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Perceptions on Interventions Impacting the Self-Efficacy of At-Risk Students

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MS, Walden University, 2003

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Teachers need interventions to improve at-risk students' self-efficacy, which may improve their academic performance in school. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school teachers at a Texas public middle school as to what research-based interventions they felt would improve the self-efficacy of these students. Bandura's social cognitive theory, which framed the study, indicates that self-efficacy beliefs affect the courses of action that people seek and the choices people make. Many at-risk students who experience a lack of academic success have low self-efficacy, which may affect their school performance. The research questions that guided the study focused on teachers' perceptions of whether a school-based mentoring program, counseling services, or an afterschool program would best help at-risk students improve their self-efficacy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from 6 teacher participants who were purposely selected from different grade levels at the school. The data were transcribed and analyzed using hand-coding procedures to determine categories and themes from the transcripts. The findings revealed that teachers thought that a school-based mentoring program would have the most positive impact in improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students. The results prompted the development of a training program for mentors. Positive social change may result when at-risk students benefit from mentors who are properly trained on ways to meaningfully impact them.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my mother in heaven, JoAnn Giddens. My mother was the central support system of my life. Before she passed away, she was so proud of me for pursuing this degree. She urged me to continue my pursuit and never give up.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank Jesus Christ for giving me the strength to endure to the end. I am grateful to the teachers at my school who agreed to participate in the interviews. Their input and perceptions allowed for me to extend my knowledge base; without them, none of this would have been possible. I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Stacy Wahl, for all of her time and continued support to help me grow and learn. As a committee chair, Dr. Wahl gave me continuous guidance, answered my numerous questions, and helped me handle many of the obstacles I faced. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Braley (second committee member) for his input and suggestions that provided me support as I developed this study. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their loving support throughout my doctoral journey. They have given me constant words of encouragement and prayers. Without these things, it would have been impossible for me to accomplish this dream.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The teachers at an urban Texas public elementary school identified that at-risk students needed interventions to improve their self-efficacy. *At-risk students* were those students who were not experiencing academic success in school and had a greater potential to drop out. Williams (2011) stated that at-risk youth face significant challenges in their lives that make it more likely for them to fail in school, and these students sometimes have low self-efficacy or belief in their capabilities. Many at-risk students with low self-efficacy believe that they will not be successful, and their efforts toward completing school work might be marginal as a result (Haselden, Sanders, & Sturkie, 2012). Actions that result in student success raises self-efficacy and those that result in failure lower self-efficacy (Joet, Bressoux, & Usher, 2011).

Definition of the Problem

At an urban elementary school in Texas, at-risk students were not receiving adequate services from the school, which may have had negative effects on them academically, emotionally, and socially. The teachers at the school identified a population of at-risk students who needed interventions to help them be successful in school. Some of the at-risk students were involved in district-wide intervention programs for academics such as small group pullouts and academic tutoring. Small group academic pullouts involved a teacher taking students out of the classroom for a designated time period and working with them to improve understanding in areas of academic difficulty. Academic tutoring was a voluntary after-school option for all

students enrolled in the school. These interventions were conducted in an attempt to address academic difficulties rather than focusing on the students' self-efficacy.

Schulz (2011) found that at-risk students' self-efficacy diminished with continuous school problems, resulting in them being alienated from the educational process. Many at-risk students have minimal identification with their school. Lampley and Johnson (2010) reported several reasons for lack of identification with the school, such as disciplinary issues, truancy problems, impulsive behavior, peer relationships, and family issues. With their lack of involvement and minimal success in school, the at-risk students at the urban school where the research was conducted might have viewed school as a negative environment that promoted low self-efficacy. Valdez, Lambert, and Ialongo (2011) explained that the roots of at-risk behavior begin in the elementary school years with low achievement patterns. This project study explored teachers' perceptions of the implementation of research-based interventions that might have a positive impact on at-risk elementary students' self-efficacy in an urban Texas public school. Interventions included school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and after-school programs.

In the broader scope of education, at-risk students experiencing academic failure in elementary school will continue to experience failure as they progress in their education. Elementary schools provide an important foundation for students to develop social skills and a positive character to successfully interact with their peers and advance in an academic setting (Prince, Ho, & Hansen, 2011). As explained by Prince et al. (2011), "Without the development of adequate social skills in the early school years,

youth become increasingly likely to develop a myriad of co-occurring and causally related problems" (p. 40). It is vital for educators to address the needs of at-risk elementary students. According to Hanewald (2011), in order to address the problem of at-risk students, educators must develop interventions that promote competence in at-risk students as well as provide a safe environment for learning to achieve positive development and positive outcomes. Without interventions to help them, at-risk students are at greater risk of dropping out of school (Montague, Enders, Cavendish, & Castro, 2011). McCullers and Bozeman (2010) explained that students who were disengaged from school cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally had a higher risk of academic failure and other negative psychosocial outcomes such as low self-efficacy. At-risk students usually have low self-efficacy regarding their abilities to regulate their own learning, and students' self-efficacy has been a predictor of their academic achievement (Klassen & Usher, 2010).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In order to be promoted to the next grade, elementary students in Texas must obtain grades of 70% or higher in the subjects of reading, math, and language arts. Additionally, students in Grades 3 through 5 must pass the state standardized test. Not all students at the school were satisfying the requirement s to be promoted to the next grade, and they were considered to be at-risk. The at-risk students at the school may not have felt that they had any control over their education due to risk-related factors that impacted their development. Johnson and Lampley (2010) listed some factors that could impact at-

risk students, including abuse, poverty, and lack of support from parents or guardians. Self-efficacy perceptions and beliefs are considered learning regulators that influence success achieved on specific tasks (Dimopoulou, 2012). Therefore, maintaining healthy self-efficacy may have a positive impact on students' academic success. At the time when this study was conducted, there were no programs or interventions at the school geared toward helping at-risk students improve their self-efficacy. Garringer (2010) explained that school-based mentoring works best when it is focused on goals such as improving self-esteem and self-efficacy. Garringer also stated that if a school's administrators are looking for better test scores, then tutoring programs are the best option.

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), 82% of the students at the school were labeled at-risk in the 2010-2011 school year. In the 2011-2012 school year, 81% of the students were labeled at-risk. However, some of those students were labeled as at-risk due to English being their second language (ESL) or because of their participation in the bilingual program. In the school district where the study was conducted, 62% of the students were labeled at-risk in 2012; the state of Texas labeled 45% of the state's students at risk during the same year. The school did offer afterschool academic tutoring, in which all students could receive extra help with skills they had not mastered. However, this was not a program geared toward helping at-risk students improve their self-efficacy in school.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Students who are not engaged in school are more likely to experience academic failure and negative psychosocial outcomes (Johnson & Lampley, 2010) such as low self-efficacy. *Self-efficacy* is the belief that an individual has in his or her ability to attain certain goals (Bandura, 2006). At-risk students often lack the support and encouragement they are supposed to receive from parents or guardians and, in some instances, their basic needs are not met (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). According to Caldarella, Adams, Valentine, and Young (2009), students who receive less parental support experience changes in family systems or social norms.

As explained by Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003), in 2000 many schools camouflaged the shortcomings of at-risk students' achievement because there was no formal accountability system. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 required that all schools receiving federal funding for education have an accountability system whereby students must demonstrate proficiency in the areas of math, reading, and language arts by 2014 (McCullers & Bozeman, 2010). When the NCLB Act was enacted, it required all states to report scores broken down by race, ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics. Under NCLB, teachers have to focus more on accountability and evaluations of all elements of student performance, and they are required to maximize students' academic success through measures such as the implementation of research-based interventions for the purpose of improving the self-efficacy in the at-risk population. This purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of the implementation of research-based interventions that might have a

positive impact on at-risk elementary students' self-efficacy in an urban Texas public school. Interventions included school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and afterschool programs.

Definitions

The terms that were used to inform this study are defined as follows:

After-school program: A program held after school hours targeted at enhancing student growth that includes activities that promote academic, personal, social, recreational, and cultural development (Durla & Weissberg, 2007).

At-risk students: "Students, who are not experiencing success in school, are potential dropouts, low academic achievers and exhibit low self-esteem" (Donnelly, 1987, p. 1).

Intervention: An academic intervention is used to introduce a new skill, build fluency in a skill, or encourage students to use an existing skill to deal with new situations or settings (Intervention Central, n.d.).

Mentoring: Mentoring involves a structured and trusting relationship between two parties that addresses problems that can result from lack of support or guidance (Caldarella, Gomm, Shatzer, & Wall, 2010).

School counselor: School counselors are a part of the educational leadership team and aid students in academics, personal/social development, and career development, in order to ensure that students become productive and w ell-adjusted adults (American School Counselor Association, 2009).

Self-efficacy: Beliefs in one's capability to achieve a goal or an outcome (Bandura, 1997).

Significance

The findings from this study may assist teachers in discovering positive interventions aimed at improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students at the school where the research was conducted. As of 2014, the No Child Left Behind Act requires 100% of students to pass state tests. To comply with the mandate, it is critical that educators research and implement strategies that might be useful in assisting at-risk students to be successful in their academic endeavors. Schools must address the needs of all learners concurrently, which include those of the at-risk population (Johnson & Perkins, 2009). Since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all students must meet the academic requirements of their school district. The requirements that lawmakers created challenge educators to implement interventions that will aid in the academic success of all students.

Guiding/Research Question

In this study, the following guiding questions were explored:

1. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing a school-based mentoring program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
2. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing the services of the school counselor to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

3. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing an after-school program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

Interventions specifically targeted toward improving and maintaining the self-efficacy of the at-risk population at this particular Texas public school may help strengthen at-risk students' self-efficacy. Those research-based interventions might teach the students strategies to help them deal with frustration and disappointment and acquire the self-efficacy they need to improve their academic standing. Therefore, the findings from this study could provide a foundation for improving achievement and self-efficacy by implementing a research-based intervention program for at-risk students.

Review of the Literature

Literature related to improving and maintaining the self-efficacy of at-risk elementary students was reviewed. The following review of this literature begins with an examination of at-risk students. The theory of self-efficacy and its connection with educating at-risk students are discussed. Last, I present an in-depth examination of research-based interventions for improving at-risk students' self-efficacy, including mentoring, counseling services, and after-school programs.

Sources for the literature review included peer-reviewed articles, doctoral dissertations, websites of state and federal educational organizations, and books. The following databases were accessed from the Walden University Library: (a) Academic Search Premier, (b) Business Source Premier, (c) EBSCO, (d) Education Research Complete, (e) ERIC, (f) Proust Digital Dissertations, (g) Sage Journals Online, and (h)

Google Scholar Search. The literature search included the following key words and phrases: *after-school programs for at-risk students, after-school programs for the improvement of at-risk youth self-efficacy, American School Counselor Association, at-risk youth, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, group counseling, high school dropouts, mentoring, mentoring youth, mentoring at-risk youth, National Mentoring Partnership, No Child Left Behind Act, school-based mentoring, school counselor, self-esteem of at-risk youth, self-efficacy of at-risk youth,* and *tutoring at-risk youth.* The scope of the literature review was restricted to the period from 2007 to the present, with the exception of seminal works and a small number of relevant research studies.

Conceptual Framework

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform given tasks and accomplish goals. Self-efficacy beliefs form the foundation for decisions and persistence in completing tasks (Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010). The confidence individuals have to exert control over motivation and behaviors is reflected by self-efficacy. According to Dimopoulou (2012), an assumption of self-efficacy theory is that an individual's ability to perform a task or behavior relies mainly on psychological factors such as perseverance, willingness, expectations of success, and a positive attitude.

Self-efficacy is a part of social cognitive theory. Bandura (1997) explained social cognitive theory as suggesting that individual achievements rely on interactions between behaviors and personal factors such as thoughts, beliefs, and environmental conditions. Bandura's social cognitive theory indicates that self-efficacy beliefs affect the courses of action people seek and the choices people make. According to Song and Chathoth

(2010), social cognitive theory suggests that academics-related choice goals are influenced by domain specific self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs between a number of domains such as math, reading, writing, and language arts have been consistently connected with academic achievement in elementary and secondary education (Perry, DeWine, Duffy, & Vance, 2007). *Academic self-efficacy* is the belief one has regarding one's ability to control personal academic performance. McMahon, Parnes, Keys, and Viola (2008) explained that academic self-efficacy is a predictor of academic indicators such as achievement, motivation, effort, persistence, and goals for students.

Students' belief in themselves and their abilities can directly affect the effort they exert on academic tasks. Artino (2012) explained, "students with high self-efficacy in various academic domains choose to engage in tasks that foster the development of their knowledge, skills, and abilities in those areas; exert effort in the face of difficulty; and persist longer at challenging tasks" (p. 79). Individuals are unlikely to perform a task if they do not believe that they can achieve a desired outcome, and low self-efficacy deters effective learning and academic success (Olgilvie & Stewart, 2010). King (2015) suggested that children with low self-efficacy or disengagement from school withdrew from learning activities and gave up in the face of perceived difficulties such as class work and standardized tests. In contrast, a child with high self-efficacy would be quick to engage in academic tasks. When students notice an improvement in their skills over a period of time, they usually experience a boost in self-efficacy (Brewer & Carroll, 2010). The beliefs children hold regarding their capabilities to do a task constitute a determinant of their use of self-regulatory strategies such as planning and organizing academic work,

structuring a productive study environment, overcoming distractions, and participating in class.

At-risk students' performance and interactions in school can be impacted by their degree of self-efficacy, their sense of feeling worthy in the school environment, and the attitudes and expectations teachers have in relation to them (Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011). High self-efficacy usually causes students to search for deeper meaning when performing tasks, to report lower anxiety, and to have higher achievement in school, as opposed to students with lower self-efficacy, which brings low achievement patterns (Joet et al., 2011). Many students who have low self-efficacy engage in problem behaviors such as dropping out, delinquency, and school failure (Butz & Usher, 2015). Dimther, Dochy, and Segers (2015) explained that elementary school setting factors such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation can enhance students' self-efficacy. Butz and Usher (2015) explained that self-efficacy directly influences students' success in mathematics, writing, reading, science, and other school subjects. Therefore, participation in an organized cocurricular activity can increase students' self-efficacy, school engagement, and emotional connectedness in school (Li & Lerner, 2011).

At-Risk Youth

According to McCullers and Bozeman (2010) the notion of accountability in education became more prevalent when the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was enacted. McCullers and Bozeman further explained that the NCLB Act changed standards in schools, which included accountability for every student's progress, highly qualified teachers, a system that is aligned with state regulations, and instructional

programs founded on scientifically based research. Some students, such as at-risk students, require more consistent and extensive services than others (Schulz, 2011). It is necessary for at-risk students to have additional support for any opportunity to achieve success in the academic setting (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). According to Lubans, Plotnikoff, and Lubans (2012), *at-risk students* are those who live in a negative environment and lack skills and values to guide them toward becoming responsible members of society. Valdez, Lambert, and Ialongo (2011) reported that the risk behaviors of at-risk students may include aggressive behavior, low social acceptance, depressive symptoms, and low academic achievement.

Some students are at risk before they enter school. At an early age, children experience at-risk factors such as poverty, abuse, neglect, criminal or substance use by parents, inconsistent parenting practices, and minimal exposure to language and reading. As a result of these factors, the number of children with at-risk behaviors in school is increasing as children become either disengaged or uninterested in learning (Hanewald, 2011). In order to reduce educational inequality for at-risk students, teachers should seek interventions to improve students' wellbeing, promote competence in students, and build positive youth development and outcomes (Hanewald, 2011).

Dropout Rates

A growing number of students are at risk for dropping out of school before graduation (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). A common experience among at-risk youth in the United States is dropping out of school 3 to 4 years prior to the expected graduation date (Hickman & Wright, 2011). That can have repercussions for youth who make the

decision to drop out of school early. Lemon and Watson (2011) explained that the repercussions for dropping out can be long term, such as emotional pain and financial suffering for the student. For that reason, educational institutions must identify students who are likely to drop out as early as elementary school (Burrus & Roberts, 2012).

Students across America are deciding to leave school before they graduate, mostly because they have come to the conclusion that there is no solution to their academic problems (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Dropping out is a process that starts years before high school, and at-risk students exhibit warning signs early in their education. Most at-risk youth have a history of being retained in a grade early in their educational experience. Burrus and Roberts (2012) found that students who dropped out of high school were more likely to have been retained as opposed to students who were successful and graduated. Further, among students who were held back, those who graduated tended to have been held back early in elementary school in kindergarten and first grade, whereas those who dropped out tended to have been held back later in elementary school in grades 5 and 6 (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Students who continue to have difficulties past first grade are at a high risk of becoming high school dropouts.

Academic Failure

Achievement refers to a student's overall understanding of information and development of skills within the school setting. Achievement involves the cultural, social, and environmental fit of the school for the student (Anderson & Mezuk, 2012). Research with at-risk students has shown that academic success is needed for academic achievement (Hickman & Wright, 2011). At-risk youth, like most students in the

educational system, are required to take achievement tests at the end of the school year, and the No Child Left Behind Act set a standard for all students to perform on grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics by 2014. The focus educators put on improving scores on achievement tests has discouraged at-risk students academically because they are expected to perform like their peers who are not considered at-risk (Mirci et al., 2011).

School Belongingness

School belonging has been defined as a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and connection with peers, teachers, and the school (McMahon et al., 2008). At-risk students who have difficulty in academics become frustrated, which may result in a dislike of the school environment due to exposure to a school climate characterized by an emphasis on accountability (Schulz, 2011). Academic pressure upon at-risk students creates an environment of fear, anxiety, and depression when they are faced with tasks of academic difficulty (Lemon & Watson, 2011). Many students are affected by their lack of engagement in school, and they are more likely to experience academic failure than students who are engaged in school (Hickman & Wright, 2011). School belonging has been linked with positive academic and behavioral development (McMahon et al., 2008), and an absence of school engagement or belonging negatively affects the student (Sulkowski, Demaray, & Lazarus 2012).

Mentoring as an Intervention for At-Risk Students' Self-Efficacy

Mentoring is evidenced in public educational institutions, postsecondary educational institutions, the workplace, community-based organizations, and publicly or

privately funded programs. In education, mentoring entails a relationship of structure and trust that addresses problems that can result from a lack of adult availability, support, or guidance for many children (Caldarella et al., 2010). The professional literature on mentoring has identified mentoring as an intervention that promotes positive self-efficacy and academic outcomes for students (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). Mentoring can help students achieve better grades, establish goals, and enhance their self-efficacy (Lampley & Johnson, 2010).

Politicians have shown an immense interest in mentoring. In 1997, the Presidents' Summit for America's Future chaired by General Colin Powell focused on support for at-risk youth. Even though the Summit's focus was broader than mentoring, it had a tremendous effect on the mentoring movement. In 1999, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that more than 7,500 at-risk youth in 37 states would receive one-on-one mentoring, along with new grants to support the mentoring effort. As role models, guides, and teachers, mentors help mentees become competent in study skills and attitudes (Eddy et al., 2015).

Public and Private Ventures, Inc. conducted a comparative study of 959 students 10 to 16 years of age who applied to eight local Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) mentoring programs in 1992 and 1993. Half were randomly assigned to a treatment group with BB/BSA matches, and half received no intervention. Participants in the BB/BSA had improved attendance, school performance, attitudes toward completion of school work, and they demonstrated improved relationships with peers and family.

Those results provide evidence that caring relationships between youth and adults may be supported by mentoring programs.

School-Based Mentoring

There has been an increased amount of attention within the past two decades on educational reform. School-based mentoring programs have gained popularity in recent years. More schools are partnering with school-based mentoring programs in an effort to address the academic and social needs of students (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). School-based mentoring is designed to support at-risk students both socially and academically, and mentoring relationships have positive influences on students' emotions, expectations, and relational behavior (Caldarella et al., 2010). Few mentoring programs for at-risk youth have been rigorously evaluated in regard to their effectiveness in promoting maturity and positive social adjustment (Frels, 2013). However, there are some indications that at-risk youth may benefit academically and socially from school-based mentoring programs (Herrera et al., 2011).

School-based mentoring programs can reduce dropout rates and may improve emotional well-being (Sessums, 2010). Youth involved in mentoring relationships that last over a period of time see the greatest benefits, which usually occur after the mentoring relationship has an opportunity to develop (Herrera et al., 2011). Wheeler, Keller, and Dubois (2010) explained that school-based mentoring could help at-risk students by emphasizing the importance of a high-quality interpersonal relationship in supporting students' capabilities to function effectively in school. Wheeler et al. further

explained that mentoring relationships are influenced by the mentor and mentee's interpersonal relationship, which deepens as the mentoring process continues.

Mentoring is gaining credence as an intervention that schools can implement with students who are at-risk that gives them the opportunity to receive guidance, solve problems, and improve self-esteem and resiliency (Eddy, 2015). At-risk students may come to see themselves as competent, capable problem solvers through a mentoring relationship (Herrera et al., 2011). In school-based mentoring, a match is made between an adult and an at-risk student with the goal of creating trust and support when the youth would otherwise have limited opportunities to accomplish this. The National Association for the Education of Young Children found that constructive relationships in which students felt valued were necessary for the development of the students' sense of security, self-esteem, academic performance, and ability to interact with others (Caldarella et al., 2010). For healthy development, students need positive relationships with adults (Caldarella et al., 2010). The main purpose of school-based mentoring relationships is to pursue, attain, and enhance students' self-awareness in regard to their academic capabilities.

There are significant associations between youth involvement in mentoring relationships and positive developmental outcomes, and youth mentoring has been used as an effective prevention tool for many at-risk youth (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Mentoring programs may offer a possible solution to the many problems at-risk children face.

Counseling Services as an Intervention for At-Risk Students' Self-Efficacy

The research on the effect that school counselors have on at-risk students is limited, but conclusions indicate that school counseling may impact students' educational and personal development (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Elder, 2011). School counselors are in a position to address the unique needs of at-risk students in their schools (Goldsmith, 2011). Teachers may suggest counseling services to students in need of them, such as at-risk students (Sherwoord, 2010). At-risk students require more consistent and extensive services. School counselors, in their efforts to reach the at-risk population, must consider developing programs that impact students' academic, personal/social, and career development (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011).

School counselors often find themselves working with students who are at-risk (Amatea, Thompson, Clemons, & Ettinger, 2010). According to Amatea et al. (2010), a great amount of federal funding has become available for developing school-based intervention programs for at-risk students. School counselors serve as advocates for students in the areas of academic achievement and underachievement in school (Goldsmith, 2011). In order to meet challenges, teachers can collaborate and communicate with the school counselor for help and support with at-risk students.

Group Counseling

Group counseling is one strategy school counselors can implement for at-risk students. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2009), group counseling can occur in small or large group settings. Some elementary school counselors have compiled academic interventions within small group settings to help

students improve learning behaviors and personal/social development (Whiston et al., 2011). Studer, Diambra, Breckner, and Heidel (2010) described group counseling as a positive way to address developmental concerns of students while giving them a way to build skills to reach their academic goals as well as acquire social skills. Group counseling may also be a means for students to explore and express their inner thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as provide opportunities for children to share personal experiences and acquire a feeling of belonging to a group with which they can identify (Kelley, Cunningham, & Branscome, 2015). Students who participate in school counseling groups may build skills to reach academic goals and develop social skills (Kelley et al., 2015). School counselors, as Goldsmith (2011) explained, are in a position to serve as advocates for at-risk students in the area of academics and social development. They can implement group counseling in an effort to help at-risk students acquire the self-efficacy needed to complete academic tasks in school by addressing the "challenges and barriers these students face while also accessing the strengths, solutions, and strategies that may enhance success" (Grothaus & Cole, 2010, p. 3).

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) main focus is to give school counselors support in helping students academically, personally, and socially. The National Model for School Counseling Programs was created by the ASCA to provide stability and consistency in the role of the school counselor. In the ASCA National Model there are four competencies, which include academic development, career development, personal development, and social development. Each competency defines

the skills needed for students to participate in a school counseling program (ASCA, 2005).

The ASCA National Standards and National Model for School Counseling programs seek to ensure the school counselor creates programs that are comprehensive in design as well as encourage academic success for all students (Tarabochia, 2013). Comprehensive counseling programs are proactive and provide counseling services necessary to address the specific needs of students in schools (Wilburn, Wilburn, Weaver, & Bowles, 2007). The ASCA governing board encourages the organization's members to make public the National Model and Standards to the many states, school districts, individual schools, and practicing school counselors across the country. The ASCA promotes training of school counselors and deals with current challenges of the school counselor. Some concerns of the ASCA include uncertainty in school counselor's role, function, purpose, and focus (ASCA, 2005). Therefore, the ASCA recommended reevaluating the role of the school counselor to operate without doubt and indecision.

School Counselor's Roles/Duties

The role of the school counselor has been debated through the profession's history (Studer et al., 2011). Therefore, the school counselors' role in public education is defined by the ASCA standards. The ASCA outlined the school counselor's role and duties as addressing, designing, implementing, evaluating, and enhancing a school counseling program that promotes student success academically, personally, and socially. The ASCA developed the school counseling standards to guide school counselors in the development of comprehensive school counseling programs (Perkins, Oescher, &

Ballard, 2010). However, there are numerous duties handled by the school counselor that do not fall under the traditional responsibility of school counseling services (Cervoni et al., 2011). These extra tasks can take time away from the school counselors who are required to perform the traditional counselor duties such as addressing academic and social needs of the students (Cervoni et al., 2011).

Administrators, teachers, students, and parents all have conflicting perceptions of the function of counselors (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2008). School counselors usually understand their role within the school context, but administrators define school counseling in ways that include non-counselor duties (Wehrman, Williams, & Field, 2010). Principals, in particular, do not have a full sense of the school counselor's role (College Board, 2009a; 2009b). School leaders find themselves being forced to delegate responsibilities within the school to the school counselors because of budget cuts, maximizing instruction and managerial regulations, and complex legal issues (Cigrand, Havlik, & Malott, 2015). Over half the principals surveyed reported no exposure to the ASCA National Model set for school counselors (Cigrand et al., 2015).

Historically, changes in the field of school counseling can be connected to the changes in educational reform and legislation as well as to the efforts to respond to social, economic, and political trends causing a shift in school counselors' roles and functions (Perkins et al., 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act was put in place as an attempt to close the achievement gap between minority and disadvantaged students. Schulz (2011) stated that an effective school program is characterized by student success. Therefore, all school personnel are responsible for students' achievement. The shift in accountability

has caused a changed in the roles and functions of the school counselor, making the improvement of student achievement the main focus of school counseling programs (Perkins et al., 2010). School counselors should coordinate programs that aid in students' academic, career, and personal development (Whiston et al., 2011). Being an advocate for the student's success is a key in school counselor and places them as leaders in promoting school reform (Schulz, 2011). Schulz explained that school counselors' tasks are to be aware of the many influences and contexts under which students function, as well as to create school counseling programs accordingly.

After-School Programs

After school is the term used to describe a safe structured program that provides and encourages learning and development outside of the school day. Afterschool Alliance (2014) reported that, "Over the past 15 years, knowledge of the afterschool field has grown substantially" (Afterschool Alliance, 2014, p. 3). According to Grogan, Henrich, and Malikina (2014) studies that have examined students' engagement in after-school programs associated students' improvement in academic and social benefits with their levels of engagement. After-school programs have the capacity to play a vital role in students' success (Lauver, 2012). Numerous studies suggested after-school programs enhanced students' success in school, led to better attitudes toward school, enhanced school engagement and performance, increased school attendance, and lowered behavioral problems in school (Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

After-school programs provide a variety of emotional support. Durlak and Weissburg (2012) performed a meta-analysis of seventy-three after-school programs that

focused on skills that included problem solving, conflict resolution, self-control, leadership, responsible decision making, and enhancement of self-efficacy and self-esteem. After-school programs geared toward personal and social skills were found effective as manifested in enhanced confidence among students, improved positive feelings toward school, increased test scores and grades, and positive behaviors toward peer and adults (Durlak & Weissburg, 2012). After-school programs targeting at-risk students should be geared towards helping students develop productive social skills such as self-efficacy (Hritz, Johnson, Shaeffer, & Brown, 2010). Kunz, Chimney, Sparr, and Sheridan (2008) conducted a project reviewing the literature of six prominent articles featuring various after-school programs across the country. The results from the literature review showed an improvement in school behaviors such as positive attitudes toward school and increased motivation and task persistence.

In February of 2008, the Harvard Family Research Project published an article on after-school programs where a summary of research was discussed for the future. Featured in the brief were evaluative studies on large after-school programs with experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Little, Wimer, and Weiss' (2008) review drew on those evaluations to address two primary questions: 1) Does participation in after-school programs make a difference, and, if so, 2) What conditions appear to be necessary to achieve positive results? Little et al. review of the studies confirmed children and youth who participated in after-school programs can positively benefit in a number of interrelated outcome areas such as academic and social/emotional behaviors.

Programs that are demanding and offer challenging activities have the most positive academic outcome for at-risk students (Shernoff, 2010). Students involved in after-school programs felt more of a commitment to academics and were more optimistic because they were able to carry out leadership roles, which served to promote a sense of belonging and value (Davies & Peltz, 2012). After-school programs offer opportunities for success, learning, and challenges for at-risk students causing their confidence in academics to increase (Davies & Peltz, 2012).

Summary of Literature Review

As evidenced in the literature review much has been written about at-risk students and the characteristics that place them at-risk. The self-efficacy of students predicted their success on academic tasks (Zimmerman, 2008). Researchers focused on how self efficacy is formed and on ways to improve students' self-efficacy in school. What has not been fully investigated is which intervention would be the best ones to implement specifically for at-risk elementary school students. While interventions have been researched and have been shown to be effective, most of the research has been conducted in the upper grades. The research on interventions for at-risk students suggests mentoring, counseling services, and after-school programs might help improve their self-efficacy. This study explored which interventions teachers felt would be best for the school to implement to best assist this population of learners.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the teachers' perceptions on implementing interventions for the at-risk students who did not have the level of self-

efficacy needed to be successful in school. After Institutional Review Board approval, district approval, and with the consent of the teacher participants, I conducted a series of interviews with the teacher participants in an attempt to determine what interventions might be the most appropriate for the student population under study. Possible project development directions were based on the data collection findings and analysis of interviews with the teachers. The interviews focused on the three interventions found in the literature review; mentoring, counseling services, and after-school programs. The findings from the research dictated the course of action proposed to affect positive outcomes for the at-risk students.

Summary of Section 1

Education in the twenty first century faces a myriad of problems, which affect the academic achievement and social skills of youth. The NCLB Act has put accountability at the forefront of the public school system. Public schools in America must bring all students up to a proficient level of passing on state mandated test. The NCLB takes particular aim at improving the educational outcomes of at-risk students (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Interventions focused on improving and maintaining a healthy self-efficacy to help the at-risk youth and aid them in becoming more confident, successful, and active participants in their education. Implementing an intervention for self-efficacy in the school may be an important step toward promoting positive youth development. This section provided an overview of the problem. Section 2 will provide a description of the research methodology, research design and approach, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, and data collection and analysis. Section 2 also includes details on the

measures that will be taken for protection of participants' rights, including issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm. Section 3 of the study will detail the project. This section will also provide a literature review, a project evaluation plan, and a discussion concerning project implications. Section 4 is the final section, and it will detail my reflections and conclusions concerning the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This study explored teachers' perceptions of implementing school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and after-school programs to determine which intervention might positively impact at-risk elementary students' self-efficacy in an urban Texas public school. The literature review suggested that an improvement in self-efficacy positively affects at-risk students both socially and academically. In this section, I review the research design and approach, the participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative case study was conducted. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) explained that researchers use a case study approach when there is a need to explore a problem from the perspective of the identified local population. Case studies involve exploration of issues within a bounded system (Lodico et al., 2010). Qualitative data collection research methods involve asking broad questions so that participants may share their perceptions without pressure from the researcher. This type of research design fit the research topic, as data were collected from the participants in their natural setting and in their own words. Hatch (2002) explained the goal of qualitative research work as an exploration of the behaviors of humans within the context of their natural setting.

Other approaches in qualitative research that I considered for the study were phenomenology, narrative, and ethnography. The phenomenology approach was dismissed as not being appropriate because it focuses on the structure of an experience

for different people and compares those experiences to identify the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). Another approach considered for this study was the narrative approach. According to Merriam (2002), the narrative approach focuses on first-person accounts of an experience told in the form of a story; this was not best suited for this study. An ethnographic approach was rejected because I was not seeking to study the behavior of a particular group of people.

Participants

The participants for the project study were limited to, and drawn from, teachers at the elementary school where the study was conducted. Criteria for participation in this study indicated that participants needed to be (a) classroom teachers at the school, (b) willing to be interviewed after school, and (c) willing to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) and share honest perceptions on the topic of the study. Six teachers participated in the interviews, comprising about one third of the teaching staff.

Purposeful sampling was used to choose the teachers for the study. Purposeful sampling occurs when the inquirer selects the participants and sites for the study in order to inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Identified interview participants were purposefully selected based on the grade level they taught. I chose teachers from various grade levels to gain perspectives from teachers who worked with at-risk students at different stages in elementary school.

Each teacher at the school received an invitation to participate in the study. Once approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the district research

department was obtained, the invitations to participate were distributed, and an email was sent asking teachers to bring their signed consent forms to me in my classroom. They received no further invitation. One of the returned invitations from a fourth grade teacher indicated that she was not interested in participating in the study. There were eight classroom teachers who returned their invitations with an acceptance to participate in the study. The remaining invitations were from one kindergarten teacher, two first grade teachers, one second grade teacher, one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher, and two fifth grade teachers.

I decided to choose between the two first grade and two fifth grade teachers by their longevity at the school because one of the first grade teachers and one of the fifth grade teachers were brand new to the school and may not have been familiar with the students or the dynamics of the school. Six teachers meeting the criteria for study inclusion were chosen from the teachers who accepted the invitations to participate. I asked and received permission from the school principal and district research department to use the school to conduct the interviews. Conducting the interviews at the school allowed me to gain access to the participants because the school was the shared work environment for the participants and me.

In order to establish a researcher-participant working relationship, I reviewed the consent form with the participants and explained the roles they would play in the study. Hatch (2002) stated that researchers should be able to inform participants about a study and expectations in easily understood words. Participants need to know what type of preparation is needed for the study, what they need to do when they are with the

researcher, and what they will be able to share with others about the study (Hatch, 2002). It is important that the participants feel comfortable when participating in a study. I set a convenient and agreeable time after school for the interviews to take place.

Measures for Ethical Protection

Creswell (2007) stated that throughout a study, the researcher should always consider ethical guidelines. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (number 08-04-14-0014916), I asked the participants to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B), which included the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, risk and benefits, confidentiality, and contact information for the doctoral committee chair and me. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of reprisal. A potential risk of the study was that participants might feel stressed during the interview. The participants were made aware that they could stop the interview at any time (Appendix B).

A benefit for study participants was the potential to aid in identifying available interventions and successful or unsuccessful implementation of those available interventions for at-risk students. The notes and documents pertaining to the study have been kept in a locked file cabinet at my home and will be retained in that controlled location. I am the only person who has access to the file cabinet, and I possess the only key to that cabinet. I did not include information that identified the participants in any published report. The data were reported accurately, fully, and honestly.

Data Collection

This study explored teachers' perceptions of the implementation of research-based interventions that might have a positive impact on at-risk elementary students' self-efficacy in one urban Houston public school. Interventions focused on the participants' opinions concerning school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and afterschool programs. Semistructured face-to-face interviews were conducted to obtain data for the study. The interviews were conducted in a one-to-one format. Through qualitative interviews, researchers may understand experiences and events in which they did not participate (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), and I was able to get personal accounts from the participants related to their perceptions of implementing interventions for improving at-risk students' self-efficacy.

There were 28 staff members at the school with classroom teaching positions who were responsible for teaching the core subjects of math, reading, and language arts. In order to retrieve in-depth data from the interviews, I used six teachers for the project study interviews. Merriam (2002) suggested, "A small sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 28), while Hatch (2002) suggested, "The goal is to provide an account that represents as far as possible what is going on in a particular context" (p. 58). There is no direct relationship between the number of participants in a study and the quality of the study (Hatch, 2002).

All classroom teachers at the school received an invitation to participate in the study after the Walden University IRB and Houston Independent School District research

department gave permission to conduct the study (Appendix C). I conducted the six interviews after school inside an empty classroom located at the school. Conducting the interviews at the school made it convenient for the participants and me to meet. The reason for conducting the interviews after school hours was that I did not want to interfere with daily school duties. There were six questions asked, and the participants answered the questions thoroughly and concisely. Creswell (2007) suggested that a good interviewer should be a good listener rather than a frequent speaker during the interview. I did ask some of the participants probing questions, and I received enough data from the interviews to conduct the data analysis. The participants shared their perceptions thoroughly and gave insight into their personal thoughts and feelings concerning interventions to help at-risk students' self-efficacy.

The interviews were conducted and completed within a 2-week period. All participants had a set time and day for the interview that was convenient for them. If a participant had been unable to be interviewed at the agreed-upon date and time, another date and time would have been set. The participants and I were the only two people in the classroom when the interviews were held. In order to keep a record of what was said during the interviews, two tape recorders were used. I used two recorders for backup purposes. Participants were made aware of audio taping before the interviews began. The knowledge of audio taping was specified on the informed consent form (Appendix B) the participants signed before the study began.

I kept an interview guide with the interview questions (Appendix D) in front of me as I interviewed the participants. In order to keep track of which questions had been

answered, I made notes on the guide as the interview progressed. Those notes provided direction for subsequent interviews. I also took notes during the interviews. Taking notes forces researchers to listen carefully so that they may write down the main points of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The tape recorder allowed me to go back and transcribe and analyze the interview narratives for themes.

Research Question Alignment

The interview questions (Appendix D) were prepared to align with the guiding research questions in Section 1. I used the interview questions to guide the interview and follow-up questions. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What type of activities or interventions have you implemented in your classroom to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students?
2. Do you feel the school is in need of implementing interventions to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students? Why? or Why Not?
3. What are your perceptions on implementing a mentoring program at the school to aid in improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
4. What are your perceptions on implementing the counselor to help with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
5. What are your perceptions on implementing an afterschool program specifically for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
6. Can you think of any other interventions to implement for improving the self-efficacy of the at-risk students at the school? If so, please explain.

I used the responses to understand the teachers' perceptions of which interventions would be best to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the interview questions and the research questions.

Table 1

Relationship of Research Questions to Interview Questions

Research question (RQ)	Interview question (IQ)
RQ 1: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing a school-based mentoring program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?	IQ 3: What are your perceptions on implementing a mentoring program at the school to aid in improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
RQ 2: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing the services of the school counselor to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?	IQ 4: What are your perceptions on implementing the counselor to help with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
RQ 3: What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing an afterschool program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?	IQ 5: What are your perceptions on implementing an afterschool program specifically for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

The teachers were asked three other questions:

(IQ 1). What type of activities or interventions have you implemented in your classroom to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students?

(IQ 2). Do you feel the school is in need of implementing interventions to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students? Why? or Why Not?

(IQ 6). Can you think of any other interventions to implement for improving the self-efficacy of the at-risk students at the school? If so, please explain.

These questions were asked in an effort to discover any other interventions the teachers felt would help the at-risk students.

Researcher's Role

As a teacher employed by the school under study, I understood that careful and particular procedural safeguards were needed to lessen personal bias and promote comfort in regard to the participants. It was important for me, as a researcher, to emphasize to the participants that no names or identities would be revealed and that their participation in the study was confidential. This statement and promise were detailed in the consent form, and I reminded participants of this prior to beginning interviews. Participants were encouraged to share their authentic feelings and perceptions with regard to the interview questions and were advised that their honest opinions would not affect our relationships as coworkers. I informed all participants that there was a clear and strict separation between my roles as a researcher and as a teacher and that they were free to express their perceptions without fear of reprisal. In this study, I was the data collector and data analyst.

Data Analysis

For case studies, Creswell (2003) recommended that researchers provide detailed descriptions of the settings or individuals in the study, followed by an analysis of the data for themes. Data were transcribed within 2 days of each interview. I conducted data collection and data analysis at the same time. According to Merriam (2002),

"Simultaneous data collection and analysis allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting data collection, and to test emerging concepts, themes, and categories against subsequent data" (p. 14). Analyzing the data immediately gives the researcher an opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data (Merriam, 2002).

Coding Procedure and Themes

An inductive process was used to analyze the data. Hatch (2002) stated that during inductive data analysis, the researcher searches for patterns of meaning in the data so that general statements about the phenomena under investigation can be made. Once the data for the interviews were transcribed, I used a coding procedure, which consisted of mechanically reducing the data and analytically categorizing the data simultaneously (Merriam, 2002). I used open coding by reading the data slowly to condense the data into preliminary analytic categories. During the coding process, I looked for critical terms and themes within the data.

I used the participants' answers to show evidence of the coding and themes because the study was based on the participants' perceptions. I created a chart for the open codes for each interview question. This chart for the open codes is found in Appendix E. Twelve individual codes were created from the open coding of the interviews: (a) classroom environment, (b) classroom curriculum, (c) motivation in the classroom, (d) one-on-one support, (e) motivation, (f) mentoring as an intervention, (g) mentoring setup, (h) counseling as an intervention, (i) afterschool programs as an

intervention, (j) setting up afterschool programs, (k) other interventions, and (l) teaching social skills (Appendix E).

After open coding, I conducted axial coding (Appendix F), which occurs when the researcher links the codes to themes (Creswell, 2007). I also created the themes with the guiding questions for the study in mind. As seen in Appendix E the four themes created from the axial coding were (a) mentoring as an intervention, (b) counseling as an intervention, (c) afterschool program as an intervention, and (d) other interventions. Lastly, I use selective coding (Appendix F), which involves selecting data that provides evidence for the categories that are developed. I noted certain phrases, terms, and ideas repeated by the participants and various responses were compared and contrasted to the literature review from Section 1. I color coded the participants responses according to their connection to the research questions asked. The color red was used for mentoring as an intervention, the color blue was used for counseling as an intervention, the color yellow was used for afterschool programs as an intervention, and the color purple was used for other interventions. I used three asterisks for any negative comments about any intervention.

Findings and Themes

The research findings for this project study surfaced from the participant interviews. The participants were teachers who taught various grade levels at the school.

Table 2

Participants' Grade Levels and Years Teaching

Participant	Grade level	Years teaching
Participant A	5th grade	7 years
Participant B	3rd grade	1 year
Participant C	4th grade	10 years
Participant D	1st grade	9 years
Participant E	2nd grade	20 years
Participant F	Kindergarten	10 years

Table 2 above shows the participants and the grade level they taught as well as how long they had been teaching.

I began by engaging in several readings of the interview transcripts to uncover similarities that led to the most common themes of the study. The four common themes found were (a) mentoring as an intervention, (b) counseling as an intervention, (c) afterschool program as an intervention, and (d) other interventions. The research questions and interview questions within this qualitative study were designed to explore the teachers' perceptions of school-based mentoring, counseling services, and after school programs as interventions to help improve at-risk students' self-efficacy. The participants were asked six questions that were connected to the research questions. The findings and themes for each research question follow:

Research Question 1. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions about implementing a school-based mentoring program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

***Theme 1: Mentoring as an intervention*.** Theme 1 emerged when I asked the question, "What are your perceptions on implementing a mentoring program at the school to aid in improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?"

RQ1 Finding 1: One perception held by the teachers was that the students would benefit from receiving one on one time with someone other than the teacher. Mentoring could provide them with this one on one time suggested by the teachers. Three out of the six teachers mentioned the need for someone to come and meet with the at-risk students providing them one on one time with someone else. Teacher D mentioned that the students needed "one on one time with somebody else other than the teacher". Teacher D also mentioned "one on one time with someone at the school outside of the student's daily academic schedule" would benefit the at-risk students. Teacher C mentioned one on one time with "staff within the school whether they have a classroom or not" such as clerical staff, janitorial staff, and instructional specialist. These staff members can also mentor the students. Teacher D mentioned that "one on one time with another person will make the at-risk student feel special". Teacher E thought that the school should utilize "staff that can spend one on one with students that are at-risk allowing them that one on one time so that they won't feel so overwhelmed in the classroom setting where other kids are more advanced". Caldarella et al. (2010) suggested one on one time with a mentor was connected with improvements in at-risk students' self-esteem and attitudes toward school. Caldarella et al. (2010) also explained mentors encouraged more positive relationships through praise and a reduction of negative feelings.

RQ1 Finding 2: Participants in the study perceived the need for utilizing the school and resources within the school to mentor the at-risk on campus. According to Garringer (2010), utilizing staff on campus is an advantage because the school is using existing resources. Teacher C suggested utilizing "staff within the school" to mentor the students. Teacher C stated "kids trust who they can see" and other staff members on campus are people they see on a daily basis and they might be willing to create a trusting relationship with them. Teacher F suggested utilizing "older kids to come in and have small mentoring activities with them". Teacher D suggested utilizing "someone at the school outside of their daily academic schedule" would be good for the students.

RQ1 Finding 3: Participants referred to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program and how the school should create a mentoring program, which somewhat duplicates this program. The final finding within theme 1 was creating a mentoring program that was a duplicate of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America mentoring program. Teacher C stated, "I was speaking with another teacher about Big Brothers Big Sister mentoring program, so having something like that afterschool works just as well". This participant suggested on having mentors from the Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program to come and mentor the students rather than using the staff at the school. Teacher B stated "Big Brother Big Sisters can be contacted and we can get them to mentor the children". Teachers B and C were the only teachers whom mentioned the Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program.

Research Question 2. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions on implementing the services of the school counselor to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

Theme 2: Counseling as an intervention. Theme 2 was created when the teachers were asked, "What are your perceptions on implementing the counselor to help with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?"

RQ2 Finding 1: Participants felt that school counseling would help at-risk students, but they were concerned with the interference of the many other roles the school counselor played at the school. The participants believed that a school counselor might aid with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students, but they also expressed some concern with utilizing the school counselor. Teacher D stated, "trying to use the counselor is difficult now because the counselor is doing so many other things on campus". Teacher C stated that "mentorship instead of counseling would be better suited for elementary students and elementary school students do not benefit from counseling". When I asked Teacher C to justify this perception, the participant felt that the "students looked at the counselor in a mothering nature instead of as someone to confide in or receive advice from". Teacher A and B had no idea that the school had a certified counselor on campus. Teacher E thought utilizing the "school counselor would be good because the counselor is skilled in the area of knowing how to assist at-risk youth". Teacher F suggested that "we all are counselors in a sense" but thought that "having an individual come in as a counselor would be great".

Research Question 3. What are elementary school teachers' perceptions on implementing an afterschool program to improve and maintain the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

***Theme 3: Afterschool program as an intervention*.** Theme 3 arose when the teachers were asked, "What are your perceptions on implementing an afterschool program specifically for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?"

RQ3 Finding 1: The teachers were receptive to having an afterschool program, but were concerned about getting people to be involved in the afterschool program. Some of the teachers made reference to having others people or community volunteers come in to help with the afterschool programs. Teachers A and E expressed their concern about getting the man power to govern the afterschool program and suggested using people from the community. Teacher A stated, "I think that would be outstanding if you can get the man power." and the same teacher stated the importance in getting "teachers, adults, or community liaisons to dedicate time and be consistent". Teacher E replied "I think the after school program would be great providing that you can get the proper people in place to assist the students that are at-risk". Teacher B made reference to having the Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program come in and actually be a mentor to some of these children as an afterschool program. Davies and Peltz (2012) stated if the afterschool program has a large number of students there might be some difficulty giving attention to each student because of lack of people involved. Davies and Peltz further explained that there must be a strong connection between the school and community organizations for afterschool programs to be sustainable. Teacher B

suggested the school have an “after school program where people come in and help tutor the students through their homework to explain it more in detail”. Teacher E explained that “afterschool time would give students more individualized attention”.

Theme 4: Other interventions. Theme 4 came from the three other questions about their perceptions on the interventions. One question asked was “What type of activities or interventions have you implemented in your classroom to improve the self-efficacy of your at-risk students?” I asked this question because some of the research based interventions from the research question might emerge. However, this was not the case. The teachers mostly mentioned classroom management ideas such as shortening the assignments, allowing more time for the at-risk students to finish assignments, or utilizing small groups/workstations. The other question was “Do you feel the school is in need of implementing interventions to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students? And if so why or why not?” Again, I was attempting to see if any of the research based interventions from the research questions would emerge. There were some ideas that emerged from the research questions. Teachers A, C, D, and E mentioned having someone come in and give one on one time and face-to-face contact with someone outside of the classroom for the at-risk population, which was an aspect of school-based mentoring. Teacher B stated that “the school needed to build a community of praise”. Lastly, the teachers were asked, “Can you think of any other interventions to implement to improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students at the school? And if so please explain?” Teachers A and C mentioned teaching social skills and character education while another participant made mention to using technology in some way. Bridging the

students' hobbies and interest into a program was discussed as well. Teachers B and C suggested the school should contact the Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program, which again suggest mentoring as an intervention.

Procedures for Dealing With Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are those that are counter to the identified themes. Discrepant cases should be addressed because as Creswell (2003) said, "Real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, thus discussing contrary information adds credibility of an account" (p. 192). When conducting a study, one must ensure the study is credible. Creswell (2007) suggested using member checks, which allows for the participants to comment on the researcher's interpretation of the study. My plan for addressing discrepant cases was to discuss the themes and evidence with the participants to ensure a valid representation of the findings. Therefore, I took a copy of the transcripts to the participants for member checking to check if there were any discrepant situations. There were no discrepant situations found by the participants.

Project Outcome

My goal throughout this study was to explore teachers' perceptions concerning the implementation of research-based interventions such as school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and after-school programs, which might positively impact at-risk elementary student's self- efficacy in an urban Houston public school. The suggestions from the teachers' perceptions were to start a school-based mentoring program to help improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students. During the interviews, I noticed that the participants answered questions not pertaining to mentoring with ideas

about mentoring. They constantly referred to having someone pull the students out to receive one on one attention. They made numerous references to mentoring programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters. They made little reference to the other interventions mentioned. Therefore, as a result from the outcome of the study, a mentor professional development workshop will be the project developed and informed from the research findings.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teachers' perceptions concerning the implementation of research-based interventions such as school-based mentoring, school counseling services, and after-school programs, which might positively impact at-risk elementary student's self- efficacy in an urban Houston public school.

Six teachers were selected to participate in interviews to share their perceptions on the interventions. The data obtained from the interviews was used to develop a mentoring program with the perceived components presented by the participants for the improvement of the self-efficacy of at-risk students at the school. Coding was used for data analysis by categorizing the data into correlated themes. Precautions were taken to ensure credibility, trustworthiness, reliability, and validity of the study by using member checks where each participant was allowed to comment or correct the researcher's interpretation of the data collected.

Following are Section 3 and Section 4. Section 3 of the study will detail the project. This section provides a literature review, a project evaluation plan, and a discussion concerning project implications. Section 4 is the final section, and it will detail

my reflections and conclusions concerning the study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Section 3 provides an in-depth overview of the project, including the goals and the rationale for implementing it. After this overview, I examine the literature to support the significance of the project. This is followed by the project description, project evaluation plan, project implications, and suggestions to be shared with stakeholders at the school detailing how implementation of the project can support positive social change at the school.

The project (Appendix A) addresses the educational problem of improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students by providing local schools with a professional development workshop for mentors in a school-based mentoring intervention program. The project elements are consistent with the literature on mentoring and the interview data from the participants in the local setting. The project consists of the following elements:

- Program Mission Statement
- Program Goal
- Criteria for Mentors
- Mentor Recruiting Event
- Mentor Training Outline
- Mentor Packet Handout and Materials
- Mentor Training Evaluation

The mission statement and program goals will guide the professional development and determine the design and implementation plan. Criteria are included to recruit adults who will be able to commit to the requirements of being a mentor. Mentor recruiting is necessary to solicit applications from interested mentors. The professional development outline will be used by the coordinator and assistant coordinator to conduct the 3-day training. The activities and information for the professional development are explained in detail using a step-by-step plan for trainers to follow. The packets and handouts for the mentors will be provided so that mentors can follow along with the trainers throughout the duration of the workshop. At the end of the workshop, mentors will complete an evaluation. Based on participants' responses in this evaluation, needed changes and improvements can be made to the workshop.

Description of Goals

The short-term goals of the project are to help educators (a) provide at-risk students with a mentor to encourage them, (b) provide schools with a research-based intervention to use when dealing with at-risk students, and (c) provide at-risk students with an intervention that may help improve their self-efficacy. The project's long-term goal is to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students so that they may be successful academically.

Rationale

The school does not have any interventions in place for at-risk students and relies solely on classroom teachers to come up with ways to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students. After interviewing the teachers, reviewing the transcripts, and analyzing the

data, I found that the perceived need for a quality intervention was evident. Based on the findings presented in Section 2, a school-based mentoring program is the most appropriate project design for addressing the educational problem that anchors the study. Thus, I have chosen to create a mentor professional development workshop for the mentors so that they may effectively mentor the at-risk students.

The professional development will give mentors an opportunity to learn how to build relationships with their mentees. Mentors can provide encouragement in efforts to overcome academic difficulties (Waler, Houchins, & Nomvete, 2010) and are expected to provide students with emotional support, friendship, and motivation (Pryce & Keller, 2012). Mentoring may increase students' self-efficacy and promote improved confidence in their academic ability (Pryce & Keller, 2012), as well as improved behavioral and emotional connectedness with the school (Anderson & Mezuk, 2012). Positive, nonparental adults may have an impact on students' lives by providing at-risk students with the opportunity to establish a relationship with another adult. Mentoring is a matter of trust (Mitchell, 2013), and the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is the key to successful mentoring. Students involved in mentoring programs demonstrate improvement in academic performance (Pryce & Keller, 2012).

Review of the Literature

I conducted an intensive search of the literature. The review was centered on literature related to self-efficacy in the areas of social cognitive theory, school-based mentoring programs, school-based mentoring benefits for at-risk youth, and the National Mentoring Partnership/MENTOR. Research databases such as Sage, Educational

Resources Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, and the Walden Library were used to identify relevant articles. Key search terms included, but were not limited to, *school-based mentoring, mentoring programs and at-risk youth, starting a school-based mentoring program, training mentors, professional development for mentors*, and *improving at-risk students' self-efficacy.*

Self-Efficacy in Social Cognitive Theory

The current study is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory, which involves self-efficacy beliefs or individuals' beliefs in their ability to complete a task. Social cognitive theory is a theoretical framework created by Bandura that involves the analysis of human motivation, thought, and action. Social cognitive theory relies on behavior, cognition, environmental influences, and other personal factors that operate as interacting determinants (Shu, Tu, & Wang, 2011). According to Rogers and Creed (2011), these social cognitive variables stimulate actions toward identified goals, which are necessary for a person to make progress. According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is an important determinant of an individual's task performance and affects behavior in areas of human psychosocial functioning (Shu, Tu, & Wang, 2011). Self-efficacy theory purports that individuals behave based on their belief in their capabilities of accomplishment (Dimopoulou, 2012).

Brewer and Carroll (2010) explained that self-efficacy beliefs with regard to social skills may improve through successful interactions. Four techniques may enhance the self-efficacy of individuals: (a) observational experiences or modeling, (b) verbal persuasion, (c) affective or physiological arousal, and (d) personal attainments

(Walumbwa et al., 2011). By observing others, individuals obtain information about their own capabilities (Dimther et al., 2011). Persuasive communication and a positive mood or physiological arousal may strengthen an individual's self-efficacy by energizing his or her emotional state through cognitive appraisal (Dimther et al., 2011). Self-efficacy emphasizes human action and successes with interaction with one's personal thoughts and a given task (Yusuf, 2011).

Literature Related to School-Based Mentoring

Mentoring has grown in popularity as a valuable support system for at-risk youth (Watson, Washington, & Stepteau-Watson, 2015) and has been fueled by reported successes of community-based mentoring revealing that adult mentors might have some positive impact on mentees' social life as well as academic life (Garringer, 2010). Pryce and Keller (2012) explained that mentoring is an individualized intervention of one-to-one relationships with varying effects according to the nature of the mentoring relationship. Frels (2013) stated that support from adults other than parents is vital for school-aged youth as a means of connectedness. Mentoring relationships are a matter of trust, guidance, and encouragement to develop competence and character (Mitchell, 2013). In school-based mentoring, K-12 students are paired with an adult or older student in a meaningful one-to-one relationship at the school site. Mentors are expected to provide their mentees with emotional support, friendship, and encouragement. According to Nelson, McMahan, and Torres (2012), improvement in students' perceptions about their school experience may result from involving adults in school and students' lives. In 2007 and 2009, results of three separate studies of the effectiveness of

school-based mentoring programs for youth indicated positive effects on academic performance, quality of class work, number of assignments completed, connectedness to peers, self-esteem, and perceived scholastic efficacy (Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010).

A mentoring program may offer several advantages to a school. Haire-Joshu et al. (2010) stated that "Mentoring programs are often complementary to school-initiatives; with adults acting as both tutor and role model to children exhibiting delayed academic progress" (p. 75). According to Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, and Herrera (2011), school-based mentoring targets specific student populations and limits liability issues. Also, school-based mentoring programs provide the mentored students with a more positive outlook on school by increasing students' sense of school belonging (Herrera et al., 2011). According to Brewer and Carroll (2010), housing a mentoring program at the school lessens barriers to participation such as transportation issues.

School-based mentoring may have some disadvantages. It is important to focus the program on short-term goals rather than long-term goals or the "big picture." Wheeler, Keller, and Dubois (2010) explained that long-term goals such as college attendance and improved graduation rates may not be immediately relatable, as opposed to short-term goals such as classroom behavior or improved study habits. Moreover, staffing stability or staff turnover can make or break a successful program; therefore, putting the right people in place is important for consistency and continuity of the program (Garringer, 2010). According to Culpepper, Hernandez-Gantes, and Blank (2015), some mentoring programs may be hindered by a lack of time and limited number of adult participants. Moreover, students who have experienced unsatisfying mentoring

relationships may not trust the overtures of a caring adult (Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011).

School-Based Mentoring Benefits for At-Risk Youth

Every year, teachers have students in their classrooms who require extra support, time, and motivation to function successfully in school. Educators have categorized this group of students as being at-risk. At-risk children often require some type of additional support to be academically successful (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). According to Herrera, DuBois, and Grossman (2013), at-risk youth face significant challenges, both personal and emotional. School-based mentoring has become a promising practice for improving the social-emotional strengths of at-risk youth (Tolan et al., 2014). Hickman and Wright (2011) stated that more mentoring programs are surfacing in primary and secondary schools.

Mentoring can have an impact on at-risk youth, and at-risk youth who participate in mentoring programs show development emotionally, socially, and academically (Eddy et al., 2015). Weiler et al. (2015) noted that effective programs geared toward positive youth development contain opportunities for the development of positive adult-youth relationships, life-skills training, and involvement in important community activities. Bowers et al. (2012) stated that a relationship with a caring adult other than a parent might mitigate problem behaviors of at-risk youth. According to Herrera, DuBois, and Grossman (2013), mentors who work with at-risk youth experience challenges such as the mentee's behavior and lack of family support. However, the purpose of mentoring at risk-youth is to provide positive influences and reduce negative outcomes in mentees'

lives (Williams, 2011). Mentoring programs work to ensure that youth can develop healthy self-esteem, express feelings and emotions, and establish and maintain healthy relationships (Williams, 2011). According to Pryce and Keller (2012), mentors help build motivation, provide encouragement, and serve as positive role models.

Positive mentoring can develop into corrective experiences for mentees with low self-efficacy (Brewer & Carroll, 2010). Participation in a mentoring program can help at-risk students to have stronger self-efficacy regarding their ability to perform academic tasks. A recent evaluation of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters school-based program showed that at-risk students receiving mentoring improved in academic performance and perceived self-efficacy (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).

National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR)

The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) has served the education field for nearly 25 years. The goals of the National Mentoring Partnership (Mentor) are to (a) provide a public voice about mentoring, (b) develop resources for mentoring programs, and (c) promote quality through mentoring standards. The National Mentoring Partnership functions under the mission of fueling the quality of mentoring relationships for America's youth as well as closing the mentoring gap. It provides a step-by-step plan for starting a mentoring program, a plan that is available to the public and that can be used by interested organizations. The plan offers six evidence-based standards that address six critical dimensions of mentoring program operations: a) recruitment, b) screening, c) training, d) matching, e) monitoring and support, and f) closure (mentoring center, n.d.). For each standard, the plan advances specific guidelines alongside research-

based justifications. The standards and guidelines provide reasonable guidance and resources on how best to approach the provision of high-quality mentoring in day-to-day operations (mentoring center, n.d.).

Discussion of the Project

The proposed project, a professional development workshop, consists of the following: (a) a mission statement, (b) program goals, (c) criteria for mentors, (d) mentor orientation agenda, (e) mentor training outline, (f) mentor packet handout and materials, and (g) mentor training evaluation. Appendix A outlines the project for this study, including all necessary forms and paperwork.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The resources needed to implement the proposed project will include staff volunteers and training supplies. Staff members and volunteers from the school volunteer list will be needed to mentor students who are eligible for the mentoring program. A coordinator and assistant coordinator will be needed to monitor the program and conduct the training for the mentors. Clerical staff will be needed to make copies of training materials and other paper resources. Implementation of the project will require sufficient space for the training, such as the school library or school cafeteria. Existing supports include days set aside for training the mentors. The school administration's support will be needed to approve the use of school resources such as pens, pencils, chart paper, and technology supplies. Technology supplies will include a projector and laptop. The janitorial staff at the school will be needed to help with cleaning before and after the training sessions.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers of the project are acquiring volunteers and sustaining mentor commitment. Acquiring volunteers from the staff might also be a barrier. Staff members are not required to stay at the school once the work day is over; thus, staff might be less willing to work on a volunteer basis after school hours. If there are not enough volunteers from the school staff, then the school can use the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) list. VIPS includes parents and community partners who donate their time, resources, and knowledge in support of the school's primary goal to increase student achievement. The people on the VIPS list have already undergone a background check and are authorized to work within the school.

Lack of mentor commitment may break a successful mentoring program (Garringer, 2010). It is important for mentors to be committed to the relationship. Reasons for program failure include (a) mentor abandonment, (b) perceived lack of mentor motivation, (c) unfulfilled expectations, (d) bridging cultural divides, (e) family interference, and (f) inadequate support (Frels et al., 2013). Mentor training (Appendix A) and recruitment will help to maintain a positive environment in which the mentoring relationship may grow by fostering commitment from the mentors.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The mentoring training should be implemented before school begins. The proposed time of implementation is 2 weeks before the school year begins. Staff members are required to return 2 weeks before school starts; therefore, conducting the professional development during this period will be reasonable. Mentor recruitment will

begin in July. August will consist of mentor orientation and mentor 3-day training. Evaluation of the completed professional development will happen at the end of Day 3. Participants will respond to questions using a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

I will be coordinator of the project and maintain responsibility of the mentoring program. Responsibilities will include a) helping choose mentors, b) providing orientation for mentors, and c) coordinating training for mentees. The school administrators' roles and responsibilities will be to assist the coordinator by providing support in the form of school resources and supplies. The mentor professional development will rely on the staff volunteering their time to become a mentor. They will be required to participate actively engage themselves in the workshop from start to finish.

Project Evaluation: Discussion of Project Implications

Possible Social Change Implications

Positive social change resulting from this study could include a structure for developing a quality mentor professional development for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students. This structure could provide the opportunity for the school to utilize a successful intervention. The mentoring professional development could be used in campus improvement plans and after-school intervention time plans. This project promotes a quality intervention while meeting the needs of the school's at-risk population. Teachers strive daily to encourage at-risk students to improve their achievement and self-efficacy in school. The mentor professional development created is

an attempt to prepare mentors for the mentoring program. At-risk students' self-efficacy will be impacted through application of this project and should increase as a result. Increased self-efficacy will promote social change for current and future generations.

Importance of the Project to Local Stakeholders and Larger Context

The stakeholders who are the recipients of the mentor professional development information include the staff and school administrators. The mentor professional development can only be successful if everyone involved is knowledgeable about the need to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students. Quality will increase the likelihood of this success. Results from this study could influence the current district and beyond. The project provides a plan for mentors to encourage at-risk students and develop a positive self-efficacy within them. Studies such as this one will assist school administrators in training mentors to support the needs of the students. The long-lasting effect is that at-risk students will have a high self-efficacy in the school environment by training mentors properly.

Summary

This section provided a description of the project, addressing the need for an intervention to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students. This project provides at-risk students with mentors that might improve their self-efficacy, so they may experience academic improvement. This section began with a description and discussion of the project, followed by the project rationale and review of literature related to the project. The project goals addressed the concerns in the project findings. The literature review included concepts related to a mentoring program for at-risk students. The latter part of

section 3 included the components needed for project implementation. The components included; project resources, existing supports, and potential barriers. Implementation, timetable, roles and responsibilities, project evaluation techniques, and social change implications were also included. Section 4 includes reflections, conclusions, and future recommendations.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This project addresses the need for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students. By developing their self-efficacy, at-risk students may begin to experience success academically. In Section 4, I describe the project's strengths as well as the project's limitations. I also reflect on scholarship, the project's development, and leadership and change. This section includes my analysis of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project study developer. It also contains an explanation of the project's potential impact for social change and suggestions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

This project has several strengths. Training and supporting mentors can enhance the quality of the mentor relationship and foster positive changes in the person being mentored as well as the person providing the guidance in the mentor role (Haddock et al., 2013). Mentor training is a vital component of a successful mentoring relationship. Rhodes, Stevens, and Hemmings (2011) noted a need for professional development in project-based and service learning. The context of service learning may enhance the mentors' experience, resulting in positive outcomes. Mentors offer at-risk students counsel, friendship, and constructive ways to make responsible choices. Mentors provide guidance and encouragement for students to develop character and competence (Mitchell, 2013). Providing the mentors with proper training will allow for them to become better mentors to their mentees.

Another strength of the project is that it provides individual and collaborative activities throughout the session to check for participants' understanding through role-playing and quick assessments. Participants have opportunities to apply what they have learned and to experience a forum of cooperative active learning. The activities are engaging, and participants are not involved in lecture-based professional development.

Limitations

The current project's limitation is that it is only focused on training mentors for the at-risk student population. The school has other students who are not at-risk who might benefit from participation in the program. At-risk students often need additional support in order to be successful in an academic setting (Lampley & Johnson, 2010). One third of students in the United States are labeled *at-risk* and are likely to experience academic issues (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Other students could benefit from being in the mentoring program, but the at-risk population is the focus of the project. If the mentoring program is proven to be successful, then the mentor professional development can be expanded, and mentors may be trained to mentor other students in the school.

Alternative Ways to Address the Problem

Many challenges face educators today. One of the challenges of great concern is how to provide quality instruction and interventions to students with different abilities (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015). In order for teachers to overcome this challenge, they must use their knowledge of how students learn and practice strategies and interventions proven to be effective. This qualitative case study was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding interventions best suited for improving at-risk

students' self-efficacy, and the teachers who were interviewed shared their perceptions regarding which research-based interventions were best for the at-risk population. A high-quality, sustained school-based mentoring program surfaced as an intervention that would help at-risk students. Though the mentoring program seeks to address the problem, it is only one possible solution to the problem of the study.

One alternative to the mentoring program would involve using the counselor on campus. The school counselor could offer services to the at-risk population such as group counseling and assistance with strategies to improve students' self-efficacy in school. School counselors can coordinate programs that facilitate students' academic achievement and personal social development (Whiston et al., 2011). Another alternative to the mentoring program would be an afterschool program for at-risk students in which they learn personal social development skills that they need to succeed.

Scholarship

At the beginning of my doctoral journey, my goals were to grow professionally, gain knowledge and expertise in the research process, and create a doctoral project study that would significantly impact the field of education. I reached my goal with the help of the superior staff and well-designed courses at Walden University. This doctoral project study is an example of scholarship because the information contained in the study will positively contribute to the development of the at-risk population. The scholarship involved an extensive search of peer-reviewed articles from research databases such as SAGE journals, EBSCO, and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). The literature supported the foundation for the study. Saturation of the literature was

necessary in justifying the study and the development of the project. Current peer-reviewed literature complemented the work of this project study. I analyzed and synthesized data from articles into a comprehensive format. Based on the data analysis, a mentoring program was selected for the project.

Project Development

As a project developer, I have learned how to create detailed professional development. I learned the importance of individualizing professional development to the needs of the population of learners who hold key stakeholder status in the school-based mentoring program. I was able to create engaging and collaborative activities for participants to apply the new learning to professional practice. I learned that it is important to use summative assessments at the end of a professional development program to determine what participants learned and to use the information reported on evaluations to improve the professional development program.

Leadership and Change

This project began as a way to provide an intervention for at-risk students to improve their self-efficacy. However, I have acquired a leadership role at my school because of this project. My principal and other teachers come to me for my opinions and seem to respect me more as a leader. I have learned to be a visible teacher and leader by voicing my opinions and knowledge on education-related issues.

Throughout this project study, I have learned that determination and persistence can be major elements of the effort to create change in an organization. This can be especially true when children are involved. There is an immediate need to improve the

self-efficacy of at-risk students in our school system. This immediate need gave inspiration to the project's development and provided the school with evidence to support the need for change.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

My journey as a doctoral student and researcher has made me aware of my strengths and weaknesses as a scholar. At first, I was not positive that I wanted to pursue this degree. However, now I see that pursuing this degree was my destiny. My experience as a teacher led me to focus my study on helping at-risk students. I work with at-risk learners on a daily basis. Therefore, I knew that there was a need to assist these students with their education and positive social development. This became my passion as I advanced throughout this study.

As a scholar, I followed the suggestions of Creswell (2012) by using the latest peer-reviewed articles and using logical steps to conduct my research. Conducting this study empowered me to become a critical and logical thinker as a researcher and teacher. I now look at the at-risk population with more care and patience.

As I continued with my study, I reflected on my struggle to select the format to design the project. The project study required several revisions and corrections. The process became unbearable at times. There were times when I felt frustrated because I had to separate myself from friends and family to work vigorously on designing the project. However, the final product made it well worth the wait. Throughout this process, I gained a greater appreciation for researchers, research, and how to conduct research.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner of education with 17 years of experience, I have had the opportunity to grow professionally by serving in different educational capacities. I have served as an elementary school teacher, dyslexia coordinator, and grade-level chair. Currently, I am a fifth-grade science teacher. As a fifth-grade science teacher, I am in close contact with at-risk students. As a practitioner, I have learned about at-risk students. All the knowledge I have to share on at-risk populations means nothing until it is put into action. I am able to give my input and educate others on this subject. There is still an abundant amount of knowledge to gain about at-risk students. I will continue to stay current with the research and add to my study as trends change.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I learned that a significant amount of energy, time, and resources go into formulating an idea, evaluating a project, and putting the project into practice. This project required searching for and reading many articles and books on how to conduct research. Another resource I used to develop this project was the Walden University Library, where I located many of the research articles. I also checked out books from the local university. I used these readings along with many hours of detailed writing to develop this project. In order to design a project that was practical, I had to think critically and logically.

Creating this project has truly been a rewarding experience. I have supported the at-risk students in my classroom but have always wanted to do more for them. This project allowed me to do more for these students by inquiring of colleagues on what they

thought would be best to improve students' self-efficacy in school. The trials and tribulations I experienced have made the accomplishment of the final product much more meaningful. As a project developer, I have learned to celebrate the short-term wins but to not lose sight of the long-term goals. The short-term wins motivated me for the future outcomes of the project. Even though the goals of the project were the guiding force behind its creation, as the project developer I had to be mindful of the uneasiness I felt facing the challenge at hand. A great deal of focus was needed to create a project that would impact the local setting.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

As I reflect on this project, I believe that it addresses the need to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students by providing mentors with strategies to effectively mentor at-risk students. Through implementation of the program, positive social change will be realized by providing at-risk students with supportive relationships with adult mentors. The professional development created as the project's outcome will provide mentors with an in-depth analysis of the challenges at-risk students face and how framing the professional development using self-efficacy theory guides the goals of the mentoring program. A desired outcome of the mentoring program is for the at-risk students to be positively impacted socially as well as academically. If the mentoring program for the at-risk student population is successful, this professional development program could be expanded to include mentors serving other students and may serve as an exemplar for other schools with the same dynamics.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Once this project is completed, I plan to promote school-based mentoring through mentor professional development in my district. I hope to inform the educational community of innovative ways to promote positive personal and social development for at-risk students. I would like this project to be used to assist schools with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students. A goal of this project is to advocate positive social change for educators who strive to improve the self-efficacy of students who are at risk and need self-motivation skills.

This project has the potential to support social change at other schools in America. Initially, this project focused on helping at-risk students. However, this project can be used for all students in the school system, depending on the availability and willingness of teachers and vetted volunteers to enter into mentoring relationships. This project's framework can be used as a blueprint for other mentor professional development programs. This project can be applied as an intervention resource for at-risk students. This project can be applied, revised, and extended based on feedback from the participants. This project should not be considered the only resource for at-risk students, but it will be the exemplar for future interventions.

Educators continuously search for ways to increase at-risk students' self-efficacy levels. Educators need specific interventions to assist them with these at-risk students. Providing a program that offers a way to improve these students' self-efficacy is one method of meeting all at-risk students' needs in today's schools and is the focus of this project study. It is hoped that this project study will have a positive effect on the school's

knowledge and effectiveness in implementing the mentoring program as an intervention during the school year. These improvements should positively affect students' self-efficacy and possibly lead to district-wide implementation of the mentoring program.

This project demonstrates how a solution can come from identifying a local problem and collecting data to decide the best direction to solve the problem based on perspectives of those who are close to the core of the problem. Future research could build on the mentoring program to evaluate how it may support positive social change in other schools, and with different student populations. This project could be used in settings with similar identified needs. The mentoring training could be updated to support students who are not at-risk. The mentoring training design can be replicated for students of different ages.

Conclusion

The creation of this project study was extremely difficult at times. From beginning to end, my passion for helping at-risk students was the driving force. The idea for this project study began with my difficulties as a teacher in trying to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students in my classroom. This project study gave me the opportunity to explore current research on the problem. To my astonishment, there was a great amount of information on interventions to improve at-risk students' self-efficacy in various databases. This project study has truly given me the skills to conduct research for future issues in education.

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Appendix A: The Project

School-Based Mentoring for Improving the Self-Efficacy of At-Risk Students Professional Development

Introduction

Table of Contents

Mission Statement (trainer will explain to participants)

The vision of the mentoring program is that students will experience greater academic success through quality mentoring relationships. The mission of the program is to foster quality mentoring relationship between adult and at-risk students.

Program Goals (trainer will explain to participants)

The short-term goals of the school-based mentoring program are as follows:

- Provide at-risk students with a mentor to guide them
- Provide the school with a research-based intervention to help at-risk students
- Provide at-risk students with an evidence-based intervention that may help improve their self-efficacy

The project's long term goal is to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students so they may be successful in their academic pursuits.

Criteria for Mentors (trainer will explain to participates)

The school-based mentoring program will recruit teachers and staff to become volunteer mentors. By utilizing the staff at the school, the program will ensure that mentors are more accessible to the students. In the event of not being able to recruit staff members, the school will utilize the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) list comprising parents and community partners who donate their time, resources, and knowledge in support of the school's primary goal to increase student achievement.

Candidates must meet certain criteria in order to become mentors. The criteria are as follows:

- Commit at least six-months to develop and maintain a mentor relationship with a youth
- Agree to be present for all mentor training sessions
- Meet with mentee on a weekly basis
- Support mentee in problem solving issues that stand in the way of their success at school
- Keep time logs and other information as requested by mentor coordinator.

Mentor Professional Development

Objective: Participants will receive instruction on mentor skills, mission of the program, role of mentors, how to support youth, developmental stages of youth, how to communicate with youth, and how to utilize trust-building skills. The program coordinator and assistant program coordinator will conduct workshop sessions for the mentors. All participants will receive a workshop agenda and handouts for each day.

Training Time: 18 hours over three 6 hour sessions

Day 1

Program Description: 30 minutes

- Describe the benefits of mentoring.
- Describe the mission and goals of the program.
- Describe Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.
- Provide an overview of the target group of students being serviced.
- Describe the desired outcome and length of mentoring service.
- Provide support and evaluation procedures.
- Outline the time commitment requirements. Specify the one hour per week requirement, the importance of consistency, and the importance of being engaged with the mentees.

Breakout Session 30 minutes

- Break the participants into groups of 3 or 4.
- Assign each group a concept from the program description.
- Ask them to create an outline of the information for their concept.

- Have each group present their outline.

Role of Mentors: 60 minutes

- Participants will be asked to remember when they were the same age as the mentees and to think of one person who they considered to be a mentor to them.
- Participants will write down the qualities of the person they identified as a mentor. Participants will share their qualities with the class. These qualities will be written down on chart paper in front of the room for all to view. As each quality is mentioned, a check will be place next to that quality.
- Participants will discuss the role they will play in the mentee's lives and techniques/skills they can use to accomplish that role. The training handout will include information on "What a mentor is and what a mentor is not." The session will demonstrate only pro-social behaviors.

Supporting the Youth: 60 minutes

- Provide participants with inspirational quotes on what a caring adult can do for a child (This will be located in the participants handout).
- Lead a discussion about positive youth development.
- Access: www.search-institute.org and project it on the overhead projector to discuss the assets essential to fostering healthy growth and development in children.

Let participates break for one hour lunch

Development of Youth: 60 minutes

- Review the difference between a developmental mentor versus the prescriptive mentor.
- Explain to participants that the developmental mentor focuses on supporting the mentee by providing overall guidance and support, whereas the prescriptive mentoring who seeks to “fix” issues with the mentee. Mentors must understand that quality mentoring relationships are developmental and that mentors are not “fixers.”

Communicating: 120 minutes

- Have a participant volunteer to role play active listening and inactive listening. The rest of the participants will write the characteristics from the active listening role play that evidenced good listening skills. They will do the same for inactive listening. The characteristics will be written and shared on a flipchart for each type of listening to be used as a reference during the discussion on communicating.
- Facilitate a discussion on the importance of active listening when communicating with their mentee. Active listening skills include: concentrating on the mentee, making eye contact (not looking away), using open body language (facing student, relaxed arms, smiles, nods, leaning in), paraphrasing for understanding, and asking clarifying questions.
- Have participant pair up and role play mentor/mentee communication using the active listening skills discussed in this part of the training. Assess the skills during training session two.

Wrap up 15 minutes

Review the content in training day one. Create wall space in the room where participants can write two ideas they learned from the day's training that will help participants with mentoring. They will share their ideas with the group. Answer any questions participants may have

Training Day 2

Review and Assess Active Listening and Communication: 60 minutes

- Have participants review the active listening skills from training day 1. After the review, assess participants' ability to demonstrate active listening.
- Have participants pair up and take turns playing the role of the mentor and mentee. Program Coordinator and Assistant Program Coordinator will assess active listening using a checklist **(trainer please use the checklist on next page)**.
- Have participants demonstrating a minimum of four active listening skills during the three to five minute role-play to determine competency in active listening.
- Remediate participants demonstrating less than four active listening skills during the role-play and repeat their assessment until they have demonstrated competency.

Functional Listening Checklist

Participants should show at least 4 functional listening skills during the role-play activity. The checklist below will be used by the trainers to assess participant's competency.

Scoring Card	
Name_____	Total Score_____
Maintain eye contact	_____
Open body language	_____
Attention on mentee	_____
Paraphrasing	_____
Clarifying questions	_____

Positive comments _____

Building Trust: 90 minutes

- Introduce the trust building process.
- Ask participants to think back to their childhood and recall relationships they had with an adult who made an impact on them when they were eight to twelve years old.
- Have a discussion on the following questions: What was the length of the relationship? How long did it take for you to trust the adult? What were some reasons you begin to trust the adult?
- Highlight the necessary points of building trust in mentoring relationships such as: refraining from playing the authoritative role, being a functional listener, ensuring consistency and dependability, utilizing engaging icebreaker activities, placing importance on mentee's opinions, allowing the mentee to help determine the activities, and providing opportunities for humor and fun.
- Explain trust within the context of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters (2009) volunteer training guide section on "Best Practices in Mentoring."
- Explain that the Big Brothers and Big Sisters "Best Practices in Mentoring" model might help them better understand their mentor experiences, but may or may not reflect their experiences with their mentee.
- Discuss respecting values of others as a trust-building skill.

Assessment Activity on Trust and Rapport Building: 60 minutes

- Have participants complete a written exercise explaining four components of trust building.
- Have participants' competence in trust-building assessed using a checklist. They must identify at least four trust building skills in the written exercise.
- Remediate participants' scoring less than four components and repeat the assessment until competence is reached.

Trust and Rapport Building Checklist

Participants should demonstrate at least 4 skills in trust building through a written exercise.

The checklist below will be used by the trainers to assess participant's competency.

Scoring Card

Name_____ Total Score_____

Uses functional listening	_____
Uses engaging ice-breaker activities	_____
Encourages humor and fun	_____
Ensure consistency and dependability	_____
Includes mentee in decisions	_____
Demonstrating respect of opinions	_____

Breakout Session

Mentoring/Mentee Activities 60 minutes

- Provide handout on the 52 mentoring activities from connecting generations.org.
- Have the participants read through the activities.
- Divide the participants into groups of 3 to 4 people.
- Have each group choose at least 3 activities from the handout.
- Have each group create a chart on how they would conduct each activity.

Let participants break for one hour lunch

Present mentoring Activity 60 minutes

- Have each group place their charts around the room.
- Have each group present the activities they chose and how they will implement the activities.

Wrap Up 30 minutes

Review the content in training day two. Create wall space in the room where participants can write two ideas they learned from the day's training that will help participants with mentoring. They will share their ideas with the group. Answer any questions participants may have. Let Participants know day three will focus on empowering their mentee, goal setting, mentor support, and closure.

Training Day 3

Empowering Youth: Solving Problems versus Giving Advice 30 minutes

- Have participants write the difference between solving problems and giving advice on a sticky note.
- Have each participant place their ideas on the charts for solving problems and giving advice.
- Share participants' ideas with the whole group and allow participants to justify their responses.
- Provide participants with the handout that outlines the affects solving problems and giving advice have on the mentor relationship.

Breakout Session 45 minutes

Explanations of the Effects Solving problems and Giving Advice

- Have participants pair up with another participant.
- Have each pair choose one effect from solving problems and giving advice.
- Ask each pair to create a poster explaining each effect.
- Have participants share their posters and explanations with the group.

Setting Goals with Your Mentee 45 minutes

- Discuss possible goals and outcomes for mentoring relationships.
- Have participants write on chart part how they can elicit the goals and outcomes discussed.
- Provide participants with a handout, which specifies questions they can ask their mentee to aid with setting goals and outcomes.

Mentor Support 60 minutes

- Allow mentors to discuss types of support systems they feel should be in place throughout the mentoring relationship.
- Have the participants share their discussions with the whole group.
- Have each table create a skit modeling one way that the mentoring relationship can be supported.
- Provide a handout of different ways the mentoring relationship will be supported throughout the year.

Let participants break for one hour lunch

Closure/ When and How to Let Go 60 minutes

- Discuss the importance of closure with their mentee.
- Have participants share how closure should happen at the end of the year.
- Provide participants with the guidelines to proper closure of the mentoring relationship.
- Ask each group to provide an explanation for each step and why it is important to the closure of the relationship.

Explanation of Forms/Schedules 60 minutes

- Explain the mentoring schedule for the year
- Mentoring logs
- Feedback forms

Wrap Up/Evaluation 60 minutes

- Have participants complete the professional development evaluation form
- Have each table discuss what they look forward to and what they are nervous about.
- Share their reflections with the whole group
- Have participants asked questions about any topic they would like clarification on.

Professional Development Handouts And Materials

Please use the following materials throughout the workshop. These materials will guide you through the entire workshop.

Mentor Training Day 1 Agenda

I. Program Description

II. Breakout Session

III. Role of Mentors

IV. Supporting Youth

V. Lunch

VI. Development of Youth

VII. Communication with Youth

VIII. Wrap-Up

Mentor Training Day 1 Handout

Program Description

Benefits of School-Based Mentoring:

- Mentors are easily accessible to mentees
- Mentors/Mentees achieve personal growth
- Mentees develop a better attitude toward school
- Mentees improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Mentees improve academically
- Mentees improve peer and parental relationships

Can you think of any other benefits school-based mentoring may have on students?

Share with the group. 

Mission Statement

The vision of the program is for students to experience greater academic success. The program's mission is to foster quality mentoring relationships between adults and at-risk students.

Program Goals

The short-term goals of the professional development training guide is as follows:

- Provide at-risk students with a mentor to guide them towards academic success
- Provide the school with a research-based intervention
- Provide at-risk students with an intervention that may help improve their self-efficacy

The project's long term goal is to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students so they may be successful in their academic pursuits.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in his/her ability to accomplish a desired outcome. Those who do not have a high self-efficacy give little effort to their endeavors because they feel their efforts will be futile. Academic self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief that he/she can complete an academic task. At-risk students usually have a low academic self-efficacy because of repeated failure.

Share with your table your experience with low and high self-efficacy. Have you ever experienced low self-efficacy? Have you ever experienced high self-efficacy? How did it feel when you experienced low self-efficacy as opposed to high self-efficacy?

Target Group

The target group is at-risk students. At risk students are those students who have consistently experienced academic difficulty in school, have repeated a grade, or continuously acquire failing grades. Initially, the mentoring program will focus on students in grades 3 through 5; ages 8 through 12. If the program proves to be successful, other grade levels might be involved.

Desired Outcome and Minimum Length of Mentoring

The desired outcome of the mentoring relationship is to improve the self-efficacy of the students being mentored. Mentors must make at least a six month commitment to developing and maintaining a mentoring relationship with the mentee.

Support and Evaluation Procedures

Support from the Program Coordinator and Assistant Program Coordinator will be available on a continuous basis. Ongoing evaluations will help to determine whether the mentoring program is meeting the needs of the students. The mentor will complete a feedback form after every mentoring session. The questions on this form will provide information about the mentoring session and will ask mentees to rate the session on various criteria. At the end of the school year the mentor will complete a Program Evaluation form. This form will collect summative data in order to help improve the mentoring program for the following year.

Time Commitment

All mentors are expected to meet once a week for one hour. It is important to be on time to the meeting with your mentee and to be engaged. Successful mentoring is about quality interactions. These interactions must be consistent throughout the program. If you are consistently missing meetings with your mentee, it sends a message that you do not want to meet or you do not value the relationship. A mentor who is consistently missing meetings will no longer be able to continue as a mentor. Please adhere to your commitment responsibilities

During your breakout session create an outline with the information from one concept about the program description. You group will present the outline to the entire group.

Role of the Mentor

A mentor is . . .	**A mentor is not . . .**
A friend	A surrogate parent
A coach	A tutor (although mentors can help with school work)
A supporter	
A motivator	A psychologist
An advisor	An Automated Teller Machine
An advocate	A savior
A role model	A professional counselor
A companion	A social worker
A listener	

As a mentor, you are expected to do the following:

- Commit at least six-months to develop and maintain a mentor relationship with a youth
- Agree to be present for all mentor training sessions
- Meet with mentee on a weekly basis

- Support mentee in problem solving issues that stand in the way of their success at school
- Keep time logs and other information as requested by mentor coordinator.

Supporting Youth

Inspirational Quotes

"Every child is just one caring adult away from being a success story"----John Shipp

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them"----Lady Bird Johnson

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in, which it treats its children"----Nelson Mandela

"Children must be taught how to think not what to think"----Margaret Mead

"Children need models rather than critics"----Joseph Joubert

"Every child you encounter is a divine appointment"----Wess Stafford

Developing Youth

Developmental Mentors	Prescriptive Mentors
Ask the mentee what activities he/she would like to participate in during the mentoring meeting	Tell the mentee what activities he/she will participate in during the mentoring meeting
Listen to what the mentee has to say	Give advice more than listen
Play games and talk casually	Conduct activities on what the mentor thinks the mentee needs
Do not press mentee to discuss personal issues	Push the mentee to talk personal issues
Allow the mentee bring up issues and concerns about his or her life naturally	Try to "fix" the mentee's problems
Build the mentee's confidence to be	

successful	

Communicating

You will role play with a partner to practice active listening and inactive listening skills. One of you will play the part of the active listener and the other will play the part of the inactive listener. You will switch roles and repeat this exercise so each person participates in each role. After you role play, write down the active listening skills on the chart below. You follow the same procedures for the inactive listening skills.

Active Listening Skills	Inactive Listening Skills

We will discuss the active listening skills necessary during the mentoring relationship. If you already have the skill on your chart, circle that skill. If you do not have the skill on your chart, add that skill to your chart.

Wrap Up

Write down the 2 most valuable concepts you learned in today's training. Share those ideas with your table and leave the papers on the table before you leave.

Mentoring Training Day 2 Agenda

I. Review and Assess Active Listening and Communication

II. Building Trust

III. Assessment Activity on Trust and Rapport Building

IV. Breakout Session

V. Mentor/Mentee Activities

VI. Wrap Up/Evaluation

Mentor Training Day 2 Handout

Review and Assess Active Listening and Communication

At your table, discuss the active listening skills you learned from the last training session. You will be asked to role play the mentor or mentee. Using a checklist, the program coordinator and assistant coordinator will assess your knowledge of active listening and provide you with feedback.

Building Trust

1. **Be fully present with the youth –** Avoid being distracted by your own thoughts. Do not use your cell phone.
2. **See the mentee as a person** - First, get to know the mentee. Discover his or her uniqueness as a person and provide encouragement.
3. **Consistency** - Keep your visits with the mentee consistent. Follow through with things you say you will do.
4. **Be yourself** - Be genuine. Be translucent so that the mentee wants to connect with you.
5. **Set a good example -** Be an example of a trustworthy and respectful person. Your mentee notices everything you do.

Assessment Activity on Trust Building

You will be assessed on the trust building skills above. Through a written exercise, you will explain 4 components of trust building. The Program Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator will use a checklist to assess your written responses. Remember trust building is one of the most important components of the mentoring relationships.

Read through the 52 mentoring activities mentors can do with their mentee. You and your group will choose at least 3 activities. Some activities will need to be modified depending on the age of your mentee. Decide how you will go about implementing each activity. Your group will present how you want to implement each activity.

52 Mentor Activities: An activity for each week!

Feel free to change the activities to fit your mentee's interest, or come up new activities!

1) "Mentees are teachers!" Let your mentee plan to teach you something they are knowledgeable about, and let them teach it.

2) "Go on a trip!" Not really of course, but choose a place you have always wanted to visit (Fiji, Greece, Disney World) find pictures and fun facts in magazines, books and online. When is the best time to go? What do you want see while you are there? Then make your own scrapbook or travelers guide. A great way to explore and learn geography!

3) Play the "Who, what, when, where, why, how" game. Rip 6 pieces of paper and on each write "who", "what", "when", "where", "why" and "how". Read a story, and take turns drawing one of the pieces of paper and answering a made up "who", "what", "when", "where", "why" or "how" about the story.

4) "Learn a language!" Learn Sign language, Spanish, Latin or Pig Latin! Teach each other a new word or phrase at each session. Write them down to keep track and see how many you can remember.

5) “Show and Tell!” You and your mentee can both bring in photos or items that important to you.

6) Set a goal

7) “Act it out!” Go to the library find a play, and read it out loud.

8) Make your own board game.

9) You can each make a list of 25 things you want to do or accomplish during your lifetime and share it with one another.

10) “Write a letter!” Talk to your school’s mentor coordinator about finding a pen pal for you and your mentee at their school (the principal or guidance counselor). a. For younger students you can work on your letter together letting them dictate to you or maybe help to write.

11) “Serve!” Come up with a service project you can do at your mentee’s school. Plant flowers or plan to read to a lower grade.

12) “Rubber Egg?!” Do the rubber egg experiment or another egg experiment. Plan it out, come up with a hypothesis and make sure to get permission from your mentor coordinator. (http://www.eggs.ab.ca/kids/Egg%20Science/splash.htm)

13) “Check mate!” Teach each other how to play chess or checkers, get a book from the library to figure out how.

14) “Extra, extra!” Pretend you are a news paper reporter and schedule to interview someone interesting in your school. Prepare a list of questions with your mentee and see if you can set- up an interview with a teacher, the school nurse, the PE teacher or the principal.

15) Make a bird feeder. Do your research on what types of birds are in your area. Find out about each bird's preferred habitat and diet. With the right food, you may be able to attract some birds that you don't normally see otherwise.

16) “Story Swap!” Starts writing a story with your mentee, then each take turns taking the story home and adding new fun twist and turns to the story.

17) “What is onomatopoeia? Find out!” Each of you seek out new and interesting English words and share them at your next session. Make your own book of definitions.

18) “What’s your plan?” Make a timeline of your life over the next 5-10 years. What do you want to accomplish by the time you are 10, 16, 18 and 25?

19) “Make a collage!” Choose a theme like: “What do I want in my future?”, “What is fashion“, “What I want to be”, and find pictures and words in old magazines and glue them on paper. a. For younger students you can collage a specific letter and cut pictures out that begin with that letter.

20) “Play!” Learn how to play a new sport. Look up the rules, find clips, etc of how to play cricket, hacky sack, or water polo.

21) Make a kite

22) Play Frisbee

23) Make a scrapbook or photo album

24) “Knit or Crochet!” Find books in the library or clips online on how to do it, and learn how together!

25) Paper Airplanes! Find a book or website about how to make different kinds of paper airplanes, and have a contest to see whose goes the farthest!

26) Discuss a current event

27) “Take a tour!” Let your mentee give you a tour of their school.

28) “Help wanted!” Fill out mock applications for jobs or help your mentee create their résumé. (http://sbandcompany.com/images/practice-employmentapp.pdf or http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/a/sampleapp.htm) If the mentor has a résumé you may want to bring it, and share it with your mentee (Be sure to remove any personal information).

29) “Solve it!” You and your mentee both take time making up your own math worksheets, then swap sheets, set the timer and see how many each of you can get done. This is most beneficial as a skill/self-esteem building activity if the mentor makes sure the math problems they create are on their mentee’s math level. Your mentee will get a kick out of making your problems as difficult as they can!

30) Organize! Assist your mentee in organizing school work and developing study schedules.

31) Take your mentee’s spelling words and cut the letters to spell each word out of news papers, magazines, and pictures (when applicable), etc. and make spelling word flashcards.

32) Play tic-tac-toe or the dot game

33) Go bird watching- or virtual bird watching.

34) Learn how to make Origami

35) Every day is a holiday! Make a card or draw a picture for any upcoming holiday like Arbor Day, or Talk like a Pirate Day

36) Write a haiku

37) Write a rap or a different style of song, especially as a method to help them remember key facts for a test or spelling words.

38) Play 20 questions

39) Put together a puzzle or make your own.

40) Learn to play a new card game like “I declare war”, “Go Fish”, Hearts, Gin Rummy, Memory, Old Maid

41) Play hangman

42) Create a flip book

43) Learn to play chess

44) Play Sudoku

45) Practice positive imagery and relaxation techniques with your mentee. Find an area you would like to work on or improve and use positive imagery to start to make it happen!

46) Do a crossword puzzle or word search, or make your own!

47) Take turns reading a page, paragraph or sentence from funny story aloud.

48) Walk on the playground and find as many leaves as possible and then try to find, which trees your leaves came from.

49) Teach your mentee a clapping game.

50) Make your family trees.

51) Play charades.

52) “It’s a mystery!” Write down a list of 10 things you’ve always wanted to know. “Why is it dark at night?” “How does a car work?” “How does an airplane fly?” Go to the library or go to the internet and figure out the answers**!**

Mentoring Training Day 3

I. Empowering Youth: Solving Problems versus Giving Advice

II. Effects of Solving Problems and Giving Advice

III. Setting Goals with Your Mentee

IV. Mentor Support

V. Closure/ When and How to Let Go

VI. Explanation of Forms/Schedules

VII. Wrap Up/Evaluation

Empowering Youth: Solving Problems versus Giving Advice

Write on a sticky note the difference between solving problems and giving advice. Place your sticky note on the chart in the front of the room. Be prepared to justify your idea.

Effects of Solving Problems versus Giving Advice

Solving Problems	Giving Advice
Active youth	Youth is passive, possibly resistant
Opens lines of communication	Cuts off further exploration of problem
Eliminates timing problem	Often premature
Youth learns	Youth doesn't learn
Solution belongs to youth	Can impose mentor's solution on youth's problem
Fosters self-esteem	Does not encourage self-esteem

Pair up with another participant and choose one effect from solving problems and one effect from giving advice. You will create a poster explaining each effect. Be prepared to share it with the whole group.

Setting Goals with Your Mentee

What are some possible goals and outcomes of your mentoring relationship? Share your ideas with the group.

Your group will use the chart paper at your table to write down ways you can elicit goals and outcomes in your mentoring relationship.

Clarify Goals and Outcomes

- What do you really want to accomplish?
- What is important about this accomplishment to you?
- What ways can you go about getting what you want to accomplish?
- What resources can you use to get what you want?
- Do you know someone that has achieved this accomplishment, and how did they do it?
- Is this accomplishment possible to achieve?
- Is the accomplishment sustainable by you?
- Considering what it will take and the possible consequences, is the outcome worth it?

Mentor Support

What type of systems do you think should be in place to support the mentoring relationship? Share your ideas with the whole group.

Create a skit with your table modeling one way the mentoring relationship can be supported.

Mentor Support Resources

The Mentor Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator will support you throughout the duration of your relationship with your mentee. The following support will be given:

- Monthly “check-in” calls from the Mentor Coordinator
- Telephone numbers with other mentors for support, sharing, and organizing group activities.
- Advanced mentor trainings
- Group support meetings with mentee and mentors during the school year.
- Mentor Newsletter once a month with mentor tips, successful match stories, and upcoming events.

Closure/When and How to Let Go

Why is closure important? How should you close the mentoring relationship at the end of the year? Share your ideas with the group.

Closure Guidelines

Mentors should:

- Provide youth notice before the mentor relationship ends.
- Help youth prepare for feelings such as denial or anger.
- Monitor feelings you may have about the relationship.
- Discuss youth's progress and strengths.
- Provide reassurance aboutt what they have learned and aree capable of.
- Discuss future directions of the mentoring relationship..
- Provide rreassurance youth of your confidence in him/her.
- Plan closure activities that are fun.

Provide an explanation for each step in the closure process. Write the explanations on paper and prepare to discuss with the whole group.

Explanation of Forms/Schedules

Mentoring Schedule 2016 – 2017 School Year

Mentoring meetings will take place every Tuesday from 3:45p.m. – 4:45p.m.

September Dates
4th
11th
18th
25th

October Dates
6th
13th
20th
27th

November Dates
1st
8th
15th

December Dates
6th
13th

January Dates
3rd
10th
17th
24th
30th

February Dates
7th
14th
21st
28th

March Dates
7th
21st
28th

April Dates
4th
11th
18th
25th

May Dates
2nd
9th
16th
23rd

Mentoring Activity Log

Month /Year _____

Mentor Name	Date	Hours spent with Mentee	Frequency of Meetings	Activity	Comments

Wrap Up/Evaluation

Complete the mentoring evaluation form. Be as honest as you can. Give the form to the Mentor Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator.

Mentor Professional Development Evaluation

Date: _____

Please complete the following questions. Your comments are valuable to us.

Please circle appropriate response:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The workshop was designed properly (pacing, adequate time for Q&A, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I received information that answered my questions about mentoring.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The materials and handouts provided useful content both in the session and for future reference.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The trainer(s) was/were knowledgeable and helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have a better sense of what it takes to be a	1	2	3	4	5

mentor.					
6. The workshop met the stated objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This workshop was valuable and I would recommend it to others.	1	2	3	4	5

8. Was there anything you would have liked to spend more time on? What? Why?

9. Was there anything you would have liked to spend less time on? What? Why?

10. What did you like best about the training?

11. What two things could you suggest to improve the training?

12. Please let us know of any additional training topics you would like to see offered.

Questions and Comments

Are there any questions or comments you have about any training topics or materials?

What do you look forward to and what are you nervous about?

Share your reflections with the group.

References

Big Brothers Big Sisters (2015). Volunteer training guide best practices in mentoring. Southeastern Pennsylvania. Retrieved from http://www.bbbs.org/atf/cf/%7B56DF195F-282E-4C69-8BC0-571E3952E371%7D/2009%20Volunteer%20Handbook.pdf.

Cannata, A., & Garringer, Michael (2006). Preparing participants for mentoring: the u.s. department of education mentoring program's guide to initial training of volunteers, youth, and parents. Mentoring Resource Center in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

Creative Mentoring Activity Guide, retrieved from. http://www.connecting-generations.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/52-mentor-activities.pdf

52 Mentor Activities: An activity for each week! http://www.connecting-generations.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/52-mentor-activities.pdf

Appendix B: Consent Form

Goal of the Study

The goal is to choose five teachers from various grade levels to participate in an interview process. One teacher from pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, or fifth grade will be chosen.

You are invited to participate in a project study interview about teacher perceptions on positively impacting the self-efficacy of at-risk elementary students. Please read this form in its entirety and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be part of the interview.

Criteria for Study Participation

Criteria for participation in this study will be (a) classroom teachers at the school, (b) a willingness to be interviewed after school, and (c) willingness to sign an informed consent form (Appendix A) and share honest perceptions on the topic of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project study is to identify teachers' perceptions on implementing interventions to positively effecting and improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students at the school.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview will last about 30 minutes. All interviews will take place at the school during afterschool hours in a locked classroom for privacy. I will take the draft of the findings to the participants for member checking. During member checking participants will be

able to comment on the researcher's interpretation of the study. Any discrepant situations will be corrected by the researcher. Participants will be given one week to complete member checking.

Voluntary Nature

Participation in the interview is voluntary. There will be no type of compensation such as monetary or gifting. Again, your participation is solely voluntary You may decide not to participate in the interview, or stop the interview at any time. Your decision to do so will not affect your relationship with the school or the researcher. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop it at any time. You may skip any questions, which you think might be too personal.

Confidentiality

Any information you give will be confidential. The researcher will not use your name or any identifiable information in the reports of the project study. All information you provide will be solely used for the project study.

Risk and Benefits

The risks for participation in this project study are minimal. You might feel stressed during the interview and may stop the interview at any time. The benefit of this study for you as a participant may be providing you with interventions you can use in your classrooms to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students in your classroom. This study could benefit the educational system as a whole by possibly providing interventions that might be beneficial to at-risk students' self-efficacy.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is a doctoral student pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. The researcher is a current teacher at the school. However, the researcher's role as a teacher is not connected to this study and has nothing to do with the study.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher's name is Natalie Giddens. You may contact the researcher at _____. The researcher's doctoral chair committee members are Dr. Stacy Wahl at_____ and Dr. Richard Braley at _____. You may also contact the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@waldenu.edu. You will receive a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

___ I have read the information above and I am clear on all information regarding the interview that will be conducted.

Participant's Printed Name_____

Participant's Signature_____

Researcher's Printed Name_____

Researcher's Signature_____

Appendix C: District Consent Form to Conduct Research

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
HATTIE MAE WHITE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER
4400 WEST 18th STREET • HOUSTON, TEXAS 77092-8501

TERRY B. GRIER, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Carla J. Stevens
Assistant Superintendent
Research and Accountability Department
Tel: 713-556-6700 • Fax: 713-556-6730

September 19, 2014

Natalie Giddens
Teacher, Grissom Elementary
818 Richcrest Dr. Apt 909
Houston, TX 77060

Dear Ms. Giddens:

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is pleased to approve the research "Teacher Perceptions on Implementation of Interventions Positively Impacting the Self-Efficacy of At-Risk Elementary Students." The purpose of this research study is to explore teachers' perceptions on implementing research-based interventions to improve the self-efficacy of at-risk students at a Houston urban school. The projected date of study completion is December 15 of 2014.

Approval to conduct the study in HISD is contingent on your meeting the following conditions:

- The target population is teachers at Grissom Elementary. The principal has provided written support for this study.
- Teachers will be asked to participate in a semi-structured, in person, one-to-one interview outside of work hours.
- Teachers will provide active, informed consent for participation in the study. Signatures of informed consent must be obtained and copies provided to participants.
- Interviews will last two weeks and will be recorded and transcribed within two days of each interview.
- Interview audio recordings will be coded for themes using qualitative methodology.
- Interview audio recordings will be stored on audio tapes on the researcher's computer with password protection.
- Paper data will be stored in the researcher's home in a locked file cabinet by a key that belongs solely to the researcher. All raw data will be kept up to 5 years. After which, the researcher will shred all paper data and audio tapes will be unspooled and taken to a recognized electronic disposal facility.
- The researcher is responsible for data collection. A fee may be assessed if the HISD Department of Research and Accountability assists in the data collection process.
- This project does not interfere with the District's instructional/testing program.
- The researcher must follow the guidelines of HISD and Walden University regarding the protection of human subjects and confidentiality of data. The HISD signed letter of agreement must be submitted prior to initiating the study.
- While the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University is responsible for oversight of the study, the HISD Department of Research and Accountability will also monitor the study to ensure compliance to ethical conduct guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) as well as the disclosure of student records outlined in Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Data will only be reported in statistical and qualitative summaries that preclude the identification of the district or any school participating in the study. Participants and school shall not be identified by name. Pseudonyms or non-identifying naming conventions must be used.
- In order to eliminate potential risks to study participants, the reporting of proposed changes in research activities must be promptly submitted to the HISD Department of Research and Accountability for

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What type of activities or interventions have you implemented in your classroom to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students?
2. Do you feel the school is in need of implementing interventions to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students? Why? or Why Not?
3. What are your perceptions on implementing a mentoring program at the school to aid in improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
4. What are your perceptions on implementing the counselor to help with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
5. What are your perceptions on implementing an after-school program specifically for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?
6. Can you think of any other interventions to implement for improving the self-efficacy of the at-risk students at the school? If so, please explain?

Appendix E: Open Coding

Q1. What type of activities or interventions have you implemented in y our classroom to improve the self-efficacy of your at-risk students?

Open Codes	Properties	Example of Participants Words
Changes to classroom environment	Make modifications to the classroom for at-risk students	"First initially I set in explicit expectations and routines" "I also introduce small groups during the stations" "I use peer on peer support" "I do a lot of ice breakers so that the kids can release and expose different things they are comfortable with about themselves" "I like to practice shortening time on assignments for certain kids" "We do kinesthetics and they stand up they sit down" "I like to use different areas of my room so we don't learn in one place" "They can stand if they like, they can sit, they can lay down, they can bring pillows, just making sure that I'm keeping them focused by allowing them to kind of release some of the energy they have" "I shorten assignments for

		them” “I give them a little longer time to complete their work” “I usually give them jobs try to give them some type of responsibility in the class” “Try to call on them a little bit more” “I put them in small group” “Work with them one on one” “Allow them them to work with a partner” “Allow them additional time to finish assignments” “Student to student activities”
Changes to classroom Curriculum	Make modifications to the classroom curriculum for at-risk students	“I teach the vocabulary” “I bridge into the lesson” “Workstations giving them a different variety of the same lesson easy to medium to hard at some point in the year” “We use video so that kids can make connections to the real world” “I give them activities that are geared toward their

		level”
Motivation in the Classroom	Motivate the at-risk students within the classroom to give them encouragement	“Give them encouraging words” “Give them different strategies” “I make it a big deal so they can get that little small glory onto themselves” “We have a little contract that we usually use and it depends on their behavior in class or if it’s something academic, then we’ll try and set goals that we want to achieve” “We try and do one on one conferences with them” “rewards to prompt them to be successful” “One to One and group activities to encourage them”

Q2: Do you feel the school is in need of implementing interventions to improve the self-efficacy of the at-risk students? And if so why or why not?

Open Codes	Properties	Examples of Participants Words
One on One	One on one help for at-risk students	“One on one if that is an option” “I think the at-risk kids need face to face contact” “I think the kids need to be

		pulled outside of the classroom to have that one on one time with somebody else other than the teacher" "more time with someone outside the classroom" "meeting someone on a daily basis just to come and check on them" "I think they should implement more staff that can spend one on one with students that are at-risk" "I feel if the school would supply the man power for others to come in and work with those kids one on one"
Motivation	Interventions that motivate the at-risk students	"I feel if we as a school build this community of praise to help the kid feel great" "I still think their should be some kind of extra focus on motivation"

Q3: What are your perceptions on implementing a mentoring program at the school to aid in improving the self-efficacy of the at-risk students?

Open Coding	Properties	Examples of Participants Words
Advantages of mentoring	Reasons why mentoring would be beneficial to the at-risk student	"I feel as though it will be great to have a mentor program at the school to help build those positive behaviors" "kids can have that someone they can lean on to give them that push" "I think they need to be

		exposed to different type of careers" "Someone outside of their daily schedule here at the school would be good" "I just think with one on one time they'll feel special to be pulled out" "I think that's a good idea because they bring in different backgrounds that they can assist the kids in"
Disadvantages of mentoring	Reasons why mentoring would not be beneficial to the at-risk students	"I think people coming in and out leaves a disconnect"
Mentoring set-up	The way the mentoring program should be set-up?	"quality of the mentor" "there should be a screening process or criteria that needs to be met for the mentors" "a number cap" "if there is a mentoring program here it should be based here" "People within the school" ""my idea would be bringing in the older kids"

Q4: What are your perceptions on implementing the counselor to help with improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

Open Coding	Properties	Examples of Participants Words
Advantages of the	Reasons why the school	"I think that really would

counselor	counselor would be beneficial to at-risk students	help by having small group sessions with other students" "somebody that they can feel as if they can talk with" "the counselor can have them go over strategies " "The counselor would be a great idea because they are skilled in that area to know how to assist kids that are at-risk"
Disadvantages of the counselor	Reasons why the school counselor would not be beneficial to at-risk students	"I think elementary kids don't really need counseling" "try to use the counselor is difficult now because the counselor is doing so many different other things than just counseling"

Q5: What are your perceptions on implementing an afterschool program specifically for improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students?

Open Coding	Properties	Examples of Participants Words
Types of Afterschool Programs	Different afterschool programs to put in place	"maybe that afterschool program can be where people come in and help tutor" "I was speaking with another teacher about Big Brothers Big Sisters program, so having something like that afterschool"
Set-up	Afterschool set-up	"get the man power" "get teachers or adults or the community liaisons to dedicate and being consistent"

		"they can have them do different things they may need to catch up on in class" "get the proper people in place to assist the students that are at-risk"

Q6: Can you think of any other interventions to implement to improving the self-efficacy of at-risk students at the school? And if so please explain.

Open Coding	Properties	Examples of Participants Words
Other Interventions	Alternate interventions to implement at the school to help the at-risk students	"I know that there's a program called Big Brother Big Sisters" "Get like some older people that are more professional can come in and actually be a mentor to some of these children" "a combination of character education along with mentoring program and or Big Brother Big of Sisters" "I feel if they had more technology to assist the students" "have programs on the computer that can assist them assist their needs" "interview the child to first see who is closest to them to bring up that spirit out of them"
Social skills	Teach at-risk students skills	"I think teaching social

	to help them	skills, teaching independent life skills um maybe even vocational” “maybe some etiquette sort of a charm school” “extra-curricular activities maybe like fine arts and stuff like that” “something they can look forward to come to school for it could something where the rules and social skills could be taught”

Appendix F: Axial Coding and Selective Coding

Theme (axial coding)	**Evidence from participants interviews**
Mentoring as an intervention	"One on one if that is an option" "I think the at-risk kids need face to face contact" "I think the kids need to be pulled outside of the classroom to have that one on one time with somebody else other than the teacher" "more time with someone outside the classroom" "meeting someone on a daily basis just to come and check on them" "I think they should implement more staff that can do one on one with students that are at-risk" "I feel the school should supply the man power for others to come in and work with those kids one on one" "I feel as though if we as a school build like this community of praise to help the kid just feel great" "I still think there should be some kind of extra focus on motivation" "I feel as though it will be great to have a mentor program at the school to help build those positive um behaviors" "kids can have that someone they can lean on to give them that push" "Someone outside of their daily schedule here at the school would be good" "I just think that one on one time they'll feel

	special to be pulled out" "I think that's a good idea because they bring in different backgrounds that they can assist the kids in" "if there is a mentoring program here it should be based here" "People within the school whether they have a classroom or they utilize the building that's located on campus that's no longer being used. I think just kids trust when they see you" ""my idea would be bringing in the older kids" "I was speaking with another teacher about Big Brothers Big Sisters program, so having something like that afterschool" "I know that there's a program called Big Brother Big Sisters" "I know that there's a program called Big Brother Big Sisters. I don't know if it's here in Houston, I need to find out. But, I feel if we uh contact them to get like some older people that are more professional can come in and actually be a mentor to some of these children. Maybe they can take their time out of the day an hour and thirty minutes out of the day and talk to these kids and figure out what's going on with them. Just to have that outside boost." " Get like some older people that are more professional can come in and actually be a mentor to some of these children" "a combination of character education along with mentoring program and or Big Brother Big of Sisters" "One to One group activities uh to encourage them"

Counseling as an intervention *** ***	"I think that really would help by having small group sessions with other students" "somebody that they can feel as if they can talk with" "the counselor can do just have them be able to go over strategies " "The uh a counselor would be a great idea because they are skilled in that area to know how to assist kids that are at-risk" "I think elementary kids don't really need counseling" "try to use the counselor is difficult now because the counselor is doing so many different other things than just counseling"
Afterschool program as an intervention	"maybe that afterschool program be where people come in and help tutor" "they can have them do different things they may need to catch up on in class"
Other Interventions	"First initially I set in explicit expectations and routines" "I also introduce small groups during the stations" "I use peer on peer support" "I do a lot of ice breakers so that the kids can release and expose different things they are comfortable with about theirselves" "I like to practice shortening time on assignments for certain kids" "We do kinesthetics um they stand up they sit down"

	"I like to use different areas of my room so we don't learn in one place" "They can stand if they like, they can sit, they can lay down, they can bring pillows, so just making sure that I'm keeping them focused by allowing them to kind of release some of the energy they have" "I shorten assignments for them" "I give them a little longer time um to complete their work" "I usually give them jobs try to give them some type of responsibility to do in the class" "Try to call on them a little bit more" "I put them in small group" "Allow them them to work with a partner" "Allow them additional time to finish assignments" "Student to student activities" "I also try to teach before we get into the lesson" "I teach the vocabulary" "I bridge into the lesson" "Workstations giving them a different variety of the same lesson easy to medium to hard at some point in the year" "We use video so that kids can make connections to the real world" "I give them activities that are geared toward

	their level” “Give them different strategies” “I make it a big deal so they can get that little small glory onto theirselves” “We have a little contract that we usually do and depends on like if their misbehaving in class or um if its something academic, then we’ll try and set goals that we want to achieve” “I feel if they had more technology to assist the students” “have programs on the computer that can assist them assist their needs” “interview the child to first see who is closest to them to bring up that spirit out of them” “I think teaching social skills, teaching independent life skills um maybe even vocational” “maybe some etiquette sort of a charm school” “extra-curricular activities maybe like fine arts and stuff like that” “something they can look forward to come to school for it could something where the rules and social skills could be taught to the student”