

Raising self-efficacy in seventh grade social students using teacher feedback and  
student self-reporting their own grades

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A Special Project

Presented to

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FACULTY APPROVAL

What helps students overcome low academic self-efficacy in the seventh grade  
social studies classroom?

Approved for the Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

The project was designed as an action research working with two participants to see what helps students overcome low academic self-efficacy having students self-report their own learning and teacher feedback to guide them along in their learning.

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## Chapter 1

### Background of the Problem

Students with low self-efficacy were more likely to be apathetic in the classroom than their peers with higher self-efficacy. O'Hare argued "the lower the self-efficacy beliefs of minority students provide one explanation for why many of them become 'at risk'--- why their academic achievement diminishes as they pursue their education and why a sizeable number eventually drop out of high school" (as cited in Pajares, 2003, p. 15). Enacted in 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandated all "children and youth have the opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic content standards and challenging State student academic achievement standards that all children in the State are expected to meet" (ESEA, Part D, Section 1401). Washington State responded to the new mandate with the annual state spring assessment referred to today as the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) in the middle grades. All students in grades 6-8 were assessed in mathematics and reading. Additionally, students in seventh grade participated in the writing assessment, and eighth grade students tested in science. While OSPI analyzed all scores to assess school districts levels of achievement, NCLB focused solely on mathematics and reading (OSPI, 2013). NCLB required all states to hold all students accountable to the same standards in reading and mathematics (OSPI, 2013). School districts were required to report all scores to the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction as part of the school accountability measured in the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) (OSPI, 2013). States no longer had the option to hide or ignore underperforming students' test scores. Underperforming groups included such categories as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status,



language, special services, and at risk groups. Migrant students were specifically named in the new legislation regarding funding programs provided to build equity in their education ESEA, Part C, Section, 1301). According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):

migratory children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, various health-related problems, and other factors that inhibit the ability of such children to do well in school, and to prepare such children to make a successful transition to postsecondary (Part C, Section 1301).

The law required closing the achievement gap defined as the disparity between the highest advantaged and lowest disadvantaged student's ability to meet grade level standards. Today's terminology referred to this opportunity gap, which had acknowledged "the school and community failure to provide an equal access to the opportunity for all students to meet standards" (OSPI, 2013). Additionally the law placed accountability at the state level for receiving federal funding. In an effort to show progress and compliance to NCLB, OSPI created Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) to close the opportunity gap for minority groups. By 2017, the state established a universal goal of improvement to increase proficiency by fifty percent in 2017 (OSPI, 2013). OSPI established a five year plan to implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in effort to show its compliance for the NCLB requirement "demonstrate that the State has adopted challenging academic content standards and challenging student

academic achievement standards that will be used by the State, its local educational agencies, and its schools” (ESEA Part A, Section 1111).

When examining the AMOs summary for 2011-2012 academic year as reported by OSPI, Washington State disadvantaged students (i.e. American Indian, Hispanic, African American, limited English, Special Education), and low income failed to meet their target on the Reading MSP (OSPI, 2013). For example, the state’s AMOs reading goal for limited English students was 35.2% but only 23.4% met the goal (OSPI, 2013).

Most recently, Washington State adopted CCSS with full implementation required by 2015. CCSS included a four pronged approach to close the achievement gap defined as the differences between test scores of minority and/or low income students and the test scores of their White and Asian peers (NEA, 2013). The four-pronged goals included “clear expectation for all students, clear standards that focus on learning not memorization, an emphasis in critical topics students will need beyond high school and a faster assessment system that would be online for quicker results” (OSPI, 2013). The mission of the national standards intended to close the achievement gap by requiring all schools and students to have a common, unified base of understanding, thus making the MSP/HSPE a more valid comprehensive assessment, with the underlying theory that compliance with the standards would yield success both on the test and in a deeper understanding of core concepts. By having common goals across grade bands, students would not lose knowledge when they moved out of state ensuring they could pick right up in their learning. “Vertical alignment makes it easier for teachers to spiral back one or more levels in order to support struggling students with interventions targeted to their specific area of need”

(School Improvement Network, 2013). One of the planned outcomes for CCSS was to prepare students for college and career readiness. The rigorous standards mandated the stretching of lexile levels for text requirements, which thereby demanded that students comprehend and perform complex reading skills at much higher levels than ever before. OSPI contracted with Hanover Research to conduct a crosswalk analysis comparing current state GLE standards to CCSS. When reading informational texts were aligned, 25% of the GLEs aligned with CCSS, 52% had partial alignment to common core, and 22% of GLEs had no alignment to CCSS (Hanover, 2010, p. 6).

Not only were students expected to achieve at higher levels, educators were being equally held responsible for making sure that all standards were taught, and ensuring that students had equal access to the same teaching and learning found throughout the state. Partially in response to President Obama's "Race to the Top" fund, Washington Legislature created a new Teacher Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP) from the Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6996. TPEP emphasized two areas student growth in academics by the use of data and a four tier teacher rating system. New teacher evaluation system focused on higher quality teaching but also required that teachers "engaged all students in work of high cognitive demand" (CEL 5D SE3, 2012). In order for teachers to receive the highest distinguished rating in the area of classroom environment and culture for student achievement required "collaborative work have been explicitly taught, are evident, and result in effective discourse related to the lesson purpose. Students independently use the routines during the lesson. Students are held accountable for their work, take ownership for their learning and support the learning of others" (CEL 5D CEC3,

2012). TPEP mandated students to be self-regulated learners meaning students recognized themselves highly efficacious learners thereby knowing how to help others and themselves and willing to take risks in order to grow academically.

### Statement of the Problem

The American education system contained a great and ever diversifying student body. While the student body became more linguistically and culturally diverse, educators who supported them in the learning were not. As reported by the Equity in Education Commission (EEC) (2013), “twenty-two percent of American schoolchildren live in poverty—a rate higher than that of any other advanced industrial nation in Europe, North America or Asia” ( p. 30). “In 2009, more than thirty-nine percent of our public school students were African American or Hispanic—up from thirty-three percent just a decade earlier. In eleven states, non-Hispanic white students were already a minority, a trend that is likely to continue as the Hispanic populations in a number of states continue to rise” (EEC, 2013, p. 13). The 2011-2012 demographics as reported by OSPI showed 60% white, 19% Hispanic, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 7%, Asian, 4% Black, 1 American Indian, 45% Free and Reduced, 13 Special Education, and 8% transitional bilingual (OSPI, 2013). Since the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, lawmakers struggled with how to provide a quality education of all its students. This was important because according to the EEC (2013), “low-income students, English-language learners, and students of color together form a majority of our young people and the fastest-growing population in the nation--- and that America’s future economic and civic vitality depends on their success in an age of global competition” (p. 12). The EEC further reported that

achievement gaps for students in high poverty started well before one started school and the gap just keeps growing. They started school with less background knowledge and exposure to extended learning like museums that reinforce academic content (Jensen, 2009; EEC, 2013). Recent CCSS focused on preparing students to graduate from high school with college and career readiness skills. In order to graduate from high school, students were required to show proficiency in core classes in Science, Reading, Math and Writing on state High School Proficiency and End of Course exams. To pass these state assessments students needed to be confident and capable with skills, strategies, and content knowledge to have any chance of passing these state exams.

According to Hill and Flynn (2006), state assessments reflected one's cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Without this advanced vocabulary one did have the ability to think critically or problem solve new and abstract concepts. For many students learning a new language it took them between five and seven years, and even longer for people not literate in the mother tongue, or home language (Hill and Flynn). Students lacked background knowledge of the testing protocols and content, academic vocabulary, and a firm understanding of values of the school structure (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short, 2008).

Since 2010 Washington State started to transition to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with full implementation statewide in 2015 when students were scheduled to take a new assessment called The Smarter Balanced Assessment (OSPI, 2013). According to Jensen, students who were raised in poverty lagged behind their peers and showed deficits in cognitive, social, and emotional abilities (Jensen, 2009). "Although the effects of poverty are not automatic

or fixed, they often set in motion a vicious and stubborn cycle of low expectations. Poor academic performance often leads to diminished expectations, which spread across the board and undermine children's overall self-esteem" (Jensen, 2009, p. 38). Higher expectations proved detrimental to the confidence of underperforming students who already believed themselves to be falling behind their peers in core academic classes. Students with low self-efficacy expended little effort because they did not think they were able to successfully accomplish the task. This belief could greatly impact their motivation and engagement (Bandura, 1993; Dweck, 2006; Jensen, 2009). According to Bandura (1993), "a major goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime" (p.120). With no teacher support, CCSS created a threat to the future success of low-performing student's developing learned helplessness. Teachers needed to transform learned helplessness into learned optimism; turning low performers into high achievers (Jensen, 2009). When OSPI analyzed Washington's standards to CCSS, they discovered two noteworthy comments. First the goal of CCSS was prepare students for life beyond high school. Related to this idea was the end product of CCSS focused on the product such as a research paper or presentation, while Washington's current grade level standards focused on the process of application of new knowledge in a group work (Hanover Research, 2010). Students would move beyond writing persuasive to argumentative were one would have to be familiar with counter arguments. Furthermore, text complexity would be extended by having students read beyond their comfort zone from a variety of sources to synthesize new information with deeper understanding. Educating these students became priority before they

viewed constant failures as all they were capable of which lowered one's self-efficacy.

Protheroe (2010) proclaimed "learned helplessness is an easy trap into which students with a low sense of self-efficacy can fall into. Projecting a can do attitude that signals belief in both teacher's and the class's abilities to take on challenging sets the stage for focusing on effort" (Protheroe, p.42).

By the year 2025, Hispanic students would make up twenty-five percent of the US demographics in public education (HAEE, 2000). This projected change in demographics created more roadblocks for students' path to success. Today less than half of Latino children enrolled in early learning programs, and only about half of Latino students will earn their high school diploma (Obama, IELC 2011). English Language Learners (ELL) self-reported their academic learning lower than their peers (Hattie, 2009, p. 44). Jensen believed that you can raise one's confidence by building hope. He stated "students with a champion's mind set demonstrate an attitude of success and are confident that they can change and learn new behaviors" (Jensen, 2009, p. 128). Raising confidence lowered stress in the brain. One leading researcher in second language acquisition, Krashen (1986), coined the term 'affective filter' when students are under high stress they are not able to retain new language (Krashen,1986).

Students born into poverty were more likely to have fewer resources to facilitate learning when compared to more advantaged peers and those who start behind, tend to finish behind more advantaged children. They often lacked the exposure of museums, concerts, theatres, libraries and community programs (EEC, 2013). Many students lacked parental involvement in helping them stay motivated therefore the schools must step up and help educate families on how to

better aid their student in their academic process (EEC, 2013). Many quickly fell behind their peers in the early grades and could not catch back up. Poverty affected students at both the cognitive and academic level. Their high stress situation inhibited the brain from absorbing new abstract information (Jensen, 2010).

### Purpose of Project

All seventh grade students were required to take Washington State History as their Social Studies class in order to fulfill a graduation requirement in the Saddle Mountain School District. Many students assigned to the class struggled with the content because many of the concepts covered are considered abstract to English Language Learners (Short, Vogt and Echevarría, 2011). More importantly, with migrant families frequent moves, students may not get a firm grasp of the state history before they move to the next location. Furthermore, struggling students disconnected with the history because they may not feel a sense of belonging or connection as to how or why history is important to their personal life (Echevarría, Vogt, Short, 2008). Students often struggled to stay engaged in the learning because they did not understand the relevancy of history, its connection to current events, nor how they could influence change in the world. The instructor believed that growth and learning were possible for these students when a different approach kept them engaged in their learning. The teacher focused on giving the students effective feedback using what Hattie (2009) called “feed up (where am I going), feedback (how am I doing, and feed forward (where am I going), students stayed engaged longer in their learning because she could persuade them that they were in fact on the road to achievement (Hattie). Moreover, students self-reported their own learning. The teacher and students used the



close reading strategy on the state's CBA rubric as a means of creating a checklist that clearly told the expectations but also helped the students confirm that they were knowledgeable of the content. "When rubrics are jointly constructed, there is a clearer understanding of what constitutes an acceptable performance, and the rubric score becomes far more meaningful than a traditional letter grade or even a teacher-created rubric" (Hill and Flynn, 2006, p. 33). Feedback and self-reported grading sustained participants' effort for longer periods of time as noted by case study participants and researcher.

### Delimitations

Research took place in a seventh grade social studies classroom because for many students it is one of two on grade level classes they be enrolled in during their seventh grade year. Two students (a boy and girl) selected because they self-identified themselves as having a growth mindset after completing a classroom survey. Growth mindset allowed individuals to change and grow through application, effort and experience (Dweck, 2006). Both students consistently scored below the twenty-fifth on their Reading MAP test taken three times a year.

The district where the research took place was a rural farming community along the Columbia River in Eastern Washington. As reported by OSPI, Saddle Mountain School District demographics in 2011-2012 academic year were 95% Hispanic (identified as Mexican in this community) , 57% transitional bilingual, 25% migrant and 89% free and reduced lunch labeled as a high poverty school (OSPI, 2013).

### Assumptions

The researcher trained in Structure and Style the school wide writing program. She collaborated with the language arts teacher to ensure that the writing program was used with fidelity creating consistent instruction and transparency between the classrooms.

### Hypothesis

Student's self-efficacy will increase as measured by a pre and post Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire in the seventh grade social studies classroom after teacher provided feedback and students self-reporting their own learning.

### Significance of the Project

Having positive self-efficacy about one's life was essential to their future outcomes. Bandura (1989) best explained it:

If people experience only easy successes, they come to expect quick results and their sense of efficacy is easily undermined by failure. Some setbacks and difficulties in human pursuits serve useful purpose in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort. After people become convinced that they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge from adversity with a stronger sense of efficacy (Bandura, p. 1179).

People had a more successful life when they were willing to take more risks in order to achieve their hopes and dreams. They sustained longer on difficult tasks and continued to persevere even when quitting would have been an easier option (Bandura,1983; Dweck, 2008).

On the contrary people with lower-self efficacy tended to give up on difficult tasks much quicker or never even attempted to try because they didn't see the task worth the effort. With higher expectations from federal and state education programs, students found themselves in an even more stressful situation. Raising one's confidence in academics was crucial to their future. Never before had the stakes been so high for educators to grow their students and for students engaged in their academic achievement. The project showed the two case study participants reported slightly being more confident and capable in their learning when teacher's provided directional feedback on the student's performance and the student's self-assessed their own learning to analyze how they performed on the required task. Feedback was powerful as noted by Hattie and Timperley (2007), "feedback can have major influences on self-efficacy, self-regulatory proficiencies, and self-beliefs about the student as a learner, such that the student is encouraged or informed how to better more effortlessly continue on the task" (p. 90).

### Procedure

Academic self-efficacy affected many areas of a student's life. Social studies required many higher order thinking skills. Lesh (2011) described history as "the debate between competing interpretations of events, individuals, and ideas of the past based on the utilization of historical evidence" (p. 22). He further stated "interrogating historical sources to develop and defend a source-based historical interpretation that responds to a question of the past" (Lesh, 2011, p. 22). The goal of Social Studies education stated "contributes to developing responsible citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society within an interdependent world. Social Studies equipped learners to make sound judgments and take appropriate actions that will contribute to

sustainable development of human society and the physical environment” (OSPI, 2013). The investigator led students through a CBA unit on Causes of Conflict. Students analyzed the causes of conflicts between Native Americans and settlers during the Treaty-Making period in the Washington Territory. Students analyzed and interpreted primary and secondary sources, recognized biases and identified cultural group’s point of view. Students had to analyze and synthesize this new information in order to provide a reasoned and informed analysis. Students learned research skills and process using Structure and Style as their guide throughout the school year. After students learned about the main causes of conflicts students had to write a research paper identifying what they believed were the main causes of conflict and whether or not they could have been avoided. The researcher and students as a classroom activity used the state rubric to assess students writing. Students rated their current writing samples and the teacher provided feedback on their strengths and how they might improve or added comments about things further consider. Students used the feedback during the revising process to fix up their writing. Using a pre and post questionnaire, anecdotal notes from interviews, and feedback from and to the case study participants, the researcher observed how the student’s self-efficacy changed during the CBA writing process.

### Definition of Terms

Self-efficacy- how one view’s their abilities to perform a task

Achievement gap- the disparity between the highest and lowest performing students in a grade level

Structure and Style- writing curriculum adopted by Wahluke School District for grades K-12

## Acronyms

NCLB- No Child Left Behind

OSPI- Office Superintendent of Public Instruction

WASL- Washington Assessment of Student Learning

MSP- Measurement of Student Progress

CCSS- Common Core State Standards

CBA- Curriculum Based Assessment

AYP- Annual Yearly Progress

AMOs- Annual Measurable Objectives

TPEP- Teacher Principal Evaluation Project

CALP- Cognitive Academic language

MSLQ- Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire

ELL- English Language Learner

MAP- Measurement of Academic Progress

RIT- Rausch Units

NGA- National Governor's Association.

## Chapter 2 Review of Selected Literature

### Introduction

Throughout the course of the United States History, our nation's philosophical and practical approach to education has often reflected, and as a result perpetuated the broader social trends and beliefs of each time period, creating an expectation of conformity and compliance. Immigrants from around the world migrated to the United States of America in search of the American Dream. This dream included better opportunities for one's family, more individual freedoms and rights to control one's destiny (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). However, the reality during those times reflected a different perspective; "those who seek to understand our educational past must try to comprehend the people who lived in earlier times and places on their terms, not ours" (Urban and Wagoner, 2004, p. 15). Examples of learning from and trying to understand our past educational experiences could be found not only in diverse cultures, but within one culture as it progressed through time. Looking back, from pre-colonial times to present day, education had run the gamut from emphasis of cultural funds as knowledge, what skills were passed down through generations, and deemed to be necessary not only for survival, but as an identity, to assimilatory practices that negated any prior experience from a student's home culture, in Native American cultures young children mastered certain skills in order to gain acceptance by elders. Education in the early colonial times was a blank slate, meaning with no formal educational system established immigrants created the vision based on their European social values and religious beliefs (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). Because many brought with them their European beliefs, traditionally only white males were educated (Urban and Wagoner,

2004). Education was a private matter; children were taught to read for the purpose of reading the bible preparing young boys for church and civic leadership while young women were taught the duties of being a good housewife (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). Established in 1636 and amongst the earliest public schools, Boston Latin School focused on a classic education. Though considered a public school because it was partially financed through public funds and under public control, students were from elite Puritan families continuing an old English custom (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). During the age of enlightenment, people became fixated with self-improvement in America; Benjamin Franklin believed that man must be self-made. Franklin recognized himself as born into poverty would not receive the same quality education as his elite peers, but persevered through various opportunities and became self-educated by learning from those disciplines that were most useful, including politics, mathematics, and science (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). Franklin believed that education should focus on making man virtuous and forthright characteristics of a good citizen.

When the Declaration of Independence declared man's inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the new nation began to focus on equality of men. Thomas Jefferson believed that education should be for the masses and desired "to rake geniuses from the rubbish of mankind" (Urban and Wagoner, 2004, p. 84). He believed that if educated properly, some impoverished people could rise up and lead the country. Jefferson supported the belief that education should focus on patriotism and civic duty. However, African Americans, Native Americans, and women were excluded from receiving a public education because of cultural expectations about their proper place. During the late 1860's, the fourteenth amendment of the

US Constitution guaranteed full citizenship to former slaves (US Constitution). This was significant because it recognized citizenship for former slaves; government could not exclude them from getting an education.

With the rise of industrialization and growth of urban areas came the emergence of the disparity between the wealthy and impoverished. As the United States entered the 1900's, educational practices varied greatly by location. Both educators and politicians recognized the role of the school as a means of solving the nation's social problems. Talk of educating girls to be better more refined housewives by learning social etiquettes and issues began to take form. Minority groups received a separate education that typically related to learning agrarian or household job skills. In order to improve safety, factory workers needed to be literate and formally educated to ensure safe conditions in the workplace (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). In 1893, a group that became known as the "Committee of Ten" met to discuss ways to improve the purpose of education with the "goal of equalizing students as moral and political actors" (Urban and Wagoner, 2004, p. 206). The group believed in developing all students to their fullest abilities and suggested ways to introduce technical and commercial studies in schools; this was the first hints of vocational work related classes. In 1896, courts ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that a "separate but equal" education for racial classes was acceptable (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). Segregated schools were significantly underfunded when compared to their white peers; curriculum and buildings were considered inferior white schools (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). In the early 1900's the seminal education reformer, John Dewey, introduced the idea of "aligning school experiences with real-life occupational and democratic experiences of surrounding



society” as well as improving the pedagogy of teachers training programs (Urban and Wagoner, 2004, p. 219). Teacher pedagogy focused on understanding the stages of child development to improve quality instruction; this improved student engagement, learning and therefore improving American society (Urban and Wagoner, 2004).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States regrouped from fighting two wars abroad, minority groups returned to their expected roles in society after having that slight taste of freedom and equality. African American men serving in segregated flight units successfully escorted white fighter pilots across dangerous territories without losing a single life. Members of the Navajo tribe who refused to give up their Native language, successfully served in communication units speaking their language that the Japanese military could not break. Women worked outside the home in traditional male occupations building ships and airplanes. Many refused to go back to their previous lives when the men returned home instead these minority groups demanded true equality for their places in society. The Civil Rights Movement initiated by African Americans was the platform used by minority groups to gain national support. In 1954, the US Supreme court unanimously ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* “we conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Urban and Wagoner, 2004, p. 299) Segregated school had less public funds to provide for quality instruction, materials, and updated and safe environment (Urban and Wagoner, 2004). However, it was not until Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that government recognized the disparity of education for some minority groups. Prior to his presidency Johnson taught in Texas, where he

witnessed the disparity amongst his Mexican-American students. During his 1964 State of the Union address he commented “poverty is a national problem, requiring national organization and support. But this attack, to be effective, must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.” He continued “The cause [poverty] may lie deeper in our failure to give fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities, in a lack of education and training...” (Johnson, 1964). During this time policymakers finally admitted that minority groups were not getting the education that state governments were required to provide and furthermore these minority students indoctrinated into accepting a second-rate education. While the Civil Rights Act improved education for many, political problems abroad pushed education reform to the side.

With the country in deep economic turmoil from fighting several wars, federal government and educational policymakers looked at education as the solution to build the nation back to its superpower status. In the 1980s education reform found its place in the national spotlight with report ‘A Nation at Risk.’ The report stated that a better education is a symbol of a better life. The report recognized that “the safety of the United States depends principally on the wit, skill and spirit of a self-confident people, today and tomorrow” (NCEE, 1983). The report encouraged citizens to support education reform for all people for “learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the “information age” we are entering” (NCEE, 1983). Policymakers could no longer ignore that minorities lacked the same quality education and that they as US citizens would need an equitable education not equal.

Having learned from past mistakes, missteps, and misconceptions, the public pressured representatives to demand change in the education structure making education and schooling equitable for all students. In an attempt to close the achievement gap and take the blame of poor performance away from race, federal government started to disaggregate the data. By doing this, it took the focus away from race and provided deeper understanding of how students performed by looking at race, economic status, parents education levels and teacher qualifications to improve the equity in a child's education. In 2002 with the enactment of No Child Left Behind, this new law required that all children receive a fair education through higher expectations and greater accountability to close the achievement gap. Newer studies in brain research revealed how poverty impacted the brain, but the researcher also proved that this impact could be mitigated thus proving that children raised in poverty today could have better outcomes than previous generations resulting from higher expectations and standards in teaching and learning. Research showed "the human brain is designed to change from experiences and that if we design enough high-quality experience, over time we will get positive results" (Jensen, 2009, p. 64). Today's focus on scientific brain-based research revealed much about capabilities of reaching all students. One of the strongest factors for helping students in poverty was having a strong, positive relationship with an adult (Jensen, 2009). Another strategy finding its place in the education spotlight was the use of building on a student's funds of knowledge, the knowledge they brought with them to class every day from their prior experiences within home and culture (Mercado, 2002). Strategies used from brain-based research need to be coupled with these home and culture experiences, provided a strong foundation on which a student can then launch their

educational learning and understanding to higher levels. When teachers provided a more enriching classroom environment, built hope that things would get better, and showed examples of similar people overcoming obstacles impoverished students realized that they too could be successful (Jensen, 2009). For example, classes that created new experiences for students to add learning to similarly to which Dweck (2008) referred to this same phenomenon as the growth mindset meaning people believe they have the mental capacity to improve their situations in life (Dweck). Most recently, Hattie (2009) noticed this same mindset change when teachers and students provided feedback to each other. Hattie discovered “feedback was most powerful when it if from the student to the teacher [...]. When teachers seek [...]feedback from students as to what students know, what they understand, where they make errors [...] when they are not engaged---then teaching and learning can be synchronized and powerful” (p. 173). Today’s student teacher dialogue showed the shift in the paradigm of education. Feedback became more content rich by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of both parties. Teachers learned from student feedback what methods were or were not successful. Students gained a better understanding of their performance when the teacher focused feedback on achievement and effort making it less emotionally subjective.

#### Self-efficacy as the driver of one’s abilities

Self-efficacy defined as efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes (Bandura, 1977). In other words self-efficacy resulted from the confidence one possessed in their abilities to perform any given task. The level varied depending on one’s abilities and can range from low self-efficacy (high stress

low motivation) to high self-efficacy (low stress high motivation). Self-efficacy drove one's motivation and abilities while repeated failures produced lack of motivation to complete tasks. In his seminal work Bandura (1977) observed that "efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people's choice of activities, how much effort they will expend, and how long they will sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations" ( p. 194). Mastery of a task or skill determined the level of self-efficacy and the time on task to the degree one displayed mastery of a task or skill was often correlated with self-efficacy and the time one might spend on a difficult task. In other words, a person stuck to the task longer when they believed they would have a successful outcome. Persistence and perseverance were greatest when efficacy was at the highest level.

Raising one's self-efficacy level in task specific situations resulted only under certain conditions. For example, "convincing the client that a certain behavior will lead to desirable consequences will not lead to behavioral change unless the client believes that he can perform the behavior in the required situation" (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, Rogers 1982, p. 664). Bandura noted that levels of change occurred from four sources: accomplishments, personal experience, persuasion and emotional arousal. Bandura (1977) further stated "performance-based treatments not only promote behavioral accomplishments but also extinguish fear arousal, thus authenticating self-efficacy through enactive and arousal sources of information" (p. 195). Positive outcomes from performance-based activities produced success. Failures from these activities do not necessarily result in lower efficacy. Exposing disadvantaged students to an event in low stress situation helped to build confidence. While

working with ELL students, Krashen (1982) observed that students who were not confident in acquiring a second language had a high affective filter that would block all linguistic input even in cases when they understood the conversation (Krashen). Pushing students slightly past their ‘zone of proximal development’ encouraged students to challenge their perceived capabilities (Fisher, Fray, and Lapp, 2012). Understanding how stress affects the brain’s ability to either shut down, or persevere knowing one’s personal efforts would pay off were essential.

Personal experiences influenced efficacy. Bandura (1977) observed “seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts” (p.197). By watching others who performed the task successfully, students believed they too were capable of accomplishing the task at hand. This was most effective when students see people from like cultures completing a similar task (Bandura, 1977; Jensen, 2009; Dweck, 2008). Another example for improvement suggested that teachers should model the expected behavior with clear outcomes builds more confidence and understanding (Bandura, 1977). People built confidence in their abilities by seeing the task modeled before them making the expectations clear, understandable, and attainable toward the expected measurable outcome. Krashen referred to this as comprehensible input or  $i+1$ . He said give student information that was slightly above their current understanding in order to get them to their potential ability (Krashen, 1982). How people react or identify with failure was crucial to developing one’s self-efficacy. Dweck (2006) wrote “[...] failure can be a painful experience. But it doesn’t define you. It’s a problem to be faced, dealt with and learned from” (p. 33). Dweck believed that the stigma of failure came

after parents praised their children too much on intelligence and talent. Instead she urged parents to praise children for effort especially through challenging tasks (Dweck, 2008). According to Fisher, Fray and Lapp (2012) students should be provided with opportunities to struggle so they could learn that perseverance pays off. “Productive failure provides students an opportunity to struggle with something and learn from the mistakes they make along the way. Again, it’s not planned failure but rather an opportunity to struggle with something and learn along the way” (Fisher, Fray, Lapp, 2012, p. 11).

Another method of boosting one’s efficacy was feedback. This method of building one’s efficacy is referred to as ‘verbal persuasion’ (Bandura, 1977). By coaching or giving feedback to a student, one gained confidence and motivation in their ability to complete the task. Bandura (1977) stated “people are led through a suggestion into believing they can cope successfully with what has overwhelmed them in the past” (p. 198). In a sense, the coaching, or feedback provided the student with a roadmap leading them from where they are currently to what they needed to do in order to accomplish the activity. Leading researchers, Hattie and Timperley (2007), studying feedback noted “It [feedback] is most effective when it addresses faulty interpretations not a lack of understanding” (p. 82). In other words, focus feedback on improving the student’s chosen reading or writing strategy for mastering a skill was a greater predictor of raising their self-efficacy. “Strategies become skills with instruction, practice [and feedback] (Fisher et al, 2012, p. 10). By building on what the students already knew and was relevant to them boosted their confidence so that they could apply that new knowledge in areas where they were less proficient. Feedback was the bridge that filled the gap from the stated goals, to where one is

going, and where to go next (Hattie, 2009). For the less proficient student, modeling produced the greatest results of efficacy because it became visible before their eyes. Feedback greatly benefited ELL students as well. “Some of the best feedback you can give ELLs is letting them know what was correct or incorrect in their use of written English” (Hill and Flynn, 2006, p. 33). However, it was noted to be cautious about giving feedback that was unclear or above comprehension had an adverse effect on a student’s performance. In other words “to be effective, feedback needs to be clear, purposeful, meaningful and compatible with students’ prior knowledge and to provide logical connections” (Hattie, 2009, p.175). Again feedback provided information from where one was currently to what one needed to do reach the expected outcome. Clear, constructive feedback kept the person motivated to persevere through a slightly difficult task. “Research shows that students who are taught about the connection between effort and achievement do better than students who are taught time-management techniques or comprehension strategies” (Hill and Flynn, 2006, p. 88)

The last method to improving efficacy was what Bandura referred to as “emotional arousal.” Student’s motivation and effort spent on an activity were directly related to one’s perceived stress levels. If one associated an activity as stressful, they had little motivation to accomplish the task and therefore put forth little effort to complete the task because they associated fear with ability. Bandura (1977) explained:

perceived self-competence can therefore affect susceptibility to self-arousal. Individuals who come to believe that they are less vulnerable than they previously assumed are less prone to generate frightening thoughts in situations. Those whose fears



are relatively weak may reduce their self-doubts and debilitating self-arousal to point where they perform successfully. Performance successes, in turn, strengthen efficacy ( p. 200).

By using positive self-talk, students were able to realize that they have greater ability than they once perceived. On the contrary negative self-talk created the self-fulfilling prophecy that one was always incapable of completing the performance task. Building students efficacy in small incremental tasks improved one's confidence. People associate activities that were easily accomplished as a sign of mastery and thereby had a higher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). On the other hand people failed to associate that attention to detail was much like an athlete repeatedly practicing and honing in their skills (Dweck, 2010). Dweck (2006) encouraged students "to think of time someone else outperformed them and asked them if they believed the other person was smarter, used a better strategy or just practiced longer" (p. 81). Repeated practice and attention to detail really did pay off and boosted one's efficacy. Bandura (1977) observed when individuals realized they were more competent than they previously thought it strengthened their self-efficacy because their emotional arousal declined (p. 200).

#### Academic self-efficacy as the predictor of success

During the 1980's and 1990's researchers applied self-efficacy in the realm of academic education by focusing specifically on how self-efficacy influenced goal setting and academic attainment in education from elementary through college years. Self-efficacy proved to be a strong predictor of academic motivation and attainment. A leading researcher on academic self-efficacy reported:

...personal factors as goal setting and information processing, along with situational factors (i.e., rewards and teacher feedback), affect students while they are working. From these factors students derive cues signaling how well they are learning, which they use to assess efficacy for further learning. Motivation is enhanced when students perceive they are making progress in learning (Schunk, 1991, p. 208).

Students who felt supported in their academic endeavors by teachers and parents were more motivated to produce work of higher quality and persevere longer through more difficult tasks. He further remarked “students might believe that their teacher will be pleased if they make a high grade on the next exam (positive outcome expectation), but they may seriously doubt their capabilities to learn the material on the exam (low self-efficacy). This further speaks to the dichotomy between one’s perceived capabilities and outcome expectations (Schunk, 1991). When one believed they were capable of accomplishing a task, but feared the results would not match the intended outcome, often times the student opted to not do the work then risk being labeled a failure by their peers or themselves.

On the contrary, “people who have a low sense of efficacy for accomplishing a task may avoid it,” (Schunk, 1991, p. 207). People with a low sense of efficacy were not motivated and therefore unwilling to attempt difficult tasks. Repeated failures at an early age often produced, “beliefs becoming crystallized with repeated similar experiences. This crystallization or better fossilization [stopping of learning] produced lower levels of self-defeatism: meaning no amount of feedback or modeling would overcome this low perception” (Schunk, 1991, p. 210).

In an effort to raise academic achievement, it was highly recommended to create “goals that incorporate performance standards in order to raise efficacy and motivation instead of general goals” (Schunk, 1991, p. 211). In other words, setting small short-term measurable goals for students with lower levels of efficacy produced the greatest outcomes because students were able to see the outcomes for the activity. Hattie (2009) wrote “learning goals [are] about more than the mastery of new things, and claimed that students encouraged to use learning goals were less worried about the intellect, remained focused on-task, and maintained their effective problem-solving strategies” (p. 163). More importantly Schunk (1991) recommended and “modeled importance of strategy use to enhance motivation and skills; emphasizing strategy use and positive beliefs led to the highest self-efficacy” (p. 212) Focusing on a specific learning strategy allowed the students to understand why that method may or may not have been the best option for the predicted outcome. Offering up alternative strategies showed students there was more than one option to the outcome.

In goal setting in the classroom, researchers noted “academic self-regulation is concerned with the degree to which students were metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally proactive regulators of their own learning process” (Zimmerman, Bandura, Martinez-Pons, 1992, p. 664). Today’s perspective on education expected students to be self-regulated learners (CEL 5D, 2013; CCSS, 2013). Self-regulation defined as students who were consciously aware of their learning strengths and weaknesses and able to assist their classmates (CEL 5D, 2013; CCSS, 2013). Students with higher self-efficacy were better equipped and more attuned to their learning strengths. Self-regulated learners possessed the executive functions to be more

successful and confident and capable learners. Typically these learners not only had more learning strategies available at their disposal but the:

...perceived self-efficacy for self-regulated learning assess students' perceived capability to use a variety of self-regulated learning strategies such as planning and organizing their academic activities, transforming instructional information being taught, resisting distractions, motivating themselves to complete school work, structuring environments conducive to study, and participating in class (Zimmerman et al, 1992, p. 664).

Self-regulated learners practiced the greatest amount of self-control, as well as the greatest understanding of their cognitive understanding of their academic abilities with a "firm belief in one's self-regulatory skills provides staying power" (Bandura, 1993, p. 136). Students were more likely to exert more effort in difficult tasks and persevered through the difficult challenges. Students with higher self-efficacy persisted longer by establishing the best strategies to master the present task.

On the contrary, a researcher observed "a low sense of academic and self-regulatory efficacy is associated with emotional irascibility, physical and verbal aggression, and ready disengagement of moral sanctions from harmful conduct" (Bandura, 1993, p. 138). Students with this self-defeat perception shut down or acted out rather than have their classmates perceive them as dumb thereby became the class clown or bully. The same researcher noted "students who doubt their social as well as their intellectual efficacy are likely to gravitate to peers who do not subscribe to academic values and lifestyles" (Bandura, 1993, p. 138). Repeated low

academic results may impede a student's motivation and effort to learn. Students created a self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations in all areas of their life but especially in the academics when they knew they would be perceived as the lowest ability kid in class. Unmotivated and high stressed students perceived "low self-efficacy may believe that things are tougher than they really are a belief that fosters stress, depression and a narrow vision of how to best solve a problem" (Pajares, 1996, p. 544). Research seemed to suggest some students simply failed to see that they did have the skills to solve the obstacle and therefore successfully achieved.

Bandura (1986) considered "self-reflection the most uniquely human capability for through this form of self-referent thought people evaluate and alter their own thinking and behavior" (Bandura). Getting students to think about their own thinking (metacognition) was one of the higher predictors of success because they analyzed their strengths and weaknesses of a specific task and more importantly understood why they got the expected outcome. When students were asked to rate their own confidence, they were able to analyze their own understanding. However, Pajares (1996) cautioned "self-efficacy beliefs should be assessed at the optimal level of specificity that corresponds to the critical task being assessed and the domain of functioning being analyzed" (p. 547). Students needed to clearly understand what skill they were being assessed on and more importantly how they were expected to produce their evidence. "When students know their learning target, understand what quality work looks like, and engage in thought-provoking and challenging performances of understanding [...] they are able to deepen their understanding of content, produce evidence of learning and self-assess" (Moss and Brookhart, 2012, p. 15). At this level of understanding, students not only internalized their

learning, but were able to self-regulate. Assessments tested a student's perceived confidence for the specific task. Self-efficacy was a great predictor of learning. Hattie (2009) reported that students self-reporting of grades had the highest indicator of success. Students were consciously aware of their abilities when asked to assess their own learning and were highly accurate at assessing what they know and do not know (Hattie, 2009).

### Mindset to Change

Most recently research on self-efficacy focused on not necessarily the capability but the mindset for learning. Researcher Dweck (2008) commented "the key, she found isn't ability; it's whether you look at ability as something inherent that needs to be demonstrated or as something that can be developed" ( p. 56). She coined the term 'fixed vs. growth mindset.' Dweck (2008) identified there were two frames of mind that people referenced; some people possessed a fixed mindset meaning they were born they were born a certain way and no amount of effort will change their abilities (Dweck). This mind frame created a sense of learned helplessness because of the belief no amount will improve one's sense of self-efficacy (Dweck, 2008). Other people possessed a growth mindset meaning through effort and hardwork one can become the better athlete, student, or parent. In other words all it took was dedication to achieve high levels of success. People with a growth mindset, because of positive habits of mind were able to meet and conquer challenges as a way of improving their self-efficacy. She suggested the cure for learned helplessness was a long string of successes (Dweck, 2007). Greatly attuned students observed how others around them performed. "When teachers preached and practiced a growth mindset. They focused on the idea that all children could develop their skills, and in their classrooms a

weird thing happened. It didn't matter whether students started the year in the high—or low ability group. Both groups ended the year way up high” (Dweck, 2006, p. 66).

Dweck (2008) offered this advice of encouragement for teachers, students, and parents “understand that mistakes and effort are critical to learning” (Dweck). By recognizing one's weaknesses, then they could focus on improving the process. Dweck further recognized “the main thing that distinguishes people who go to the top of their fields and make creative contributions from their equally able peers is the effort they put in. Some of our greatest learning opportunities in life come from the mistakes we made in the process of learning” (Dweck, 2008, p. 57).

#### Self-efficacy when Reading in content areas

Students' self-efficacy was affected most in content areas that required specialized skills in literacy. What students with lower efficacy beliefs needed most was “a crucial ingredient in helping students become lifelong learners and joyful literates is a clear understanding of motivation,” (Scott, 1996, p. 195). As reported by Harris and Hodges the issue of “aliteracy has been defined as a “lack of reading habit; especially such a lack in capable readers who choose not to read,” (Scott, 1996, p. 195). Teachers needed to instill in their students a passion to read so that students had the ability to make informed and reasoned judgments about the world around them. Many times educators looked at “students' ability level when predicting achievement, ignoring that the efficacies of these students plan an influential role” (Scott, 1996, p. 197). Students who suffered from low self-efficacy were not being assessed correctly by their teachers.

How students perceived their students own abilities greatly impacted how they performed in school (Bandura, 1984).

Students with low self-efficacy benefitted greatly from learning specialized literacy instruction in learning how to read more complex texts. “A major goal of formal education should be to equip students with intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime” (Bandura, 1984, p. 136). Learning reading strategies for specialized texts greatly benefitted students with lower literacy skills. More importantly, reading in the discipline of social studies required sophisticated skills to access the texts. Students struggled with analyzing historical documents, interpreting events, chronological sequence, cause and effect relationships, determining biases, and understanding that history texts are interpretation of events and not always truth (Shanahan, 2008). While reading in the content of Social Studies raised the difficulty level “people who were socially persuaded that they possess the capabilities to master difficult situations and are provided with provisional aids for effective action are likely to mobilize greater effort than those who receive the performance aids” (Bandura, 1977, p. 204). People remained on task longer when they were received verbal reinforcement suggesting they already possessed the skills needed to be successful.

Transference was the last aspect that affected students with low self-efficacy. Students did not transfer learned knowledge from one content area to another. In other words, self efficacy was task specific. “Strength of perceived efficacy is measured by the amount of one’s certainty about performing a given task,” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 83). Children needed to be taught how to transfer life skills from one context to another and making them relevant to real



work experiences. Jensen described “fostering fluid intelligence—that is, students’ ability to rapidly adjust their strategies and thought process from one context to another” (Jensen, 2009, p. 53).

### Summary

The research suggested self-efficacy; specifically low self-efficacy was often correlated with lesser life outcomes. Educators needed to understand how self-efficacy impaired students learning. The National Governor’s Association (NGA) reported that while eighth grade science students were memorizing parts of the high, students in high performing countries were learning how the eye captures light and changes it into images (NGA, 2008). Today’s students held to higher levels of accountability and expectations than ever before. The intention behind CCSS prepared students for not just for the next grade level, but rather prepared them for college and future careers (CCSS, 2013). Today’s students needed to be competitive not just nationally but internationally as well. NGA called for focusing education to improve the human capital by improving the quality of instruction in math, reading, science and problem-solving (NGA, 2008). Improving the quality of education was the only way that Americans could compete in a global environment. As reported by the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee “a strong education system creates opportunities for Washington citizens. Well-educated citizens support our economic growth and competitive advantages in a diverse and democratic society” (AGAOC, 2010). Labor statistics showed a large economic gap for students who fell behind academically and no longer able to compete for jobs amongst their peers. Students at risk of failing were more likely to drop out of school, be incarcerated, suffered from mental health

issues, and received financial support from state services to name a few of the risk factors (GAO, 2010). As reported in 'A Nation at Risk' "the people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards [...] but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life" (NCEE, 1983). A high level of education was generally associated with positive life outcomes. Adults needed to instill the mindset in the youth that they were capable of growing their mind and abilities. Children taught not to give up on difficult tasks persevered longer through life's greatest challenges. Jensen (2009) stated "hope changes brain chemistry, which influences the decisions we make and the actions we take. Hopefulness must be pervasive, and every single student should be able to feel it, see it, and hear it" (p. 112-113.) When building hope that abilities could change, students learned that their future was not predetermined by their past but rather controlled by their future abilities. Research generally indicates students exposed to brain-based teaching, frequent feedback mechanisms and teachers who believed in growth mindset were more likely to enjoy positive life outcomes than like peers without these educational strategies and experiences.

## Chapter 3

### Introduction

Literacy outcomes for students in Washington State History at Crab Creek Junior High School were varied and skewed toward low levels of achievement as measured by state and local assessments. Therefore, the teacher-researcher decided to determine whether students reporting a higher level of self-efficacy made greater achievement gains than did like peers with lower self-reported levels of self-efficacy. The teacher-researcher sought to determine whether these self-identified students would ultimately have better literacy growth than their peers who self-reported lower levels of self-efficacy. Reading in the content of Social Studies required higher order thinking skills but more importantly also required specialized reading strategies designed to comprehend the variety of materials that students read throughout the academic year. Unlike many reading classes, Social Studies classes were not grouped by students reading ability. Using at or above grade level texts, students struggled consistently to access and comprehend the text as evidenced by student comments, grades, missing assignments, and misbehavior in the classroom. All students enrolled at Crab Creek Junior High School received Social Studies instruction for the full academic school year.

A meta-analysis study conducted by Hattie (2009) revealed that students self-reporting grades ranked first in contributions from the student when relating to achievement. Having students self-report their learning encouraged the students to think critically about their own work and how well it met the learning targets and success criteria. Teacher feedback provided information to the student about how well their work was meeting grade level standards.

According to Hattie's (2009) effect size research, teacher feedback ranked tenth in contributions from the teacher on student achievement. Students could take the constructive feedback to fix up their work to meet standard, or ignore the feedback accepting the consequence. With new rigorous standards for students and teachers in programs such as CCSS and TPEP, teachers needed to be well-informed in some of the best research-based methods to raise student's self-efficacy.

### Methodology

The chosen research method was an action research project that focused on qualitative and quantitative data. According to Gay and Mills (2009), a case study was a desired method when the "researcher wants to answer a descriptive question [...]. [It] is also an appropriate choice of research method if the researcher is interested in studying process" (p. 427). An action research project provided the teacher-researcher to focus on the quality of instruction by what two students reported worked from their perspective as their learning outcomes improved. The investigator observed two students for five weeks to see if students' self-reporting their own learning in combination with teacher feedback raised the student's perception of their self-efficacy. The research took place during the Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) unit on Causes of Conflicts. The unit required two students to research a topic and complete a research paper using a state rubric. Students and teacher communicated through a portfolio where they collaboratively created rubrics for students to self-report their own learning. "When rubrics are jointly constructed, there is a clearer understanding of what constitutes an acceptable

performance and the rubric score becomes far more meaningful than a traditional letter grade or even a teacher-created rubric” (Hill and Flynn, 2006, p. 33).

### Participants

Prior to selecting students to participate, the teacher-researcher obtained project approval from building and district level administration as well as parent and student consent. Both student participants completed pre and post questionnaires and the teacher recorded formative observations and conducted student interviews through the assigned time period. The Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment taken three times per academic school year provided important data about the student’s reading ability. The data provided a percentile ranking for the student, a lexile range used to determine student’s reading range ability, and Rasch Units (RIT) score, or the student’s growth divided by the student’s RIT growth range norm, used to correlate the student’s probability of passing the MSP test (Lexile, 2013). For example, a student who received a Spring RIT score of 218 placed them in the 47<sup>th</sup> percentile of passing the seventh grade MSP with a level three proficiency. The two selected participants consistently scored below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on their Reading MAP test for the last three school years. MAP percentile corresponds to a lexile range for each student. Lexile levels established one’s readability level and text complexity measured by word choice, sentence structure and length, and complexity of content. The range for the participants was 627L-777L. The first number in the range generally meant that a student could read at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile as compared to grade level peers on a nationally normed test (Lexile, 2013). Lexile levels were not intended to establish a grade level range, but approximate seventh grade lexile ranges fell between 737-

1065 (Lexile, 2013). In this case 737L fell at the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and 1065L the highest 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Using the old lexile system, most seventh grade on-level texts fell between the ranges of 860L-1010L. CCSS extended lexile ranges to a present range of 925L-1185L (Lexile Framework, 2013). The higher lexile ranges mandated by CCSS and teacher support through scaffolding, exposed students to text that corresponded to texts formerly seen as high school appropriate. Both students were placed in a below grade level reading class. According to their spring MAP scores, both students scored at about mid-year level for a fifth grader. Both students spoke English as a second language, but have attended school in the United States since kindergarten. Both students enrolled in the researcher's first period class.

### Instruments

As part of a classroom assessment, students took part in two questionnaires. Students completed a pre and post Motivated Strategies Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). The purpose of the scale assessed students' beliefs that they were capable of performing a task and whether the student accepted responsibility for their learning (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990). The MSLQ comprised of forty-four statements asking students to rate their in-class behavior using the seven point Likert scale. They also took a Growth Mindset survey comprised of fifteen true/false statements.

### Design

The students kept a portfolio that was used as a two-communication between teacher and student. Both the students and the teacher created a student friendly rubric using the state rubric. The rubric served as a tool for students to self-assess their writing while the teacher provided

feedback guiding the students to the required level three proficiency requirement. Students received no overall score or letter grade until meeting the required level three proficiency just written notes between participants and teacher suggesting ideas to further develop in their research or clarify in their writing. Students completed the MSLQ survey prior to the start of the CBA unit as well as the end of the unit to see if there was a change in how they rated their self-efficacy score. Teacher also annotated in a journal any relevant information about the student's journey through the research.

### Procedure

The teacher became acquainted with students in her classroom throughout the school year. In December all seventh grade students took a growth mindset survey seeing how they defined their abilities as fixed or growth in orientation. In April, two students were selected for participation in the case study. The students took an MSLQ survey that measured their motivation in the classroom environment. Over the following five weeks, teacher and case study participants kept a portfolio throughout their CBA unit. The portfolio provided a private two-way communication between participants and teacher. Students and teachers used the state provided CBA rubric on Causes of Conflict which the students created rubrics in student friendly language for the students to self-assess their own learning. The teacher frequently provided feedback that focused solely on where the student was currently and what they needed to consider or do to get them on the correct writing path as clearly stated in their rubric. Students used feedback to improve their research paper to the required level three proficiency passing. Throughout the process, the teacher kept a journal of student teacher contact. Though the unit

only lasted five weeks the teacher observed that students stayed motivated and persevered with longer time on task as compared to the prior work. Additionally, the students continued to work on assignments after they received feedback that provided information for achieving the required standard of a level three. The scoring guide provided by OSPI stated “there are four qualities than any CBA response must have to earn credit. In short they must be accurate, clear, cohesive and explicit in addressing the relevant concepts” (OSPI, 2013). In other words, students work needed to clearly and accurately analyze and explain the main causes of conflicts.

### Summary

The investigator researched, helping students overcome low academic perception using feedback and student’s self-reporting their learning in the seventh grade social studies classroom. In an attempt to gain insight into what helped two students’ self-efficacy to increase as measured by a pre and post MSLQ in the seventh grade social studies classroom after teacher provided feedback and students self-reporting their own learning. The researcher collected quantitative data that included survey results, history of reading MAP scores, and CBA rubric scores. The teacher recorded qualitative notes and observations on participants’ use of effort and strategies, and students’ personal anecdotal stories.



## Chapter 4 Analysis of the data

### Introduction

The researcher conducted an action research project utilizing a case study approach to better understand how to help two students raise their perception of low academic self-efficacy in a seventh grade social studies classroom when students self-reported their own learning using rubrics created collaboratively by teacher and participants. Teacher provided feedback for case study participants in three different ways. Researcher confirmed students reasoning and evidence was on the path toward success, suggested areas to strengthen or improve their writing process through elaboration, and encouraged students to continue with their task and efforts.

“Students increase their perceptions of self-efficacy by tackling appropriate levels of challenge in specific areas and by attributing their successes to the decisions they make and the strategies they use” (Hill and Flynn, 2012, p. 69). The students took a growth mindset survey to assess if they believed they had the ability change their current perception of low academic self-efficacy. The two selected students reported a growth mindset perception. The participants also completed a pre and post MSLQ survey using the seven point Likert scale.

### Description of the Environment

The researcher worked with two students from the researcher’s Seventh Grade classroom in a small rural agrarian community located along the Columbia River in eastern Washington

State. The two selected students represented one boy and one girl. The intention of the study was to look at methods that potentially improved student's self-efficacy because students self-reporting their learning and teacher feedback ranked in the top ten in his meta-analysis for improving student achievement (Hattie, 2009).

### Hypothesis

Student's achievement will increase when student's self-efficacy improves as measured by a pre and post MSLQ in the seventh grade social studies classroom after teacher provided feedback and students self-reporting their own learning using collaboratively created rubrics.

The data indicated participants self-reported a slightly higher rating in their self-efficacy between the pre and post MSLQ. The two participants scored above the twenty-fifth percentile in their spring reading MAP test.

### Results of the Study

The results of the study demonstrated that the two students who received teacher feedback and self-reported their own learning using collaboratively created rubrics reported slightly higher self-efficacy ratings using the MSLQ survey.

Table 1 showed the reported scores for the self-efficacy related questions on the MSLQ.

	Student A		Student B	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Compared with other students in this class I expect to do well.	4	4	5	6
I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course.	4	5	4	6
I expect to do very well in this class.	5	5	5	6
Compared with other students in this class, I think I'm a good student.	5	6	5	6
I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class.	4	5	4	5
I think I will receive a good grade in this class.	4	5	5	6
My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class.	3	4	4	6
Compared with other students in this class I think I know a great deal about the subject.	3	4	3	4
I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class.	3	4	5	6
Average	3.89	4.67	4.44	5.67

### Findings

The data showed that students reported slightly higher self-efficacy ratings in some of the nine questions in the MSLQ. Student A scored a 3.89 on the pre assessment and reported a 4.67 on the post questionnaire. Student B averaged a 4.44 during the pre MSLQ and scored a 5.67 on the post questionnaire. Both students also reported to the researcher that they believed that collaboratively created rubrics by teacher and students helped them focus on what specifically they needed to do to meet the success criteria. Student A stated “the rubrics made me think about what I needed to do and what writing strategy would help me best accomplish the task.” Student B commented “rubrics helped me understand what I needed to do to improve my writing. I finally understood why some kids got high scores and why I received lower scores.”

Rubrics helped student's metacognition because they were able to look across the scores on the rubric to see what the requirement was for each skill. Student B reported "the rubric made my grade feel less personable." When the participant was asked to clarify what she meant by "less personable" she further explained that the score didn't seem like a reflection of how the teacher liked her because she could clearly see why the recorded score was earned. The rubric took the negative emotions away from the score by making it appear emotionally objective. The rubric provided a roadmap by clearly defining in writing what students were required to do meet the standard or skill.

Both participants stated that the teacher feedback was quite useful in guiding them to improve their work. Student A stated "it made me feel more confident that I was on the right track." Student B commented that "the feedback helped me see how to improve or strengthen my ideas to make my writing stronger." The researcher observed that when students received their teacher feedback both students went back to their rubric to see how the feedback matched the requirements on the rubric. Students often gave feedback to teacher that helped confirm in what areas of writing students needed the most support.

The data and teacher observation of students confirmed that using rubrics and teacher feedback helped case study participants to think critically about their learning deepening their understanding and affirming that they were confident and capable learners. During state mandated testing, the teacher observed both participants referring back to the state check off list numerous times during their writing test. Both students reported that using the state provided

check off list helped them to sustain on task and writing for a longer period of time than other classmates in the testing location.

### Summary

The action research confirmed that for the two participants using rubrics and teacher feedback helped them become more confident learners. Both rubric and feedback helped them think about their learning in a new and deeper way. According to Pintrich and De Groot (1990), “self-efficacy was positively related to student cognitive engagement and performance. Students who believed they were capable were more likely to report use of a cognitive strategies and to persist more often at difficult or uninteresting tasks” (p. 37). The teacher-researcher observed students sharing their feedback with classmates. These same classmates then looked deeper at their paper to correct similar errors or fallacies.

Some limitations may need to be considered in the research project. The sample of two participants was too small for any generalization. This was important to note because the students success resulted from them being open and receptive to the feedback provided by the teacher. Students had to be actively engaged in their learning and willing to accurately assess their own learning. In other words, students and teacher established a relationship built on mutual trust and respect for learning.

Another limitation to note was that the research took place during a five week period in the fourth quarter of the school year. This was important to note because though the students and researcher observed changes in the students self-efficacy it was unknown if these new levels of confidence would sustain for longer periods of time. Self-efficacy was task specific. Meaning

though students showed improvement in social studies class it was unknown if this improved confidence carried over to other disciplines when the same topic was being learned.

## Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

The project was designed to examine what potential methods help students overcome their perception of low academic self-efficacy. The two case study participants self-reported their own learning and received teacher feedback to guide them in their learning. The feedback focused on confirming and strengthening their ideas, recognizing their effort, and encouraging them to further examine fallacies in their writing. The project took place in the spring of their seventh grade year during a five week period.

### Summary

The researcher conducted this case study to analyze what helps students overcome their low academic perception in the seventh grade social studies classroom. The two participants were selected because they self-reported a growth mindset using a growth mindset survey. Students also took a pre and post MSLQ survey using a seven point Likert scale to see if they noticed a change in their self-efficacy. Both students reported a slightly higher perception in self-efficacy using the MSLQ survey. Using teacher feedback and having students self-report their own learning supported Hattie's findings of their effectiveness in improving student's academic achievement.

### Conclusions

Surveys, interviews, and observations confirmed by project participants suggest that rubrics and feedback helped them to become more confident learners in their social studies

classroom. Between the pre and post MSLQ both students self-reported growth in their self-efficacy. Student A's mean score during the pre MSLQ was 3.8, but on the post MSLQ reported a 4.6 mean score. Student B's mean score during the pre MSLQ was 4.4, but on the post MSLQ reported a 5.6 mean score. Both students were able to strengthen their writing by making it better reasoned and more informed when they used the collaboratively created rubrics and teacher provided feedback. The participants found the rubrics and feedback to impact their learning making it a more positive experience and teaching them cognitive skills to use in future grades.

### Recommendations

The researcher was pleased to see how collaboratively creating students rubrics clarified the different requirements and strategies needed to meet the assessed standard or skill. Teacher feedback provided information that removed emotional objectivity. Students could verbally state why their score was earned without blaming the teacher and therefore accepted ownership of the earned score.

More research needs to be conducted in helping students become more confident in the social studies classroom. This is important because of the influx of ELLs in the classroom in future years. Social studies class is often the last class that English learners will receive in their new language because it is such a difficult topic with a lot of abstract concepts for students to master. Teachers need to recognize the role that self-efficacy plays in engagement in the classroom. More effort and attention should be focused on collaboratively teaching students how to create rubrics to increase student buy-in and engagement in their learning. This also helps



students to think about their learning. While many educators note the effectiveness of using rubrics and feedback, there is still needed research in ways to do so in a timely manner. With ever-growing classroom sizes how to return feedback in a timely manner is difficult. Perhaps exploring technology might be an option to see if there is not some program to make feedback immediate. Teaching students and parents how to provide feedback to their peers might be an area to research in the future. There is much for teachers to learn about how to scaffold rubrics for ELL students to help them become more confident learners until mastery of new language is reached.

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### Student Mindset Survey

1. I want to be better than other students in my class.
2. An important reason why I do my class work is because I like to learn new things.
3. I'd like to show my teacher that I'm smarter than the others in my class.
4. I like class work that I'll learn from even if I make a lot of mistakes.
5. It's very important to me that I don't look stupid in class
6. If I do poorly on an assignment or test, it's because I didn't try hard enough.
7. Natural ability is more important than effort for doing well in school.
8. I can do well on any assignment if I try hard enough.
9. If I do well on an assignment or test, I think it's because of good luck.
10. An important reason why I do my work in class is because I want to get better at it.
11. If I do poorly on an assignment or test, it's usually the teacher's fault.
12. Effort is more important than natural ability for doing well in school.
13. My intelligence is something very basic about me that can't change very much.
14. No matter how much intelligence I have, I can always change it quite a bit.
15. I can learn new things, but I can't really change how intelligent I am.

When you are done, turn this page over for scoring instructions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Student Mindset Reflection

1. Add up the number of TRUEs for the odd-numbered statements. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Add up the number of TRUEs for the even-numbered statements. \_\_\_\_\_
3. If you have more for ODD, you have a fixed mindset, and if you have more for even you have a fluid or growth mindset. My mindset is primarily \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What does it mean to have this mindset?
5. How does this mindset affect how you do in school?
6. What can you do to change your mindset to an overwhelmingly growth mindset and/or to maintain a growth mindset?
7. How can your teachers, parents, etc, help you have a growth mindset?

## **Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire\***

Please rate the following items based on your behavior in this class. Your rating should be on a 7-point scale where **1= not at all true of me** to **7=very true of me** .

1. I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things.
2. Compared with other students in this class I expect to do well
3. I am so nervous during a test that I cannot remember facts I have learned
4. It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class
5. I like what I am learning in this class
6. I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course
7. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this class in other classes
8. I expect to do very well in this class
9. Compared with others in this class, I think I'm a good student
10. I often choose paper topics I will learn something from even if they require more work
11. I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class
12. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take a test
13. I think I will receive a good grade in this class
14. Even when I do poorly on a test I try to learn from my mistakes
15. I think that what I am learning in this class is useful for me to know
16. My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class
17. I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting
18. Compared with other students in this class I think I know a great deal about the subject
19. I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class
20. I worry a great deal about tests
21. Understanding this subject is important to me
22. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing
23. When I study for a test, I try to put together the information from class and from the book
24. When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so I can answer the questions correctly
25. I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying
26. It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read
27. When work is hard I either give up or study only the easy parts
28. When I study I put important ideas into my own words
29. I always try to understand what the teacher is saying even if it doesn't make sense.
30. When I study for a test I try to remember as many facts as I can
31. When studying, I copy my notes over to help me remember material
32. I work on practice exercises and answer end of chapter questions even when I don't have to

33. Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I keep working until I finish
34. When I study for a test I practice saying the important facts over and over to myself
35. Before I begin studying I think about the things I will need to do to learn
36. I use what I have learned from old homework assignments and the textbook to do new assignments
37. I often find that I have been reading for class but don't know what it is all about.
38. I find that when the teacher is talking I think of other things and don't really listen to what is being said
39. When I am studying a topic, I try to make everything fit together
40. When I'm reading I stop once in a while and go over what I have read
41. When I read materials for this class, I say the words over and over to myself to help me remember
42. I outline the chapters in my book to help me study
43. I work hard to get a good grade even when I don't like a class
44. When reading I try to connect the things I am reading about with what I already know.

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