness of teachers to provide accurate and honest opinions about their teaching dispositions.
2. The willingness of teachers to participate in an e-mail survey to determine their attitudes, beliefs and practices. It is possible that only more confident teachers from the selected group opt to participate.
3. Schools whose F/R lunch percentages are below the district average of 67% are considered to be less urban than those whose F/R lunch percentage is above the district average. Since data is being collected from teachers in all schools regardless of their degree of urbanicity, it is possible that teachers in schools that are more urban have dispositions that are the same or less like those teachers in schools that are less urban. This will be discussed in Chapter 5 after the data is collected.

Delimitations of the study. The delimitations of this study are listed below and were factors the researcher intentionally selected:

1. This study is limited to third, fourth and fifth grade teachers who had a class pass rate of 70% or better. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) uses 70% as its benchmark to determine overall proficiency on math SOL assessments.

2. Student performance is restricted to 1 measure, 3 grade levels, and one year of math scores on the Virginia math SOL. A student is considered proficient if he or she achieves a passing score of 400 out of a possible 600. Teachers are then measured by the percentage of their students that meet the proficiency score of 400 or better. Since the study was only concerned with teachers considered to be effective, there was no purpose in asking non-effective teachers to respond to survey items.
3. The study is limited to one urban school district in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are other urban school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia, however, there are none of similar size in the same geographical area of southeastern Virginia.
4. Only one year's SOL data was considered and used in the study. The 2011-2012 SOL math data were the most current data available at the time the study was initiated.
5. During the 2011-2012 school-year, students were using newly implemented math Standards of Learning (SOL) that were adopted in 2009 but used for the first time in the spring of 2012. This may have impacted the number of teachers considered to be successful on the SOL assessment.
6. Private school and secondary teachers were not included in this study. This study is designed to measure the dispositions of successful elementary school teachers in the public school setting.

Organization of the Study

There are five chapters included in this study. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, background information, statement of the research problem, significance and purpose of this study, research questions, the conceptual framework, definitions of terms used throughout the study and the scope and limitations used by the researcher. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature. The review explores effective teachers and the dispositions associated with effective teachers. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology used in the study, describes the population sample and the data collection instrument used, and names and describes the statistical procedure used. Chapter 4 reports and describes the data as it relates to the research questions. Chapter 5 includes a summary and discussion of the findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to identify the dispositions of teachers of students in grades three through five who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. The study was conducted in an urban school division in southeastern Virginia using the assessment results of teachers of students in grades three through five during the 2011-2012 school year. The review of the literature related to effective teachers and their dispositions supports the researcher's study.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated that all teachers who teach in public schools be identified as highly qualified. The legislation defined highly qualified as being a teacher who has a bachelor's, is certified to teach in his or her content area or be enrolled in an alternative route program, and demonstrate subject area competency (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Many urban school districts and high poverty schools are challenged with attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers (Hanushek, Kain , & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).

Ascher (1991) asserted that retaining good teachers is often more difficult for urban schools than for schools located in suburban or rural areas. Ascher believed that the low retainment rates in urban schools is attributed to the fact that urban schools serve low-income and minority children in addition to the limited funding for educational materials, teacher salaries and general upkeep of the school. Despite these challenges, urban school districts and high poverty schools possess certain teachers who are able to achieve positive student outcomes. In Virginia, this achievement is documented through results on high stakes assessment, commonly known as the Standards of Learning (SOL).

Researchers are beginning to delve into teacher effectiveness that focuses on teacher behaviors more so than teacher pedagogical practices (Stronge, 2007). Stronge described affective characteristics such as caring, the role of fairness and respect, social interactions with students, the promotion of enthusiasm and motivating learning as the important characteristics for student achievement. The author also discussed the value in a teacher's efficacy, or how they view themselves as being responsible for the success of their students (Stronge, 2007).

Effective Teachers

Of all the factors that impact a students' achievement, the teacher is the most significant, accounting for 30% of the variance in measured student learning outcomes (Hattie, 2003). More specifically, instructional quality has a 1.00 effect size (Hattie, 2003). NCLB mandates that states implement plans to improve teacher effectiveness with the underlying belief that highly qualified teachers will be able to improve student outcomes, especially for those students that are disadvantaged or at-risk (Konstantopoulos, 2009).

Stronge, Ward, Tucker and Grant (2011) define effective teachers as those teachers whose students make gains in the top quartile on reading and mathematics standardized achievement tests. Conversely, less-effective teachers were those teachers whose student gains were in the bottom quartile. Strong et al. (2011) assessed teacher effectiveness in terms of outcome, or student learning gains. Using a regression-based model, hierarchical linear model (HLM), the researchers were able to estimate the growth of the students in the sample in order to predict the expected achievement (Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Results ranged approximately two standard deviations below and above expectations, confirming that effective teachers make a difference.

Kawell (2008) completed a study of effective teachers of minority students in high poverty areas. The researcher noted that there is a gap in the research that focuses on instruction inside classrooms where African-Americans and Latinos gain academic achievement through effective teaching. Kawell in her study of effective teachers of minority students used a qualitative design where classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys were analyzed to look for emergent patterns occurring in classrooms designated as being effective. A purposeful sample of ten effective teachers and high achieving students from low performing schools in high poverty areas were included. In the study, effective teachers were those teachers whose students showed gains on their yearly high-stakes tests. The study analyzed teacher responses from thirty interviews regarding their beliefs, backgrounds, motivation and instructional practices. Seven hundred thirty-six students, primarily Hispanic, from effective teachers' classrooms in a K-12 learning center were also participants. Students' grade levels varied between elementary through high school. Students were asked to complete a three question survey. Two questions were general, the third asked about the effectiveness of the particular teacher.

Kawell found that teachers that cared for their students, held high expectations and equipped students for future success were more successful. It was dually noted that the teacher's ethnicity was not an important factor in the effectiveness of the teacher. Lastly, the study found that direct instruction for minority students was more effective than collaborative learning (Kawell, 2008). It was further noted that research is needed in order to develop effective teacher preparation programs at the college level, professional development programs at the district level and in keeping professional teacher organizations informed about the state of urban schools, especially schools with an African-American and Latino population (Kawell, 2008).

Isenberg, E.; Max, J.; Gleason, P.; Potamites, L.; Santillano, R.; Hock, H.; Hansen, M. (2013) conducted research in a study entitled *Access to Effective Teaching for Disadvantaged Students* and examined whether disadvantaged students had equal access to effective teaching within study districts for grades 4 through 8. The results of the study revealed “disadvantaged students do not have access to effective teaching on AVERAGE in the 29 study districts and across the three school years” (p. 27). The report goes on to state that there was a two percentile point shift in the student achievement gap for effective teaching between Free and Reduced lunch (FRL) and non-Free and Reduced lunch (non-FRL) students.

Teachers of non-FRL students had higher value added than teachers of FRL students on average, with statistically significant differences of 0.034 standard deviations of students test scores in ELA and 0.024 standard deviations in math.

The results imply that the typical FRL student experiences less effective teaching than the typical non-FRL student within a district (p. 6).

Williams (2011) reports that in order to narrow the achievement gap of at-risk students, “districts need to ensure that teachers are educated on the most effective teaching methods through the use of professional development time, as well as create a culture in its buildings that values learning and quality teaching” (p. 70). Williams concludes that teachers must be afforded opportunities to plan and collaborate with colleagues in order to share new insights and dialogue with colleagues on new instructional methodologies.

Teacher Preparedness

One of the factors that impacts student achievement is the quality of instruction the student receives (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, shared with the public that many teachers did not have the training or necessary knowledge and skills they

needed to be successful. Teachers are responsible for teaching all students. Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare them to do so (Gay, 2002). Lack of exposure to preparation leaves a large percentage of pre-service teachers unsure of how to best teach urban students and places an additional barrier on students who are already at-risk of academic failure because of other risk factors. Pre-service teachers not only have to master the academic tasks but also have to conform to cultural conditions that are unnatural (Gay, 2002). Gay goes on to say that teacher preparation programs must be as culturally responsive to ethnic diversity as K-12 classroom instruction (Gay, 2002). Findings from a 2000 survey by The National Center for Education Statistics revealed that only 20% of teachers who teach culturally diverse students felt they were prepared to teach students in urban areas. Preparing teachers is everyone's responsibility and sensible designs require cooperation among faculty, school systems, and students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Thompson (2007) believes that teacher preparation programs are not properly preparing our teachers to teach urban students with diverse backgrounds. Teacher preparation programs tend to be led by professors who are white, middle-class and lack experience in urban, high-poverty areas (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ladson-Billings share that teacher preparation programs need to incorporate strategies and coursework that assist teachers in becoming more culturally aware in order that they are able to respond to the needs of the students they serve. Additionally, school leaders must support teachers in their efforts to transform their teaching styles in support of more culturally responsive classrooms serving unique, yet, diverse groups of students (Brown, 2007).

A large, urban mid-South university sought the need to redesign the elementary education program. A team of researchers recognized that there was a need to find out the teacher

characteristics necessary for student academic success. The goal was to align those characteristics with the New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards. These standards guide the curriculum of the elementary education program. The group agreed on the pedagogical skills, but struggled with the dispositions of effective teachers. Taylor & Wasicsko defined teacher disposition as the perceptions or beliefs that guide a teacher's actions (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000). Based on the high turnover rate of first year teachers and the underachievement of urban students, researchers, Schwartz & Bakari determined that previous professional development efforts had not proven effective (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005). To aid in fulfilling the effort of urban teacher development, the researchers designed and used an instrument to determine what pre-service teachers know about effective teaching in urban schools. The thought was that by finding out what students' strengths and weaknesses were, the instrument would be able to guide future professional development.

The researchers came up with eight separate but interconnected conceptual components that would drive the survey. The study consisted of 248 full and part-time graduate students. Researchers administered the survey in 13 classes during the fall semester of 2003. Participants were chosen by their length of participation in their master's program. Demographic data was used to compare groups of teachers using SPSS to analyze data. The findings revealed that the scale has the potential to measure what teachers know about teaching in urban schools and how faculty professional development can be built around knowledge gaps (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005). It was also determined that the respondents' certification and college program credits had no significance on teachers' knowledge base; however, teachers who were interested in teaching in urban schools scored higher. The hope is that the scale would help to improve outcomes for teacher educators, teachers and thus, urban students (Schwartz & Bakari, 2005).

Teachers are responsible for teaching all students. Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare them to do so (Gay, 2002). Ill-prepared teachers places an additional barrier on students that are already at-risk of academic failure because of other risk factors. At-risk students now have to master the academic tasks as well as conform to cultural conditions that are unnatural (Gay, 2002). Gay goes on to say that teacher preparation programs must be as culturally responsive to ethnic diversity as K-12 classroom instructors (Gay, 2002). Findings from a 2000 survey by The National Center for Education Statistics revealed that 20% of teachers who teach culturally diverse students felt they were prepared to teach students in urban areas. Therefore, a high percentage of pre-service teachers are left unprepared and unsure of how to best teach urban students.

In an attempt to increase the effectiveness of teachers in urban schools, higher learning institutions have changed the way they train pre-service teachers. Teacher training programs now include self-reflection practices, field experiences and multi-cultural coursework in their studies. Song (2006) argues that urban teacher development should encompass courses that incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy as the foundation. Teacher training program courses should be organized to contain content that is relevant to urban schools and their students' needs (Song, 2006). These pre-service teacher practices will give pre-service teachers a more realistic view of urban teaching.

Instructional Delivery

Teachers in high poverty, urban schools tend to assign more independent seat work and students have less interaction with the teacher. Urban schools tend to promote low rates of student engagement (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Assigning students independent work is useful as it frees the teacher to be able to work with students needing intervention in a small group or

individual level (Baker, 1999). Contrary to this belief, Baker noted that the practice of independent seatwork may exacerbate academic and social problems for low-achieving students who aren't able to handle the social and behavioral expectations associated with cooperative learning and more independent small groups.

Researchers Gardner and Miranda (2001) stated that behavior management in some urban schools is a priority rather than academic achievement due to challenging student behaviors. Pre-service teachers should be given multiple opportunities for actual experiences with instructing and managing children before being thrust into the teaching environment (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Additionally, the researchers state that new teachers should be given an opportunity to act as an apprentice taking on only small chunks of teaching tasks at a time. Smaller class sizes and more capable students would also enhance novice teachers' efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

As we continue this journey to close the achievement gaps, we must continue to find innovative ways to teach and improve the academic proficiency of all students. Educating successful students starts with grooming successful teachers. Teacher quality has been shown to have large effects on student achievement with experience and education explaining only a small share of the difference (Buddin & Zamarro, 2009). Hindman, Grant & Strong (2010) define teacher quality as being “multi-dimensional and explain that these multi-dimensions interact to form the chemistry of what makes good teachers good” (p. 2). Hindman et al. (2010) noted that a high-quality teacher has fewer discipline problems, better relationships with their students, and most importantly, higher student achievement results.

Teacher Dispositions

The term teacher dispositions differs among teacher education programs. Welch, Pitts, Tennini, Keunlen, & Wood (2010) define teacher dispositions as “certain beliefs or attitudes about specific knowledge” (p. 180). According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001), teacher dispositions are:

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence practices and behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth.

Dispositions are guided by knowledge bases and beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment (p. 30).

Vaughn (2012) in her quantitative study on *Teacher Dispositions and Student Achievement* aimed to find the relationship between teacher dispositions and student achievement. The researcher in this study surveyed in-service teachers using a combined questionnaire originally developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) of The Ohio State University and a second scale by Gibson & Dembo (1984) to measure six teacher dispositions recommended by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The researcher measured the following dispositions: instructional strategies, cultural awareness, critical thinking, student engagement, assessment based planning, classroom management, personal efficacy and positive interactions with parents and colleagues. The researcher determined that there are positive correlations between student achievement and the dispositions

of self-efficacy, the ability to motivate challenging students, and classroom management (Vaughn, 2012).

Sociocultural awareness. Geste's 2010 study entitled, *Urban Elementary Teachers' Negotiation of School Culture and the Fostering of Educational Resilience* researched why some at-risk children are successful in school and others are not. The researcher used a multiple case study methodology that investigated the experiences of three experienced elementary teachers of fourth grade students at a high poverty urban school in the southeastern United States (Geste, 2010). The aim of the study was to find the ways in which teachers negotiate the social and cultural differences that exist between the dominant school culture and their students. The researcher described in a detailed narrative how this negotiation impacts the use of strategies that foster educational resilience. Teachers were interviewed and observed over a nine-week period using questionnaires, documents, a series of interviews and field observations. The researcher used a purposeful sampling method to select teachers that worked in a high poverty elementary school in a large urban district. The poverty criteria level for the selected school was 75-100% of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunch. All fourth grade teachers of the selected elementary school were eligible to participate. Fourth grade was selected as it is the first grade that students took an end-of-course assessment. Geste used an initial questionnaire to solicit background information about the teachers and their work environment (Geste, 2010). The responses from the questionnaire were used to produce interview questions that were open-ended and in the form of guided conversations.

The findings from this study revealed that the more closely the personal experiences of teachers were to the students' homes lives and experiences, the more they were able to relate to the reality of what students were living (Geste, 2010). Implications drawn from the study were

that teachers need professional development opportunities that challenge the personal habits of teachers and administrators; teachers and administrators must be informed about the attitudes and practices that they will need to be successful in building resilience in students; there must be a paradigm shift in the way teachers and administrators see success and resilience by moving away from having students conform and adapt to their beliefs, values and norms (Geste, 2010).

Efficacy. One of the ways teachers have the ability to impact student achievement is through their sense of efficacy. Teachers' efficacy is their judgment about their own ability to increase student learning. This characteristic was identified in a study by Rotter (1966) and the RAND organization (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Efficacy beliefs influence how people, behave, think, feel, and are motivated. Efficacy is grounded in the theory that teachers can control the nature and effects of reinforcement (Rotter, 1966).

Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy (1990), conducted a study in which they "examined the relationships between each dimension of efficacy and several measures of teachers' orientations toward management, control, and student motivation" (p. 137). Fifty-five religious school teachers were studied by the researchers and concluded that "the greater the teacher's sense of personal efficacy, the more humanistic the teacher's pupil control orientation" (p. 137).

Additionally, the researchers asserted that teachers with strong beliefs about successful teaching even with unmotivated or difficult students, "the more humanistic the teacher's pupil control orientation and the more the teacher supported student autonomy in solving classroom problems" (p. 137). Woolfolk et al. (1990) conclude that "a teacher with a well-managed class may feel more efficacious and, at the same time, support student learning" (p. 147).

Over three decades ago, the RAND Corporation completed a study of the Los Angeles Unified School District analyzing their reading programs in minority schools (Armor, et al.,

1976). The researchers, using an existing questionnaire, added two items regarding teacher efficacy. More specifically, they asked teachers how they felt about the impact they could have on a student's achievement despite the student's home life and the other asked teachers if they felt they could impact or make a difference in even the most difficult students (Armor, et al., 1976). The results revealed that the more efficacious the teacher was, the better the students reading achievement was. Thus, the construct of teacher efficacy was born.

Using the theoretical work of Rotter (1966) as a starting point, teacher efficacy was first conceived to be the belief that a teacher could control the reinforcement of their actions (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Rotter worked under the assumption that student motivation and performance were significant reinforcers for teaching behaviors. Therefore, highly efficacious teachers are able to control or significantly influence student academic achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Conversely, when teachers with a low sense of efficacy work with students who have a low opinion of their academic capabilities, their achievement is further impacted Bandura (1993).

Alderman defined teacher efficacy as how strongly a teacher feels about their ability to influence student learning and motivation (Alderman, 1990). People who have a high sense of efficacy envision success and are able to guide and support positive performances. On the contrary, those with low, or negative, efficacy beliefs visualize negative outcomes and focus on all the ways things can go wrong (Bandura, 1993). People with a low sense of efficacy tend to shy away from tasks that threaten their perceived ability (Bandura, 1993). When in a threatening situation, a teacher with low self-efficacy will focus on all things negative, including their own personal deficiencies, obstacles and other possible adverse outcomes (Bandura, 1993).

Teacher efficacy influences how well students learn (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Teacher efficacy affects a teacher's effort in teaching, planning goals and what they aspire to do (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy see student and achievement difficulties as an invitation to master challenges rather than a threat to their ability. They build students' esteem by assuring them that they will be taught the skills they are deficient in. The work of Bandura (1993) attests that as student academic achievement increases, teacher efficacy increases. As a result of this increased efficacy, student achievement further increases regardless of the SES of the students (Bandura, 1977).

As a motivational construct, teachers with high efficacy will expend an excessive amount of persistence when students face obstacles in their learning (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). These teachers recover quickly from failures and attribute their failure to a lack of effort on their part (Bandura, 1993). Low-achieving students can be reached by teachers with a high sense of efficacy combined with high, realistic expectations for student achievement (Alderman, 1990). These teachers recognize that their students are low-achieving, but they don't let that limit their expectation and they let students know that they want them to succeed and will provide them with the skills and strategies they will need to assist in meeting their goals.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy states that efficacy is most supple during the early years (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is the most beneficial for those in education because it relates to choices and actions such as goal setting, persistence, resilience, effort and strategy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The greater a teacher's efficacy the less likely they are to be critical of students who make mistakes, the more likely they are to work with struggling students and less inclined to make special education referrals (Jerald, 2007).

Noticing that there was little research in the area of teacher efficacy in the early years, Hoy and Spero (2005) studied how teacher efficacy changed from the point of student teaching through the teachers' first year of teaching. It was hypothesized that increases in self-efficacy would be consistent with Bandura's theory of self-efficacy; related to perceptions of task mastery and support. The researchers used multiple measures including Gibson and Dembo's Teacher Efficacy Scale Gibson & Dembo (1984), Bandura's teacher Self-Efficacy Scale and an instrument that took into account the specific goals of the teacher preparation program studied (Hoy & Spero, 2005). They included 53 prospective teachers in a Master's level teaching certification program. Measurements were taken at the beginning of prospective and novice teachers' preparation program, at the end of their student teaching experience, and finally, after the end of their first year of employment as a teacher. The results indicated teacher efficacy increases as teachers move from pre-service to full-time, then declines within the first year, probably due to removal of support (Hoy & Spero, 2005). It is suggested that this support be continued throughout the early years. Support through mentoring is one form of support and could be the missing link as a possible thought for further research.

Cultural responsiveness. Teachers have the responsibility of teaching all children. They must be aware of the various cultures within their classroom and be able to design instruction that embodies the cultural and linguistic practices and values of the groups, giving all students the opportunity to learn. Culture strongly influences the attitudes, values and behaviors that students and teachers bring to school (Gay, 2002). Gay encourages teachers to develop a knowledge base for cultural responsive teaching that involves acquiring detailed factual information about the culture and practices of the ethnic groups that teachers will be working with (Gay, 2002).

McKinney, Flenner, Frazier & Abrams (2006) affirm that “developing and supporting teachers to transcend prejudicial biases and appreciate diversity, become more culturally literate and responsive, and demonstrate state-of-the-art pedagogy that responds to the needs of diverse learners is of utmost importance for any urban school success” (p. 2). Becoming a culturally responsive classroom means that teachers and students will develop new classroom standards and norms that recognize students’ diverse backgrounds. As teachers, we have to change much in the same way as the population of our diverse communities. If we are to reach and teach all students, teachers have to make a concerted effort to teach in a manner that is responsive to students’ cultures (Brown, 2007). This can be difficult, particularly if teachers are unfamiliar with the various cultures of students.

It is imperative that urban teachers understand and respect students’ cultural backgrounds, experiences and resources (Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul, & Gordon, 2006). Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively and making learning more relevant” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). According to Gay (2002) our schools are made up of students from many ethnicities, cultures, and socio-economic statuses, yet teachers are still not being trained to teach in schools that are rich in diversity. It is important that teachers understand the role that culture plays in building a student’s learning style (Kuykendall, 2004). Kuykendall encourages teachers to use classroom activities that relate to students’ life experiences.

Frustrated by teachers and their classroom management approaches, Hubbard (2005) thought that teachers who did not consider student diversity and cultural backgrounds in their practices were presenting barriers to effective management in an urban context. His 2005 study

entitled *It's About More Than 'Just Be Consistent' or 'Out-Tough Them': Culturally Responsive Classroom Management* researched successful, White female teachers in urban middle schools and how students' culture influenced the way teachers handled classroom management problems. The researcher used a qualitative case study approach which embodied interviews, focus group meetings, and observations. The goal was to find the relationship between the views of culturally responsive pedagogy and classroom management (Hubbard, 2005). The researcher's hypothesis was that as classroom teachers increased the use of culturally responsive practices, classroom management problems would decline.

The findings of this study add to the scholarship on the convergence of culture (i.e., beliefs, values, and behaviors) and management in urban classrooms with a diverse student population. The findings from this research substantiate what has been studied by other researchers (Hubbard, 2005). The researcher noted that further research was needed to aid in understanding the pedagogy behind socializing behaviors that support improved academic success. In addition, the researcher noted more work was needed on how teachers develop and used the information in urban classrooms. In summary, Hubbard wrote that if culturally responsive pedagogy is valid as a theory then future research should prove that teachers that are culturally sensitive will possess dispositions that are aligned with this theory.

Building relationships. Characteristics of effective teachers include respecting students (Thibodeau & Hillman, 2003), developing positive relationships and having high expectations for students' achievement (McKay, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2009). At-risk students, when compared to their higher-achieving peers, experience more negative social experiences (Baker, 1999). Baker examined teacher-student interactions and relationships among groups of poor, urban, African-American students experiencing high and low satisfaction with school (Baker,

1999). The study found that students at-risk of school failure not only felt alienated, but also carried the burden of poor academic achievement.

Baker stated that lower achieving students typically did not receive the positive and supportive interaction that higher achieving students received. Their interaction was mostly on a compensatory basis and with greater teacher support. These students experienced more harsh interactions, which in turn left a negative school impression on students, often leading to alienation (Baker, 1999). Cooperative learning opportunities and cross-age peer mentoring were suggested as strategies used to improve the social context of at-risk students. At the elementary level, students spent a great deal of time with their teacher-of-record. This encouraged the opportunity for them to build relationships with the teacher and a hope for a more positive attitude toward school. The researcher encouraged programs that target improved student-teacher relationships and classroom social climate at the elementary level as a means of intervention at the elementary school level for students at-risk of poor academic outcomes (Baker, 1999).

Teachers influence students in a variety of ways (Irvine, 2003). They have power over students that parents do not often have. These powers can uplift or destroy students' wants and desires (Brown, 2006). Singham (2003) notes that what a teacher does and the relationship he or she builds with the student is extremely important. This relationship is reflected when students demonstrate what they have learned to their parents and are only willing to demonstrate the practice exactly as their teacher originally modeled it. Pete & Fogarty (2005) in their book, *Close the Achievement Gap*, share how teachers subtly share messages with students. Pete & Fogarty go on to say that when teachers carry themselves with dignity, act with integrity, are consistent, fair and predictable; children are inclined to model their behavior after those models.

There is evidence that a student's satisfaction with school is affected by student-teacher interactions (Baker, 1999). It is important that we fill a student's day with quality teaching practices and beliefs in order to maximize students' positive outcomes. Baker recommends that psychologically responsive classroom practices be used to prevent or intervene with students at-risk. Paik (2007) editor of a book entitled, *Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, stated that African-American students need the following seven things from their teachers:

1. African-American students need teachers who have the "Mrs. Tessem Mindset." Mrs. Tessem Mindset is a mind-set of teachers and how they must look for innate talents and gifts that African American students bring with them to school.
2. African-American students need teachers who equip them with the academic skills that are prerequisites for academic success.
3. African-American students need teachers who teach them how to use their education for personal empowerment.
4. African-American students need teachers who make the curriculum culturally relevant.
5. African-American students need teachers who have good classroom management skills.
6. African-American students need teachers who develop a college-going mind-set in students.

7. African-American students need teachers who focus on the “Alterable Variables.” Alterable Variables refers to paying attention to things that are within a teachers’ control rather than circumstances that are not within their control (pp. 156-163).

Croninger (2001) defines at-risk as students who are at risk of failure. They possess factors that can be either social or academic. According to Croninger, social factors are linked to demographics and academic factors are linked to academic performance (Croninger, 2001). He considered three types of risk; (a) those who are part of a socially disadvantaged group, (b) those who have academic or school-related difficulties prior to high school, and (c) those who fall into both (Croninger, 2001). Croninger’s study looked at the critical role the social relationship between students and teachers plays in students successfully graduating from high school. The findings suggest that students that receive support and guidance from their teachers are more likely to graduate from high school. Croninger contended that not only does academic risk have the largest impact on the probability that a student will drop out of high-school, social risk elevates the possibility.

Motivation. People motivate themselves by thinking about and envisioning what they do before they do it (Bandura, 1993). If a person values the outcome they will be more engaged in the task. Conversely, people are less likely to be engaged in a task when they don’t value the outcome (Pajares, 1996). When learning goals are matched with student’s motivational zones of proximal development and when the information is relevant, optimal learning situations occur (Brophy, 1999).

Effective teachers must be able to motivate students (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004) and be aware of their urban students’ sociocultural position (Sachs, 2004). Effective teachers

also use positive motivation strategies. Some examples of strategies that effective teachers use with students are praising students, building lessons that are interesting and relevant, and matching student learning tasks to their ability (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004; Brophy, 1999). Students are more excited about learning when they feel that school is preparing them for the real world (Kuykendall, 2004). Students that are part of a culturally responsive classroom setting, are more likely to be motivated, less likely to be disruptive and more likely to benefit from their school and learning experience (Kuykendall, 2004).

According to Szente (2007), children with high self-efficacy possess the ability to focus on a task longer, are more motivated and will work harder to reach their goal. Goal setting, removing negative thoughts, creating positive affirmations and visualization are all steps in motivating children. The more children believe that they can achieve, the more successful they will be. Research shows that teachers with high degrees of efficacy have the capability of increasing student's motivation and academic achievement (Protheroe, 2008). These teachers are more likely to view low-achieving students as reachable, teachable, and worthy of their attention and effort (Ashton & Webb, 1986). The more positive experiences students have, the greater the desire to succeed (Szente, 2007). Kuykendall writes that it is the responsibility of schools and teachers to develop a positive self-image for Black and Hispanic youth by adding the key ingredient, accomplishment (Kuykendall, 2004).

Teachers must create a classroom culture that is motivating for students and themselves. (Nichols & Zhang, 2011). However, recent education reforms have forced teachers to create learning environments that are less motivating. Teachers find themselves teaching to the test, following scripted plans and some have even lost their passion for doing what they love. This is another unintended consequence of NCLB; creating environments that are less motivating for

students and teachers. Nichols & Zhang (2011) conclude that classrooms should be more learner-centered with less teacher control of learning and more opportunities for building positive relationships (Nichols & Zhang, 2011; Paik, 2007). In order to instill a love for learning and the desire to succeed, we must find more motivational ways to work with students' behavior, how they respond to instruction and their desire to complete and graduate from high school (Britt, et al., 2005).

Conclusions/Synthesis

Urban students face a number of obstacles during their K-12 school experience; some in-school, some out of school. Students in urban and high poverty areas continue to be subjected to underprepared teachers, schools that are of lesser quality than schools in suburban areas (Thompson, 2004) and an achievement gap that is still not near closing. These obstacles may impede urban students' success in school and life. Urban educators, policy-makers and scholars alike, continue to search for ways to close the achievement gaps that exist between subgroups of students.

The literature points to building the capacity of our university students in teacher preparation programs by increasing the quality and amount of culturally rich training and experience they receive while in college (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Pre-service teachers sometimes become disheartened when they are confronted with the challenges of teaching in urban schools. Preparation and exposure to multiple experiences could aid in placing teachers that truly want to teach in urban environments (Adams & Adams, 2003). According to Amrein-Beardsley (2007), in hard-to-staff schools:

Teacher quality is the biggest school-level factor related to success or failure of students... but only about 15 percent of expert teachers teach in high-poverty,

under-achieving schools. Simple logic tells us that more expert teachers must be recruited to teach in these schools. Because these schools are hard to staff, policies must be devised to attract and retain expert teachers (p. 41).

If Amrein-Beardsley's assertion is correct, districts and school leaders should invest in urban schools by recruiting and selecting high-quality teachers that are willing to teach in inner-city schools. If the goal is truly to close the achievement gap between our subgroup populations, then we must put the best teachers in front of our neediest populations.

According to DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber (2010), "contingencies that offer an important caveat to the premise that school-based hiring will, by virtue of empowerment alone, lead to more effective teacher recruitment and selection" (p. 323). Research conducted by Amrein-Beardsley (2007) asserts that in order to help increase student achievement in high-risk schools, the following five policy considerations should be instituted in high-needs schools:

1. Place expert principals in high-needs schools.
2. Salaries, incentives, and signing bonuses should be offered to entice expert teachers to teach in high-needs schools.
3. Encourage and allow time for the best teachers in high-needs schools to mentor and collaborate with other teachers.
4. Encourage and allow time for teachers and principals to share in teaching, learning, and leadership responsibilities.
5. Guarantee expert teachers adequate support staff, resources, and access to technology (pp. 43-44).

Recognizing the vast differences in our populations, resources and facilities within many of our urban versus suburban schools, district and school level leaders use innovative ways to increase student achievement in spite of the factors that history has shown to impede the progress of our urban at-risk students (Barbour, et al., 2010).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design for the study. The chapter includes the following topics: methodology, research questions, population and sample, survey instrument, and data collection procedures. A quantitative method, survey research, in the form of a teacher questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. Creswell described survey research as trends, attitudes or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2009). This study surveyed teacher dispositions collected via a Likert-type electronic survey e-mailed to participants. The schools' F/R lunch rate along with the teacher's level of proficiency on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL were the demographic data collected. This information was needed to determine if there were any trends amongst schools whose F/R lunch rates differed. The goal was to generalize using a smaller sample size that represented the population of urban teachers in southeastern Virginia.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the dispositions of teachers of students in grades three through five who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. The researcher investigated the attitudes and beliefs of effective teachers through the work of a three part survey of forty-seven questions. The survey used was a collection of Likert-type questions from the Teacher Beliefs and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and additional questions from a scale originally developed by Gibson & Dembo (1984) used to measure Teacher Efficacy. The researcher combined the three scales to form one survey measuring seven Teacher Dispositions.

Part I of this study identified effective teachers that were successful at teaching urban, at-risk students. For the purpose of this study, effective teachers were defined as those teachers

whose aggregate score was 70% or higher on their end of year Virginia math (SOL) assessment during the 2011-2012 school year. The second part of the study asked the respondent to complete a survey on Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Beliefs and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy. This study was undertaken to provide supporting data to assist school districts and administrators in selecting the most effective teachers to work with urban, at-risk students and to provide the greatest opportunities to increase student achievement. In addition, the outcomes from this study should prove to be beneficial to teacher education preparation programs. Teacher education programs can use these results to build the capacity of pre-service teachers in preparation for the possibility of working in urban school settings and becoming effective full-time teachers.

Research Design

This study was empirical and used quantitative research methods using responses derived from a three-part survey. Butin (2010) noted that empirical research examines specific data. In this study, teacher surveys were used to examine data collected from teachers along with student outcomes on high stakes tests. The surveys measured teachers' dispositions as they related to their Efficacy, Beliefs and Sense of Efficacy. E-mail versions of the survey were distributed to all teachers in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia whose class pass-rate was 70% or better on the 2011-2012 Virginia SOL math assessment. The questions were of the Likert-type and included either a 5 or 6-point rating scale. The survey data was collected during the month of October 2014. Participants were expected to return survey responses within two weeks. The preferred survey response rate was 50% or 40 teachers. A second opportunity to complete the survey was made to those participants who had not returned their survey within the two-week window. A final attempt to have participants complete the survey was conducted one day before the window closed.

Research Design Justification

The Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Belief and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scales were the preferred types of data collection for this study as they aimed to measure the attitudes and beliefs of effective elementary teachers of grades three through five. Creswell stated that a survey's design gives a quantitative description of trends or attitudes of a population using a smaller sample of that population and from this, one can generalize about the population studied (Creswell, 2009). This study aimed to generalize the attitudes and beliefs of urban teachers in southeastern Virginia whose students were successful on high-stakes assessments.

Research Questions

Three research questions were developed to investigate the dispositions of urban elementary school teachers in the southeastern area of Virginia who were considered to be effective based on their students' success on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL assessment: The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Efficacy scale (Survey A)?
2. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Beliefs scale (Survey B)?
3. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale (Survey C)?

Defining the Population

The population of this study consisted of full-time general education teachers who taught math in grades three through five during the 2011-2012 school-year. In Virginia, grades three, four and five are the only elementary grades to participate in high-stakes testing each year. The

selection criteria were teachers who were considered to be successful by achieving a class pass rate of 70% or above on the Virginia math SOL assessment during the 2011-2012 school-year, and thus were considered to be effective.

Sample Size and Procedures

Teachers were selected from 33 elementary schools based on their class pass rate on the Virginia math SOL assessment from the 2011-2012 school year. The school-year 2011-2012 marked the first year Virginia schools used the revised 2009 mathematics standards. It was anticipated that the group of effective teachers in this study would be less than groups of effective teachers in previous testing years because of the increased rigor and unknown characteristics of the new assessment. Table 2 outlines the grade distribution of effective teachers who were eligible to participate in the study based on their successful student outcomes on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL.

Table 2

Grade Level Taught by Invited Participants

Grade	n	%
3	24	26.4
4	36	39.6
5	31	34.0
Total	91	100.0

The urban district in this study was composed of 33 elementary schools. The district's average F/R lunch percentage was recorded as 65.16% as of January 26, 2012 (Virginia Department of Education, 2012). There were 12 schools that had F/R lunch percentages below the district average of 65.16% and 21 schools with F/R percentages higher than the district average. Schools whose F/R lunch rates were below the district average were in neighborhoods that have less of a concentration of low-income students. Schools with F/R lunch rates that are higher than the district average are located in neighborhoods with a high concentration of

students living in poverty. Research suggests that students in urban neighborhoods with high concentrations of students living in poverty would be expected to have less positive student outcomes (Lippman, Burns, & McArthur, 1996).

Data Collection Procedures

The district's research and testing department determined by query those teachers who were considered to be effective based on their end-of-year SOL results for the school year 2011-2012. The researcher received each teacher's e-mail address along with the corresponding school F/R lunch percentage by school and were used to track demographic data of the teacher and school. Throughout the study, the researcher referred to each school according to its F/R lunch percentage and corresponding school number assigned by the researcher.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher used Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool offered to Virginia Tech students for the purpose of collecting and analyzing data. A three-part survey was used (See Appendices A-C) to determine, Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Beliefs and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy. The surveys were used with the permission of researchers, Dembo of the University of Southern California (See Appendix D), Tschannen-Moran, College of William and Mary, and Hoy of the Ohio State University (See Appendix E). Participating teachers responded to questions utilizing a Likert-type response ranging from (1) *Strongly Agree* to (6) *Strongly Disagree* on the *Teacher Efficacy* and *Teacher Beliefs* sections and (1) *Nothing* to (5) *Great Deal* on the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* section of the survey. Teachers were assured of confidentiality as it relates to their names and school as this information added no value to the study. No incentives were offered to teachers for their participation in this study.

Instrument Design

The survey instruments used were Survey Part A, *Teacher Efficacy* (See Appendix A), Survey Part B, *Teacher Beliefs* (See Appendix B) and Survey Part C, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* (See Appendix C). Survey Part A, *Teacher Efficacy* was downloaded from the site of Hoy with permission granted by the original researcher, Dembo (See Appendix D). Survey Part B, *Teacher Beliefs* and Survey Part C, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* were both developed at the Ohio State University by Tschannen-Moran, from the College of William and Mary and Hoy, from The Ohio State University, and were downloaded from the website of Hoy. Permission was granted from one of the researchers, Hoy (see Appendix E). The surveys were designed to measure three distinct, but related latent factors associated with three areas of teaching: Efficacy for Classroom Management, Efficacy to Promote Student Engagement, and Efficacy in Using Instructional Strategies.

Reliability and Validity

Tschannen-Moran & Hoy conducted Reliability and Validity tests for the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* scale by surveying principals which resulted in an explanation of variances. The outcomes resulted in a reliability of 0.94 for the long form and 0.90 for the short form scale. In addition to the reliability calculation for the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* scale, the scale was further tested for construct validity. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) construct validity was examined for the short and long form. It was noted that:

Total scores on the OSTES (24-item long form) were positively related to both the RAND items ($r=0.18$ and 0.53 , $p<0.01$) as well as to both the personal teaching efficacy (PTE) factor of the Gibson and Dembo measure ($r=0.064$, $p<0.01$) and the general teacher efficacy (GTE) factor ($r=0.16$, $p <0.01$), (p. 801).

Data Management

The resulting collection of aggregate teacher data was kept private and only accessible by staff in the district's research and testing department and the researcher. Teacher and school names were not revealed to the researcher; however, the researcher was able to view the number of teachers, the grade level they represented and their end of year class results for the school year 2011-2012. By keeping teacher and school names limited to access by only the research department, participants were assured that the confidentiality of their responses would remain confidential. Permission was granted by the urban school district based on these guidelines (See Appendix F).

Data Analysis Techniques

In order to report on the survey outcomes, data were exported from *Qualtrics*, a survey data collection software tool, then imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (*SPSS*) software. Descriptive Statistics were used to report the Mean and Standard Deviation. The number and percentage of teachers who believed similarly or differently when it comes to their sense of efficacy were reported and rank ordered.

Timeline

Upon approval from the research committee, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects participating in research conducted by faculty, staff and students of Virginia Tech application was completed and forwarded to the IRB for research approval. Once IRB approval was granted (see Appendix F), the survey instrument was loaded into *Qualtrics*, a sophisticated Web-based research and survey tool used to collect and analyze data. Permission from the urban district was solicited and granted (see Appendix G). The survey was then e-mailed to survey participants by the researcher using the email information shared by the

research and testing department. The initial e-mail (see Appendix H) was shared with participants on October 2, 2014 and remained open for responses through October 18, 2014. A reminder e-mail (see Appendix I) was sent to participants who had not yet responded on October 14, 2014. The last reminder e-mail (see Appendix J) was sent on October 16, 2014.

Methodology Summary

The methodology selected for this study, *Dispositions of Effective Elementary Teachers in an Urban School District in Southeastern Virginia*, aimed to identify the attitudes and beliefs of teachers who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in grades 3 through 5 in an urban school district. Data from an electronic survey was collected and reported to determine how similar or different successful and thus deemed effective teachers in one urban school district are when it comes to their dispositions. The results of this study should be beneficial to urban school districts and administrators in their quest to select the most effective teachers for urban populations. In addition, teacher preparation programs may be able to pre and post-screen pre-service teachers to determine the likelihood of their success in urban elementary schools.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to identify the dispositions of teachers of students in grades three through five who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. The researcher utilized descriptive statistics using the software program *SPSS* to calculate Means and Standard Deviations and count teacher responses to survey questions about the teachers' dispositions as they related to the students these teachers served. More specifically, the study addressed teachers' beliefs about the impact they had on positive student outcomes on high stakes tests. By identifying the dispositions of effective urban elementary teachers, this research could aid urban school districts and administrators in their quest to select the most effective teachers for urban populations. Three research questions were developed to investigate the dispositions of urban elementary school teachers considered to be effective based on the results of the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL assessment:

1. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Efficacy scale (Survey A)?
2. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Beliefs scale (Survey B)?
3. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale (Survey C)?

A three-part survey was used to measure the following dispositions:

1. Instructional Strategies
2. Critical Thinking
3. Student Engagement

4. Building Positive Relationships with Students and Their Families
5. Classroom Management
6. Personal Efficacy
7. Teaching Efficacy

The instrument included 47 questions identified by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy along with older work from (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The items were designed to measure the following: 1) how strongly effective teachers of elementary at-risk students believe that they are a large part of the reason their students are successful; 2) the degree to which teachers believe they are able impact students who are considered to be unmotivated or present with challenges; and 3) how much a teacher believes he or she can influence a student with challenges to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of positive academic outcomes. When combined, effective teachers dispositions are represented in the three surveys.

The researcher selected seven dispositions identified through the review of the literature and noted as being a factor in determining teacher effectiveness through the work of Vaughn, (2012). The dispositions are listed in Table 3 and are sorted by the disposition that they are most closely related to. Each disposition was matched to corresponding questions of the three-part survey administered to respondents and allows the reader to easily identify which questions to reference for a particular disposition.

Table 3

Survey Questions Sorted by Disposition

Disposition	Survey A	Survey B	Survey C
		Item #	
Instructional Strategies		27, 31, 32, 34,	38, 40, 43, 44, 47
Critical Thinking			36
Student Engagement		24, 25, 26	41, 42
Positive Relationships		33	
Classroom Management		23, 28, 29, 30	37, 39, 45, 46
Personal Efficacy to Motivate challenging Students	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22		35
Teaching Efficacy	2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 17, 20, 21		

Note. Classification of dispositions presented in dissertation (Vaughn, 2012).

The population of this study consisted of full-time general education teachers serving grades three through five during the 2011-2012 school-year. For teachers serving as the general education teacher, math instruction, is a required component. For the purposes of this study, *math teacher* refers to the general education teacher of record for a particular class. A survey created by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Gibson and Dembo (1984) was used to address the questions of this study. The survey was e-mailed to a sample size of 81 elementary teachers whose 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL class results yielded a 70% or greater pass rate. An overall return rate of 39.5% ($n=32$) was achieved of which two surveys were submitted incomplete. One respondent failed to complete Survey Part B, and a second person failed to complete Survey Parts B and C; the responses they did submit were used in the current study.

Chapter 4 shares the data collected via the three-part Likert-type survey and the responses to the research questions presented in the study. The first section of the chapter outlines the population and dispositions utilized for the study. The second section describes the characteristics of the survey and presents the data collected via the survey. The third section provides a question analysis and the last section summarizes how the data was used to respond to the three research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 shares the findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations.

Survey Characteristics

Survey Organization. The survey instrument used was assembled from components of the work of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Gibson and Dembo (1984). The combination of the scales combined to create the survey entitled, *Teacher Dispositions*. Permission to use Survey A-*Teacher Efficacy* (See Appendix D), Survey B-*Teacher Beliefs* (See Appendix E) and Survey C-*Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* (See Appendix E) was granted by all original authors via e-mail. The combined surveys collected information about the dispositions of urban teachers successful on the 2011-2012 Virginia SOL math assessment. The survey instrument included 47 questions on: (a) Teacher Efficacy or the belief that with a little extra effort, I can make a significant difference in a student's progress (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and (b) Teacher Beliefs or what a teacher is able to do with and for students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and c) Teachers' Sense of Efficacy or how much a teacher believes he or she can influence a student with challenges to overcome obstacles (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

All questions on the survey were of the Likert-type and either utilized a 5 or 6-point rating scale; developed to measure attitudes or opinions. Likert is the most widely used rating scale type; advantageous because it does not allow the respondent the opportunity to supply a

simple yes or no answer but encourages degrees of opinion, allowing the data to be collected and analyzed quantitatively (McLeod, 2008). Additionally, respondents are only able to select one answer per question.

Survey Part A (Appendix A) questions 1-22 measures a teacher's belief in general and personal teaching efficacy. More specifically, the scale addressed whether a teacher attributes academic success or failure to a student's family background or the influence of the teacher's efforts (Vaughn, 2012; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Bandura's work on personal and outcome expectancy defines personal efficacy as the belief that one can produce desired outcomes through their own efforts and outcome expectancy as the degree to which teachers believe environmental influences affect student learning (Bandura, 1997). Based on Bandura's definitions, the "Teacher Efficacy" scale, Survey Part A, applies Bandura's principles by measuring both personal and general teaching efficacy. A 6-point Likert scale with response choices that ranged from *Strongly Agree*, *Moderately Agree*, *Agree slightly more than Disagree*, *Disagree slightly more than Agree*, *Moderately Disagree* to *Strongly Disagree* was used to complete Survey Part A.

Survey Part B (Appendix B), *Teacher Beliefs*, questions 23-34 solicits respondents' opinion about their ability to bring about positive student change (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The survey measured the dispositions of classroom management, student engagement, instructional strategies, developing critical thinking, and positive interactions (Vaughn, 2012). Respondents were asked to respond to a 6-point Likert scale with response choices of *Strongly Agree*, *Moderately Agree*, *Agree slightly more than Disagree*, *Disagree slightly more than Agree*, *Moderately Disagree* to *Strongly Disagree*.

Survey Part C (Appendix C), *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy*, questions 35-47 aimed to find out how much a teacher believes she can influence a student with challenges to overcome obstacles (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The survey measured the dispositions of personal efficacy, critical thinking, classroom management, student engagement, instructional strategies, and positive interactions. The survey items were adapted to capture the teachers' first person voice of "I am able to..." rather than "How much can you...." Respondents were asked to respond to a 5-point Likert scale with answer choice options of *Great Deal, Quite a Bit, Some Influence, Very little, and Nothing*.

The survey instrument for this study was designed and delivered to respondents using *Qualtrics*, a software program provided to students of Virginia Tech as a free online data collection tool. The tool allowed the researcher to create surveys that were as simple or as complex as desired. Surveys were then e-mailed to participants to complete and respond anonymously. All surveys were designed with the Virginia Tech logo atop each page.

Survey results: response counts. The three-part survey, *Teacher Dispositions*, was e-mailed to 81 pre-identified participants based on e-mail addresses provided by the school district's research and statistics department. *Qualtrics* allowed the researcher to request responses via e-mail, then sent an e-mail to participants on a pre-determined schedule set by the user. The software program returned survey results instantaneously; once a respondent completed the survey.

Of the 91 teachers eligible to participate in the study, 10 were no longer employed with the district and only one left a forwarding e-mail. Additionally, one teacher was listed twice, as being proficient at two schools. The participant was only counted once. The double count may have been due to a transfer student who was assessed under the sending schools' information

rather than the receiving school, causing the student to be counted at their new school and the teacher's class data reported at the student's previous school. Therefore, a net amount of 81 teachers were invited to participate in the study.

The first e-mail inviting effective teachers of elementary students who took the Virginia math SOL assessment in 2011-2012 was sent on October 3, 2014 and used the subject line, "Effective educator survey-Va Tech doctoral candidate." The second e-mail was sent on October 14 and used the subject line, "Survey from Tatem-VaTech doctoral candidate." A final opportunity to respond e-mail was sent on October 16, 2014 and used the subject line, "Last day to participate in survey from Principal Tatem-VaTech doctoral candidate." The varied subject lines and title Effective Educator were used as an attempt to capture the attention of respondents who may have considered the e-mail spam and to encourage each respondent to participate. An overall return rate of 39.5% ($n=32$), was obtained of which twenty-seven respondents completed the survey in its entirety; three respondents completed 90% of the survey; one respondent completed 70%; and one respondent completed just 40% of the survey. It was not known why respondents who began the survey chose not to complete the survey. Overall, 97% of the 32 participants completed the survey in its entirety.

Presentation of the Data: Research Questions

The presentation and analysis of the data for each research question are presented in this section. *Qualtrics*, the survey collection tool, compiled data that were uploaded to *SPSS*. Data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data were then summarized according to teacher responses in order to compare the Mean, Standard Deviation and Frequency of a particular response. Additionally, demographic data were presented to look for trends based

on schools' F/R lunch percentages as a degree of urbanicity. These data will help to establish a generalization for schools with similar populations.

Research Question 1. In response to the research question, “How do math teachers of students in grades three through five score on the Teacher Efficacy scale?” Table 4 displays the results from running Descriptive Statistics in *SPSS*. The question, “If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly” exhibited a mean score ($M=1.56$). This was the survey question with the most agreement as indicated by the mean score. Answer choices *Strongly Agree* and *Moderately Agree* were coded a 1 and 2 respectively. The question, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” yielded a mean score ($M=5.16$). This was the survey question with the most disagreement as indicated by the mean score. Answer choices *Moderately Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree* were coded 5 and 6 respectively.

Table 4

Item Means and Standard Deviations for Effective Teachers Measure of Teacher Efficacy (Survey Part A)

Survey Questions 1-22	# Participants ($n=32$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exert a little extra effort.	2.38	1.476
The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	3.91	1.445
The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	4.56	1.190
If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	4.25	1.437
I have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem.	3.28	1.550
When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	1.72	1.054

When a student gets a better grade than he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	1.84	.884
When I really try, I can get through to the most difficult students.	1.72	.729
A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment has a large influence on his/her achievement.	4.00	1.368
Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.	5.16	1.139
When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective approaches.	1.72	.729
If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	1.97	.999
If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.	3.06	1.645
If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	2.44	1.413
The influences of a student's home experiences can be overcome by good teaching.	2.63	.976
If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	1.56	.801
Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.	4.16	1.687
If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	1.91	1.088
If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	2.09	1.058
When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.	5.13	1.212
Some students need to be placed in a slower group so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations.	4.16	1.687
My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	2.09	1.228

Note. n=number of respondents to respond to survey question.

Table 5 displays the number and percent of teachers who responded to the top 10 survey items on the *Teacher Efficacy* scale, questions 1-22. The top 10 survey items are listed based on the greatest number of teachers who responded *Strongly Agree* and *Moderately Agree* combined. Questions are listed in order of highest response rate of teachers who *Strongly Agree*. The responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale: 1= *Strongly Agree*, 2= *Moderately Agree*, 3=

Agree Slightly More than Disagree, 4= Disagree slightly more than Agree, 5= Moderately Disagree, 6= Strongly Disagree.

Table 5

Teacher Efficacy Scale (Survey Part A) Scores by Answer Choice in Rank Order by Ten Highest Count and Percent of Strongly Agree (Strongly Agree combined with Moderately Agree are reported)

Survey question response	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>n</i> (%)					
If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	20 (63%)	6 (19%)	6 (19%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	17 (53%)	10 (31%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	13 (41%)	16 (50%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective approaches.	13 (41%)	16 (50%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	13 (41%)	14 (44%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	13 (41%)	10 (31%)	4 (13%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
When a student gets a better grade than he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	12 (38%)	15 (47%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in	10 (31%)	16 (50%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)

teaching that concept.

If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	9 (28%)	15 (47%)	6 (19%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
When a student does better than usually, many times it is because I exert a little extra effort.	8 (25%)	16 (50%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)

Note. *n* = number of teachers selecting item; % = percent of population selecting item; 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Moderately Agree; 3=Agree Slightly More than Disagree; 4=Disagree slightly more than Agree; 5=Moderately Disagree; 6=Strongly Disagree.

Survey Part A, Teacher Efficacy, contained 22 actions designed to gather information regarding the dispositions of teachers as it relates to their personal and general teaching efficacy in motivating challenging students. A teacher’s personal efficacy is the belief that with a little extra effort, the teacher can make a difference in student outcomes. Somewhat on the contrary, general teaching efficacy is shaped on the belief that a student’s home and external environment influence the student’s ability to progress. The data reported may be academic, social or motivational.

Of the 32 teachers responding, there were no responses unanimously selected in the *Agree* or *Disagree* categories. Results on 10 of the 22 questions resulted in 75% or more respondents selecting *Strongly Agree* and *Moderately Agree*. Two of the 22 questions yielded a 91% response rate when *Strongly Agree* was combined with *Moderately Agree*. Of the ten highest scoring items, personal efficacy items were selected in the *Strongly Agree* category in nine instances. The only general teaching efficacy item to rank in the top ten was question #4, “If students aren’t disciplined at home, they aren’t likely to accept any discipline.” This item ranked 6th.

Table 6 displays the number and percentage of respondents who did not believe that their personal or general teaching efficacy were the reasons why their students were successful. Of the 32 teachers who responded, one teacher responded *Strongly Agree* to item #10 “Teachers are

not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.”

Additionally, one teacher responded *Strongly Agree* to item #20, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.” Both items indicate general teaching efficacy or in this case a lack of general teaching efficacy since the respondents *Strongly Agreed*. The responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale: 1= *Strongly Agree*, 2= *Moderately Agree*, 3= *Agree Slightly More than Disagree*, 4= *Disagree slightly more than Agree*, 5= *Moderately Disagree*, 6= *Strongly Disagree*.

Table 6

Teacher Efficacy Scale (Survey Part A) Scores by Answer Choice in Rank Order by Count of Highly Agree (Moderately Disagree combined with Strongly Disagree is reported)

Survey Question Response	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>n</i> (%)					
When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	10 (31%)	16 (50%)
Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	5 (16%)	9 (28%)	16 (50%)

Note. *n*=number of respondents to respond to survey question.

Research question 2. In response to research question 2, “How do math teachers of students in grades three through five score on the Teacher Belief scale?” Table 7 displays the results from running Descriptive Statistics in *SPSS*. Survey Part B contained 12 actions designed to give the researcher a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for

teachers in the classroom. The Teacher Beliefs Scale, designed by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, (2001) is designed to measure a teacher's belief system. Teachers who score high on this scale believe in what they are able to do with and for students.

Table 7

Item Means and Standard Deviations for Effective Teachers' Measure of Teacher Beliefs (Survey Part B)

Survey Questions 23-34	<i>Survey score</i>		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I am able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom.	31	1.61	1.022
I am able to motivate students who show low interest in school work.	31	1.71	.783
I am able to get students to believe they can do well with their school work.	31	1.45	.624
I am able to help my students value learning.	31	1.55	.675
I am able to craft good questions for my students.	31	1.35	.551
I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.	31	1.32	.541
I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	31	1.58	.848
I am able to establish a classroom management system with each group of students.	31	1.26	.815
I am able to use a variety of assessment strategies.	31	1.45	.925
I am able to provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused.	31	1.29	.529
I am able to assist families in helping their children do well in school.	31	1.77	.805
I am able to implement alternative strategies in my classroom.	30	1.40	.770

Note. *n*=number of respondents to respond to survey question.

Table 8 displays the amount and percent of teachers who responded to Survey Part B, *Teacher Beliefs Scale*. At least 84% of all teachers surveyed believe that they can affect student learning. This is evident in the high number of teachers *Strongly Agreeing* and *Moderately Agreeing*. Items are listed in order of highest teacher response count beginning with *Strongly Agree*, then a combined count of *Strongly Agree* with *Moderately Agree*. The responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale: 1= *Strongly Agree*, 2= *Moderately Agree*, 3= *Agree Slightly*

More than Disagree, 4= Disagree slightly more than Agree, 5= Moderately Disagree, 6= Strongly Disagree.

Table 8

Teacher Beliefs Scale (Survey Part B) Scores by Answer Choice in Rank Order by count of Highly Agree (Highly Agree combined with Moderately Agree are reported)

Survey Question Response	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>n</i> %					
I am able to establish a classroom management system with each group of students.	27 (87%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
I am able to provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused.	23 (74%)	7 (23%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.	22 (71%)	8 (26%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to use a variety of assessment strategies.	22 (71%)	7 (23%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
I am able to implement alternative strategies in my classroom.	22 (73%)	5 (17%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to craft good questions for my students.	21 (68%)	9 (29%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to get students to believe they can do well in school work.	19 (61%)	10 (32%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom.	18 (58%)	10 (32%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	17 (55%)	12 (39%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
I am able to help my students value learning.	17 (55%)	11 (35%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to motivate students who show low interest in school work.	14 (45%)	13 (42%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am able to assist families in helping their children do well in school.	13 (42%)	13 (42%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Note. 1=Strongly Agree; 2=Moderately Agree; 3=Agree Slightly More than Disagree; 4=Disagree slightly more than Agree; 5=Moderately Disagree; 6=Strongly Disagree.

Research question 3. In response to research question 3, “How do math teachers of students in grades three through five score on the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy scale?” Table 9 displays results from running Descriptive Statistics in *SPSS*. Survey Part C contained 13 actions designed to give the researcher a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in the classroom and is designed to measure how much the teacher believes she or he could have a positive impact on a student’s achievement despite obstacles that students face.

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure of Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy (Survey Part C) by question

Survey Questions 35-47	Survey Score		
	<i>n</i>	M	SD
How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	29	1.83	.805
How much can you do to help your students think critically?	30	1.60	.724
To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	30	1.13	.346
How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	30	1.50	.572
How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	29	1.21	.412
How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	30	1.37	.490
How much can you do to foster student creativity?	30	1.70	.702
How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	29	1.83	.805
How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	30	1.60	.814
How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	30	1.47	.681
How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	30	1.50	.630
How well can you respond to defiant students?	30	1.63	.809
How well can you provide appropriate challenges for every capable student?	30	1.63	.765

Note. *n*=number of respondents to respond to survey question.

Survey response frequencies were calculated using SPSS. Table 10 lists survey items in rank order based on the number of effective teachers that responded *Great Deal* as their answer choice. The responses were based on a 5-point Likert-scale: 1= *Great Deal*, 2= *Quite a Bit*, 3=*Some Influence*, 4= *Very Little*, 5=*Nothing*.

When it comes to a Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy, there were 0 (0%) teachers that believed they could not get students to behave appropriately, to rise to high expectations or make progress toward being successful. This is evident in the responses from teachers in the “nothing” column. More specifically, 87% (n=26) to 100% (n=30) of teachers believed that they had a great deal to do with influencing student behaviors. These calculations were based on the percentage of teachers who responded “A *Great Deal*” or “*Quite a Bit*.”

Table 10

Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Survey Part C) Scores by Answer Choice (Great Deal to Nothing) in Rank Order by Count of Great Deal (Great Deal and Quite a Bit are reported)

Survey Question Response	1	2	3	4	5
	n %				
To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	23 (79%)	6 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	19 (63%)	11 (36%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	18 (60%)	11 (37%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	17 (57%)	11 (37%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How well can you respond to difficult questions?	16 (53%)	13 (43%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	12 (40%)	13 (43%)	5 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How well can you respond to defiant students?	16 (53%)	10 (33%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
How much can you do to help your students think critically?	15 (50%)	13 (43%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	15 (50%)	12 (40%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
How much can you do to foster student creativity?	19 (63%)	11 (37%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	13 (43%)	13 (43%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How much can you do to get through to even the most difficult students?	11 (38%)	13 (45%)	4 (14%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Note. Questions that do not total 100% are due to rounding. 1=Great Deal, 2=Quite a Bit, 3=Some Influence, 4=Very Little, 5=Nothing.

Presentation of the Data: Sample Characteristics

The urban school district used in this study employs 338 teachers in grades three through five in its elementary schools. Table 11 is a representation of the urban school districts' F/R lunch ranking by school. The table outlines the amount and percent of effective teachers who taught grades 3, 4 and 5 in each of the elementary schools in the urban school district studied during the 2011-2012 school-year. Teachers are listed according to their referent school number and corresponding F/R lunch rate. Effective teachers of students in grades 3, 4 and 5 accounted for 27% (n=91) of the total elementary school teaching population.

Table 11

Effective Teachers Employed in Grades 3, 4 and 5 by School's F/R Lunch Rate

School No.	F/R Lunch %	# of Effective Teachers	# of Teachers Employed	% of Effective Teachers Employed
1	21.18%	7	12	54%
2	30.47%	7	9	78%
3	33.84%	3	10	30%
4	46.20%	5	8	63%
5	50.65%	8	16	50%
6	52.71%	5	8	63%
7	58.78%	2	10	20%
8	60.39%	3	5	60%
9	60.49%	9	11	82%
10	60.82%	2	3	67%
11	62.31%	6	9	67%
12	63.62%	4	11	36%
13	65.56%	3	11	25%
14	66.62%	6	12	50%
15	67.25%	8	15	67%
16	67.31%	1	14	7%
17	72.41%	3	10	30%
18	72.55%	0	13	0%
19	73.27%	0	14	0%
20	73.74%	1	13	8%
21	75.34%	0	9	0%
22	75.61%	1	9	11%
23	76.10%	0	11	0%
24	78.18%	3	15	20%
25	80.91%	1	10	10%
26	85.09%	0	7	0%
27	86.12%	1	10	10%
28	87.17%	0	7	0%
29	91.46%	0	12	0%
30	91.69%	1	7	14%
31	94.10%	1	9	11%
32	95.31%	0	13	0%
33	95.82%	0	5	0%

Note. (Virginia Department of Education, 2015); (U. S. Department of Education Sciences, 2014); F/R=Free/Reduced Lunch; Data reflects teachers of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia.

Figure 2 displays the frequency data related to the distribution of effective teachers with their corresponding F/R lunch rate across all elementary schools in the urban school district. A total of 67% of the teachers considered to be effective are from schools whose F/R lunch percentage is below the district average of 65.16% (F/R lunch). The data presented demonstrates that there was a high frequency of teachers (n=61) at schools where the F/R lunch rate was less than the district average than there were teachers (n=30) at schools where the F/R lunch rate was higher than the district average. In all but one school, there are three or fewer teachers considered to be effective based on their 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL results in schools where the F/R lunch percentage is greater than the district average of 65.16%. This group accounts for the remaining 33% of teachers who are considered to be effective and work in schools whose F/R lunch percentage is above the district average.

Teacher Distribution

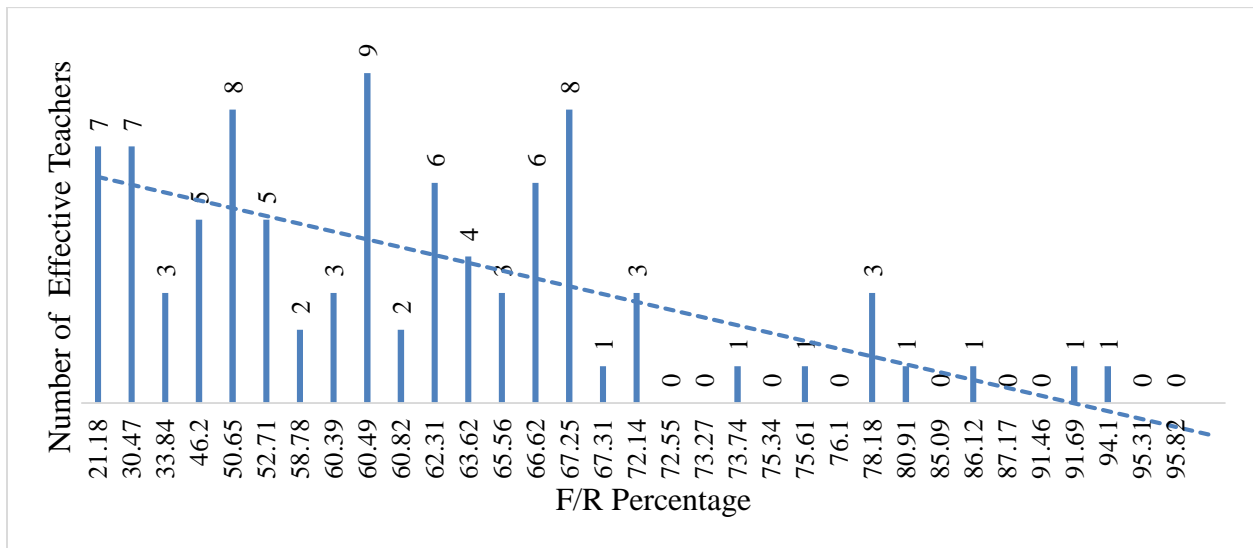


Figure 2. Teacher Distribution graph. Frequencies of the number of teachers whose class proficiency rate was 70% or more on the math SOL during the 2011-2012 school-year compared to the percentage of students who receive F/R lunch that attend the school.

Summary

In this chapter, data were described and the results for the study's three research questions were presented. The population of this study consisted of 32 teachers of students in grades 3, 4 and 5 in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. The descriptive analyses used by the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation. Responses were counted and compared to determine the respondents' beliefs about the positive impact they have on student outcomes on the Virginia math SOL results during the 2011-2012 school-year. A summary and discussion of the study results in addition to conclusions and recommendations for professional practice and further research are included in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

There is a tremendous need for effective teachers in major urban school districts (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007). The great demand for effective teachers is largely because of today's era of school accountability imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Nationwide, urban school districts face the challenge of attracting and retaining effective teachers (Council of the Great City Schools, 2000) because the work is difficult and the teachers who choose to teach there are least equipped to succeed (Murnane & Steele, 2007). Knowing that effective teachers are essential in urban schools, it is important to determine the characteristics and dispositions necessary to produce the greatest student outcomes for our neediest children.

This study was a quantitative study designed to solicit the attitudes and beliefs of urban elementary teachers considered to be effective based on the results of the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL assessment. The purpose of this study was to identify the dispositions of teachers of students in grades three through five who have been successful in achieving positive student outcomes for their elementary students in an urban school district in southeastern Virginia. A survey instrument was used to collect data from participants. Descriptive Statistics were run using *SPSS* to determine Means and Standard Deviations. Results were counted and rank ordered to determine the percent and frequency of responses for specific survey items. The data were then examined to determine if successful teachers had common dispositions; ideas and beliefs about the impact they had on student outcomes with the population they serve. The results were then summarized to determine the dispositions education stakeholders should

consider when recruiting and selecting effective teachers of at-risk students in urban school settings.

The participants in this study were all full-time general education teachers who worked with students in grades three, four and five. Each participant was selected because they were able to achieve positive student outcomes on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL in a year that was unlike any other years' annual assessment. The new math Standards of Learning (SOL) were adopted in 2009 and first implemented during the 2011-2012 school-year. The new test included increased rigor, less multiple choice questions and added technology enhanced items (TEI's). According to the VDOE (2013), TEI's require students to indicate their responses in ways other than a multiple-choice format. This new format of testing, resulted in a decline in performance throughout the Commonwealth and across all grade levels (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). The VDOE recognized that results from the 2010-2011 Virginia math SOL that tested the old standards were higher than the new 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL results. According to the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, Patricia I. Wright:

The performance of students on rigorous new state mathematics assessments introduced during the 2011-2012 school year provides a "solid foundation" for future achievement. Virginia teachers and students worked hard throughout the school year – and for many, into the summer – to meet the Board of Education's challenging new mathematics standards... while we have a long climb before we reach the achievement levels we hope to see on the new mathematics tests, the results released today represent a good start and provide a solid foundation for further progress in 2012-2013 (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

Table 12 outlines the results of SOL assessment years before and after the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL administration. Results are displayed by percent of students proficient across the state.

Table 12

3-Year Math SOL data

	2010-2011 (Pre-Revised standards)	2011-2012 (Revised standards)	2012-2013 (Post-Revised Standards)
Grade 3	91	64	65
Grade 4	89	70	74
Grade 5	89	67	69

Note: (Virginia Department of Education, 2015) Data were retrieved using the build a table webpage found at <http://bi.virginia.gov/BuildATab/rdPage.aspx>.

According to the VDOE, the decline in scores documented by the results of the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL are the result of changes in rigor on the grades 3, 4 and 5 state mathematics assessment. Therefore, the pool of teachers considered to be effective based on the results of their 2011-2012 math SOL results significantly decreased based on the overall proficiency ratings at various grade levels. According to the VDOE (2013), students in grade 3 had the most difficulty on the new math SOL standards assessment.

Considering the impact of high stakes testing and the possible adverse effects that poor results may have on an urban school and urban school district, placing effective teachers in front of our neediest children is essential to increasing student achievement (Murnane & Steele, 2007). Based on the demographic data of effective teachers in Table 12, there appears to be an unequal distribution of effective teachers in the urban district studied. Murnane & Steele (2007) note this unequal distribution as the most urgent problem facing American education. A possible explanation for the distribution of effective teachers in Figure 2 may be the lack of turnover in

low poverty schools resulting in greater stability and the opportunity to build efficacy beliefs over time. There is also the possibility that effective urban teachers were not solicited to participate in the study because of the poor results on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL assessment.

The researcher conducted a survey grounded in teacher efficacy. The survey was used to determine the attitudes and beliefs of teachers considered to be effective based on their overall class proficiency rate of 70% or higher on the Virginia math SOL in 2011-2012. A 3-part survey of 47 questions was based on seven dispositions identified by Vaughn (2012) and used in her study that was “designed to determine what relationships, if any, exist between particular teacher dispositions and student achievement” (Vaughn, 2012, p. 87). Vaughn’s study found positive correlations between student achievement and the dispositions of self-efficacy, ability to motivate challenging students, and classroom management. However, the researcher found no significant correlations between student achievement and a teachers’ cultural awareness, expectations, academic emphasis, adaptation, adaptation of the curriculum, or positive interactions with parents and students (Vaughn, 2012). Despite some of the findings of Vaughn (2012), the literature points to teacher dispositions as being the factor or combination of factors that impact student achievement (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Vaughn’s findings are aligned with the current study’s findings; effective teachers possess and display the dispositions of self-efficacy, the ability to motivate challenging students and the use of classroom management techniques.

The survey used for this study asked effective teachers of urban elementary students to identify how much they agreed or disagreed that they are a key factor in impacting the performance of students with challenges in order to achieve positive student outcomes. The

effective teachers' responses were then analyzed using *SPSS* to compare their Means and Standard Deviations. Additionally, the researcher utilized *SPSS* to calculate and compare frequencies and percentages to determine which dispositions were most common among a group of effective teachers. The researcher was then able to draw conclusions based on the findings from the survey results. The findings are presented by the disposition they are classified under.

Research Questions

This study answered three research questions developed to investigate the dispositions of urban elementary school teachers in the southeastern area of Virginia who were considered to be effective based on their students' success on the 2011-2012 Virginia math SOL assessment:

1. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Efficacy scale (Survey Part A)?
2. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teacher Beliefs scale (Survey Part B)?
3. How do math teachers of students in grades three through five who are effective with urban students score on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale (Survey Part C)?

Chapter 1 included an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, significance and purpose of the study, research questions, a conceptual framework, definition of key terms, and scope and limitation. Chapter 2 explored effective teachers and the dispositions associated with effective teachers. Chapter 3 described the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 shared the results collected from the survey and presented the data in response to the research questions and Chapter 5 presents the findings and implications for practice. The chapter closes with reflections from the researcher based on the experience of designing and conducting this study.

Findings

Finding 1. Effective teachers believe they make a difference on student achievement when all factors are considered. Findings from the survey indicate effective teachers have high teaching efficacy. Similar to findings by (Bandura 1977; Vaughn 2012), researchers conclude that teachers with high teaching efficacy believe that it is their efforts that impact student achievement despite the challenges students face in their environment. Effective teachers were asked to respond to “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.” This item is negatively worded. More than half of the respondents answered the question in the negative, indicated they believe teachers do have an influence 26(81%), ($M=5.13$, $SD=.1.212$). Gibson & Dembo (1984) findings support this belief that a student’s home life is not the determinant of student outcomes, but it is the teacher who has the ability to impact and influence a students’ motivation and performance.

Finding 2. Effective teachers were confident in their use of classroom management strategies. When effective teachers responded to the question “I am able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?” the results yielded 28(90%) teachers who either strongly or moderately agreed, ($M=1.61$, $SD=1.022$). Students must be taught the rules and procedures of the classroom and of the school. Effective teachers believe they can get children to follow classroom rules, with 30(97%) teachers responding to this question either strongly or moderately agreeing, ($M=1.32$, $SD=.541$). Effective teachers in the current study believe they are able to establish a classroom management system with each group of students with 29(93%) teachers moderately or strongly agreeing, ($M=1.26$, $SD=.815$).

Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher (2007) state that classroom management is one of the dispositions needed in urban schools. Vaughn (2012) shares that effective teachers possess strong classroom management skills and found positive correlations between student achievement and the disposition of classroom management. Behaviors should be modeled and the message should remain consistent. Positive rewards for appropriate behavior and consequences for violating rules must be established and followed through. Use of classroom management strategies will create environments of success and resilience for students who are confronted with challenges (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007).

Additionally, all respondents believe they are able to make their expectations clear about student behavior and establish routines to keep activities running smoothly. According to Gardner and Miranda (2001), classroom management is necessary for teachers of urban and high-poverty students in order to provide structure and organization. Findings are consistent with Gibson & Dembo (1984) who state the definition of *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy* as being "the belief that one has the skills and abilities to bring about student learning" (p. 175).

Finding 3. Low poverty schools were more densely populated by more effective teachers than high poverty schools. The school demographic data collected and presented in the current study revealed that most effective teachers were employed in schools with the lowest poverty rates. This is evidenced by the number and percentage of effective teachers in schools that are less than the district average for F/R lunch 61(67%). Research shows that school poverty concentration has an independent impact on educational outcomes (Poverty & Race Research Action Council, n.d.). The research points to urban districts need for effective teacher placement in high poverty schools that serve the neediest children (Murnane & Steele, 2007), however, the evidence collected reveal just the opposite in this district 39(33%). Stotko, Ingram,

& Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) state that “Urban school districts and school administrators must hire and promote the teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to succeed in urban classrooms” (p. 31). Researcher Stronge (2010) writes that effective teachers tend to flock to suburban districts that have higher pay, better working conditions and students with fewer challenges. Similar to the scenario on effective teachers that Strong (2010) presents, effective teachers within urban districts tend to flock to lower poverty schools within the district as these schools have characteristics that closely resemble those of schools in suburban districts; conditions that are more favorable and students that present with fewer challenges.

Finding 4. Effective teachers set high expectations for their students. Making and setting high expectations for students in urban schools is a priority (Ramalho, Garza, & Merchant, 2010). Effective teachers of urban students confirm the importance of high expectations based on their high response rate to the question, “To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?” 26(87%), ($M=1.13$, $SD=.346$). Establishing clear expectations from the beginning is critical in setting the tone and it sets the stage for success.

Finding 5. Effective teachers have high teaching efficacy. When item means were compared, effective teachers scored all but one teaching efficacy item between *Moderately Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*. These items were all negatively worded and acknowledge that effective teachers believe it is the impact they are able to make contrary to any negative influence in the students’ background. When all degrees of disagreement were combined, the item, “Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered”, yielded 94% of the respondents disagreed to some degree with the item as worded. Descriptive statistics yielded ($M=5.16$, $SD=1.139$). This is consistent with findings from

Woolfolk, Rosoff and Hoy (1990) in their study on teacher beliefs about control, management and motivation. Pupil control ideology, maintaining order in a rigid environment, is less profound in teachers with high personal efficacy. Effective teachers with high personal efficacy use a more humanistic approach, where students are able to communicate in a cooperative setting and self-discipline is taught rather than imposed through punitive measures (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). The researchers found that the greater the teachers' personal sense of efficacy, the more humanistic the teacher's pupil control orientation. The current study confirms previous research on personal teaching efficacy and it is evident in the high percentage of respondents strongly and moderately disagreeing to eight of nine teaching efficacy items in the survey.

Finding 6. Effective teachers build personal relationships with students and their families. Nearly all teachers believed that they were able to assist families in helping their children do well in school 30(97%), ($M=1.77$, $SD=.805$). This item was classified under the disposition of Positive Relationships. Positive relationships between parents, students and teachers stem from positive interactions students and their families experience with their teachers. According to (Baker, 1999; Singham, 2003; Paik, 2007), positive student relationships impact student outcomes. Driving this point further, Baker (1999) wrote that high achieving students typically have “positive and supportive interpersonal interactions” (p. 59) with teachers. Similarly, Nichols & Zhang (2011) report elementary teachers have a greater desire to have less teacher control and more student empowerment with a greater opportunity for positive relationships. When at-risk students lack positive relationships, they feel a sense of alienation from school in addition to poor academic achievement (Baker, 1999).

Finding 7. Effective teachers believed they could establish a positive classroom environment through student engagement. In four of five student engagement items, effective

teachers agreed to some degree that they were able to promote student achievement through student engagement. Descriptive statistics yielded the following results; get students to value learning ($M=1.55$, $SD=.675$), show interest in their work ($M=1.71$, $SD=.783$), foster student creativity ($M=1.70$, $SD=.702$), and believe they could do well with their school work ($M=1.45$, $SD=.624$). When teachers understand motivation and behavior, he or she is able to establish a positive classroom environment (Vaughn, 2012).

Researchers and scholars have connected effective teachers to the ability to motivate students to do well. Hootstein (1996) writes about at-risk students' low self-esteem and insecurities about their abilities, then responds that teachers of at-risk students must be genuine in their feedback and encouragement in order to promote students' motivation to learn. Brophy (1999) argues; students are able to meet learning expectations when teachers scaffold activities by gradually transferring responsibility for learning to the student, when the expected behavior is modeled by the teacher or when students are coached by the teacher through hints and cues. Additionally, effective teachers motivate students through praise, they make sure students realize their effort contributes to their success and teachers design lessons that are interesting and relevant to the learner (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004). Lastly, (Szente, 2007; Hoostein, 1996) write about children in urban schools and the need to believe in themselves and their ability in order to persevere and reach their set goals. Teachers should use feedback to help students attribute success to effort (Hoostein, 1996).

Finding 8. Effective teachers use instructional strategies to increase student achievement. Using the frequency responses on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale, effective teachers believe that they are able to adjust learning activities to meet students' needs 27(90%). Descriptive statistics yielded $M=1.40$ ($SD=.770$) and is consistent with findings from Gibson &

Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) who found that the instructional strategy of adjusting a lesson to meet a student's needs is positively correlated to student achievement. Conversely, Vaughn (2012) found that the more adjustments the teacher is willing to make to lessons, the less likely students are to make better gains.

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, there are potential implications for the following education stakeholders.

Implications for school based administrators/principals are as follows:

- ***Principals of urban elementary schools should build relationships with local universities by allowing pre-service teachers to complete part of their teacher training in their schools.*** By affording pre-service teachers the opportunity to work in urban schools, students become more familiar with what is required as a full time teacher in an urban school. Pre-service teachers need to know and understand the nuances of working with urban student populations, family dynamics, community stakeholders and challenges.
- ***Principals in urban school districts should participate in teacher recruiting activities to gain an idea of the candidate pools' dispositions, beliefs and attitudes.*** Principals know first-hand what the needs of their school are. By attending recruiting events, principals will have an opportunity to pre-screen candidates to look for candidates who possess research based dispositions known to impact student outcomes.
- ***Principals should work to raise the collective efficacy beliefs of their staff.*** It is essential to build the capacity of the full faculty as it relates to teacher efficacy. Research from Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy (2000) state that collective efficacy beliefs of the full faculty

impact the achievement of urban students in reading and math. Further, collective teacher efficacy is a better predictor of student achievement than students' SES.

- ***Principals should solicit professional development opportunities for the full faculty on effective dispositions for teachers in urban schools.*** Future and current teachers must know and understand the appropriate dispositions, attitudes and practices, known to be effective in urban schools. Palardy & Rumberger (2008) acknowledge that dispositions can be learned through professional development. Additionally, dispositions are malleable and can be enhanced over time.

Implications for Human Resource Generalists/Recruiters are as follows:

- ***Human Resource Generalists/HR departments should encourage teacher candidates who are highly effective to work in urban schools with the highest need.*** Many effective teachers work in schools that have a low incidence of at-risk students. There should be equity among high and low need schools. If effective teachers are to be distributed equitably, schools in need of improvement ought to be staffed with more effective teachers.
- ***Human Resource Generalists/HR departments should seek candidates from university programs known to incorporate dispositions of effective teachers in their course of study.*** Pre-service teachers who are well-trained in effective strategies to work with at-risk students should be offered early-hire contracts to minimize the chances of losing highly qualified candidates to suburban or less challenged districts. This would increase the pool of candidates for principals to select from, alleviating placing ill-prepared teachers in placements that may be challenging.

Implications for state and federal policymakers are as follows:

- ***State and federal policymakers should ensure that hard-to-staff schools have access to quality teachers.*** State and federal policymakers are able to allocate additional funding to urban districts to encourage high quality teachers to seek employment there. In order to make hard-to-staff schools more attractive, incentives at the state and federal level should be added so that local districts are not asked to use funds designated for other use in order to build social capital.
- ***Federal policymakers should adjust the definition of highly-qualified teacher to include the definition of dispositions.*** Research has shown that a teacher's background characteristics and credentials are not sufficient in determining the quality or effectiveness of a teacher, but a teacher's attitudes and beliefs play a more significant role (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008). Therefore, it is essential that policymakers consider the construct of teacher dispositions when reauthorizing NCLB.

Implications for the Local Education Agency are as follows:

- ***The Local Education Agency should work to create more diverse schools based on socio-economic status and race.*** By modifying district lines and through busing, Local Education Agencies are able to more fairly distribute students who are at-risk so that all children are afforded the opportunity to be taught by the same high quality teachers that are most often employed at less economically challenged schools.
- ***The Local Education Agency should provide training to pre-service and in-service teachers on research based dispositions for effective teachers in urban schools.*** Teacher efficacy builds as a teachers' experience heightens. Urban teachers need to build strong efficacy skills in order to increase student achievement. According to Hoy &

Spero (2005), teacher efficacy increases in a pre-service teachers' first year, then decreases once support is removed. In order to maintain and encourage increased teacher efficacy, it is important that teachers continue to learn how to build their efficacy skills. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) confirm that more work needs to be done on the scale measuring teacher efficacy of in-service teachers as most of the studies completed have used pre-service teachers as the population.

Implications for teacher preparation programs are as follows:

- ***Teacher preparation programs should prepare pre-service teachers to work with multiple populations of students.*** Urban schools have diverse populations with a variety of factors that often impact their academic achievement. In order to provide high quality teachers in urban neighborhoods, it is important that pre-service teachers be exposed to strategies and coursework that assist teachers in becoming more culturally aware so that they are able to respond to student needs, regardless of the population they serve.

Implications for pre-service teachers are as follows:

- ***Pre-service teachers should become familiar with the strategies needed to become an effective urban school teacher.*** Before signing on as a teacher in an urban school district, pre-service teachers should expose themselves to urban school populations even if it is on a volunteer basis. Pre-service teachers should become familiar with the research based dispositions so that they are able to build their capacity during their first years in-service.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Descriptive data generated from this study revealed suggestions for future studies. The following suggestions are recommended for use in future studies:

1. In order to increase the opportunity for participation in a similar study and to provide more conclusive feedback, comparison of multi-year assessments, before and after the revised (2009) Virginia math SOL assessments should be utilized.
2. A future study could incorporate the creation and use of a valid and reliable scale to measure Cultural Awareness and the ability to build relationships. Guskey & Passaro (1994) confirm that more sophisticated measures of teacher efficacy are needed.
3. Combine surveys so that there is no redundancy, minimizing the number of questions in the hope that respondents will complete all questions.
4. A similar study should be conducted with the addition of a focus group.
5. Researchers conducting a similar study could include teachers who were not successful. It is possible that all teachers effective or not, possess the dispositions noted.
6. Include suburban effective teachers. It is possible that all teachers possess these dispositions.
7. A future study should solicit participation from all urban districts within the Commonwealth.
8. Future researchers should collect demographic information to determine years of service, age group, sex of teacher, and certification.
9. A future study should include the use of Value Added Measures (VAM) that will allow multiple measures to assess teacher quality versus one measure as in this study, the Virginia math SOL.
10. Confirm survey responses against actual classroom observations since surveys do not always capture actual practices.

11. Use a mixed-method approach by adding open item responses to capture teachers' personal reflections, then develop disposition themes based on the responses. If this data is combined with a survey and focus group, data can be triangulated.
12. Consider use of a survey that includes more items related to Positive Interactions as one question does not conclusively determine teachers' belief or attitude about a particular disposition.

Researcher's Reflection

Before beginning this journey, I often wondered what it was about certain teachers that made them so successful in high poverty schools; schools where students had multiple risk factors that at some point impacted their student achievement. Each year, it really didn't matter which student or combination of students certain teachers got, they always seemed to be successful. Some teachers would even invite the school's administration to give them a student they knew no one else wanted because everyone knew the student had challenges. It was almost as if the teacher wanted to see if she or he could truly make a difference in the student's outcome.

Now that I've gone through this journey, it is so easy to reflect upon what it was that each successful teacher possessed. It was a special talent that enabled them to reach and teach students, regardless of their challenges. Each successful teacher possessed the belief and attitude that set them apart from the rest. Those beliefs and attitudes were their dispositions. Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) p.48 agrees with researchers, "urban teachers possess the dispositions of tenacity, flexibility, a sense of efficacy, and a belief in students abilities to achieve high levels of academic performance."

The current study was encouraging as it allowed me to pinpoint some of the dispositions effective teachers of urban students possess. It was also insightful to find out how much research is available on the topic of effective teachers in urban schools. Education research points to many dispositions effective teachers use in classrooms; urban and otherwise, however, I was not surprised to find out that effective teachers possessed the dispositions discussed in this study. I was also encouraged to find out very early that urban student achievement was not dominated by any particular race of teachers.

My topic developed over time; initially I thought that this phenomena was about Black and White students, but I quickly realized that the populations I had served were not of any one race. Over a 15 year span, I had encountered both Black and White students in multiple states; some who did not speak English, some who were poor, some very mobile and some who had family challenges that made school less of a priority than anything else. What all of these students had in common was their attendance at an urban school. As I conclude my journey, I am pleased to be able to call myself a scholar, focusing in the area of effective teachers in urban schools.

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Appendix A

Teacher Efficacy Scale

Directions: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement. Your answers are confidential.	Key					
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly more than Disagree	Disagree Slightly More than Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. When a student does better than usually, many times it is because I exert a little extra effort.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
2. The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
3. The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
4. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
5. I have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
6. When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
7. When a student gets a better grade than he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
8. When I really try, I can get through to most difficulty students.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
9. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment has a large influence on his/her achievement.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
10. Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
11. When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective approaches.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
12. If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
13. If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
14. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
15. The influences of a student's home experiences can be overcome by good teaching.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
16. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
17. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
18. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

<p>Directions: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement. Your answers are confidential.</p>	Key					
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly more than Disagree	Disagree Slightly More than Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
20. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a teacher's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
21. Some students need to be placed in slower groups so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
22. My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Appendix B

Teacher Beliefs Scale

Directions: The following questions are about your beliefs and practices regarding cultural issues in the instructional setting. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Key					
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly more than Disagree	Disagree Slightly More than Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
23. I am able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
24. I am able to motivate students who show low interest in school work	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
25. I am able to get students to believe they can do well with their school work	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
26. I am able to help my students value learning	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
27. I am able to craft good questions for my students	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
28. I am able to get children to follow classroom rules	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
29. I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
30. I am able to establish a classroom management system with each group of students	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
31. I am able to use a variety of assessment strategies	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
32. I am able to provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
33. I am able to assist families in helping their children do well in school	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
34. I am able to implement alternative strategies in my classroom	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

Appendix C

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	How much can you do?				
	Nothing	Very Little	Some Influen	Quite A Bit	Great Deal
35. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
36. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
37. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
38. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
39. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
40. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
41. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
42. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
43. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
44. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
45. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
46. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
47. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Appendix D

Permission to use Scale (Dembo)

From: **Myron H. Dembo** dembo@usc.edu
Subject: RE: Permission to use survey
Date: August 21, 2014 at 9:00 PM
To: **Pamela Tatem** tatem1@vt.edu

PAMELA—

YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO USE THE TEACHER EFFICACY SCALE IN YOUR RESEARCH.

MYRON DEMBO

From: Pamela Tatem [<mailto:tatem1@vt.edu>]
Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2014 5:26 PM
To: Myron H. Dembo
Subject: Permission to use survey

Professor Dembo, I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in the Educational Leadership and Policy studies program and am conducting a study of teacher dispositions. I will be analyzing "effective" teachers' sense of efficacy, teacher efficacy and cultural awareness. I would like to have permission to use your survey items as part of my survey in my study entitled "Dispositions of effective teachers in an urban district in southeastern Virginia". I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Appendix E

Permission to use Scale (Hoy)

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D. Professor

Psychological Studies in Education

Dear

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy of both the long and short forms of the instrument as well as scoring instructions can be found at:

<http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/researchinstruments.htm>

Best wishes in your work,

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D. Professor

College of Education
29 West Woodruff Avenue Columbus, Ohio 43210-1177

www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy

Phone 614-292-3774 FAX 614-292-7900 Hoy.17@osu.edu

Appendix F

Virginia Tech IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 20, 2014
TO: Carol S Cash, Pamela Michelle Tatem
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Dispositions of Effective Elementary Teachers in an Urban District in Southeastern Virginia
IRB NUMBER: 14-815

Effective August 20, 2014, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 2,4**
Protocol Approval Date: **August 20, 2014**
Protocol Expiration Date: **N/A**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **N/A**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

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Appendix G

Urban School District Approval

September 2, 2014

Pamela Tatem
Doctoral candidate, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
tatem1@vt.edu

Approval is granted to conduct the proposed study, *Dispositions of Effective Elementary Teachers in an Urban District Southeastern Virginia*, in fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education from Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. The proposed study meets the technical criteria following the [redacted] and must follow the stipulations below:

- Voluntary participation allows each participant—principal to decide individually whether to participate or withdraw at any time, without question, consequence, or follow-up.
- All participants and schools will remain anonymous in data and survey collection, and reporting results. Identifiable characteristics or linkage to the identity of any individual or school is prohibited.
- Approval does not constitute commitment of resources or the endorsement of the study or its findings by the school district or the School Board.
- Data collected and results will not become part of any principal, school, or district record. All research records must be locked in a secured location.
- The researcher will email a copy of the final report for the school district, and report any changes or problems while conducting the study, to Dr. Bailey.

We look forward to your findings and contribution to instructional practice, program services, and achievement for *ALL* students.

Sincerely,

Appendix H

Participant Invitation e-mail #1

Dear Effective Educator,

I am currently a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a principal at an urban elementary school. I am conducting a study that will identify the dispositions of effective teachers of elementary students in an urban school district in order to complete my Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree requirements. I have received permission from your district to contact you via e-mail.

Effective teachers' dispositions will be studied through the lens of a survey instrument adapted by researchers Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, Gibson and Dembo and Kathy Vaughn. It is my hope that you will not only participate in this study, but that you will provide your honest response as an effective teacher of students in an urban school district. As an administrator and former teacher in an urban district, I respect and appreciate your time. The survey should not take more than 12-15 minutes.

Confidentiality will always be a priority and maintained at all times. No connection to teacher, school, district or assessment data will be used to identify any participant as this information has no relevance to the study. Your survey responses will be anonymously submitted to the researcher and no reply feature will be available. By completing the survey you will be providing consent to participate.

You may access the survey by clicking the following link: _____ or by copying and pasting the web address into your browser. Please complete the survey by (date, TBD). If you have questions about the study or the survey, please contact the Principal Investigator, Carol Cash at ccash48@vt.edu or by phone (757) 363-3930. The Co-Investigator, Pamela Tatem, can be contacted at tatem1@vt.edu or by telephone (757) 435-4256.

I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to participate in this study.

Pamela M. Tatem
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

IRB # 14-815
Institutional Review Board
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Dr. Moore, moored@vt.edu
(540) 231-4991

Appendix I

Participant Invitation e-mail #2

Hello again Effective Educator,

Thank you so much for considering participation in my study. I am sending a follow-up invitation to ask that you consider participating in my study on the dispositions of effective teachers of elementary teachers in urban school districts. If you have not already done so, I ask that you take just a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey.

I am currently a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and a principal at an urban elementary school. I am conducting a study that will identify the dispositions of effective teachers of elementary students in order to complete my Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree requirements. I have received permission from your district to contact you via e-mail.

Effective teachers' dispositions will be studied through the lens of a survey instrument adapted by researchers Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, Gibson and Dembo and Kathy Vaughn. It is my hope that you will not only participate in this study, but that you will provide your honest response as an effective teacher of students in an urban school district. As an administrator and former teacher in an urban district, I respect and appreciate your time. The survey should not take more than 12-15 minutes.

Confidentiality will always be a priority and maintained at all times. No connection to teacher, school, district or assessment data will be used to identify any participant as this information has no relevance to the study. Your survey responses will be anonymously submitted to the researcher and no reply feature will be available. By completing the survey you will be providing consent to participate.

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I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to participate in this study.

Pamela M. Tatem
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

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Institutional Review Board
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Dr. Moore, moored@vt.edu
(540) 231-4991

Appendix J

Participant Invitation e-mail #3

Effective Educators,

Don't miss out on the opportunity to share your dispositions as an effective educator!! Just a few minutes is all it will take to complete the on-line survey. The information you provide will help future teacher recruiters and administrators to select the best candidates as teachers in urban elementary schools. If you've already completed the survey, I thank you in advance for your participation.

As previously shared, confidentiality will always be a priority and maintained at all times. No connection to teacher, school, district or assessment data will be used to identify any participant as this information has no relevance to the study. Your survey responses will be anonymously submitted to the researcher and no reply feature will be available. By completing the survey you will be providing consent to participate.

You may access the survey by clicking the following link: _____ or by copying and pasting the web address into your browser. Please complete the survey by (date, TBD). If you have questions about the study or the survey, please contact the Principal Investigator, Carol Cash at ccash48@vt.edu or by phone (757) 363-3930. The Co-Investigator, Pamela Tatem, can be contacted at tatem1@vt.edu or by telephone (757) 435-4256.

I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to participate in this study.

Pamela M. Tatem
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Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

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