

Navigating a commercial literacy program: A first-year teacher's self-efficacy journey

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 2009

M.S., Kansas State University, 2018

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

First-year teachers encounter many challenges throughout the beginning stages of their careers. One of those challenges relates to the navigation and implementation of district-mandated commercial literacy programs. When first-year teachers are expected to teach commercial literacy programs with fidelity, decisions about how to best implement the program to meet the needs of their specific group of students fall on their shoulders. Consequently, the level of a first-year teacher's self-efficacy impacts their decision making in terms of the navigation and implementation of the program. With current calls to action for a shift in the focus of reading instruction across the country, this study holds significance, especially in terms of first-year teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore and understand in what ways, if any, does a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy impact the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program. This qualitative single case study design was grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory, and employed Bandura's proposed four sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states) as theoretical constructs to analyze the data from three different collection methods. Seven themes emerged from the data: Responsive Teaching Practices, Parents, Mentors, Literacy Curriculum, Professional Development, Planning, and Affective Domain. These seven themes aligned with one or more of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion and mastery experiences were found to have the greatest amount of influence on the first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy in terms of her use of the commercial literacy program.

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Approved by:

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Dedication

To Jack—You never missed a “good job on finishing your paper” throughout the years.

I love you.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Personal Story

In 2011, I was a first-year teacher, teaching first grade. First grade is the year when many children begin learning to read. As their teacher, I felt a great deal of pressure to make sure I was able to provide them with the resources and instruction they needed to be successful. As someone who thrives off of systems, procedures, and order, I took our school district administration team's guidance to "teach with fidelity" very serious when it came to my literacy curriculum. I thought I was doing the right thing by following the curriculum to a tee, without modifying or supplementing—I didn't feel that I had "permission" to change anything. It became apparent that I wasn't meeting the needs of my students with my strictly linear approach to the curriculum. Something had to change.

It wasn't until my third year of teaching first grade when I began to feel a sense of ownership over the way in which I navigated our district's literacy curriculum. I started to experiment with supplemental materials, modified lessons, and rearranging how and when I taught certain parts of the curriculum. I had over two hours of literacy instruction to fit into a 90-minute reading block, which meant I needed to get creative and trust my own judgment when it came to fitting it all in. Getting creative was easy for me but trusting my own judgment was not. I constantly second-guessed myself as I began to implement my literacy instruction using different approaches. I remember thinking, "as soon as I figure out the most effective and efficient way to plan and execute my 90-minute reading block, I can close the book on it and move on to perfecting another subject". I felt as though there was a finish line that I was trying to get to and once I reached it, I'd be able to stop trying to find the answer. What I didn't understand was that there wasn't and never would be one right answer because my students

would change every year and basing my instructional decisions on the specific needs of my students was where my focus should have been.

I taught first grade for six years before moving into higher education. After completing my master's degree and now working toward my doctorate, I realize how little I advocated for myself as a teaching professional in those six years. I did not possess a strong sense of self-efficacy about my teaching. Sure, I became more confident in my teaching as the years went by, but something was missing. In the back of my mind, no matter how confident I was, someone else (my colleagues) or something else (the curriculum) always "knew better than me". It wasn't until my first year as a doctoral student when I realized that being critical of certain ideas, opinions, and beliefs was not a negative characteristic to have---in fact, it was a strength. The ability to question, ponder, and/or disagree with something or someone based on my own principles, values, and beliefs had been a foreign concept to me for so long.

In recent years, the concept of personal agency has gained attention. Personal agency, according to Bandura (2000), is defined as a "belief in the power to make things happen" (p. 22). When I first began this study, I wanted to focus on personal agency. Reflecting on my personal agency as a first-year teacher and how it had increased over time sparked curiosity in other first-year teachers' experiences with personal agency. However, as I peeled back the layers of personal agency, I realized that my interest and curiosity was actually focused around the concept of self-efficacy. "Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (Bandura, 2000, p. 16). Understanding that self-efficacy is the foundation of agency helped me to pinpoint the focus of my study.

In my current position, I work with pre-service teachers who are just months away from being first-year teachers and having their own classrooms. After working with them during their student teaching, I see many of them as first-year teachers in the buildings that I visit each semester. It is the combination of working with these soon-to-be first-year teachers, my own personal experience with navigating a district-mandated, commercial literacy curriculum as a first-year teacher, and my interest in self-efficacy that has motivated me to pursue this type of study.

Overview of the Issues

First-year teachers

To say that a teacher's first year in the profession is challenging would be an understatement. Zembytska (2016) states, "It is fairly doubtful that having a fieldwork experience limited to 10 to 16 weeks of student teaching, a newly qualified teacher should immediately become a professional and perform at the level of a veteran teacher" (p. 67). It is understood that first-year teachers will need time, practice, and support in order to gain confidence in their abilities. Oftentimes, first-year teachers are working in survival mode and just trying to get through the school day. Martin et al. (2016) states, "New teachers, regardless of their pathways into teaching, are not fully prepared for the first day and have much to learn" (p. 4).

A first-year teacher's experience is multifaceted. Induction programs, mentoring, collaboration with colleagues, and teacher retention all hold space for challenges and overwhelm to occur. Common challenges among first-year teachers include classroom management, working with parents and families, differentiating instruction for students, students with difficult behaviors, and assessing student learning.

Commercial literacy curriculum

As a first-year teacher, being handed a commercial literacy curriculum might seem like a lifesaver. According to Valencia et al. (2006), “Many new teachers do not have the time, confidence, or expertise to be able to sort through complex, comprehensive programs or to use supplemental materials effectively” (p. 117). However, following a commercial literacy curriculum will not magically fit the needs of all students without careful consideration as to how it is implemented. Valencia et. al (2006) states, “The point is not simply to implement curriculum materials according to guidelines or to use supplemental materials in a particular way but to consider the effects of specific materials and particular instructional strategies on student learning and then adjust instruction accordingly” (p. 117). According to Allington (2002), “Exemplary teaching is not regurgitation of a common script but is responsive to children's needs” (p. 7).

The relationship between the intended, implemented, and enacted curriculum is influenced by the teacher and her instructional decisions. First-year teachers, in particular, tend to follow the adopted and/or mandated curriculum with fidelity due to their lack of experience with the curriculum materials and the fact that a commercial curriculum gives them a starting point as to what and how they will teach. Adopted and/or mandated curriculum follows an uneven path of influence for teachers in general. Some, like first-year teachers, follow the curriculum linearly while others adapt and/or resist using it all together.

Self-efficacy

Although consideration must be given to the various influences that impact a beginning teacher's design and implementation of the literacy block, research has recognized the teacher as a key factor in determining reading instruction effectiveness (Kennedy, 1998). Allington (2002)

agrees, stating “In the end, enhanced reading proficiency rests largely on the capacity of classroom teachers to provide expert, exemplary reading instruction” (p. 7).

An individual’s self-efficacy stems from four different sources: mastery experiences, physiological and affective states, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experiences (Bandura, 1997). These four sources can be explained in terms of a first-year teacher’s self-efficacy, specifically related to how it influences the way in which she navigates a commercial literacy curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of curriculum is dependent on many factors. As Valencia et al. (2006) stated, “Over the last several decades, studies of teachers’ use of curriculum materials have revealed an uneven path of influence, and curriculum materials have repeatedly fallen in and out of favor with teacher educators, teachers, and policy makers alike” (p. 94). Teachers are expected to follow district-adopted curricula with fidelity. Unfortunately, some curricula do not align with state standards, which puts the responsibility of making instructional decisions that will best fit the needs of students on the teacher. This can be challenging for a first-year teacher, as Valencia et al. (2006) explained, “Faced with an array of materials and high-stakes accountability, it is a challenge for new teachers to figure out how the pieces fit together and how to ensure student success” (p. 118). Thus, this study aims to explore, understand, and describe the influences of a first-year teacher’s self-efficacy when implementing a commercial literacy program.

Research Question

This broad research question will guide the study: In what ways, if any, does a first-year teacher’s level of self-efficacy influence the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program?

Definition of Terms

Table 1.1. Definition of Terms

Self-efficacy

a person's confidence in his or her ability to complete a task, even when the task is challenging or difficult (Bandura, 1997)

Teacher self-efficacy

the beliefs teachers hold about their ability to influence students, including domains such as learning, motivation, and building relationships (Klassen et al., 2011; Siwatu, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Commercial curriculum

a set of teaching materials put together by a national organization or publishing company

First-year Teacher

a teacher who has completed a teacher preparation program and is in their first year of teaching

Enacted curriculum

content of instruction delivered by classroom teachers (Kurz et al., 2010)

Intended curriculum

set forth in the content standards for a particular subject and grade level (Kurz et al., 2010)

Implemented curriculum

teaching materials and instructional approach that teachers offer in their classrooms (Bogaerds-Hazenberg, 2022)

Outcome expectancy

a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes (Bandura, 1977)

Fidelity

the level of faithfulness and/or loyalty to the implementation of a curriculum as intended by the developer

Teacher Candidate

a person who has been admitted to a teacher preparation program and is completing coursework prior to student teaching and earning licensure

Student Intern

a person who is in their last semester of a teacher preparation program, completing their student internship in a classroom

Cooperating Teacher

a classroom teacher whose role is to supervise and mentor student interns

University Supervisor

an experienced teacher and/or administrator whose role is to act as the liaison between the school district, the cooperating teacher, and the student intern

Significance of the Study

There are many studies and an extensive amount of research done on first-year teachers, self-efficacy, and commercial literacy programs, however, gaps in the literature suggest that little research has been done to combine all three to explore how a first-year teacher's self-efficacy impacts the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program. With current calls to action for a shift in the focus of reading instruction across the country, this study holds significance. Using a single case study design, this research aimed to understand one first-year teacher's perceived self-efficacy in terms of how she makes decisions when navigating and implementing a commercial literacy program.

Researcher Subjectivity and Positionality Statement

As the researcher, it was important for me to be transparent in my values, beliefs, and assumptions throughout the research process. According to Peshkin (1982b), "...subjectivity operates during the entire research process" (p. 17). Because this study took place at the elementary school where I taught for six years, I was already very familiar with the district and building. In addition, the participant was a former student intern of mine. It was necessary to describe my own subjectivities and positionality to not only be acknowledged at the beginning stages of my research, but recognized and reflected upon throughout each stage of the study. Bhattacharya (2017) states, "...qualitative research does not view subjectivities as negative

influences on data...it calls for the researcher to become increasingly vigilant in order to reflect and address the role of subjectivities in research with academic rigor and trustworthiness” (p. 36). Although my familiarity with the research site and participant allowed for preconceived notions, to maintain the rigor and trustworthiness that Bhattacharya speaks of, my goal throughout the study was to maintain an awareness of my own thoughts and keep my focus on understanding and interpreting the participant’s unique experience.

Bracketing was used as a means to deliberately put aside my own beliefs and prior knowledge of the participant, the research site, and the commercial literacy program contextualizing the study (Carpenter, 2007). Fischer (2009) defines bracketing as “...an investigator’s identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study’s data” (p. 583). I definitely had a vested interest in this study due to my personal experience as a first-year teacher was the driving force. Because of that, my feelings about commercial literacy programs and the support that I received as a first-year teacher had to be recognized and set aside. Chan et al. (2013) states, “If the researcher is unaware of their own preconceptions and beliefs, it is impossible for them to put these issues aside” (p. 3). The ongoing awareness of my own beliefs throughout the study allowed me to put those issues aside. Coming into this study, my view of commercial literacy programs was divided—I understood the need for a program that was already mapped out and gave step-by-step directions for first-year teachers to follow, but I also was not blind to the fact that commercial literacy programs did not always align with state standards and had no idea of knowing the needs of specific students in my classroom. My own struggle with how to navigate a commercial literacy program as a first-year teacher piqued my interest in how other first-year teachers took on this challenge.

Overlapping roles were present in this study. I was the participant's instructor for a classroom management course that she took as part of her teacher preparation program and also her former university supervisor during the semester of her student internship. Naturally, the participant viewed me as her superior because of our past relationship. My past experiences with the participant were positive. As both a student in my course and an intern under my supervision, her academic performance was above average and she demonstrated favorable dispositions. Throughout the research process, our established relationship served as a constant focal point for reflection to ensure my subjectivities were being acknowledged and taken into consideration, particularly when analyzing the data. Furthermore, our demographic profile was similar, both young white middle-class females—it would be naïve to claim there weren't times when I compared my own experience with hers. In those moments, bracketing my own experience was crucial in upholding the integrity of the study.

An important element of qualitative case study research is to seek understanding of the specific case being studied rather than how it differs from other cases (Stake, 1995). In this study, "other cases" referred to my own personal experience as a first-year teacher navigating a commercial literacy program. Crotty (1996) points out that it is not humanly possible for qualitative researchers to be totally objective. In this specific case study, before I could effectively set aside the various influences on the research process, it was essential to first cultivate an awareness of my own values, interests, perceptions, and thoughts. This self-awareness served as a prerequisite for navigating these influences. To do this, I kept a researcher journal to bracket my thoughts. When I had thoughts and/or feelings that were comparative to my own experience as a first-year teacher, I would make a note of this in my journal. This was a

tangible way to keep track of and shelf any personal opinions or past experiences that might influence my interpretation of the participant's experience.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative case study examined the self-efficacy of a first-year teacher in terms of how she navigated and implemented a commercial literacy curriculum. Theoretical perspectives including Constructivism, Social Cognitive Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory were used as a lens to guide the research. This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction, including a personal story, an overview of the issues, a statement of the problem, the research question, definition of terms, the significance of the study, and a researcher subjectivity and positionality statement. Chapter 2 reviews the literature of the underlying theoretical perspectives, first-year teachers, self-efficacy, and commercial literacy curricula. Chapter 3 provides a rationale for the selected methodology and includes the research design, data collection methods, the role of the researcher, and the data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the data gathered from three data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, observations/field notes, and documents/artifacts. This chapter also explains the grounded theory method used to code and analyze the data. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study, examines implications for practice, states the limitations of the study, and offers recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how a first-year teacher's self-efficacy influences the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy curriculum. This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I will discuss the theoretical perspectives used to guide the study. Then, I will review the many facets of being a first-year teacher: challenges, induction programs, mentoring, collaboration with colleagues, and teacher retention. Next, I will examine self-efficacy, specifically in regard to first-year teachers. Finally, commercial literacy curricula will be reviewed.

Theoretical Perspectives

Constructivist Approach

A constructivist approach is the underlying theoretical perspective that drives this case study. Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) agree that a constructivist paradigm is how case studies should be approached. This paradigm "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity. Pluralism, not relativism, is stressed with focus on the circular dynamic tension of subject and object" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 10). According to Ültanir (2012), the Constructivist approach "maintains that individuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already believe and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come into contact" (p. 195).

Constructivists have also been referred to as interpretivists. Schwandt (1998) states

The constructivist or interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of the actors one studies. (Schwandt, 1998, p. 222).

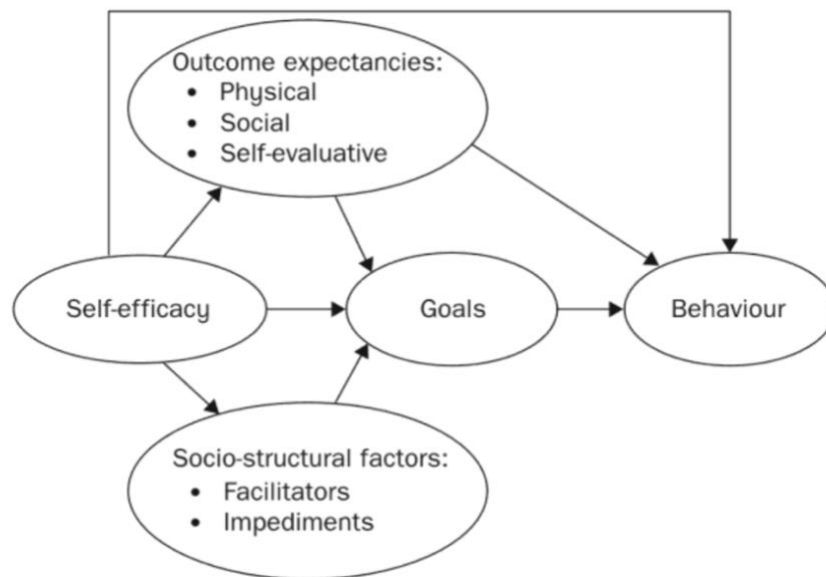
My understanding of how the teacher constructed knowledge and made meaning was rooted in Interpretivism. An interpretivist focuses on “the processes by which these meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified within a specific context of human action” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 225). As an interpretivist, my approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the participant's experience was greatly influenced by three factors: subjectivity, context, and inductive reasoning. It was important for me to acknowledge my own subjectivity and the influence it had on the research process. When gathering data, I was intentional about bracketing my own biases and assumptions so that I could more clearly understand the participant's lived experience. The context of this case study played a major role in how I situated the findings. The participant was in her first year of teaching and was working with a specific commercial literacy program; in order for my interpretations to hold meaning, the specific context of the study had to be emphasized. My inductive approach to analyzing the data allowed for themes to emerge rather than forcing the data into a preconceived theoretical framework.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1997) describes Social Cognitive Theory as individuals having the capacity for self-regulation, goal-setting, anticipatory planning, and self-reflection. According to Bandura's

social-cognitive theory, people aspire to gain a sense of agency and exercise control over significant life events (Schunk, 2012). A number of variables, including self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, and self-evaluation, have an impact on this sense of agency and control (Schunk, 2012). Table 2.1 below is an illustration of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2000).

Figure 2.1. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory



As illustrated in Figure 2.1, Social Cognitive Theory suggests that behavior is influenced by cognitive processes such as forethought, self-efficacy, and outcome expectancies, as well as external factors such as goals and perceived obstacles or supports. These constructs interact throughout the behavior change process, shaping individuals' actions and outcomes. Bandura (1997) states, "In social cognitive theory, efficacy beliefs are developed and altered not only by direct mastery experiences but also by vicarious experience, social evaluations by significant others, and changes in physiological states or how they are construed" (p. 14). These four sources of self-efficacy are later explained in detail and in terms of first-year teachers.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-Efficacy Theory is included in the broad framework of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy reflects one's confidence in their ability to perform tasks effectively in various situations. Bandura (1977) bases Self-Efficacy Theory on the “principle assumption that psychological procedures, whatever their form, serve as means of creating and strengthening expectations of personal efficacy. Self-efficacy is sometimes paired with the term outcome expectancy. Self-efficacy and outcome expectancies are closely related but can be differentiated depending on the context of a situation.

Bandura (1977) states

An outcome expectancy is defined as a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes. Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated, because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but if they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities such information does not influence their behavior. (1977, p. 193).

It's important to distinguish between outcome expectancies and self-efficacy expectations. Outcome expectancies pertain to an individual's beliefs about the likely consequences or outcomes of their actions, whereas self-efficacy expectations specifically relate to their confidence in their ability to perform the necessary actions to achieve those outcomes. While both types of beliefs influence behavior, self-efficacy is particularly crucial because even if individuals anticipate positive outcomes, their behavior may be hindered if they lack

confidence in their ability to perform the required actions. Therefore, self-efficacy plays a central role in shaping motivation, behavior, and ultimately, achievement.

A low sense of efficacy causes people to avoid challenging tasks because they see them as personal threats (Bandura, 1993). They opt to pursue goals with weak devotion and modest aspirations (Bandura, 1993). Personal accomplishment is enhanced in many ways by a strong sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1993). High efficacy individuals regard difficult jobs as challenges to be conquered rather than as dangers to be avoided (Bandura, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs are the result of a difficult self-persuasion process that depends on cognitive processing of many efficacy cues transmitted enactively, vicariously, socially, and physically (Bandura, 1986).

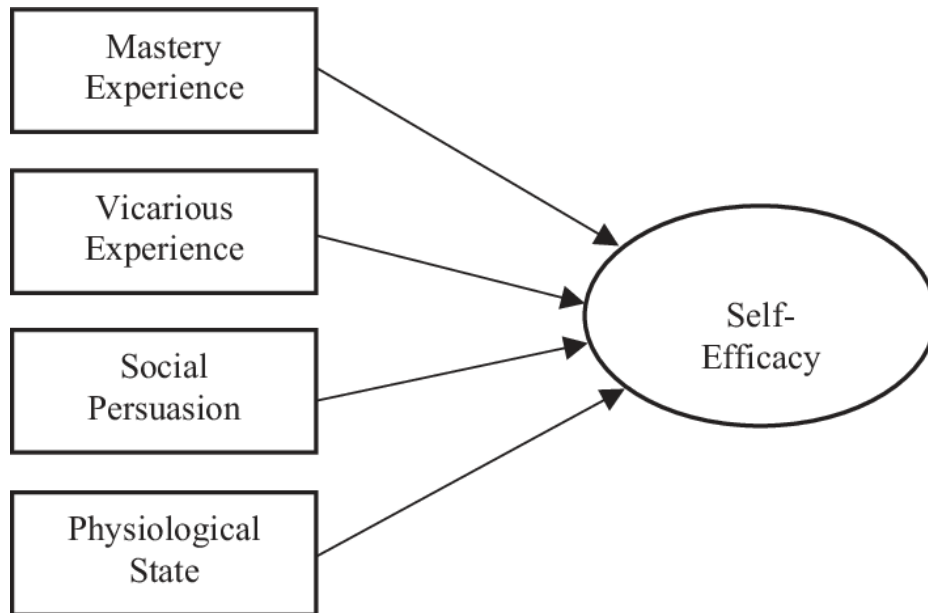
Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) has been defined as the beliefs teachers hold about their ability to influence students, including domains such as learning, motivation, and building relationships (Klassen et al., 2011; Siwatu, 2007; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). According to Bandura (2006), “One cannot be all things, which would require mastery of every realm of human life. People differ in the areas in which they cultivate their efficacy and in the levels to which they develop it even within their given pursuits” (p. 307). Self-efficacy can be explained in terms of many different contexts; for this particular case study, self-efficacy will be discussed in the context of teaching. While studies have shown TSE as potentially powerful in the success of teachers, identifying and measuring the processes by which it develops is not fully understood (Klassen et al., 2011), however, Bandura (1997) proposes four sources that help to explain where TSE derives.

Sources of Self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) suggests four central sources of self-efficacy that can be examined in terms of first-year teachers. These four sources are mastery experience, physiological (and affective) states, verbal (social) persuasion, and vicarious experience: see Table 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2. Bandura's Four Sources of Self-Efficacy



Mastery Experiences

Mastery experiences refer to times when individuals experience success in challenging situations (Bandura, 1997). Palmer (2006) recognizes disciplinary content and pedagogical knowledge as cognitive mastery experiences that can impact a first-year teacher's teaching based on the amount of understanding in those areas (Gaikhorst et al., 2015). Furthermore, when those experiences take place in the individual's teacher preparation program, if they favor a theoretical rather than practical lens, the impact on the individual's self-efficacy during their first year of teaching is limited (Gaikhorst et al., 2015). This limitation stems from a lack of connection between theory and practice. If a first-year teacher comes into their career with a great amount of theoretical knowledge but no practical experience to connect it to, the cognitive mastery

experience is less likely to impact the first-year teacher's self-efficacy because of that disconnect. According to Ma et al. (2022), "the influence of teaching experiences on first-year teachers' self-efficacy also varies across different school contexts" (p. 945). Ma et al. (2022) explains that different school contexts, such as mentorship, diversity of students, types of teaching positions, and school administration all served as examples of teaching experiences. Thomson et al. (2019) adds that when first-year teachers are in schools where they don't receive support, they experience lower self-efficacy.

Physiological and Affective States.

Physical and emotional states can dictate an individual's beliefs about their abilities. When experiencing negative emotions and/or physical pain, a person will tend to put lesser value on their abilities than when experiencing positive emotions and/or physical wellness (Bandura, 1997). Ma and Cavanagh (2018) believe that when teachers have not yet acquired sufficient mastery experiences, specifically at the beginning of their teaching practice, feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty are more likely to occur when faced with new teacher challenges. It has also been reported that first-year teachers' negative evaluations of their teaching capability are linked to the stressful emotions they experience (Putwain & von der Embse, 2019). Adams and Woods (2015) found that when teacher candidates become first-year teachers, the emotional connection among colleagues has been cited as being crucial since it reassures new teachers that they are not alone in tackling the problems of teaching, leading to improved assessments of their teaching competence.

Verbal Persuasion.

Verbal persuasion takes place when a credible individual influences a person's belief in themselves, persuading them that they can achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997). According to

Bandura (1997), when faced with challenges, self-efficacy based on this source could be readily undermined, especially if the encouragement is unrealistic. It has been suggested that first-year teachers rely on mentor teacher input to self-assess their competence (Chang, 2010). Richter et al. (2013) found that first-year teachers' self-efficacy increased dramatically when they were supported in exploring their teaching potential, such as by being encouraged to try out new teaching techniques that they had developed.

Vicarious Experience.

Vicarious experience refers to an individual basing their own capability on their interpretation of how the behavior and results of others are related (Bandura, 1997). In regard to first-year teachers, research on this source of self-efficacy does not match up. While Chang (2010) and Fackler & Malmberg (2016) found that the self-efficacy of interviewees who had initially indicated low self-efficacy was increased when first-year teachers were given opportunities to observe their colleagues' triumphs in managing challenging students, van Rooij et al., (2019) were unable to determine if this source had a statistically significant impact on self-efficacy, suggesting that relying entirely on experienced teachers to impart knowledge would be unproductive and urging further qualitative research.

Measuring Self-efficacy

According to Klassen et al. (2011), a number of studies looking at TSE have been quantitative in nature, at times putting the instruments used to measure TSE into question, in terms of validity. Because of this, researchers suggest adding a qualitative component. Narayanan et al. (2023) states "Qualitative investigations both provide insight into Bandura's original four sources of self-efficacy, and also allow researchers to go beyond the original theory" (p. 178).

Self-efficacy in First-year Teachers

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as a person's confidence in his or her ability to complete a task, even when the task is challenging or difficult. Feng et. al (2019) believes that investing in teacher self-efficacy can be beneficial for school administrators. Feng (2019) states, "We recommend school districts prepare mentorship programs that emphasize collaborative teaching and pair novice and veteran teachers based on their content area. With this approach, new teachers will learn pedagogical as well as content skills from their mentor" (p. 94). Feng (2019) goes on to state that although self-efficacy is "difficult to measure, analyze, and dissect" (p. 82), it is an "especially important factor to consider among teacher effectiveness" (p.81). Because self-efficacy focuses on the teacher's own beliefs, it is important to take into consideration their views and perspectives. According to Hudson (2012), "Understanding how to support beginning teachers must include beginning teachers' views on how they experience support within their schools" (p. 72).

In a study done by Feng et al. (2019), eight indicators were used to evaluate the varying perspectives of teacher self-efficacy. Participants in this study reported responses on a scale that ranged from one (not at all prepared) to four (very well prepared). These indicators included classroom management, instructional methods, subject-matter teaching, technology usage, assessment, differentiated instruction, adjusted instruction, and state content standards. Based on these indicators, the findings revealed that "participants felt prepared to teach their content area, so self-efficacy differences were most likely from other variables" (p. 86). Furthermore, Feng et. al (2019) states, "first-year teachers who were assigned to teach a content area or subject area other than their certification area did not necessarily experience lower self-efficacy for that reason" (p. 84). It is important to reiterate how multifaceted self-efficacy is and that is should be

looked at using varying perspectives. The results of Feng's study indicated that "first-year teachers felt less prepared on handling classroom management issues, assessing students, and providing differentiated instruction" (Feng et. al, 2019, p. 86).

First-year Teachers

Challenges

Gourneau (2014) explains that the transition from teacher candidate to first-year teacher can bring feelings of overwhelm with the many responsibilities first-year teachers are faced with (curricula, diverse students, behaviors, feeling a lack of support, and other duties). The five challenges below were identified by six different beginning teachers who were part of an elementary education teacher resident program. A collaborative effort between a College of Education and Human Development and a local public school system, the Resident Teacher Program provided a group of beginning teachers with collegial support and mentorship as they entered the profession as elementary teachers. This resident program was developed as a support system for first-year teachers as they pursued a master's degree, providing educational growth and curriculum and instruction support.

Classroom Management

Jackson and Joyce (2003) define classroom management as "all of the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time and materials so that instruction in content and student learning can take place" (p.3). Gourneau (2014) states, "Classroom management is an area in education that requires thought, confidence, and experience, as it always ranks high among first year teachers' concerns and challenges" (p. 303).

Working with Parents and Families

Clark (1999) and Partin (1999) agree that beginning teachers can struggle with uncertainty and anxiety when learning how to engage in conversations with parents. Gourneau (2014) offers an explanation for why this is a challenge for beginning teachers, stating “In teacher education programs, teacher candidates are educated to work with children, but given little direction on how to conduct parent/teacher conferences” (p. 306).

Differentiating Instruction for Students

Differentiation can be defined as “the ways in which teachers tailor the curriculum and pedagogical practices to the unique cognitive and socio-cultural understanding and practices that each child brings to the classroom, while at the same time maintaining group cohesion” (Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 2005, p. 225). Gourneau (2014) explains that the first-year teachers in this particular elementary education teacher resident program found differentiation to be overwhelming and scary.

Students with Difficult Behaviors

According to Marzano (2003), “Student behavior is one of the major issues facing beginning teachers because many teachers do not feel that they are prepared to understand or deal with disruptive behavior” (p. 27). First-year teachers no longer have a cooperating teacher in the room to help deal with behaviors. Unless students have paraprofessional support, many first-year teachers are expected to handle the behaviors in their classrooms on their own.

Assessment of Student Learning

Gourneau (2014) explains that for beginning elementary teachers, “it is important to monitor and assess students’ understandings of new concepts to evaluate when things need to be re-taught and what skills they have already secured” (p. 313). Figuring out a process for

monitoring and assessing students can be difficult for first-year teachers and using the data from those assessments to plan future instruction is not something that comes naturally to a beginning teacher.

Induction Programs

A support system is a crucial component in a teacher's first year of teaching. Gourneau (2014) describes the term induction as "the period when teachers have their first teaching experience and adjustment to all the roles and responsibilities associated with teaching" (p. 300). In an effort to provide first-year teachers with the support they need, many districts and schools have created induction programs to provide professional development and mentorship to those new to the profession (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Not only do induction programs and support systems foster the development of new teachers, Ronfeldt & McQueen (2017) found that "receiving induction supports in the first year predicts less teacher migration and attrition, suggesting that using induction to reduce new teacher turnover is a promising policy trend" (p. 394).

Over half of all states in the United States require some form of induction for first-year teachers (Goldrick et. al, 2012), however, according to Wayne et al. (2005), the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) suggests that approximately as little as 1% of first-year teachers receive what is deemed as a comprehensive induction program. Smith & Ingersoll (2004) found that a comprehensive induction program consists of five key components: opportunities to collaborate in small learning communities, observe experienced colleagues' classrooms, be observed by expert mentors, analyze their own practice, and network with other novice teachers.

The types of support that define the components within an induction program vary based on the context of the school district but Ingersoll and Strong (2011) explain that a typical

induction program includes some form of orientation, classroom support, professional development workshops, collaboration with colleagues, and mentoring. In a study done by Nielsen et al. (2007) that revealed “teachers’ views on the components of an induction program that they considered most beneficial” (p.20), mentoring and collaboration were the two main themes across all groups of teachers.

Mentoring

Research on mentoring emphasizes the importance of selecting a qualified mentor who provides quality support to the first-year teacher. In a study done by Kardos and Johnson (2020), it was made clear that inequities exist in the mentoring of first-year teachers. According to Martin et al. (2016), “Mentoring is a critical component of the induction process; therefore it is paramount that leaders select mentors who are qualified for the role and prepare them to successfully support beginning teachers” (p. 10). Le Maistre and Pare (2010) parallel this sentiment, explaining that when quality mentoring is provided, a beginning teacher can develop problem-solving skills and strategies that will help them handle practical and complex situations. Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) echo the importance of quality support, stating that the “quality of supports likely matters as much, if not more, than the number of supports” (p.407).

In regard to the role of a mentor, scholars agree that different types of mentors are needed for beginning teachers to be successful. Martin et. al (2016) describes two types of mentor roles, stating “The first type of mentor helped meet the teacher’s basic needs, such as getting forms completed, helping obtain classroom supplies, and being available for immediate assistance” (p. 7) and “the second type of mentor skillfully focused support on improving the teacher’s practice” (p. 8). Martin et. al (2016) goes on to point out that beginning teachers also need “a confidant and someone they can rely on in a mentor” (p.8). According to Nielsen et al. (2007), “In some

cases the mentor is essentially a “buddy” in the form of an experienced teacher who makes the new teacher feel welcome and answers his or her questions as they arise” (p. 15).

Collaboration with Colleagues

As aforementioned, collaboration was one of two main themes that teachers found most beneficial when identifying components of an induction program, specifically collaboration with colleagues (Nielsen et al., 2007). Collaboration with colleagues can take on many forms. In a successful induction program, allowing the first-year teacher to observe the modeling of effective teaching (Wong, 2004) is a critical component. Other forms of collaboration include help with lesson planning, finding materials, making difficult teaching decisions, and consistent meeting time with mentors (Hunt, 2014).

A more structured form of collaboration among colleagues is referred to as a professional learning community (PLC). A PLC is a group of educators, typically from the same school or district, who meet regularly to engage in ongoing learning or professional development. Professional learning communities are a valuable resource for all teachers, but can significantly impact the success of first-year teachers. According to Hudson (2012), “Establishing a professional learning community (PLC) that supports the beginning teacher may comprise of a range of staff, not only teaching staff, who can assist the beginning teacher through purposeful guidance to ensure effective assimilation into a teacher career” (p. 72). Furthermore, Taranto (2011) states, “Professional learning communities where teachers form groups to collaborate on new teaching concepts and strategies promote positive learning environments” (p. 4).

Advances in technology over the years have allowed teachers to collaborate without the constraint of physical boundaries. Online learning communities, according to Taranto (2011), “have opened new possibilities for educators to work collaboratively” (p. 4). In his 2011 study,

Taranto found that an overall evaluation of an online learning community was “proven to be a positive addition” (p. 14) to a school district’s induction program. He went on to state, “The new-teacher induction online learning community framework enhanced and expanded the experience of both the new teachers and contributors” (Taranto, 2011, p. 14).

Teacher Retention

Research has shown that close to 50% of all beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), however, there are conflicting studies as to why this is so. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) have found that the majority of correlational studies seem to suggest that teacher induction programs improve retention rates among beginning teachers. Darling-Hammond (2003), Fulton et al. (2005), and Smith and Ingersoll (2004) stand united in their belief that comprehensive induction programs positively effect beginning teacher retention. The first few years of teaching are not only difficult for new teachers, but they also mark a crucial point in educational reform because these years build the groundwork for future success in the classroom and could even influence whether or not new teachers decide to leave the field (Darling-Hammond, 2000). On the other hand, according to Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017), “The largest experimental study to date suggests that new teacher induction is unrelated to teacher retention, instructional practice, and student achievement” (p. 395).

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that teachers who are assigned a mentor and receive support that is focused on building confidence are less likely to leave the profession after their first year (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sharp, 2006). Darling-Hammond (2003) states, “a growing body of evidence indicates that better prepared teachers stay longer” (p. 7). Sharp (2006) explains that programs associated with first-year teacher retention should also focus on

the development of positive perceptions of the professional. This explanation circles back around to a teacher's self-efficacy. According to Unruh & Holt (2010), "Teachers' sense of efficacy and their satisfaction with teaching as a career are two important components to retaining teachers in the field" (p. 13).

Commercial Literacy Curricula

Commercial literacy curricula can be simply defined as a set of reading and language arts teaching materials put together by a national organization or publishing company. These materials typically include: anthologies of stories and essays, a scope and sequence of learning objectives, directions for instruction, practice activities, assessments, and recording systems to track student progress (Shannon, 1987). According to Phillips et al. (2005), the dominant materials used to teach reading in elementary classrooms for most of the 20th century came from commercial reading programs. Phillips et al. (2002) adds, "Commercial reading programs, though not complete determinants of what occurs in classrooms, are nevertheless pervasive and influential" (p. 231).

Since commercial materials have been routinely used by reading teachers in America (Shannon, 1987), it is important to note the complex interplay between commercial interests, conservatism, and educational concerns within the realm of textbook publishing. Venezky (1987) states, "...textbook publishing was as entrepreneurial an activity in the early republic as it is today. Attacks on one's competition, coercion of adoption committees, and alteration of reader content to appeal to special markets are enduring themes in the history of the American reading textbook." (p. 248). While progress has been made in incorporating culturally and politically diverse content in commercial literacy curricula, early materials were conservative, "representing a narrow, sterilized view of society" (Venezky, 1987, p. 248). History has shown that

commercialism of literacy materials is just as much motivated by the need to appeal to certain audiences as it is by educational concerns and when there are societal shifts, the content in the commercial materials reflects those changes (Venezky, 1987).

History

In early colonial times, the hornbook served as the most widely used introductory “text” (Venezky, 1987). The hornbook, a thin strip of wood to which a single sheet of paper was attached, included the alphabet, simple syllables, and the Lord’s Prayer (Venezky, 1987). Colonists considered literacy an “entrée to religious responsibility” (Venezky, 1987, p. 248). The religious beliefs of the adult society took precedence over interests of the child during this time. The New England Primer came next and was written before the Revolutionary War, including many references to God, religion, and prayer. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the New England Primer “shed most of its religious materials and became primarily an introductory text, either for the speller or, later in the century, the lowest-level reader” (Venezky, 1987, p. 250). Spelling books, called spellers, and a series of readers began appearing later in that century as children spent more time in school (Venezky, 1987). Venezky (1987) recalls the societal shift from “preaching adult concepts to promoting interest through child concerns” (p. 262) as one of the major historical revolutions of the basal reader. Basal reading series’ usually include a teacher’s manual, readers, worksheets, workbooks, skill kits, and a management component—all which are developed and produced by a commercial publishing company (Shannon, 1987). The terms basal reading series or basal readers and commercial literacy programs have been used interchangeably throughout the years.

In the 1920s, basal readers began including separate teacher’s manuals, which were used to “direct teachers and students in using the materials during reading instruction” (Shannon,

1987, p. 309). At this time, many teachers were uneducated, and the creation of the teacher's manual ensured basal reading materials were used correctly. Venezky (1987) makes an interesting point about the authors of modern basal readers, stating "One of the great ironies in the development of the modern basal is that as teachers received more and more preservice and in-service training in teaching reading, the authors of reading texts assumed that teachers knew less and less and expanded the teacher's manual and textbook instructions accordingly." (p. 252). As teacher's manuals expanded, teachers became more reliant on them, causing some to question their professionalism. According to Shannon (1987), "...although teachers may think of themselves as professionals, their heavy reliance on commercial reading materials makes observers of their work skeptical of their professionalism" (p. 311). This "heavy reliance" on the teacher's manual became one of the greatest criticisms of commercial literacy programs moving forwards.

Criticisms

Research reveals numerous criticisms of commercial literacy programs. Materials included in these programs have been considered in terms of "what teachers must risk to reap these time-gain benefits and whether or not it is a good exchange" (Shannon, 1987, p. 308). Shannon (1987) states, "...experts believe that commercial materials recently have become an impediment rather than an impetus to scientific reading instruction" (p. 310). The gap between current scientific reading instruction and what is found in commercial reading programs is wide, and when teachers "over rely" on commercial materials, implementing findings from the most recent research is not put into practice (Shannon, 1987). Researchers find this overreliance on commercial materials unfortunate for a number of reasons:

- precludes attention to students' individual needs (Austin & Morrison, 1963; Goodland, 1970)
- stymies attempts at instructional innovation (Chall, 1967; Rosecky, 1978; Singer, 1977)
- predetermines teachers' instructional decisions (Duffy & McIntyre, 1980)
- does not ensure thoughtful instruction (Boney, 1938, 1939)
- defines schooling, literacy, and childhood in less-than-optimal ways (Freebody & Baker, 1985)

Not only do researchers find this overreliance on commercial materials unfortunate, they have suggested that “school personnel treat the directions in teacher’s manuals as the science of reading” (Shannon, 1987, p. 314) and have described elementary-grade teachers’ behavior during reading instruction as “the application of commercial materials” (Shannon, 1983, p. 69).

Shannon (1987) goes on to state, “...rather than a collaboration among author, teacher, and student, reading instruction is understood as an exchange between commercial materials that have the power to teach and students who can absorb that instruction” (p. 314).

Shannon (1987) believes that when teachers see reading instruction as directions from a commercial program, there are consequences for teachers such as “becoming uninformed spectators of the scientific, instructive activity of the commercial materials” (p. 314) and “seeing no need or way to alter the course or content of their reading instruction except to change the commercial materials used in their classrooms” (p. 314). He suggests an alternative: “What should be done, it seems to me, is to provide teachers with information and allow them (not require, prescribe, or legislate) the opportunity to formulate the available choices, to argue over them, and then to choose for themselves.” (Shannon, 1987, p. 327)

Intended, Implemented, and Enacted Curriculum

Kurtz et al. (2010) defines intended curriculum as “set forth in the content standards for a particular subject and grade level” and enacted curriculum as the “content of instruction delivered by classroom teachers” (p. 132). Harwood (2017) explains enacted curriculum as being what actually happens in the classroom. Ball and Cohen (1996) add to the meaning of enacted curriculum, stating that it is “jointly constructed by teachers, students, and materials in particular contexts” (p. 7). According to Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al. (2022), “teaching materials constitute the implemented curriculum, which entails the learning content and instructional approach that teachers offer in their classrooms” (p. 1498-1499). In other words, the intended curriculum is what the standards prescribe, the implemented curriculum includes the teaching materials and instructional strategies, and the enacted curriculum is what actually happens during a lesson.

Curricula materials affect a teacher’s curriculum enactment in the classroom (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Teachers can use these materials in a variety of ways, whether that means adapting, adding to, and/or omitting parts of the curriculum (Harwood, 2017). Because of this, a curriculum guide does not constitute the enacted curriculum, rather, the curriculum writer’s intended curriculum (Ball & Cohen, 1996). To fully understand enactment, it is important to carefully analyze a teacher’s curriculum implementation (including the instructional approach) and how decisions are made in regard to the intended curriculum (Penuel et al., 2014).

In a recent study done by Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al. (2022) describing the features of teaching materials used for reading comprehension instruction in primary grade levels, despite complaints about the lack of clarity or usefulness of the curriculum, most of the teachers

interviewed and observed followed the curricular content in a linear manner, replicating the misalignment between lesson objectives, theory, and activities in their classrooms.

Unfortunately, this was the result of following a curriculum with fidelity, as so many teachers, particularly first-year teachers, are instructed by their districts to do. Fidelity in education refers to the degree to which an intervention, program, or curriculum is implemented as intended by its developers. When following a commercial literacy curriculum with fidelity, educators adhere closely to the instructional strategies, content sequences, pacing guides, assessments, and other components outlined in the curriculum materials. Only a few educators in this study expressed a desire to have more knowledge so that they could adjust their teaching to the individual needs of their students and be less reliant on their textbooks (Bogaerds-Hazenbergh et al., 2022). Studies stating the opposite have also been documented. According to Datnow and Castellano (2000) and Eldridge et al. (2002), research on commercial or highly structured reading curriculum materials has indicated that teachers do not always stick to the suggested guidelines, contrary to what the developers anticipated.

Influence on Teachers

Research into educators and curricular resources is not an innovation. During the last several decades, analysis of teachers' utilization of curricular resources has exposed an inconsistent impact, and curricular materials have regularly been in and out of favor with teacher trainers, instructors, and policy makers (Valencia et al., 2006). Philosophical discourse is ongoing over whether textbooks limit teachers and impede independence (Apple & Junck, 1990; McNeil, 1986), support them (Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Kauffman et al., 2002), or offer the most effective and proficient approach to provide instruction (Carnine et al., 2004; Madden et al., 1993).

Studies on mainstream education has shown that the implementation of teacher's guides is extremely diverse. Some teachers disregard the guides, which hinders their progress in terms of taking advantage of modern textbooks (Remillard & Bryans, 2004; Valencia, 2006; Remillard, 1999). On the other hand, there are teachers who make use of the information, broadening their knowledge of content and teaching methods by reading about the most recent research and discovering ideas for activities they had not previously thought of (Remillard & Bryans, 2004; Valencia, 2006; Remillard, 1999). Furthermore, there is evidence that inadequate teacher's guides which do not provide teachers with enough guidance on how to effectively carry out innovative activities can be disheartening for users and lead to less teacher development than what could have been achieved; and guides that do not explain the design rationale behind innovative materials can cause some teachers to simply ignore these sections of the textbook (Remillard, 2000).

Previous research has established that teachers with limited educational content knowledge tend to follow their materials without question, and are thus prone to repeating mistakes (Beerwinkle et al., 2018; Dewitz & Jones, 2013; Valencia et al., 2006; Wijekumar et al., 2019; Aarnoutse, 1990). In contrast, teachers who are confident and knowledgeable evaluate the order of instruction, lesson plans and activities critically, adapting them flexibly and actively assessing their effectiveness (Jitendra et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2014; Piasta et al., 2009).

In Bogaerds-Hazenberg's recent study, 76% of teachers interviewed stated that they do not make adaptations to their curriculum and try to teach all lessons with "dutiful fidelity" (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2022). Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al. (2022) states, "Some teachers simply trust their textbook, others feel less positive about this, even though they don't make changes" (p. 1508). Because we know that the effect of the curriculum is moderated by the

teacher (Brown, 2009; Harwood, 2017), in regard to selection of materials (Scheerens, 2017) and the teacher's level of pedagogical content knowledge (Blömeke et al., 2014; Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987), even "an excellent quality of teaching materials is therefore no guarantee that teachers are able to use them" (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2022, p. 1499).

Adopted and Mandated Curriculum

Escalating state and local mandates have increased the focus on curriculum materials (Allington, 2002; Goodnough, 2001, 2003; Helfand, 2002). Certain state guidelines for implementing programs can limit district funding to only be used for curriculum materials that are on an approved list (Valencia et al., 2006). This leaves schools and teachers with two choices---they can either use their district's adopted/mandated core reading programs with consistency or make informed choices about the texts, lessons, and components they decide to use. Research does not indicate that these programs are definitive documents, but rather a balance between what research has found to be effective reading instruction and what is desired by stakeholders (Dewitz & Jones, 2013). According to Valencia et al. (2006), "some educators believe that all curriculum mandates are problematic and that they disempower teachers, others suggest that what is mandated or the degree of specification can affect how a mandate is perceived and how it influences practice" (p. 115).

Although distributing adopted/mandated educational materials to a large number of teachers can be relatively easy, it is much harder to guarantee that they are utilized effectively (Stein & Kim, 2011). When mandates fail to permit educators to contemplate their teaching practices and act on what they discover, or when they guide teachers away from the unpredictable nature of teaching and the ever-changing student body, classrooms, and teachers, the mandates may stifle teacher development (Duffy, 2004) and leave teachers feeling resistant

to use the adopted materials as they are intended. The alternative to mandated curriculum is not to deprive teachers of material or guidance; research and evidence indicate that teachers desire and require these (Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Kauffman et al., 2002). Rather, the goal is to facilitate and encourage the reflective usage of materials by involving teachers in making curricular decisions based on what is best for the students' learning (Valencia et al., 2006).

Beginning Teachers

Few studies have been conducted on the experiences of novice teachers or on the differences between new and more seasoned teachers in terms of the curriculum and materials they use (Valencia et al., 2006). Although classroom management can seem like the priority for first-year teachers, they still need guidance when it comes to what and how they will teach (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1990), which leaves their instructional needs to be met by the curriculum materials provided to them (Valencia et al., 2006). Questions still remain as to how first-year teachers who are dealing with behavior-filled classrooms not only navigate, but meet the expectations of their administration in regard to the use of curriculum materials (Valencia et al., 2006).

Because curriculum adoptions and mandates for teachers will not go away due to educational policies (Valencia et al., 2006), it is important for first-year teachers to use curriculum materials as tools for learning and continue to use them to enhance their instruction. A major challenge for new teachers, in terms of curriculum materials, is that the variability in the materials and the ever-changing contexts make them multifaceted tools. Valencia et al. (2006) states, "Faced with an array of materials and high-stakes accountability, it is a challenge for new teachers to figure out how the pieces fit together and how to ensure student success" (p. 118).

First-year teachers not only need good quality curriculum materials, but they also need support in finding ways to navigate those materials effectively (Valencia et al., 2006).

Wonders

The district mandated English Language Arts (ELA) K-6 commercial curriculum used by the first-year teacher in this study is called *Wonders*. The *Wonders* curriculum was first published in 2017 by McGraw Hill Education. This reading program was the first reading basal written since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (Dorsey, 2015). Twelve program authors and four consulting authors created this literacy program that consists of both print and digital components. Each grade level contains six units of study, separated into six different teacher manuals, one for each unit. Each teacher manual covers six weeks of instruction. The weekly scope and sequence is split into two parts: Reading and Language Arts. The Reading component includes the following: vocabulary, comprehension, phonics, and fluency. The Language Arts component includes the following: writing, grammar, spelling, vocabulary.

A typical week in terms of the Reading component includes a theme, an essential question, vocabulary words, a comprehension strategy, skill, and genre, a phonics skill, and an aspect of fluency. In terms of the Language Arts component, a typical week includes a writing genre, grammar skills, spelling patterns, and vocabulary acquisition. Each of these components of literacy align with a Common Core State Standard (CCSS) for ELA. A CCSS Correlation section is located at the back of each teacher manual and the components are labeled throughout the manual with the corresponding CCSS code.

This commercial literacy program has an extensive digital component. *Wonders* provides numerous online resources for both teachers and students, including a data dashboard and

proficiency report to help teachers track assessment scores. Additional online resources include professional development model lessons and PD videos, multi-tiered interventions, and instructional routine handbooks.

There has been a considerable amount of research on commercial reading programs and how the curriculum materials included in those programs influence teachers' instruction. The quality of the curriculum's textbooks and teacher guides impact both the teacher and students. Findings from a recent cross-country research initiative suggest that "most textbooks do not sufficiently incorporate evidence-based practices" (Wijekumar et al., 2021) which leaves teachers having to "compensate for sometimes less optimal materials" (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2022). Issues arise when teachers struggle or neglect to compensate for the poor quality of curriculum materials provided to them. Findings from studies done on the *Wonders* curriculum show certain components of the program are lacking in both quality and quantity.

In a study done by Dorsey (2105), teachers in a rural district in North Carolina were interviewed about their reading instruction using the *Wonders* reading curriculum. All teachers shared that the district expects them to use this program with fidelity and they all either agreed or strongly agreed that they do implement the program with fidelity (Dorsey, 2015). The teachers indicated that comprehension was a strength of the program but that some of them had to bring in additional resources to meet their students' needs (Dorsey, 2015). Most of the teachers agreed that they "desired additional resources for differentiating instruction to support struggling readers" (Dorsey, 2015, p. 24) and that they "sought outside resources for small group instruction" (Dorsey, 2015, p. 24).

In a critical content analysis done by Jaeger (2019) on the *Wonders* curriculum, she argues that "this basal reader promotes a view of the world that aligns with the experience of

dominant groups. In addition, because the textbook is relatively inaccessible—both complex and unengaging—it undermines middle-grade students’ critical capacities. These characteristics limit the degree to which students understand and, thus, are inclined to challenge, this world view” (p. 4). Freppon and Dahl (1998) echo this sentiment, acknowledging the conflict between curriculum materials and student interests/needs as a consideration for best practice in reading instruction.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine a first-year teacher's self-efficacy in terms of navigating and implementing a commercial literacy program. In this chapter, I will first discuss my rationale for why a qualitative case study best fits this research. Next, a problem statement will set the stage for my research question and an explanation of my research design/procedures. A description of how and why I selected the site and participant for this study is provided. Then, I discuss the role of the researcher, data collection methods, and the type of data analysis that will be used. Finally, I will review the grounded theory method used to code and analyze the data from the interviews. The grounded theory method used for analyzing the interview data is described in seven steps: raw text, relevant text, repeating ideas, themes, theoretical constructs, theoretical narrative and research concerns (question). Seven themes that emerged from the data are then summarized.

Qualitative Case Study Rationale

A qualitative approach best fit this research because of my interest in “knowing how people understand and experience their world at a particular point in time and in a particular context” (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 4). Particular time and context were central to my study since they are part of a bounded system that I was exploring. Within the realm of qualitative methodologies, case study is unique, in that a bounded system is one of its key characteristics. “A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Tisdell & Merriam, 2016, p. 37). I chose to employ a single case study because it was the most appropriate methodology for the type of research I did. Tisdell and Merriam (2016) describe a case as being “a single person who is a case example of some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy” (p. 38). In my study, the bounded system was made up of a

first-year teacher in her second semester of teaching who was a case example of a program, specifically, *Wonders* (the district-mandated commercial literacy program).

Research Question

This broad research question will guide the study: In what ways, if any, does a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy influence the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program?

Research Design/Procedures

Epistemological beliefs play a key role in the research process. The researcher must have an understanding of these beliefs because they will aid in guiding the direction and the focus of the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Huff, 2009). According to Yazan (2015), the constructivist epistemological approach seeks to draw conclusions and is transparent about the role of the researchers' subjectivity when interpreting the data. My study aligned with the constructivist approach because subjectivity was very transparent in my research due to the fact that I had a previous relationship with the first-year teacher and the district in which she teaches, specifically the building.

The constructivist approach has also been referred to as the interpretive approach due to the "effort to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied' so to speak, and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 33)". Because my goal was to understand the viewpoint of the first-year teacher, rather than my viewpoint, emphasis was placed on the first-year teacher's interpretation of how she navigated the commercial reading program. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state, "In this paradigm, theory does not precede research but follows it so that it is grounded on the data generated by the research act" (p. 33).

The main tenets of Social Cognitive Theory and more specifically, Self-Efficacy Theory, was the lens that I used to conduct my research and analyze my data. I used Bandura's four sources of efficacy: mastery experiences, physiological and affective states, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experience to guide the writing of my interview questions and inform my classroom observations and document collection.

Selection of Site

According to Crowe et al. (2011), it is important to consider access when selecting a case study site. Crowe et al. (2011) states, "the researcher needs to come to know the case study site(s) well and to work cooperatively with them" (p. 6). A pseudonym was assigned to the name of the school building for this study—Southsee Elementary. Southsee Elementary was chosen as my research site for a couple of reasons. I was familiar with this particular school, having taught there for six years, and now currently visiting the building regularly to supervise student interns. It was easily accessible to me due to my role as the district/university liaison and my established relationship with the faculty and staff.

Southsee is one of ten elementary buildings in a Midwest town with an approximate population of 55,000. Southsee Elementary serves students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. Southsee Elementary is a Title 1 school with an enrollment of 389 students at the time of this study. The cultural/ethnic make-up of the student population is as follows: 24% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 11% Black/African-American, 2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 46% White, and 14% Multi-Ethnic.

Selection of Participant

Yin (2018) notes two required elements when selecting the case in a case study: "defining the case and bounding the case" (p. 30). In my study, the case selected was a person, specifically

a third-grade teacher. In order to bound this case, I needed to decide what is and what is not included in the case. Two central elements were clear when considering the scope of this case study: time and context. It was critical that I choose a teacher in her first year of teaching due to how the data would be analyzed in terms of a specific time in the teacher's career (the second semester of her first year of teaching). Context includes the commercial literacy curriculum. I did observations within the context of this teacher's daily literacy block. Because this study focused on the self-efficacy of the teacher within a specific time and context, the students in the classroom were not included in the bounded case.

The specific teacher selected was a young, white, middle-class female who was a former student intern of mine. An advantage of single case studies is that they allow for close collaboration between the researcher and the participant (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Having a previously established relationship with the participant may have had a positive impact on the collaboration between the two of us. I asked this teacher to select a pseudonym for her name throughout the study. She suggested I choose the pseudonym for her name, so I decided on Michelle as her name in the study. She was informed that identifying information such as the name of her school building and grade-level colleagues would be redacted to ensure anonymity. Michelle's grade-level colleague, who was often referenced in the study, was given a choice about her pseudonym as well—she chose the name Anita. Anita was a middle-class, Asian (Indian), working mom in her thirties, and had been teaching third-grade for six years.

Data Collection Methods

Creswell elaborates on Merriam and Tisdell's definition of a case study, stating, "case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection

involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (2016, p. 97). With an understanding that, as the researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I employed multiple data collection tools; observations/field notes, semi-structured interviews, and documents/artifacts. According to Njie and Asimiran (2014), a case study’s focus “is to dig out the characteristics of a particular entity and its key distinguishable attributes include focus on a single unit, in depth description of a phenomenon, anchored on real live scenarios and uses multiple data collection methods” (p. 36).

Observations/Field Notes

Hatch (2002) states that

Observers need to make a record of what they observe in the settings they are studying, and these records usually take the form of raw field notes that are written on the spot while the researcher is in the setting. Raw field notes are usually descriptions of contexts, actions, and conversations written in as much detail as possible given the constraints of watching and writing in a rapidly changing social environment. (Hatch, 2002, p.77)

Observations of Michelle’s ELA block took place during one week of instruction. Each day, her ELA block lasted from 9:45-11:00 AM. I chose to do these observations during a period of time that best aligned with the school calendar in order to avoid parent/teacher conferences, holiday breaks, and the last month of school. According to Hatch (2002), “The goal of observation is to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of the participants” (p. 72). It was important for me to take my own subjectivity into account while doing these observations, in terms of my previous relationship with the teacher and the building.

During these observations, I took in-depth field notes including but not limited to: the timeline of her reading block in 15-minute increments, the modalities she employed to teach each component of *Wonders* (phonics, spelling, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), literacy resources displayed in the room relating to the *Wonders* curriculum, specific quotes from Michelle as she was teaching, and questions that she asked. Observing Michelle in her classroom, using the *Wonders* curriculum to teach reading, allowed me to triangulate my data with the information that was gathered during the interview process and with the documents and artifacts that were collected. During my observations, no field notes were taken in terms of the students in Michelle's classroom because the bounded system of this case study included only the teacher (in her second semester of her first year of teaching) and the commercial literacy program, *Wonders*.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted six in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Michelle; two interviews before observing her in the classroom, two interviews during my week of observations, and two interviews after my observations. I chose to split the interviews up in this way for a couple of reasons. I wanted to gather background data from the teacher before doing any observations. The two interviews before the observation period helped me get to know the teacher better and determine a baseline for her level of self-efficacy. The two interviews that took place during the weeks of classroom observation focused on questions that came up while observing. The two interviews after the observations concentrated on connections between what she had shared with me thus far and what I observed happening in the classroom.

It was also important for me to take into account the teacher's school calendar and respect the amount of time these interviews were taking away from her teaching responsibilities

and personal life outside the classroom. As a former elementary classroom teacher, I understood the value of time and how limited and precious of a commodity it is, so I was very flexible with the days/times of the interviews. Each interview was conducted via Zoom and lasted between 20 minutes to 30 minutes in length. The interviews were recorded, with permission from the participant, for purposes of transcription during the data analysis process.

The interview questions were created with the central tenets of Self-Efficacy Theory in mind, specifically, the four sources from which teacher self-efficacy can derive; mastery experiences, affective and physiological states, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experience. The interview questions were also motivated by the central research question guiding this study: In what ways, if any, does a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy influence the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program? The need to understand how the participant navigated and implemented the *Wonders* literacy curriculum was satisfied by weaving questions about how the participant interacted with the *Wonders* curriculum throughout the interviews. The interview protocols in Table 3.1 were carried out before and after the interviewing process.

My goal for these interviews was to understand how Michelle's opinions, feelings, and beliefs about herself transferred to the way in which she navigated and implemented the commercial literacy curriculum. According to Merriam (1998), "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate" (p. 72).

Table 3.1. Interview Protocols

-
- The participant was briefed on the purpose of the interview
 - The participant was informed about how the findings from the research would be used
 - The participant was informed that names and identifying information would be redacted, to ensure anonymity
 - The participant received an informed consent form prior to interviews
 - The participant was briefed on the member checking process and timeline of the research
 - The participant was thanked and given contact information of the researcher after the interviews
-

Documents/Artifacts

Knowledge of the study, the researcher's positionality, and what might be some useful information to collect that already exists in the context of the study are the driving forces behind document collection (Bhattacharya, 2017). Three different types of documents and artifacts were gathered for this study. I asked Michelle to fill out two different self-efficacy scales in order to get a baseline of her level of self-efficacy from her own perspective. She allowed me to borrow one of her *Wonders* teacher manuals so that I could understand how the curriculum was laid out and organized. She also sent me her weekly lesson plans for the week that I observed in her classroom. These documents and artifacts were significant in triangulating the data with the two

other collection methods: semi-structured interviews and observations/field notes. Each document/artifact is described in detail below.

Self-efficacy Scales

Two different self-efficacy scales were used as instruments to measure Michelle's level of self-efficacy. These scales provided a baseline measurement to reference when analyzing the data collected from my other sources (semi-structured interviews and observations/field notes).

The first scale I asked Michelle to fill out was a Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006, p.328). This scale was designed to help "gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities" (Bandura, 2006, p. 328). The scale asked participants to rate their degree of confidence on a scale of 0-100, stating how certain (cannot do at all, moderately can do, or highly certain can do) they are that they can do specific things, categorized under six different aspects of teaching: Efficacy to Influence Decision Making, Instructional Self-Efficacy, Disciplinary Self-Efficacy, Efficacy to Enlist Parent Involvement, Efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement, and Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate.

Although this teacher self-efficacy scale helped me understand Michelle's confidence about her own abilities as a teacher overall, the purpose of my study was to understand how Michelle's level of self-efficacy (as a first-year teacher) influenced her navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program, specifically, *Wonders*. This scale did not have line items that were specific to first-year teachers or commercial literacy programs. Bandura (2006) states, "If self-efficacy scales are targeted to factors that, in fact have little or no impact on the domain of functioning, such research cannot yield a predictive relation" (p. 310). Because of this, I felt it was necessary to employ a self-efficacy scale that was not only specific

to Michelle's navigation and implementation of *Wonders*, but also reflective of the four theoretical constructs used to analyze the data: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states.

The second self-efficacy scale I asked Michelle to fill out was specific to her use of the *Wonders* curriculum during her first year of teaching, in terms of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. This scale was an adapted version of Pfitzner-Eden's (2016) source items/scales used to measure Bandura's (1997) proposed four sources of self-efficacy for teacher self-efficacy. Pfitzner-Eden (2016) originally created this scale to measure pre-service teachers' levels of self-efficacy during their practicum experiences, in terms of Bandura's four sources, but suggested that the "direct model may well be valid for in-service teachers" (p. 15).

To adapt this scale, I changed "pre-service" to "first year of teaching" and I added wording specific to the use of *Wonders* to each line item. Michelle was asked to indicate her opinion about each statement by selecting how true (not at all true, somewhat true, exactly true) each statement was on a scale of one to nine. Each statement fell under one of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion (separated into two categories: by mentor and by others), and physiological and affective states. On this scale, Michelle noted that for the vicarious experiences category, there was "not many opportunities given to observe, just talk". Michelle's ratings from this scale would later be significant in my analysis of her level of self-efficacy, in terms of Bandura's four sources.

Wonders Teacher Manual

Throughout my conversations with Michelle, she referenced the *Wonders* teacher manual many times. This was a teaching material that she used every day during her ELA block. Although many of the *Wonders* resources could be accessed online, Michelle made it clear that

she used the physical manual often, especially for read-alouds, as she frequently asked the comprehension questions located next to the stories on the side panel of the manual. Having access to this manual allowed me to see the components of the curriculum she referenced throughout our interviews. I was also able to compare the suggested daily/weekly planner in the manual with Michelle's daily/weekly schedule as a way to better understand which parts of the curriculum she felt were most important to teach and also which components she was most confident teaching.

Weekly Lesson Plans

The weekly lesson plans Michelle sent me included the following: a matrix of her plan for the week, including which component of *Wonders* she would focus on each day, PowerPoint slides for each day of the week that included an overview of the focus strategies and skills for the week, directions/expectation for students during each part of her ELA block, screenshots from different components of *Wonders*, and differentiated packets for each of her small groups. These weekly lesson plans helped me understand how Michelle used the resources from *Wonders* to organize her whole group and small group instruction.

Role of Researcher

According to Bhattacharya (2017), "Regardless of whether a qualitative researcher is an active or passive participant in an event, the researcher is a participant in the environment that s/he is observing by being present in the environment" (p. 51-52). Although I was a participant during my observations, the role I assumed as a participant observer held peripheral membership (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Peripheral membership is when the researcher documents her observations from the sidelines but is not involved in any of the activities (Bhattacharya, 2017).

During the semi-structured interviews, my role was to build rapport with the teacher while being conscious of my role of subjectivity (Bhattacharya, 2017). It was also important for me to be an active listener during these interviews, being comfortable with silence and allowing the teacher to think, respond, and tell me what she needs (Bhattacharya, 2017).

My role as the researcher during artifact and document collection was to acknowledge my positionality and be open to potential sources of information that the teacher found valuable (Bhattacharya, 2017). Overall, my role was that of interpreter and gatherer of interpretations, which is central to qualitative research.

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) states, “Two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases are through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class. Case study relies on both of these methods” (p. 74). According to Stake (1995), data analysis does not begin at one particular moment in a study and is not only a matter of giving meaning to final editions, but also to first impressions. Bhattacharya (2017) echoes this sentiment, explaining that data analysis occurs at all times throughout a study; the process of analyzing data could possibly even start before research is conducted.

I analyzed my data as it was collected, keeping in mind the theoretical framework that drove this study: Self-Efficacy Theory. In my researcher journal, I used Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy to guide my thinking as I wrote about and made connections between various chunks of data. Because I didn’t follow a linear process and moved “back and forth between various stages and processes” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 150), inductive analysis was used during

my research. As I worked with the data and began to see patterns, this helped to inform how I identified themes (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Grounded Theory Coding

I employed grounded theory coding to analyze the data from my interviews. The grounded theory coding process I used included seven steps: raw text, relevant text, repeating ideas, themes, theoretical constructs, theoretical narrative and research concerns (question). According to Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), “The central idea of coding is to move from raw text to research concerns in small steps, each step building on the previous one. That way you do not have to immediately see the connection between the raw text and your research concerns; you only have to see as far as your next step. Having taken that step, you will be able to see further and take the step after that one” (p. 38).

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) state:

The grounded theory method allows the researcher to begin a research study without having to test a hypothesis. Instead, it allows her to develop hypotheses by listening to what the research participants say. Because the method involves developing hypotheses after the data are collected, it is called hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis-testing research. The grounded theory method uses two basic principles: (1) questioning rather than measuring, and (2) generating hypotheses using theoretical coding (p. 16).

Using this method allowed me to question Michelle about her subjective experience and then generate hypotheses from her answers (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). I later used a procedure called theoretical coding to analyze my data, grounding my hypotheses in Michelle’s responses (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). According to Creswell (2015), “Coding is the process

of analyzing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way” (p. 156). Throughout the coding process, it was important for me to remember that “coding should always be for a purpose---it is never an end in itself” (Richards, 2015, p. 105) and that the purpose of coding was for me to get to grips with the data; to understand it, to spend time with it, and ultimately to render it into something I could report (Goodwin, 1994). Each of the steps in the grounded theory coding process I used is explained in detail below.

Raw Text

Since each of my interviews were recorded via Zoom, my first step was to transcribe the conversations using Otter.ai, an artificial intelligence transcription software. Although this software was pretty accurate, it was important for me to read through the transcriptions while listening to the interviews in order to correct any incorrect words/phrases. After that, I moved to the next step of selecting relevant text. To do this, it was important for me to keep my research question and theoretical framework in mind.

Relevant Text

Relevant text refers to text that is related to the specific research concern or question (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). In order to cut down the text into more manageable portions, I went line by line through the raw text, highlighting words and phrases that were relevant to my research question and theoretical framework. I then kept only the highlighted text in order to begin looking for repeating ideas.

Repeating Ideas

As I read through the relevant text, I began to group related words and phrases together in order to record repeating ideas. This process is sometimes referred to as “open coding”.

According to Strauss & Corbin (2004), “during open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data” (p. 303). 49 repeating ideas were identified from the interview data (See Table 4.2):

Table 3.2. Interview Repeating Ideas

Feelings about self	Communication with parents	Modifying curriculum	Co-teacher	Comprehension test scores	<i>Wonders</i> PD	Grade-level planning
PD representative	State standards	LETRS training	Differentiation	Assistant principal	Progress monitoring	Student needs
District assessments	Fourth-grade teacher	Structure of ELA block	5 pillars of reading	PD reflection	Relationships with parents	MTSS reading
Teacher preparation program	Teaching with fidelity	<i>Wonders</i> curriculum components	Strengths/weaknesses	Attitudes	Personal opinions	Whole group instruction
Feelings about parents	ELA websites/resources	Beliefs	Personality traits	Student teaching	Standard-based grade cards	Former third-grade teacher
Title & SPED students	Physical feelings	Feelings about students	Small group instruction	Successes/accomplishments	Feelings about curriculum	Weekly schedule
Mentor teacher	Additional resources	Grade-level colleagues	Parent support	<i>Wonders</i> alignment with state standards	Supplementing curriculum	Collaboration with parents

Themes

Themes emerged as I grouped repeating ideas into coherent categories. Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) refer to themes as “implicit topics that organize a group of repeating ideas” (p. 41). Seven themes were identified: affective domain, literacy curriculum, mentors, parents, responsive teaching practices, professional development, and planning. Responsive teaching practices was split into two categories: differentiation and assessment. These seven themes were

reflective of Michelle's experience with *Wonders* as a first-year teacher. Each repeating idea was then aligned with one of the seven themes (See Table 4.3):

Table 3.3. Interview Themes

Affective Domain	Parents	Literacy Curriculum	Mentors	Responsive Teaching Practices	Professional Development	Planning
Feelings about self	Communication with parents	Modifying curriculum	Co-teacher	<u>Assessment</u> Comprehension test scores	<i>Wonders</i> PD	Grade-level planning
Feelings about parents	Parent support	Teaching with fidelity	Assistant principal	District assessments	PD representative	Weekly schedule
Feelings about students	Relationships with parents	Supplementing curriculum	Former third-grade teacher	Progress monitoring	LETRS training	Structure of ELA block
Feelings about curriculum	Collaboration with parents	<i>Wonders</i> curriculum components	Fourth-grade teacher	Standard-based grade cards	PD reflection	
Personality traits		<i>Wonders</i> alignment with state standards	Grade-level colleagues	State standards	ELA websites/resources	
Physical feelings		Whole group instruction	Mentor teacher	<u>Differentiation</u> MTSS reading		
Personal opinions		Additional resources		Differentiation		
Attitudes		5 pillars of reading		Small group instruction		
Beliefs		Teacher preparation program		Title & SPED students		
Successes/Accomplishments		Student teaching		Student needs		
Strengths/Weaknesses						

Theoretical Constructs

After identifying the seven major themes that emerged from the data, I grouped these themes into larger, more abstract ideas. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) refer to the abstract grouping of themes as “theoretical constructs” (p. 42). The four theoretical constructs underpinning this study are Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, physiological and affective states, verbal persuasion and vicarious experience. Each theme aligned with one or more of Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy:

Table 3.4. Theoretical Constructs: Bandura's Four Sources of Self-Efficacy

Mastery Experiences	Physiological & Affective States	Verbal Persuasion	Vicarious Experience
Affective Domain	Affective Domain	Parents	Mentors
Professional Development	Parents	Mentors	Professional Development
		Planning	
Literacy Curriculum		Responsive Teaching Practices	

Theoretical Narrative and Research Concerns (Question)

The theoretical narrative, which is explained in terms of each of Bandura’s four sources of self-efficacy in chapter five, summarizes what I learned about my research concerns (question). Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) consider this narrative as the “culminating step that provides the bridge between the researcher’s concerns (question) and the participants’ subjective experience” (p. 43). Furthermore, they believe that “weaving together subjective experience and abstract concepts brings together the two very different worlds of researchers and participant” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 43).

Research Timelines

Table 3.5. Proposed Research Timeline

January	Propose research to committee	
February	Seek IRB approval	
March	Conduct two interviews w/ teacher	
April	Teacher observations during literacy block	
	Conduct two interviews w/ teacher	*Analyze and code data as it is collected
May	Conduct two interviews w/ teacher	
June/July	Write & revise	
August	Submit dissertation to committee & defend	

Table 3.6. Actual Research Timeline

January 2023	Proposed research to committee
February	Submitted IRB
March	Received IRB approval
	Conducted two interviews w/ teacher (before observations)
April	Teacher observations during literacy block
	Conducted two interviews w/ teacher (during observations)
May	Conducted two interviews w/ teacher (after observations)
June/July	Coded and Analyzed Data
August	Coded and Analyzed Data
September	Coded and Analyzed Data
October	Coded and Analyzed Data
November	Wrote and Revised
December	Wrote and Revised
January 2024	Wrote and Revised
February	Submitted dissertation to committee
	Defended dissertation

Chapter 4 - Data Presentation

The qualitative data presented in this case study was analyzed to understand how a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy influenced the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy curriculum. This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I will discuss the semi-structured interviews conducted during the data collection process and summarize the themes that emerged from these interviews. Next, I will examine the field notes taken during observations in the first-year teacher's classroom. Finally, artifacts and documents gathered during the data collection process are reviewed.

Interviews

For this qualitative case study, my main goal in collecting data from interviewing was to understand how this first-year teacher's opinions, feelings, and beliefs about her teaching influenced her navigation and implementation of the *Wonders* literacy program. My one-on-one interviews were with Michelle—a young, white, middle-class female who taught third grade. Michelle's grade-level colleague, Anita, was not interviewed but was mentioned several times by Michelle during the interview process. Anita was a middle-class, Asian (Indian), working mom in her thirties, and had been teaching third-grade for six years.

Interview #1

Although I had met Michelle previously, the purpose of my first interview with her was to get to know her a little better in terms of her teaching style and her experiences as a first-year teacher. I asked her to share some background information about herself in terms of teaching:

I would describe myself as a pretty laid back but anxious teacher. I'm pretty relationship-based with my students. I really focus on having a good relationship and trying to get them to understand me and me understand them. My management is based off that really, we have talks, and that's what my students need, I feel like.

Due to the semi-structured nature of my interviews, I was open to asking additional questions, based on Michelle's responses, in order to clarify or expand on how she answered. I was curious to know what she meant by "laid back but anxious" when describing herself. I asked her to explain that a little more. She talked about her "laid back" nature in terms of taking the time to talk to her students and get to know them, but also that she questions herself at time which makes her feel anxious.

Keeping the research question in mind, it was important for me to ask Michelle about her first year of teaching in terms of literacy instruction:

Based on my teaching for ELA, I try to use the curriculum. I go by the book, mostly, I take out bits and pieces. There's so much in the *Wonders* curriculum that I really have to shave it down for my students and focus on what I think is most important.

I felt that this would be a good opportunity to dig a little deeper about her opinion on what she thinks is most important for her students. I asked her to tell me about how she decided what is most important: "I just base my decisions on my own thoughts and what Anita is doing in her classroom".

The next few questions related to the four sources of self-efficacy. In terms of mastery experiences, I asked Michelle to tell me about a time when she experienced success in a challenging situation as a first-year teacher. This was difficult for her to answer right away and she admitted to feeling like she doesn't reflect on the successes a lot, because the first year of

teaching is overwhelming and she feels that she is constantly doing something wrong. Thinking back to my first year of teaching, I could relate to this same feeling. She asked to come back to that question and we continued with the interview. At the end of the interview, she was ready to share a success story that, as I'll explain later, ended up being one of the major themes that emerged in terms of sources of self-efficacy.

She shared this experience:

Talking to parents was the scariest thing about teaching to me at the beginning of the year. And now I feel like I have such a great relationship with my parents and they have encouraged me a lot and I just was not expecting that. I had one parent at the beginning of the year come in really hot and heavy because she's very protective of her student. And there's just been a few issues throughout the year...but there was a big problem just a couple of days ago. I was like psyched out about it. I was getting down about it, but we worked it out. I went out of my way and called her and talked to the principal and I was like, I want you to know everything that I'm doing in school and like, here's what I'm doing for him. Here's a paper that I log, etc. And she was like, you are so great, I wish we could take you throughout his whole schooling experience. It's just like a weight lifted off my shoulder to be like, I am doing enough in some areas! Like, yes, parents are seeing that I am trying. I never want them to feel like I'm just leaving their student in the dust. And I feel like my parents know that. And I feel like that's been a big accomplishment from the beginning of the year. I don't feel scared to talk to parents anymore.

Listening to her tone of voice as she told me this story was very powerful. Her tone changed from casual and matter-of-fact to serious, and then optimistic. I could tell this was something that really challenged her at the beginning of the school year. I asked her what changed in order for her to feel more comfortable talking to parents and she responded:

I think just them not questioning everything I do, like I expected them to. They're a lot more supportive than I thought they would be. I'm just honest with them and tell them, I love your student. I also try to always show them positive things about their kid, and I think it makes them feel comforted.

Michelle's personality and passion for teaching really started to come through as she spoke about her students and the relationships she had built with their families. Watching her face light up as she talked about connecting with her students and working as a team with their families was evidence of the type of teacher she was: warm, empathetic, caring, and thoughtful. Understanding her thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward her students and parents would later be part of another major theme that emerged from the data collected.

In terms of physiological and affective states, a question I asked Michelle was about how she handled teaching responsibilities while experiencing physical or emotional stress:

I'm just really honest with my kids, like, I'll tell them, I'm just not feeling great today. I'm sorry, I'm not my best today. And I'm trying, but you've got to really help me out because I'm hurting or my stomach hurts like, I had the biggest headache. I tell them, I'm trying to be the best I can but I'm snapping a lot, because I'm feeling frustrated. And they're still empathetic with me. And like they understand and they will, they'll work with me. Usually, that's like, the biggest tool in my toolbox, when I'm not feeling great...is honesty. It's just like minor things... like I'm drained, or I'm just tired.

I found this response very admirable, especially coming from a first-year teacher. The challenges and pressure that come with the first year of teaching can feel threatening. Michelle's decision to choose honesty in situations like this showed a level of maturity that I haven't seen in other first year teachers that I've worked with. I was impressed.

In terms of verbal persuasion, I asked Michelle to share in what ways, if any, she had been positively influenced by someone she considered to be a credible individual:

My co-teacher, Anita. She is really great at that. And also, I feel like the emotional way of teaching, she's really good at being like,

are your kids learning? Are they safe? And I'm like, yes, and she's like, then you're doing a good job. And she is a really, really great teacher. And so I look up to her. And I go to her to be like, what are you doing this week, like, I need help all the time. So it's really great to have her just like, down the hall, because I wish my classroom was more like hers every day. But her and I would say the vice principal, is also a great resource for that stuff...encouragement, and also like validation. She'll say you're teaching this right, you're okay.

I found that Michelle considered multiple individuals in her building to be mentors. It was apparent that she valued the opinions of her colleagues and administrators, not only in the way that she spoke of them in our interviews, but also in the interactions with them that I observed while being in her classroom.

My last question for this interview was created based on the fourth source of self-efficacy, vicarious experience. I asked Michelle if she felt that the behavior/results of others was related to her own capabilities, and if so, in what ways:

One of the fourth-grade teachers is my friend. And she's also a first-year teacher. And she just does so much. And I'm like, I wish I could be more like that. But I'm also like, am I doing something wrong by not staying at school till 10 o'clock? The other night, she was here till 10 pm. She's doing all this great stuff in her classroom and her classroom is beautiful. And I love that for her. But I'm also like, am I not doing enough? And are my kids not succeeding because I'm not putting in enough time and effort? I don't know, I feel like I just run out of energy very easily with teaching and I have to go shut my brain off. And sometimes I'm like, wow, while I'm in my first year, I need to be doing stuff constantly. But I also feel like, at the end of the day, I'm out of energy. And I don't know how people do more. And my

organization, that's never been a strong suit with me...so when I see a really organized teacher, I just am like, I just don't know how they do it.

This was the first time in the interview that I noticed a sense of defeat in Michelle's voice and facial expression. She was questioning her abilities based on what she saw as successes in others. I could absolutely relate to how she was feeling. Before ending the interview, I shared an experience that I had in my first year of teaching that was similar to hers. I wanted her to know she was not alone in that feeling.

Interview #2

My second interview with Michelle focused on her use of resources and materials from the *Wonders* literacy curriculum, the structure of her reading block, and what a typical week of planning with the *Wonders* curriculum looked like. I started by asking her which materials she uses are supplemental, and which ones come from the curriculum. She stated that she does not use any supplemental materials other than a video about prefixes and/or homophones from time to time. When asked about the number of materials included in the *Wonders* curriculum, she stated, "It's a lot of materials. Almost too much, actually". I followed this up by asking her how much of the curriculum materials she uses and how much does she pick and choose from. Her response was that she only uses 50% of the curriculum, due to the number of materials and the limited time she has for her ELA block. I wanted to know how she picks what to use and what to skip. She stated, "I don't know, I just base it on my own thoughts and what Anita is doing".

At this point, it was becoming clear to me that Michelle valued the opinions and decisions of her co-teacher, Anita. As a first-year teacher, she felt content with following the lead of a teacher who she trusted and looked up to. The next few questions I asked were in terms of planning and structure of her ELA block. I asked how much of the ELA block was planned

independently by her and how much was planned in collaboration with her grade-level colleagues:

We have like the same structure days... I think Haley uses a lot more supplemental stuff just because she thinks *Wonders* is a little boring. I think Anita sticks to it (*Wonders* curriculum) even more than I do. She also uses, I started using them too, the tier three support that *Wonders* has. I don't always get to those with my small groups. I don't always get to them just because everything else takes so much time. But yeah, so Haley uses more supplemental stuff and Anita is more structured with *Wonders*.

I followed this up by asking how her weekly ELA block is structured/organized:

The first day is just like an overview of all the skills. The second day I do the phonics or spelling focus and we read the story and do some comprehension. Wednesday, I do vocabulary and another story and some comprehension. Thursday, I do grammar and a little bit more comprehension, if needed. And small groups, sorry, small groups on Tuesday and Thursday, where they practice reading their leveled readers. And then Friday, we take the test. And that's basically all that our time allows for. So, the most important parts are vocabulary and spelling, comprehension, and then grammar gets thrown in there a little bit. Fluency gets thrown in there a little bit too, but the main thing I really do that takes the most time is comprehension, probably.

I asked about how writing fits into this weekly ELA block. Michelle explained that she does writing time separately because “we (grade-level colleagues) do not use *Wonders* for writing because the *Wonders* writing is terrible”. She went on to explain that she has only been able to commit 15 minutes to writing time each day and having a consistent writing time for all students is tricky because her Title 1 Reading and special education students get pulled during

that time. Title 1 Reading is a program that provides extra support for struggling readers who aren't receiving services from the special education program. Reading specialists pull students to work on specific literacy skills in small groups outside of the classroom. We then shifted to a conversation about her small group instruction. Michelle used weekly packets that are differentiated, based on fluency and comprehension for four different groups; below grade-level, on grade-level, above grade-level, and English language learners (ELL). She explained that the weekly packets are made up of pages that come directly from the *Wonders* curriculum and that her students work on these packets individually while she is meeting with small groups.

I was curious to know how often she meets with small groups throughout the week:

I try to do small groups on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I try to do like 15 minutes with each group. So two groups on Tuesday, two groups on Thursday, and then my purple group (ELL students), I try to meet with them more like three times a week, because they're my lowest group--- they're more like 40 minutes a week.

Michelle had mentioned that her small groups were differentiated based on fluency and comprehension, but I wanted to know how those components were measured/assessed. She explained that students are screened three times each year and they are progress-monitored in between screenings. The scores from these screenings and the data from progress monitoring determines which group they fall into. She also added that the groups can be fluid throughout the year based on the screening each trimester.

Interview #3

Our third interview dove deeper into how Michelle navigated *Wonders* in terms of planning, the alignment of *Wonders* with the state literacy standards, and a more detailed view of

the focus for her small group instruction. I started this interview by asking Michelle how much influence from others impacted the way that she planned her ELA block:

Yeah, I really just ask Anita to tell me exactly how she does it in her classroom. We also had a representative from *Wonders* come in at the beginning of the year for a professional development day. There were separated grade level sessions where we could ask questions specific to our grade level. We also had a representative from *Wonders* come a few months later to teach us how to use the online curriculum resources. That was really helpful. That's actually when I started changing some things up. I had been pulling a lot from *Wonders* and creating my own PowerPoints....and now I can go into the *Wonders* website to click on things without doing all that extra work.

Professional development later emerged as a major theme in terms of a source of self-efficacy that Michelle's navigation of *Wonders* derived from. My second question was in regard to the alignment of *Wonders* and the state literacy standards. In Michelle's opinion, the *Wonders* curriculum is very much aligned with the state literacy standards. She explained that the questions on the weekly tests from *Wonders* are separated by standard and that allows her to see what percentage they earned based on each standard.

Our conversation then shifted back to planning. I asked what planning looked like from week to week in terms of consistency:

It's pretty much the same (planning from week to week). For every five days a week, it is pretty much the same consistency. Something that does affect it a lot, though, is the big story that *Wonders* has---it's like 20 pages long. So we'll take almost a whole day to read it as a class. And then that's what their weekly test is on---questions from that story. So we have to get through that. But besides that factor, weeks are consistent.

I was curious to know what a week would look like if students had days off for breaks, professional development days, snow days, etc. I knew that the “big story” took priority, however, I wanted to know what other components of *Wonders* she chose to focus on during those short weeks. She explained:

It really throws me off when we have a four day week, though. It's hard for me to pick and choose what I should do and what I should cut because I feel like I'm already doing that so much, right? And it ends up usually being mostly whole group, just to make sure I cover everything. Like my Mondays, though, when I go through everything the first day, I'll do that on Tuesday instead. And I just encourage them to practice their spelling words at home. What a 20-minute lesson would be ends up being a 5-minute mini lesson. I still cover vocabulary and then grammar I'll cover the next day. We don't always get to our small group books---that's usually the thing I cut out.

Keeping in mind this was the second semester of Michelle's first year of teaching, I thought it would be important to ask her how she initially structured her ELA block at the beginning of the year. Consistent with her previous responses, she answered, “I asked Anita how she did it, and that's how I started doing it”.

I ended this interview with asking about how the focus for small group instruction is determined:

Yeah. So for my orange group, they are my on grade-level group, a lot of those kids are kind of interchangeable. I just do fluency with them---they partner read the level readers and we talk about them. With my purple group, my lowest group, I do the tier three resources with them. And I kind of go over everything with them--like we do fluency, a little bit of comprehension, a little bit of spelling, some phonics stuff, as they need a lot of support. And

then my high group, I'm actually doing the inquiry space in *Wonders*, which is like a writing and research project. Oh, I don't really do the level readers with them unless they want to. I just started doing the inquiry space things with them, though. They're good enough readers that they don't need a ton of practice right now. And it's only for 15 minutes. And they do a lot of reading during Galaxy reading. That's something I learned about at the professional development day, which was really cool---the inquiry space writing and research projects for my high groups.

Michelle clarified that “Galaxy reading” was their multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) time. This is a 30-minute time block where all third-grade students are split into groups (tier one, tier two, or tier three) to receive support based on their specific needs. This time block takes place outside of the daily ELA block.

Interview #4

The goal for interview four was to find out if there were other influences outside of Michelle’s colleagues and professional development that had an impact on her use of the *Wonders* curriculum. I also wanted to understand which component of *Wonders* she felt the most confident teaching, and why. I started with a question about the influence of her teacher preparation program (TPP) on her literacy instruction as a first-year teacher:

What I got from my TPP was you should do small groups. They gave us some small group ideas, like read-alouds we could use. We did a lot of those. In the back of my mind, I remember learning about literacy circles and stuff---but it's all kind of separated from my first year. I feel like I'm just trying to get to know the curriculum and do what the curriculum says--- and I'm really honestly not using much from college. I kind of do wish that we went more in depth with like, what a structured literacy block

would look like, as far as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension. Because the curriculum has all of that, and a lot of all that, and it's hard to know how much of each I should spend time on or how important each one is.

I followed this up by asking if she got a chance to work with any commercial literacy curricula in her education courses from her TPP. She recalled, "I think maybe a little. If we did, it was probably one lesson where we looked at a curriculum book. Block C is really when I starting working with curriculum". Block C was Michelle's semester before her student teaching. The focus courses for her Block C semester were literacy, math, and social studies. Because Michelle completed her student teaching in the same district that she is now a first-year teacher in, I was curious to know how her experience using *Wonders* during student teaching impacted her use of it now as a first-year teacher:

Oh, yeah, I feel like I would have been completely overwhelmed if I hadn't (used *Wonders* during student teaching). Just because there's so much on there and I'm still overwhelmed by it sometimes. Like, what's useful and what's not so useful?

Michelle went on to explain that she felt like using the *Wonders* curriculum during student teaching gave her somewhat of a leg up on other first-year teachers who hadn't student taught using this curriculum. Taking into consideration that she not only was familiar with *Wonders* from her student teaching semester, she was also in her second semester of her first year of teaching, which meant that she had been exposed to the curriculum for almost a year now. This led to my next question about which of the five components of literacy she felt most confident teaching and whether that had to do with a general sense of confidence about that component or if it was related to the support provided by the *Wonders* curriculum:

I would say, probably, comprehension. I can ask a lot of questions to easily build comprehension and I use a lot of graphic organizers. That's the one (comprehension) I hit the most. I feel like I would say that I'm not the most confident in any of them yet. But yeah, I would say comprehension is the easiest to nail. And then next is probably grammar, and then phonics. The curriculum is the most supportive with comprehension, because they have questions to the side of the manual. They also provide those graphic organizers. That (the curriculum) is pretty well set up for that. Yeah, and there's support for other ones (components of literacy)—you just kind of have to search more.

My last question was aimed at finding out if Michelle sought out literacy resources from places/people outside of professional development sessions and grade-level colleagues:

I have my mentor teacher, she's actually a reading specialist right now. I ask her about a lot of MTSS stuff because I have the lowest group for that, so I go to her. I went to her a bit to see what I should be doing in my MTSS time. But as far as like my structured core reading time, I mean, Haley, Anita, and I pretty much follow the same schedule, so I don't really seek out much support for that right now. There's no judgment with them (grade-level colleagues). It's like you do your own thing, but also you can have any of my stuff, which is really nice.

Interview #5

My questions for the fifth interview were a mix of expanding on questions that were asked in prior interviews and also getting Michelle's opinion on the school district's plan to discontinue using *Wonders* and adopt a new literacy curriculum---this is something that she had mentioned to me during one of our observations and I wanted to dig a little deeper on it. I started by asking her to tell me a little more about the professional development session with the

representative from *Wonders*. She had previously told me what the session was about but I was curious to know more details about the session and how she felt afterward:

Mostly what I remember from it is that she walked us through some of the features, which were basic ones I already knew. I knew how to get into the calendar that was arranged by weeks. She showed us the daily slides that were on there, which I kind of already knew about. And then she also showed some additional resources for different tiered students, which I took away and used. And a couple other takeaways that she showed me were some writing features that I didn't know they had---like writing that they could do on their iPads. And then also an research project type thing, a research writing project. After the session, I felt like it (the *Wonders* curriculum) was a little more manageable. But, I was really excited about the writing features. And then I used that research project right after because I needed something like that for my higher kids. So I was a little more excited about it (the *Wonders* curriculum).

Because the professional development day was focused on the online resources, I was curious to know how much Michelle used the actual hard copy of the teacher manual. She said she uses it almost every day when she does read-alouds with her students because she likes to use the questions on the side of the page. However, she did indicate that she uses the online resources more, in terms of overall use of materials.

My next questions focused on observations of others using the *Wonders* curriculum.

I asked if she had ever observed her co-teacher, Anita, or any other teachers using *Wonders*:

A *Wonders* lesson? I don't think so. Unless it was while I was student teaching, but I can't remember. I don't think so. No, I've never observed her teach one. But I asked her (Anita) about it a lot.

In first grade, we had it---so I saw how my cooperating teacher used it. I'm sure I did when I was student teaching, but I can't remember who or what grade level specifically.

This interview ended with a conversation about the school district's plan to adopt a new literacy curriculum. Although interesting, this was not surprising to me. With teacher preparation programs currently responding to legislation surrounding the "science of reading", there is a push for educators to focus on teaching foundational literacy skills, such as phonics, especially in primary grades. I asked Michelle her opinion on this:

Personally, I don't think that *Wonders* is teaching exactly what they want, and it doesn't feel like it's (*Wonders*) emphasizing the right things necessarily. We've been talking a lot about phonics---and the phonics in *Wonders* is really bad. Even the *Wonders* representative that did our professional development was aware of that, the phonics lacked a lot. They're pushing everyone to do LETRS training, which I'm doing now. So, a lot of what it is telling us is like, not in our curriculum at all. The training has been really helpful, too. It's just so much extra stuff that it's a little hard to focus on.

Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) are professional learning sessions that "build teachers' knowledge of language structure and the processes involved in learning to read words, spell, and comprehend, and then to help teachers apply these understandings in their classrooms" (Moats, 2023, p. 5). Michelle's district was encouraging all teachers, especially those in grades K-3, to take the LETRS training due to the lack of phonics instruction provided by *Wonders*.

Interview #6

For our final interview, I wanted to dig deeper into how certain experiences while teaching *Wonders* felt for Michelle. My questions for this interview stemmed from Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological & affective states. I began this conversation by asking Michelle to tell me about a time when she received feedback, encouragement, or constructive criticism from a colleague or administrator, in terms of her literacy instruction, and how that feedback made her feel:

My mentor teacher has observed me in the past and given constructive criticism simply about my area and the resources I needed to make it run more smoothly. For example, she mentioned basic things, like having a teacher table set up with markers, dry erase boards, pens, and other supplies to make transitions go more smoothly. It felt positive and helpful because she was more experienced and gave me simple pointers that I would not have thought of on my own. When I received positive feedback in the way I taught *Wonders*, I felt confident in my abilities and it made me realize that I wasn't just winging it and my coworkers could tell that I was prepared. Some specific feedback that I received from my ELA instruction from my principal was:

- “Asks students what an antonym might be (maybe opportunity for turn and talk?)”
- “DOK (depth of knowledge) maybe have them predict and justify why they choose that?”
- He was suggesting that I add deeper questions to the material, as well as have students interact more with each other. I thought it was a good suggestion, as I can get caught up in the amount of time I have and rush through deeper questions or turn and talk, but

this allows students to stew on the questions and activate knowledge.

Michelle's response to this question aligned with verbal persuasion, in that her feelings about the experience, described with words such as positive, helpful, and confident, were influenced by individuals who she found to be credible. Feedback from Michelle's mentor and principal not only boosted her confidence, but also affirmed to herself that this meant her colleagues would see that she was prepared to teach *Wonders*—this comment was powerful, underscoring the importance for Michelle to be a contributing colleague to her third-grade team.

My next question shifted toward vicarious experience, which is when an individual's expectation of their personal success is raised by observing others perform similar tasks successfully (Bandura, 1997). I asked Michelle to share with me a time when she saw, heard, or discussed the way in which a colleague used *Wonders* successfully and how that made her feel:

I remember discussing how Anita implemented different subjects into ELA on different days. This made much more sense for me and made me feel relieved when trying to set up/reconstruct my weekly ELA block. I continue to teach this way with an overview of the week on Monday, phonics on Tuesday, vocabulary and comprehension on Wednesday, grammar and comprehension on Thursday, and spelling/comprehension tests on Friday. This set up gave me more structure. Before, I felt overwhelmed by the amount of content *Wonders* predicted you would cover in one day, so picking out topics for each day was much more manageable. I still do small sections of each focus daily, but this allows me to have less transitions in ELA and waste less time doing short, unmemorable mini lessons.

Although Michelle didn't mention observing Anita, she did explain how their conversations about implementing different subjects into ELA on different days helped her feel

relieved when planning her own ELA block, and that she continues to teach this way today. This was very telling. It showed how big of an impact Anita's explanation of her implementation of *Wonders* had on Michelle's expectations of success for herself in terms of implementing the *Wonders* curriculum.

Mastery experiences tend to be the most influential source of information when determining an individual's level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). I wanted to know more about the successes Michelle had while using the *Wonders* curriculum and what those successes felt like:

I feel like I am successful in teaching genres, comprehension strategies, and comprehension skills with the way *Wonders* incorporate multiple texts to practice. The curriculum also spirals, so these topics return every few weeks for students to dig deeper into their understanding of these concepts. For example, each week we fill out two graphic organizers on two different texts (like POV/compare and contrast/theme) and we are able to do one together, while I can assess their understanding of the element on how they fill out the next graphic organizer. I feel accomplished when students are able to pull details directly from the text and use it to justify the POV/theme/etc.

Michelle had mentioned before that she felt the most confident teaching comprehension, so it was helpful to hear her expand on why she felt that way. For Michelle, seeing her students master a skill was reflective of her own mastery in teaching that skill. She used the term "accomplished" to describe her feelings about her successes—this term is synonymous with "expert"—indicating to me a high level of self-efficacy stemming from mastery experiences.

Physiological and affective states deal with different types of arousal (Bandura, 1997). If an individual is positively aroused, they feel interest and curiosity, and tend to see difficult

situations as a challenge. On the other hand, if an individual is negatively aroused, feelings of nervousness and anxiety are present, and they see the difficult situation as a threat. I asked Michelle to reflect on a time when she felt that the *Wonders* curriculum presented difficulties and how did she respond to those difficulties:

I have felt challenged when there are not enough resources/options to choose from throughout the week. I feel like there are options for most of my students, but they tend to be dry. *Wonders* sets up a good consistent week for students with structure and routine, but our ELA time can sometimes be dry and unexciting. I have had to find ways to incorporate games or fun videos related to the content in order to get students excited about ELA. Phonics instruction and writing is also a challenging area, as I don't feel there are enough resources to properly teach phonics as a whole, and specifically for students who are below grade level. I use Heggerty: "Bridge the gap" with those students, as well as spend extended time on the weekly spelling words, mapping them out and noticing the spelling patterns. The writing resources are especially dry and unexciting, and tend to be above my students' level, which is consistent across grade levels, so it is not widely used in our school.

Heggerty: Bridge the Gap is a series of systematic phonemic awareness intervention lessons for students in 2nd grade and above (VanHekken & Bottari, 2020). Michelle's district adopted this program to supplement phonics instruction not covered by the *Wonders* curriculum. Hearing Michelle use the word "challenge" as a way to describe how she felt told me that her feelings of arousal stemming from a difficult situation were more positive than negative. Although she felt challenged, she responded by finding ways to incorporate content that would excite her students when the curriculum provided dry material.

Interview Themes

Theme: Affective Domain

Michelle's level of self-efficacy was central to this study, so tapping into her affective domain helped me understand how she viewed her level of confidence and ability when it came to navigating and implementing the *Wonders* curriculum.

This theme played a significant role in analyzing the level of Michelle's self-efficacy. Throughout the interview process, Michelle expressed feelings toward parents, students, and the *Wonders* curriculum. She spoke about her personality as a teacher and the attitudes, beliefs, and personal opinions she possessed. Understanding the emotion behind her statements was important to me. Listening to her speak about successes and accomplishments during her first year of teaching helped me interpret how she saw herself as a teacher. Her tone of voice and facial expressions aided in my understanding of where she felt her greatest strengths and weaknesses were in regard to how she navigated and implemented the *Wonders* curriculum.

Theme: Parents

Michelle spoke in depth about the positive impact her students' parents have had on her. She described her fear of communicating with parents at the beginning of the year due to a preconceived notion of how they might respond. To her surprise, the support she has received from parents has not only boosted her confidence, but has allowed her to build relationships with parents, which in turn, positively impacted her students. After a successful conversation with one parent, Michelle reflected on her feelings: "It's just like a weight lifted off my shoulder to be like, I am doing enough in some areas! Like, yes, parents are seeing that I am trying. I never want them to feel like I'm just leaving their student in the dust. And I feel like my parents know

that. And I feel like that's been a big accomplishment from the beginning of the year. I don't feel scared to talk to parents anymore.”

Theme: Literacy Curriculum

Throughout our interviews, the commercial literacy program in which this study centered around, was a common thread. Michelle spoke about teaching the curriculum with fidelity, explaining that she did little to modify or supplement the curriculum, if at all. Four of the five pillars of reading: phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were mentioned over and over again. These four pillars correlated with the weekly components in *Wonders*. Michelle discussed her opinion on the alignment of the state standards with *Wonders*—she felt it was very aligned, mentioning the Common Core State Standards correlations located within the teaching manual. Having used this same curriculum in her student teaching classroom, Michelle was familiar with the components of the program and had practice navigating the teacher’s manual.

In her teacher preparation program, she does not remember working with an actual curriculum until the semester before student teaching. However, it wasn’t until she began student teaching in a first-grade classroom that she was introduced to the *Wonders* curriculum, in particular. Having the chance to observe her cooperating teacher use *Wonders* and then begin using it herself in her student teaching proved beneficial during her first year of teaching literacy. Michelle recalled: “Oh, yeah, I feel like I would have been completely overwhelmed if I hadn't (used *Wonders* during student teaching).”

Theme: Mentors

Michelle’s experiences during her first year of teaching with *Wonders* were influenced by a number of individuals. First and foremost, her grade-level colleague, Anita, was someone she looked up to and respected as a mentor. She mentioned Anita many times throughout our

interviews and it was always in a positive light, stating how much of a supportive colleague she has been, especially in regard to the use of the *Wonders* curriculum. Her other grade-level colleague also offered a level of support, providing Michelle with resources when needed but also being understanding about their individuality and personal teaching styles. It was evident that these three third-grade colleagues made a wonderful team, prioritizing collaboration toward a common goal: meeting the needs of the students in their classrooms. Michelle stated: “There’s no judgment with them (grade-level colleagues). It’s like you do your own thing, but also you can have any of my stuff, which is really nice.”

Other individuals that Michelle considered mentors were her assistant principal, a former third-grade teacher that taught at Southsee during Michelle’s student teaching, a fourth-grade teacher, who was a friend and first-year teacher as well, and the mentor teacher who was assigned to her during her first-year teaching orientation. This mentor did not teach in Michelle’s building but provided a wealth of literacy knowledge, being that she was a reading specialist. It was clear to me that Michelle valued support and guidance from others, and she was comfortable reaching out to these individuals when needed.

Theme: Responsive Teaching Practices

A number of responsive teaching practices emerged from the data. In this study, responsive teaching practices refer to the ways in which the participant responded to the individual academic needs of her students. Michelle spoke of the way in which she and her colleagues planned for and responded to these needs. I split this theme into two categories: differentiation, the way in which she grouped her students and assessment, the way in which she evaluated and measured her students’ learning.

Differentiation

In order to meet the varying needs of her students, Michelle employed a number of instructional strategies that were supported by both the *Wonders* curriculum and support services put in place by her building and district. A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) served as the district's framework for ELA differentiation. Michelle was familiar with the MTSS model from using it during her student teaching semester. Michelle explained that MTSS time took place outside of her core ELA block and she was in charge of instruction for the lowest group out of the third-grade students. She often reached out to her mentor teacher, who was a reading specialist, for support and guidance on what to focus on for the students in her group. I did not ask Michelle how she and her grade-level colleagues determined who took which group for MTSS instruction, but this would have been a good question to follow up on.

The students in her classroom who received intensive support for reading were pulled out of the classroom for Title 1 reading and special education services. Michelle noted that because the reading specialists in her building were currently being trained in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), which caused them to be out of the building on certain days, the students receiving Title 1 services for reading did not get pulled consistently. Because of this, those students needed extra support from her in the classroom. To meet those needs, Michelle pulled these students for small group instruction more frequently than her on-level and above-level students.

Small group instruction for students in Michelle's classroom was supported by the *Wonders* curriculum. Michelle used the resources in *Wonders* to create differentiated weekly packets to guide the learning of four different groups of students: below grade-level, on grade-

level, above grade-level, and ELL students. She spoke in detail about the weekly schedule, focus, and goals for each of her small groups and how these are determined.

Assessment

Comprehension test scores, district assessments, progress monitoring, standards-based grade cards, and state standards were topics that came up during our conversations in regard to data that was used to determine student ability groups. *Wonders* has weekly comprehension tests that Michelle's students take each Friday. Those tests, along with the district reading assessments are what she uses to split her students into small groups for differentiated instruction. The questions on those tests are separated by standard, so Michelle can track the progress her students are making on each standard, based on the percentages from the weekly tests. Furthermore, her district uses standards-based grade cards, which allows for the student's overall grade in reading to correlate with their average performance on all state standards for ELA. Michelle explained that although she followed the curriculum's assessment schedule, she also used anecdotal notes and her own observations to inform her instruction and grouping of students.

In regard to progress monitoring, Michelle specified that in between the three times per school year that district assessments are used to screen students, progress monitoring is used to track some of the students, but not all. She explained that the grouping of students throughout the year can be fluid, based on how a student's fluency and comprehension levels fluctuate.

Theme: Professional Development

Professional Development (PD) emerged from the data as a common theme. Repeated ideas that served as aspects of professional development included *Wonders* PD, PD representative, LETRS training, PD reflection, and other websites/resources related to ELA

instruction. The *Wonders* representative that came to Michelle's building to do a professional development session on the *Wonders* curriculum was particularly helpful in providing explanation and guidance for the online features of *Wonders*. The online resources came from the actual *Wonders* website as well as other ELA websites that connected with the components included in *Wonders*. Although Michelle was already familiar with using *Wonders* from her student teaching experience, she found this professional development session valuable in that it provided her with extra resources that could be used for her above grade-level group of students. She reflected on her feelings after that day, describing the excitement she felt about implementing a research project that she learned about using with her above grade-level students. She stated, "I used that research project right after because I needed something like that for my higher kids". The structure of that professional development day was also beneficial, as each grade level had the opportunity to meet with the *Wonders* representative separately to ask questions specific to their grade level.

LETRS training came up in our conversations a few different times. Michelle explained that the district was training all of their reading specialists in LETRS, but also encouraging all teachers to do the training. Michelle was doing the training at the time of our interviews and she was finding that most of what was being taught to her was not at all in the *Wonders* curriculum. She felt that the training had been helpful so far, but it was a bit difficult to focus on, due to the disconnect from *Wonders*, which she was expected to be teaching with fidelity each day. She understood the push for incorporating more phonics instruction into the curriculum and even mentioned that the *Wonders* representative was aware of the fact that the phonics instruction in *Wonders* was lacking.

Theme: Planning

The way in which Michelle planned her weekly and daily ELA block was important for me to understand for a few reasons. Her planning would give me an insight into how she navigated the *Wonders* curriculum and what influences impacted that navigation. It was evident that Michelle's grade-level team, particularly Anita, had a great deal of influence on how she structured both her weekly ELA block and daily small group instruction time. Michelle acknowledged the fact that she often deferred to Anita's planning and structure as a model for what to do in her own classroom. Although this is characteristic of a low sense of self-efficacy, this gave her a starting point to experience success on her own. She and her grade-level colleagues structured each day similarly, but differed in their level of fidelity to the curriculum. One of her grade-level colleagues used more supplemental materials as opposed to Anita, who stuck to the structure of *Wonders* more strictly. Michelle fell somewhere in between, but noted that she didn't consider herself to look outside of the curriculum for supplemental materials very often.

Observations/Field Notes

My main goal in collecting data from taking field notes during my observations was to gather evidence of the enacted curriculum, in other words, document what was actually happening during a *Wonders* reading lesson in Michelle's classroom. Kurtz et al. (2010) defines the enacted curriculum as the "content of instruction delivered by classroom teachers" (p. 132).

It was during these observations that I was able to take in-depth field notes describing Michelle's weekly and daily schedules for her ELA instruction (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

Table 4.1. Michelle's Weekly ELA Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<u>Whole group</u> Overview of weekly focus skills/strategies: phonics/spelling grammar vocabulary comprehension fluency	<u>Whole Group</u> Phonics/Spelling Story Comprehension	<u>Whole group</u> Vocabulary Story Comprehension	<u>Whole Group</u> Grammar Story Comprehension	<u>Whole group</u> Spelling and Comprehension Test
<u>Small group</u> Purple *If time allows*	<u>Small groups</u> Purple Blue	<u>Small group</u> Orange *If time allows*	<u>Small groups</u> Purple Orange	<u>Small group</u> Green *If time allows*

Table 4.2. Michelle's Daily ELA Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:45-10:00	Daily Edit (Grammar)	Daily Edit (Grammar)	Daily Edit (Grammar)	Daily Edit (Grammar)	Spelling and Comprehension Test
10:00-10:15	Introduce weekly focus skills/strategies	Phonics Spelling	Vocabulary Comprehension	Grammar Comprehension	
10:15-10:30	Story	Story Comprehension	Story	Story	
10:30-10:45	Story	Small group (Purple)	Vocabulary Comprehension	Small group (Purple)	
10:45-11:00	Small group (Purple) *If time allows*	Small group (Blue)	Small group (Orange) * If time allows*	Small group (Orange)	Small group (Green) *If time allows*

Documents/Artifacts

The results from the self-efficacy scales that Michelle rated herself on allowed me to add a quantitative measure to my qualitative data. The ratings from these scales provided concrete data points that supported my qualitative observations, enriching the research findings.

The first scale (see Table 4.3 below) rated Michelle's confidence about different aspects of teaching on a scale from 0-100. This scale gave me a general understanding about how

confident Michelle felt as a teacher overall. As shown on the scale, she rated herself above 50 on all aspects of teaching except two: *get children to do their homework* and *increase collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively*. I interpreted this as meaning those were two areas where she felt she didn't have enough control to make a difference in the outcomes because the two items involved something taking place outside of the school (homework) and individuals other than herself (teachers and administration). However, she rated herself a 90 on two other aspects that involved similar factors: *get students to learn when there is a lack of support from the home* and *get students to trust teachers*. This was puzzling to me, so I decided to ask her for clarification. She stated:

I think I ranked those other two areas higher because I know I can only control my actions and efforts! Of course, I can encourage and incentivize students to do their homework, but ultimately, it's up to the students and/or the time and resources available to them at home. That's why my homework is always optional. I also feel that I can only do so much when it comes to collaboration but try to do my part with volunteering and communicating, which is why I felt it is a 50/50. For the higher areas, I know that students can learn and trust teachers based on how I interact with them on a daily basis. Although support from home helps greatly, I feel that school can often be a safe space for students who don't have that at home.

This made more sense to me. She ranked herself higher on *get students to trust teachers* because she was basing it on her own interactions with students, and because she interacts with them every day, she felt that there was a higher chance that they would trust her as their teacher. She didn't see this as something that was completely out of her control. She also felt confident in her ability to *get students to learn when there is a lack of support from the home* because she

felt that if school is a safe space for students, they can let their guards down and be better able to focus on learning.

Table 4.3. Michelle's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale Ratings

	Confidence (0-100)
Efficacy to Influence Decision Making	
Influence the decisions that are made in the school	60
Express my views freely on important school matters	80
Get the instructional materials and equipment I need	70
Instructional Self-Efficacy	
Get through to the most difficult students	80
Get students to learn when there is a lack of support from the home	90
Keep students on task on difficult assignments	70
Increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons	80
Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork	70
Get students to work well together	80
Overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning	75
Get children to do their homework	40
Disciplinary Self-Efficacy	
Get children to follow classroom rules	80
Control disruptive behavior in the classroom	80
Prevent problem behavior on the school grounds	80
Efficacy to Enlist Parent Involvement	
Get parents to become involved in school activities	60
Assist parents in helping their children do well in school	65
Make parents feel comfortable coming to school	80
Efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement	
Get community groups involved in working with the school	60
Get businesses involved in working with the school	60
Get local colleges and universities involved in working with the school	70
Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate	
Make the school a safe place	60
Make students enjoy coming to school	85
Get students to trust teachers	90

Help other teachers with their teaching skills	60
Increase collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively	50
Reduce school dropout	60
Reduce school absenteeism	60
Get students to believe they can do well in school work	80

The second scale (see Table 4.4 below) rated Michelle's "degree of truth" on statements relating to her use of the *Wonders* curriculum as a first-year teacher. The items on this scale were categorized by Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion (separated into two categories: by mentor and by others), and physiological and affective states.

On this scale, Michelle rated herself the highest in the category *Verbal Persuasion by Mentor*. This rating supported Michelle's responses throughout the interview process. She rated herself as an eight for *Verbal Persuasion by Mentor* and a six for *Verbal Persuasion by Others*. These ratings were not surprising to me, as they coincided with the qualitative information she shared with me during the interviews. It was very clear that verbal persuasion had the greatest influence on Michelle's self-efficacy in terms of her navigation of the *Wonders* curriculum. Her grade-level colleague, Anita, was a mentor to her and was by far the most influential in her decision-making. My interpretation of this was that because Michelle had found success in following guidance from Anita, she continued to hold her to a high standard. Following guidance from Anita increased Michelle's self-efficacy because the support gave her the confidence to find success in her own classroom.

The second highest rating was in *Mastery Experiences*. Although I had assumed her ratings of this source would be higher, I did expect this source to be more influential than *Vicarious Experiences* and *Physiological and Affective States*, based on the interview data.

Michelle rated the category *Physiological and Affective States* the lowest, however, the statements made in this category were negative in nature: *I often felt anxious*, *I mostly felt uncomfortable*, and *I often felt quite down*. This told me that her degree of truth for the negative feelings was low, which meant that her self-efficacy was not negatively influenced by this source.

Table 4.4. Michelle's Four Sources of Self-Efficacy Ratings

Degree of truth (1-9)	
Mastery Experiences	
5	I was very satisfied with my own achievements (in using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum) during my first year of teaching.
7	During my first year of teaching, I had many successful experiences (using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
5	During my first year of teaching, I noted that I could be a very good teacher (when using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
6	I successfully mastered the requirements of my first year of teaching (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
Vicarious Experiences	
5	During my first year of teaching, I could observe teachers from whom I learned how to be a good teacher (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
4	During my first year of teaching, I observed teachers that managed difficult classroom situations successfully (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
5	During my first year of teaching, I observed teachers that conducted very good lessons (using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
4	During my first year of teaching, I could observe teachers from whom I learned a lot (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
Verbal Persuasion by Mentor	
8	My mentor at school told me that I would be a good teacher (based on my use of the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum) during my first year of teaching.
8	My mentor at school gave me positive feedback (about using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum) during my first year of teaching.

Verbal Persuasion by Others	
6	During my first year of teaching, other people in my building told me that I would be a good teacher (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
6	During my first year of teaching, other people in my building gave me positive feedback (in terms of using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
Physiological and Affective States	
5	During my first year of teaching, I often felt anxious (when using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
3	During my first year of teaching, I mostly felt uncomfortable (while using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).
4	During my first year of teaching, I often felt quite down (while using the <i>Wonders</i> curriculum).

Michelle's ratings on the four sources of self-efficacy scale were consistent with the data derived from the six semi-structured interviews. Her average rating in terms of each source of self-efficacy is displayed in Table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5. Four Sources of Self-Efficacy Scale Average Ratings

	Mastery Experiences	Vicarious Experiences	Verbal Persuasion	Physiological and Affective States
Average rating (out of 9.0)	5.75	4.5	7.0	4.0

Chapter Summary

Chapter four presented data from three collection methods: semi-structured interviews, observations/field notes, and documents/artifacts. These three sources of information were used to triangulate the data. Qualitative information gathered from the semi-structured interviews coincided with quantitative information gathered from the documents/artifacts, specifically the self-efficacy scales. Data gathered from observations and field notes also supported the

qualitative information gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Seven themes that emerged from the interview data were summarized and a table with average ratings from the four sources of self-efficacy scale was provided.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

First-year teachers navigate a number of challenges at the beginning of their careers. Understanding how to use their district's mandated commercial literacy program is the challenge central to this case study. The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of self-efficacy on a first-year teacher's navigation and implementation of a specific commercial literacy program, entitled *Wonders*. As the researcher, my focus was to understand how Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy impacted the first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy in the context of the *Wonders* curriculum. A qualitative single case study was employed as the methodology. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, observations/field notes, and documents/artifacts. The grounded theory method was used to code and analyze the data. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings in terms of the theoretical frameworks that this study was situated within. Seven themes that emerged from the data are analyzed in terms of four theoretical constructs.

Findings

Research Question

This broad research question guided my study: In what ways, if any, does a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy influence the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program? The answer to this question has many layers. It can best be explained by starting with the theoretical frameworks in which this study was situated within.

Social Cognitive Theory

Self-efficacy is one of the key constructs of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Dating back to the 1970s, SCT was part of a shift that took place from a focus on behavior to a focus on cognition (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Since then, SCT has been used in education

research to explore interactions between behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors that influence educator actions (Bandura, 2000). This study gathered data from three different respective sources in order to understand how a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy influenced her navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program: observations (behavioral), interviews (cognitive), and the commercial literacy program: *Wonders* (environmental/contextual).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as a person's confidence in his or her ability to complete a task, even when the task is challenging or difficult. According to Schunk and Pajares (2009), "Self-efficacy can influence the choices people make and the courses of action they pursue" (p.37). In this study, my goal was to explore and understand how self-efficacy influenced the choices and decisions Michelle, a first-year teacher, made when navigating and implementing the commercial literacy program, *Wonders*. I was particularly interested in which components of *Wonders* Michelle felt the most confident teaching and where that confidence came from. Schunk and Pajares (2009) go on to state, "Individuals tend to select tasks and activities in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not" (p. 37). From the data gathered, I was able to analyze which components of *Wonders* Michelle deemed most important and how she determined that importance—from where the influence derived.

Self-efficacy beliefs are the result of a difficult self-persuasion process that depends on cognitive processing of many efficacy cues transmitted enactively, vicariously, socially, and physically (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1997), individuals base their self-efficacy beliefs on four main sources: mastery experiences, physiological and affective states, verbal

persuasion, and vicarious experiences. These four sources of self-efficacy served as the social constructs used to analyze Michelle's level of self-efficacy as a first-year teacher in terms of her navigation and implementation of the commercial literacy program, *Wonders*.

Interview Themes

The seven themes that emerged from the interview data aligned with one or more of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy. My analysis of each theme in terms of the respective source of self-efficacy is described below.

Mastery Experiences

According to Bandura (1997), mastery experiences serve as the most influential source of self-efficacy because the most realistic information is provided to learners in regard to their ability to succeed. When individuals experience success in mastering a skill or achieving a goal, it reinforces their belief in their own abilities (Bandura, 1997). For Michelle, mastery experiences were demonstrated in three different themes that emerged from the interview data: affective domain, professional development, and literacy curriculum.

Affective Domain

The affective domain is concerned with a person's feelings, attitudes, and emotions. Both successful experiences and setbacks were included in the affective domain because Michelle expressed specific feelings that she had during these times. Michelle experienced successes throughout her first year of teaching that built her self-efficacy beliefs, which lead to increased confidence and motivation. She described two successful experiences, in particular, that gave her a sense of accomplishment. The first was her ability to talk to parents. She reflected on how it felt to talk to parents at the beginning of the school year: "talking to parents was the scariest thing about teaching to me at the beginning of the year". She explained that

after working through a difficult situation with a parent and coming out on the other side of it, she “didn’t feel scared to talk to parents anymore”.

The second successful experience Michelle felt accomplished by was her ability to teach genres, comprehension strategies, and comprehension skills. She recalled: “I feel accomplished when students are able to pull details directly from the text and use it to justify the POV/theme/etc.”. The success of her students was evidence to her that she too had succeeded.

Professional Development

Two different professional development opportunities provided Michelle the means to gradually build her self-efficacy to tackle new challenges. After a *Wonders* professional development session revealed writing resources from the digital component of the curriculum that she could immediately take back to her classroom and implement with her above grade-level group, Michelle felt excited. This experience also made her feel that the plethora of resources included in *Wonders* was more manageable for her to navigate.

LETRS training offered Michelle an opportunity to improve her phonics instruction. She found that much of what she learned from LETRS training did not correspond with the phonics in *Wonders*. This training benefited Michelle in terms of her understanding of the *Wonders* curriculum; she realized that a district-mandated curriculum can be lacking in certain components of literacy. Further solidifying this notion, she recalls: “even the professional development representative was aware that the phonics in *Wonders* was lacking”.

The fact that Michelle was able to recognize and identify the disconnect between what she was learning from the LETRS training and what the *Wonders* curriculum was asking her to teach is characteristic of a mastery experience. This experience taught her the importance of being critical when it comes to commercial literacy materials. She realized that teaching these

materials with fidelity did not guarantee her students were getting the instruction they needed. This was a lightbulb moment for Michelle in terms of the value in looking outside the curriculum for supplemental materials.

Literacy Curriculum

Out of the core components of literacy included in the *Wonders* curriculum, Michelle felt the most confident teaching comprehension. She credited *Wonders* for how supported she felt with asking questions and using graphic organizers to build comprehension. She stated: “the curriculum is the most supportive with comprehension because it provides questions on the side of the manual...it is set up pretty well”.

Although Michelle initially expressed that she did not use outside materials to supplement the curriculum, she later mentioned that she has had success in finding ways to incorporate games and fun videos that align with the content in *Wonders*. She explained that the resources from *Wonders* can sometimes be “dry and unexciting”.

Michelle had a lightbulb moment while using *Wonders* when she began to realize how important using the vocabulary words throughout the week and year was, as opposed to only referring to them in one specific lesson or unit. She has become very intentional about mentioning previously learned vocabulary words and using them in context. Because of this, she has noticed “students using them or pointing them out in books”.

Physiological and Affective States

Bandura (1997) defines physiological and affective states as emotional arousal, which is an indicator to the individual as to their ability to cope with particular tasks or situations. When experiencing a heightened level of emotional arousal, an individual’s feelings will either be negative or positive. Feelings of anxiety and/or fear tend to be negative and feelings of

nervousness and/or excitement tend to be positive. These emotions influence an individual's self-efficacy, consequently determining whether they look at the task or situation as a challenge or a threat. Aspects of physiological and affective states were present for Michelle in two of the themes that emerged: affective domain and parents.

Affective Domain

Michelle's feelings about herself, her students, her students' parents, and the *Wonders* curriculum led to a sense of self-awareness when she was put in situations that triggered certain emotions. She described herself as a laid back but anxious teacher who prioritizes relationships with her students. Throughout our interviews, she used words like overwhelmed, scared, tricky, panicked, and psyched out. These feelings took on a negative connotation, however, the way in which Michelle chose to deal with these feelings was quite the opposite. She believed honesty was the most genuine and effective response, stating, "I'm just really honest with my kids...and they're empathetic with me". She shared an equally authentic response in terms of how she became more comfortable talking to parents: "I'm just honest with them...I make sure they know I love their student...I'm positive about their kid...it makes them feel comforted".

Parents

Michelle went into her first year of teaching very intimidated by parents due to a preconceived notion that they would question her every move. Talking to parents felt threatening and scary. This negative emotional arousal quickly disappeared after she realized they were a lot more supportive than she expected, even encouraging. Michelle's low level of self-efficacy in terms of communicating with parents increased as she began finding ways to connect with them and build positive relationships.

In terms of the impact that her relationships with parents had on how she made decisions using the *Wonders* curriculum, Michelle recalls:

Going into the first year, I thought parents would ask me a lot more questions about content and the specifics of what I was teaching. For my first conferences, I was prepared with samples, student work, and journals to prove to the parents I was teaching “with fidelity”. I realized quickly that my parents are focused on overall standing with the students. They wanted to know generally how they were doing in reading, math, and social emotionally. They trusted that as a teacher their student was being taught what they needed to succeed, and most of the parents just wanted to know how they could support the learning at home.

This trust and support from parents gave Michelle a lot more confidence, shifting her mindset from stress and defensiveness to teamwork with her students’ parents. She stated:

It helped me relax a bit while teaching the reading curriculum and the confidence in myself and my teaching abilities led me to having more flexibility in my lessons based on what I felt my students needed.

Verbal Persuasion

Although Bandura (1997) considers verbal persuasion the weakest of the four sources in altering self-efficacy beliefs, due to a lack of tangible evidence and/or successful outcomes, it proved to be one of the stronger sources of self-efficacy influencing Michelle’s confidence in her own abilities. I believe this was the result of Michelle’s unique situation. Verbal persuasion refers to others persuading a learner that they are capable of succeeding at a particular task (Bandura, 1997). When the “others” are individuals who the learner sees as credible and when verbal persuasion is combined with other sources of self-efficacy, the effectiveness of the source increases—this was the case for Michelle. Three of the themes that emerged from the data

contained characteristics of verbal persuasion: parents, mentors, planning, and responsive teaching practices.

Parents

Michelle's self-efficacy level was greatly influenced by her students' parents. She cared deeply about her students and how their parents perceived her as their child's teacher. As aforementioned, Michelle began the school year with trepidation in terms of communicating with parents. After taking multiple avenues to work through an issue with a student and their parent, the parent offered words of encouragement and support: "She (the parent) was like you are so great, I wish we could take you throughout his whole schooling experience". These words meant so much to Michelle—she expressed how she felt in that moment: "It's just like a weight lifted off my shoulder to be like, I am doing enough in some areas and parents are seeing that I'm trying".

Because Michelle held her students' parents to a high standard and cared greatly about how they thought of her as their child's teacher, their words of support and encouragement combined with the positive outcome of the initially difficult situation enhanced Michelle's level of self-efficacy in terms of verbal persuasion.

Mentors

Verbal persuasion from individuals who Michelle considered mentors proved to be one of the most influential sources of self-efficacy in this particular case study. First and foremost, Michelle's grade-level colleague, Anita, provided daily support through conversations regarding the *Wonders* curriculum. There were numerous times throughout our interviews when Michelle responded to a question about *Wonders* with phrases like "I just ask Anita" and "Anita tells me exactly how she does it in her classroom". Michelle was steadfast in her respect and trust for

Anita's guidance involving the *Wonders* curriculum. She recalls questions that Anita would ask her to reinforce that she was doing a good job as a teacher: "Are your kids learning?" and "Are your kids safe?" When Michelle would answer "yes" to those questions, Anita would reassure her that "you are a really great teacher". Michelle expressed how comfortable she felt asking Anita for help; Anita never made her feel like a bother. She stated, "I wish my classroom was more like hers everyday".

Other mentors that Michelle received verbal persuasion from were her assistant principal and principal. Michelle's assistant principal offered encouragement along with validation, often telling her that she was teaching something correctly and she was okay, when Michelle would come to her with concerns about her teaching style. Her principal provided specific feedback about her ELA instruction using *Wonders*:

He suggested that I add deeper questions to the material, as well as have students interact more with each other. I thought it was a good suggestion, as I can get caught up in the amount of time I have and rush through deeper questions...but this allows students to stew on the questions and activate knowledge.

In this case, verbal persuasion was effective in influencing Michelle's beliefs about her capabilities, due to the fact that it came from her administrators, who she considered very credible sources.

Planning

In terms of planning the structure of her ELA block and weekly ELA schedule using *Wonders*, Michelle's level of self-efficacy came from verbal persuasion by her grade-level colleagues. When asked about how she initially decided to structure her ELA block at the beginning of the year, Michelle replied: "I asked Anita how she did it". She went on to explain that she and her grade-level colleagues have the same structure each day, but they vary in the

amount of supplemental material they use. She said they plan together in order to stay on the same week and they share resources with one another, but there is no judgment if someone wants to do their own thing in terms of planning. Because Michelle had stated that she is forced to pick and choose which resources to use for each component of *Wonders*, due to the large number of resources available and not enough time to incorporate them all, I asked her how she decides: “I base it on my own thoughts and what Anita is doing”.

It was evident that for this theme, verbal persuasion from her grade-level colleagues was combined with other sources of self-efficacy enhancement, such as providing support and encouragement alongside opportunities for mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997), which paved the way for higher levels of self-efficacy.

Responsive Teaching Practices

Michelle’s mentor teacher, although placed in a different building, provided a wealth of knowledge in regard to reading instruction, specifically MTSS. Her mentor was a reading specialist and with Michelle in charge of the lowest group during MTSS time, her advice was especially valuable. She reflected on her mentor teacher’s feedback in terms of small group instruction using *Wonders*: “When I received positive feedback in the way I taught *Wonders*, I felt confident in my abilities and it made me realize that I wasn’t just winging it”. Because this type of verbal persuasion was backed up by a successful outcome (positive feedback about a specific lesson she taught), it resulted in a formidable impact on Michelle’s self-efficacy beliefs.

Vicarious Experiences

Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1986) emphasizes the importance of modeling as a tool for promoting self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences are mediated through observing others perform tasks. According to Bandura (1997), when individuals observe others successfully

completing tasks or achieving goals, it can increase their beliefs in their own capabilities to perform similar tasks. In this particular case study, Michelle's level of self-efficacy deriving from vicarious experiences was low. Although it was evident that she had many influential conversations and received a great deal of positive feedback from others, she did not have many opportunities to observe others in terms of using and modeling the *Wonders* curriculum.

Vicarious experiences only came through in two of the themes that emerged from the data: mentors and literacy curriculum.

Mentors

Michelle made it very clear that she did not have opportunities to observe others using the *Wonders* curriculum, but instead, received a lot of verbal feedback and guidance from her mentors. However, there was one instance where she spoke about her friend, another first-year teacher who taught fourth grade, in a way that suggested she had observed her teaching habits. Michelle's explanation was somewhat of a comparison of herself and her friend. She questioned herself as a first-year teacher, stating that her friend was also a first-year teacher but "does so much...and stays at school until 10 o'clock at times, and is doing great stuff in her classroom, and her classroom is beautiful...I wish I could be like that". She went on to question whether she was doing enough for her students and comparing her classroom organization to other teachers: "organization has never been my strong suit...I just don't know how they do it".

Typically, observing others who are similar successfully perform tasks raises an individual's expectation of personal success on the same task (Bandura, 1997), however, in Michelle's case, observing what she considered to be the success of her friend, made her question her own abilities as a teacher.

Literacy Curriculum

Michelle's exposure to the *Wonders* curriculum during her student teaching semester had a major impact on her use of the curriculum as a first-year teacher. She felt that had it not been for the experience she had observing her cooperating teacher use *Wonders*, she would have been completely overwhelmed her first year. Although this was a positive experience for Michelle, in terms of vicarious experiences, the degree of impact that modeling has on self-efficacy is influenced by the extent to which the observer identifies with the model (Bandura, 1997). During student teaching, Michelle did not feel that she was on the same level as her cooperating teacher, which is a very natural feeling as a student teacher. Because of this, despite the benefit of having a leg up on other first-year teachers due to her familiarity with *Wonders*, observing her cooperating teacher use *Wonders* did not greatly influence her self-efficacy beliefs in terms of her use of the curriculum during her first year of teaching. On the other hand, because she identified more closely with her friend who was also a first-year teacher, comparison and self-doubt lowered her level of self-efficacy in terms of vicarious experiences.

Implications for Practice

This study yields practical implications for practice in the field of education at various levels: schoolwide, districtwide, statewide, and teacher preparation programs.

Schools

This study highlighted feelings of fear and uncertainty in regard to Michelle's experience with communicating with parents. Understanding teachers' levels of self-efficacy should be a concern for building administration, especially with regard to first-year teachers. Teacher Self-Efficacy is an actual term in the research and should be taken into consideration in every school

building. Exploring avenues to identify teacher levels of self-efficacy could inform building administration in their support of first-year teachers.

Michelle indicated she did not have opportunities to observe other teachers in her building. It is critical that building administration offer the support first-year teachers need to allow them time for observing more experienced teachers. First-year teachers tend to feel isolated in their classrooms, which can lower levels of self-efficacy. If they are given the opportunity to observe other teachers, especially in terms of using commercial literacy materials, their levels of self-efficacy may increase, which ultimately has a positive impact on their instruction.

Organizing professional learning communities (PLCs) within their buildings is one avenue school administrators can take to become more familiar with teachers' levels of self-efficacy and to offer support from colleagues. When a first-year teacher is included in a PLC, made up of other colleagues in their building, a sense of belonging can encourage them to seek support for feelings of fear and uncertainty. It is essential that school administrators dedicate time, resources, and support to the development of PLCs in their buildings as a means to increasing levels of self-efficacy in teachers.

Districts

The quality of mentors for first-year teachers is a critical component of district mentorship programs. Michelle's assigned mentor through her district's mentorship program was located in a different building. Although she had the chance to collaborate with this mentor during monthly mentor meetings, it was difficult to observe her and/or touch base with her regularly due to them being located in different buildings. Michelle was a prime example of a first-year teacher who was steadfast in accepting and following the guidance of her grade-level

colleague, who she considered a mentor. In Michelle's particular case, the mentor she most often looked to for advice was indeed a credible individual who provided valuable support that had a lasting impact on her self-efficacy. This study underscored the importance for school districts to invest in mentorship programs that take into consideration the ease of access first-year teachers have to their assigned mentors.

A major revelation Michelle had during this study was the disconnect between the district-mandated commercial literacy program (*Wonders*) and the phonics training (*LETRS*) that was offered to teachers in the district. The professional development sessions that the district provided for *Wonders* acknowledged but did not focus on this disconnect. Although the recognition and identification of this disconnect ultimately increased Michelle's level of self-efficacy in terms of *Mastery Experiences*, this may not be the case for other teachers. It is critical for districts to be transparent in their reasoning for supplementing commercial literacy programs with additional trainings.

State

Teacher retention is a critical issue in education and state legislation plays a role in addressing this challenge. State legislation should take teacher self-efficacy into consideration when enacting policies and providing funding for professional development/support of first-year teachers, school climates/work environments, and teacher evaluation/accountability. Because self-efficacy is such a personal thing, it is important for policies surrounding it to be based on specific feedback from teachers. Oftentimes, teachers don't feel heard. They feel underappreciated for the work they do, resulting in decisions to leave the field. If legislatures could establish recognition and/or incentive programs for teachers, this could help motivate

participation in providing feedback specific to self-efficacy in order to improve policies and funding.

Teacher Preparation Programs

First-year teachers would benefit from early exposure to commercial literacy programs in their teacher preparation courses. Michelle acknowledged that she did not have many opportunities to work with commercial curricula in her education courses prior to student teaching. Although she felt that her teacher preparation courses did provide her with a solid foundation to build on, in terms of literacy instruction, she also felt a disconnect between what she had learned in her teacher education program and what she was expected to teach using the district-mandated commercial literacy program in her first year of teaching.

Teacher preparation programs should take into consideration the roadblocks that prevent them from access to commercial literacy materials. Connecting and collaborating with commercial publishing companies as a means to acquire these materials would benefit teacher candidates during their teacher preparation courses. Although foundational skills and theory provide teacher candidates with a solid base, the inability to connect these with the practical use of materials is unfortunate. Michelle stated that being able to use materials from *Wonders* during her student teaching semester gave her a head start for her first year of teaching. If these commercial materials were readily available for teacher candidates at earlier stages in their teacher preparation programs, first-year teachers' levels of self-efficacy in using these materials could be higher.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the influence of a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy on the navigation of a commercial literacy program. Because this

was a single case study, the experiences described in this study were limited to one individual and one specific context. Michelle's experiences cannot be generalized in terms of all first-year teachers. Not all first-year teachers have the opportunity to practice and become familiar with the same commercial literacy program used in their student teaching as in their first-year of teaching. Additionally, Michelle was in her second semester of her first year of teaching, which meant she had worked with the same curricula for almost a year before this study took place. This allowed time for her to work with the *Wonders* curriculum before reflecting on the influences that impacted her level of self-efficacy.

My previous relationship with the participant could be considered another limitation of this study. Although I took my subjectivity and transparency throughout the study very seriously, I took note of times when our previous relationship may have colored the way I interacted with the participant. Examples of this include: reassuring her during the interview process, trying to ease her discomfort when speaking about negative situations by relating to the situation with a personal story of my own, and offering words of encouragement during the interview process. These interactions may have limited how she expressed herself and because I was her previous supervisor, the overlapping of roles may have inhibited her from complete transparency.

Recommendations for Further Research

An individual's level of self-efficacy can change at different points in their life and within different contexts. This particular study looked at a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy during her second semester of teaching third grade, and in the context of a specific commercial literacy program. Pfitzner-Eden (2016) suggests future research on how influences from each of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy change with career stage—the same can be

suggested for this study. The influence from mastery experiences on Michelle's level of self-efficacy in terms of using the *Wonders* curriculum was greater than what I would expect from a first-year teacher who had not previously worked with that specific literacy program.

Assumptions that first-year teachers have lower levels of self-efficacy in terms of mastery experiences have been made due to the fact that they are at the beginning stages of their careers and have not had as many opportunities as veteran teachers in the field—these assumptions did not hold true for this particular study, however, further research could better inform the assumptions made at different stages of a teacher's career.

The questions below should be considered as recommendations for further research:

- How can an understanding of teacher self-efficacy help schools support first-year teachers?
- How can state legislation use teacher self-efficacy to inform the issue of teacher retention?
- In what ways do teacher preparation programs use commercial literacy programs to enhance levels of teacher self-efficacy?

Conclusion

This study combined data from three different sources in order to analyze a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy in the context of her navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program. Social Cognitive Theory and Self-efficacy Theory served as the theoretical frameworks which grounded the study. Bandura's sources of self-efficacy (mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological and affective states) offered four theoretical constructs used to analyze data from semi-structured interviews, observations/field notes, and documents/artifacts. Seven themes (responsive teaching practices,

professional development, literacy curriculum, parents, mentors, planning, and affective domain) emerged from the interview data that proved consistent with data from the other two sources. Verbal persuasion and mastery experiences reflected the greatest influence on the participant's level of self-efficacy.

It is important to note the overlap in themes and sources of self-efficacy. For example, there were certain themes that aligned with more than one source of self-efficacy and also separate themes that could have been analyzed as one, depending on the context of the situation and/or experience being described by the participant. Parents emerged as a theme that aligned with both verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states, however, because Affective Domain was also an emergent theme, and aligned with mastery experiences, aspects of the theme Parents were present in mastery experiences within the Affective Domain.

Michelle's experiences in this particular case study underscore the importance of support, guidance, and feedback for first-year teachers from their mentors and colleagues. Furthermore, significance should be given to opportunities for first-year teachers to reflect on successful experiences. As illustrated by this case study, a first-year teacher's level of self-efficacy is context-specific and influenced by individuals who are regarded by the first-year teacher as credible.

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Appendix A - Interview Protocols

The following interview protocols were carried out before and after the interviewing process:

- The participant was briefed on the purpose of the interview
 - The participant was informed about how the findings from the research would be used
 - The participant was informed that names and identifying information would be redacted, to ensure anonymity
 - The participant received an informed consent form prior to interviews
 - The participant was briefed on the member checking process and timeline of the research
 - The participant was thanked and given contact information of the researcher after the interviews
-

Appendix B - Interview 1 Questions

1st Interview Questions (before observations)

- Tell me about yourself in terms of teaching.
 - Background information about yourself?
 - How are things going as a first-year teacher in terms of literacy instruction?
- Tell me about a time when you've experienced success in a challenging situation as a first-year teacher.
 - What do you think changed in order for you to feel more comfortable talking to parents?
- How do you handle teaching responsibilities while experiencing physical or emotional stress?
- In what ways, if any, have you been positively influenced by someone who you consider to be a credible person?
- Do you feel that the behavior/results of others is related to your own capabilities? If so, in what ways?

Appendix C - Interview 2 Questions

2nd Interview Questions (before observations)

- Which materials that you use are supplemental, and which ones come with the curriculum?
 - Is the daily edit part of the curriculum or is that something you found?
 - Do you make the weekly packets or is that from the curriculum?
- How much of the curriculum materials do you use and how much do you pick and choose from?
 - How do you pick what to use?
 - Do you plan together? (w/ grade-level colleagues)
 - How many third-grade classrooms are there in the building?
- How much of your ELA block is planned independently and how much is planned with your grade-level colleagues?
 - How is your reading block structured/organized?
 - How long do you have for writing time, since it is separate from your reading block?
- What percentage of *Wonders* do you skip or take out?
- How often do you meet with small groups?
 - When you are meeting with small groups, what does the must do/may do time look like for other students?
 - Are the weekly packets based on ability?
 - How often do you use district assessment scores to group students?

Appendix D - Interview 3 Questions

3rd Interview Questions (during observations)

- In regard to planning, how much influence from others impacted the way that you planned your reading block?
- How aligned do you feel the state standards and *Wonders* are?
- What does your planning look like from week to week in terms of consistency?
 - When you have off weeks that force you to pick and choose from parts of *Wonders*, other than the “big story”, what parts take priority?
 - Does *Wonders* refer to the small books as leveled readers?
- How did you initially decide to structure your reading block?
- How are small groups determined and are they fluid?
- What is the focus for small groups and how is that determined?

Appendix E - Interview 4 Questions

4th Interview Questions (during observations)

- In what ways did your teacher preparation program influence your literacy instruction?
 - Did you get a chance to work with any commercial literacy curricula in your education courses?
- How did your experience w/ *Wonders* during student teaching impact your use of it now as a first-year teacher?
- In which area of “the big 5” (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency) do you feel the most confident teaching?
 - Do you feel like that is where you’re most confident in general or is your confidence in that area specific to *Wonders*? (the way the curricula is laid out, easy to follow, etc.)
- Outside of any type of professional development and/or grade-level planning with colleagues, how often do you seek out literacy resources from other places?

Appendix F - Interview 5 Questions

5th Interview Questions (after observations)

- Tell me a little bit more about the PD session where the *Wonders* representative came in. What was your experience like during that PD session?
 - Was she walking you through how to use the curriculum in terms of online resources?
 - How often do you use the actual teacher manual?
 - What feelings were you having after that specific PD day?
 - Was that just your specific grade-level?
- Have you ever observed Anita teach using *Wonders*? Explain that experience.
 - Have you observed any other teachers teaching *Wonders*?
- Do you know why they're (the district) changing the literacy curriculum?

Appendix G - Interview 6 Questions

6th Interview Questions (after observations)

- Tell me about a time when you received feedback, encouragement, or constructive criticism from a colleague or administrator, in terms of literacy instruction. How did that make you feel?
- Tell me about a time when you saw, heard, or discussed the way in which a colleague used the *Wonders* curriculum successfully. How did that make you feel?
- Tell me about a time when you have had a lightbulb moment while using the *Wonders* curriculum. How did that make you feel?
- Reflect on successes you've had with the *Wonders* curriculum. What did those successes feel like?
- Reflect on a time when you've felt that the *Wonders* curriculum has presented difficulties. How did you respond to those difficulties?

Appendix H - Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale

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Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please rate how certain you are that you can do the things discussed below by writing the appropriate number. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the scale given below:

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Cannot do at all					Moderately can do				Highly certain can do	

	Confidence (0-100)
Efficacy to Influence Decision Making	
Influence the decisions that are made in the school	_____
Express my views freely on important school matters	_____
Get the instructional materials and equipment I need	_____
Instructional Self-Efficacy	
Get through to the most difficult students	_____
Get students to learn when there is a lack of support from the home	_____
Keep students on task on difficult assignments	_____
Increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons	_____
Motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork	_____
Get students to work well together	_____
Overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning	_____
Get children to do their homework	_____
Disciplinary Self-Efficacy	
Get children to follow classroom rules	_____
Control disruptive behavior in the classroom	_____
Prevent problem behavior on the school grounds	_____
Efficacy to Enlist Parental Involvement	
Get parents to become involved in school activities	_____
Assist parents in helping their children do well in school	_____
Make parents feel comfortable coming to school	_____
Efficacy to Enlist Community Involvement	
Get community groups involved in working with the school	_____
Get businesses involved in working with the school	_____
Get local colleges and universities involved in working with the school	_____
Efficacy to Create a Positive School Climate	
Make the school a safe place	_____
Make students enjoy coming to school	_____
Get students to trust teachers	_____
Help other teachers with their teaching skills	_____
Increase collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively	_____
Reduce school dropout	_____
Reduce school absenteeism	_____
Get students to believe they can do well in school work	_____

Appendix I - Sources of Self-Efficacy Scale

Using the scale below, please indicate your opinions about each statement by selecting the number from the scale that best describes your experience. Please write the number on the line in front of each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all true				Somewhat true				Exactly true

- I was very satisfied with my own achievements (in using the Wonders curriculum) during my first year of teaching.
- During my first year of teaching, I had many successful experiences (using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I noted that I could be a very good teacher (when using the Wonders curriculum).
- I successfully mastered the requirements of my first year of teaching (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I could observe teachers from whom I learned how to be a good teacher (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I observed teachers that managed difficult classroom situations successfully (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I observed teachers that conducted very good lessons (using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I could observe teachers from whom I learned a lot (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- My mentor at school told me that I would be a good teacher (based on my use of the Wonders curriculum) during my first year of teaching.
- My mentor at school gave me positive feedback (about using the Wonders curriculum) during my first year of teaching.
- During my first year of teaching, other people in my building told me that I would be a good teacher (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, other people in my building gave me positive feedback (in terms of using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I often felt anxious (when using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I mostly felt uncomfortable (while using the Wonders curriculum).
- During my first year of teaching, I often felt quite down (while using the Wonders curriculum).

*Adapted version of Pfitzner-Eden's (2016) source items/scales used to measure Bandura's (1997) proposed four sources of self-efficacy for teacher self-efficacy (TSE).

Source:
Pfitzner-Eden, F. (2016). Why do I feel more confident? Bandura's sources predict pre-service teachers' latent changes in teacher self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 7:1486.

Appendix J - IRB Approval



TO: F Goodson
Curriculum and Instruction
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number: IRB-11603

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 03/28/2023

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Navigating a commercial literacy program: A first-year teacher's self-efficacy journey."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written - and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 1.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 03/28/2023 4:40 PM ET

Appendix K - IRB Informed Consent

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Informed Consent Template Form

comply@k-state.edu | 785-532-3224

PROJECT TITLE:

Navigating a commercial literacy program: A first-year teacher's self-efficacy journey

**PROJECT
APPROVAL
DATE:**

01/20/2023

**PROJECT
EXPIRATION
DATE:**

01/20/2024

**LENGTH
OF STUDY:**

1 year

**PRINCIPAL
INVESTIGATOR:**

F. Todd Goodson

**CO-
INVESTIGATOR(S):**

Tracey Conway

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR
PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:**

Tracey Conway, traceyc@ksu.edu

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT
INFORMATION:**

Lisa Rubin, rubin@ksu.edu

**PROJECT
SPONSOR:**

N/A

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

Thank you for being a participant in this qualitative case study. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand how a first-year teacher's self-efficacy influences the navigation and implementation of a commercial literacy program. You will be the sole participant in this study since it is a single case study. My focus will be on you as the teacher, not your students.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

I plan to employ multiple data collection tools; observations/field notes, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and documents/artifacts. I will be conducting observations during your literacy block. During these observations, I will take detailed notes, specifically focusing on how you interact with the commercial literacy program. I plan to observe your literacy block every day for one week. I plan to conduct four in-depth, semi-structured interviews with you; one before my observations, two during the week of my observations, and one after completing my observations. The documents I plan to collect are your lesson plans from each day of my observations, teacher manuals/guides from the commercial literacy program, and any other documents/artifacts the you find valuable in the navigation and implementation of your literacy curriculum materials. I also plan to use a general self-efficacy scale to assess your perceived self-efficacy.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES COLLECTED (Describe procedure, storage, etc.):

N/A

[Select a statement from the drop down menu]

[Select a statement from the drop down menu]

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

N/A

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

Inconvenience
Time Constraints

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

N/A

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

All names and identifying information will be pseudonymed or removed. The participant will have the option to refuse to answer any interview question or artifacts that they don't want included. Audio recordings are for transcription purposes only and will be stored on a secure OneDrive platform. Any artifacts collected will have all identifiers removed. Observations in the classroom will only focus on the teacher. No student data or artifacts will be collected and all identifiers will be removed from observation field notes. The data will be stored on a university-approved platform, OneDrive, which is password protected. Data will be stored for three years or until publication of the study. At that time, all data will be deleted from OneDrive. Only the researchers listed on this IRB will have access to this data. The data will be stored on a password protected platform (OneDrive).

[Select a statement from the drop down menu]

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**PARENTAL APPROVAL
FOR MINORS:**

**PARENT/GUARDIAN
APPROVAL SIGNATURE:**

N/A

DATE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

**PARTICIPANT
NAME:**

**PARTICIPANT
SIGNATURE:**

DATE:

**WITNESS TO
SIGNATURE: (PROJECT
STAFF)**

DATE: