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The Impact of Collective Efficacy and Collective Inquiry on Closing the Achievement Gap

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THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE EFFICACY AND COLLECTIVE INQUIRY ON CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and colleagues who supported me throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this two-phased, mixed-method action research study was to investigate the impact of a professional learning community's collective teacher efficacy and their practice of collective inquiry in closing the achievement gap of 8th-grade social studies English language learners. The research questions guiding this research were How and to what extent collective inquiry impacts collective efficacy among teachers? and How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners? Social cognitive theory and adult learning theory provided the theoretical foundation for this study, understanding how adults learn, including motivation factors and guiding principles for instituting effective andragogy practices. Undoubtedly, much research reveals a positive relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement. However, minimal research exists examining the relationship between collective efficacy and diminishing the achievement gap. The strength of the results of this study lies in the practical application of educators' daily work. In the context of the modern educational system, plagued by high stakes testing and unprecedented challenges resulting from the worldwide pandemic, education can feel like never-ending checklists of mundane activities and mandates. Success, at times, is defined by compliance rather than intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to ensure all students achieve success. This study's triangulated data revealed how well-designed, high-functioning PLCs with high levels of collective teacher efficacy and utilization of continuous cycles of collective inquiry

positively impact ELL academic achievement. While this study's results are limited, the findings are significant and worthy of review and should ignite future studies.

Keywords: collective teacher efficacy, collective inquiry, professional learning communities, professional learning community, achievement gap, English language learners.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALT ..... Adult Learning Theory

ATI ..... Advanced Teacher Influence

CS ..... Collaborative Staff

CFA ..... Common Formative Assessment

ESI ..... Effective Systems of Interventions

ELL ..... English Language Learners

GAIN ..... Getting All I Need

GC ..... Goal Consensus

GC ..... Group Consensus

LTEL ..... Long Term English Learner

MAP ..... Measure of Academic Progress

PA ..... Performance Assessment

PLC ..... Professional Learning Community

QSA ..... Quarterly Summative Assessment

RiT ..... Rasch UnIT

RISD ..... Resilient Independent School District

RL ..... Responsive Leadership

SCT ..... Social Cognitive Theory

STAAR ..... State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness

SIFE ..... Students with Interrupted Formal Education

TA ..... Task Analysis

TK..... Teacher Knowledge

TAPR..... Texas Academic Performance Report

TELPAS..... Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Individuals fashion the fabric of America from different regions all over the world. Each year, as more and more people migrate to the United States, this fabric is altered to include each new inhabitant. In 2018, the Census Bureau released data showing that 67.2 million U.S. residents ages five and older speak a language other than English at home (United States Census Bureau, 2018). This ever-changing fabric of America is replicated in teachers' classrooms across the nation. In 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics reported close to five million English language learners (ELL), representing 9.5% of Pre-K through 12th-grade students enrolled in U.S. schools.

Meanwhile, state and federal accountability requirements have intensified teachers' and administrators' demands (Texas Classroom Teachers Association, 2018). Increasing accountability and growing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse ELL students pose complex challenges for teachers across the nation. The significant social-emotional needs of students and academic deficits lead to widening achievement gaps for ELL students.

Problem of Practice

The American educational system has been struggling to keep up with a growing culturally and linguistically diverse population (Thibault, 2017) and obtain adequately equipped teachers skilled in modifying the unsuccessful practices (Gold, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education reported that 55.6% of public-school teachers in the United States have at least one ELL in their classrooms (Donohoo, Bryen, et al., 2018). "Given

the steady increase in diversity among ELL students in the United States, a key challenge for educators is understanding the social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the children they serve and creating the conditions of trust and respect necessary for effective instruction" (National Academies of Science, Engineering, 2017, p. 3). School districts across the nation are considering different instructional approaches that support ELL students' academic and social-emotional learning struggles in their schools. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2009) reported teachers do not have adequate professional development to meet ELL needs. Contributing to the problem are varying requirements for teacher preparation programs in each state. Additionally, school districts cite the realistic challenge of providing ELL-specific professional learning to support teachers blaming time constraints and the inability to identify appropriate instructional strategies.

Notably, Texas is ranked number two in the United States for having the most significant ELL population (Sanchez, 2017). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) reports 19.5% of students enrolled in Texas schools are ELL students (Texas Education Agency, 2019e). However, according to the most current data from the TEA, Resilient Independent School District (RISD-a pseudonym), 26.7% of the 38,985 students enrolled were identified as English Learners in 2018-2019 (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). According to the TEA website, the wide range of diverse home languages for ELL students in RISD fluctuates from year to year: in 2007, there were over 56 different languages, and currently, that number has risen to more than 80 languages. In addition to the numerous languages, the number of students experiencing delayed enrollments proves problematic for RISD. Roughly 4% of

RISD's ELL students are considered to be "Students with Interrupted Formal Education" (SIFE). To be identified as SIFE, a student must be an immigrant and enrolled in US schools typically after grade two, have limited or no prior schooling, and lack basic literacy skills in their native language. (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2020; Student Assessment Division, 2018).

Further perpetuating the challenges in RISD is the number of Asylee Refugee students. According to the district's database, 13.5% of RISD's ELL students are classified as Asylee Refugee students. An Asylee Refugee is a person seeking admission to the United States who is unable or unwilling to return to their country due to fear of persecution (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2020). Over one-fourth of RISD's student population are ELL students. Many students have unimaginable life experiences, explaining why the district struggles to meet this student population's unique needs.

The vast number of languages, combined with ELL students' difficult life experiences in RISD, present tremendous challenges for teachers. Teachers are expected to teach ELL and non-ELL students simultaneously, covering content and managing multiple languages and academic problems in addition to sustaining their ELL students' social-emotional needs with minimal support from the district.

According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (2018), ELL students scored significantly lower in reading and mathematics on national assessments. Likewise, substantial achievement gaps exist between RISD ELL and their non-ELL counterparts' performances on national and state assessments. To illustrate the achievement gap between ELL and native English students, in RISD, a 33-

point achievement gap exists on the 8th-grade Social Studies State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (Texas Education Agency, 2019a, p. 3). Circumstances such as poverty, mobility, and disruption in education contribute to the challenges faced by ELL students. Rumberger and Gandara (2004) assert inequitable access to adequately equipped teachers most likely contributes to the ELL student achievement gap and further claim that teachers need specialized professional learning to meet their ELL students' unique needs.

Research indicates that teachers have the single most significant impact on student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1986a; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). When educators share a sense of collective efficacy, school cultures tend to be characterized by beliefs that reflect high expectations for student success and incorporate a shared language that represents a focus on student learning (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018). Adaptive change (Donohoo, 2014) as closing the student achievement gap is only possible when educator beliefs and actions include a change agent mindset, believing their fundamental task is to evaluate their practice's effectiveness on students' progress and achievement (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018) through collective inquiry. Collective inquiry is a structure in which members of a professional learning community (PLC) come together to examine their educational practices systematically. Educators also believe that students' success or failure is more associated with their actions than blaming students. They place value in solving practice problems together (Hattie & Zierer, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Two fundamental perspectives provide the context for this action research project's theoretical framework: Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986b, 1997) and Malcolm Sheppard Knowles's (1968) adult learning theory. Social cognitive theory focuses on understanding human learning and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1997), while adult learning theory, or andragogy, concentrates on the art and science of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (1986b) emerged from Bandura's social learning theory as a framework for understanding human learning motivation. Social cognitive theory asserts that learning occurs best in a social environment with dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (LaMorte, 2019). It introduced the context of collective-efficacy (Bandura, 1997)—the shared belief by a group of people in their collective power to produce desired results (Bandura, 2001). Collective beliefs are central to the intentional pursuit of a course of action; groups are unlikely to initiate action without a definite sense of efficacy (Hoy et al., 2006). John Hattie's (2018) meta-analysis of achievement effect sizes of academic influences rank collective teacher efficacy as having the most significant effect size (1.57) on student learning outcomes; collective efficacy impacts how educators feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1993).

As educators, it is our job to ensure that all students achieve at high levels, graduate, and be ready for college and/or careers despite challenges. Accomplishing

these objectives requires classrooms filled with educators working with high collective efficacy levels (Hattie, 2018). Research supports the power of collective efficacy's unquestionable impact on student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1977; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Hattie, 2012, 2018). This notion is consistent with what researchers know about how adults learn (Slepkov, 2008; Terehoff, 2002).

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) examines andragogy, the art and science of how adults learn and how to involve them in the learning process (McCall et al., 2018; McGrath, 2009). Andragogy concentrates on the learning process and the learner's internalized needs rather than the teaching process and outcomes (McCall et al., 2018). Adult education is unique in its approach in that it aims to do more than impart information to participants. Instead, it includes them in the learning process by asking learners questions about their workplace work (Connolly, 1996; McGrath, 2009).

Knowles (1980) patterned adult learning theory after ideas from the pioneering theorist Edmond Lindeman, who laid the foundation for a systematic adult education theory and identified adult learners' critical assumptions. The principles of andragogy were developed to create educational philosophies that focus on adult learners' needs and incorporate their life and career experiences (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Lindeman, 1926). The andragogical model is based on several assumptions that are different from those of the pedagogical model. They include fundamental principles that empower teachers to make their own decisions, feel valued, leverage their willingness to

learn, focused on relevant tasks, and motivates and encourages collaboration (Donohoo, 2014; Knowles, 1968).

Further supporting the idea of adult learning theory, DuFour and Eaker (1998) introduced the notion of creating an environment that fosters cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth to achieve together what cannot be accomplished alone. More recently, the authors defined a PLC as "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 10). Tara Fenwick (2008) asserts the most pressing issues of workplace learning for adult educators involve figuring out how people solve complex workplace problems through learning. Adults are problem-solvers and learn best when the subject is of immediate use, and effective instruction involves the learner in solving real-life problems (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011). These problems can include getting teams to work together to close the achievement gap of marginalized student groups, such as English language learners.

Katz and Dack (2013) assert professional development makes a difference when it results in permanent changes in behavior and draws upon the power of the collective, social capital to identify and solve problems of practice. Collaborative inquiry provides a structure in which members of a PLC work together to ask questions, develop theories of action, determine action steps, and gather and analyze evidence to assess the impact of their actions (Donohoo, 2014).

Social Cognitive Theory and Adult Learning Theory

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986b) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980), when applied together with professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), foster a culture of collective efficacy in which educators develop shared beliefs, prompting their actions and behaviors to focus their collective power on solving real-world issues (Donohoo, 2014; Hoy et al., 2006; Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011). In collaboration with applying adult learning theory, the power of collective efficacy has strong potential to empower teachers to discover authentic and meaningful solutions to close the achievement gap for English language learners.

Purpose of the Study

Increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse ELL students presented complex challenges for school districts and teachers in RISD, including significant social-emotional needs of students and academic deficits leading to widening achievement gaps (National Academies of Science, Engineering, 2017). According to the Texas Education Agency's Texas Academic Performance Report, the RISD's ELL students scored significantly lower than their English-speaking peers on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment. This study examined collective efficacy and PLCs as methods of empowering teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to closing the achievement gap for their ELL students through collective inquiry.

Research Questions

Through collective inquiry, this study empowered teachers to close ELL students' achievement gap on the social studies state assessment by developing collective efficacy

by building shared knowledge and learning together within a PLC (Donohoo, 2017; DuFour et al., 2016; Patankar, 2013).

The following research questions guided the inquiry for this action research:

1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among 8th-grade social studies teachers in a junior high?
2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?

The process of continuous cycles of collective inquiry within a high functioning PLC demonstrated the potential to identify methods and techniques to close the achievement gap for ELL students on the social studies state assessment. The opportunity to foster improvements in the educational experiences of students was essential to this educator-researcher. As an action researcher, it is important to evaluate one's realm of control and collaborate with teachers to determine the necessary actions for creating a rich learning environment that promotes equity and equal access to success for all students. Hattie (2018) and his team assert collective teacher efficacy is the number one influence related to student achievement is significant (Cohen's d=1.57). The research questions guided the action research and provided necessary insight into whether collective efficacy and collective inquiry within a PLC empowered teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to closing the achievement gap for ELL students on the state social studies assessment.

Researcher Positionality

Action research is a type of practitioner research that seeks to understand and make meaning of a problem while attempting to solve a practical local problem of practice that improves the practice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While many forms of action research exist, all types share universal principles: research focuses on a problem, participants become co-investigators, the degree to which the lead researcher is an insider or outsider to the problem of practice is relevant, and the design of the action research study evolves and emerges throughout the process as the participants and researcher collaborate on next steps in solving their problem of practice (2016). Researcher positionality is critical in all research; this requires the researcher to determine "who am I in relation to my participants and setting" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 37). This participatory action research harnessed reciprocal collaboration between insiders and outsiders (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Role of the researcher. As the action research study architect, my goal was to observe the participants conduct continuous collective inquiry cycles to identify specific strategies to close the achievement gap for ELL students. My positionality in this action research fluctuated between an insider and outsider and shifted throughout the process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Initially, as the social studies director, I had a vested interest in closing the achievement gap for ELL students in RISD. Thus in this context, I was an insider aiming to eradicate the achievement gap for ELL students. As an insider, I studied myself in relationship to the problem of practice and communicated and acknowledged my positionality and potential implications to participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). While observing the inner workings of Practical Junior High's social studies PLC, I was

an outsider. The goal was to study the PLC's behaviors, interactions, and practices to determine effective practices. As the social studies director, I built a rapport with participants and paid close attention to perceived power relations during the research process. Initially, participants were suspicious of me and the intent of this action research study. To reduce participant suspicions, I intentionally, clearly, and repeatedly communicated the *why* behind the proposed innovation, what it involved, and *how* it ranked among other innovations (Evans, 1996).

I am a White female educator who has have lived in Texas all my life. Before conducting this action research study, I worked as a teacher serving a diverse student population. More recently, my experience has been as a district-level administrator working with school administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers who work and serve a large, diverse ELL population. This experience led to my interest in conducting a mixed-method action research study to explore the power of collective inquiry and efficacy, specifically related to English learner students' academic success. As the director of social studies, I have witnessed the challenges of effectively meeting the ELL students' academic and social-emotional needs in RISD. Therefore, I have a vested interest in ensuring ELL students succeed.

The ELL students enrolled in RISD represent students from all world regions; their experiences and life's journeys are unique and sometimes unfathomable to American-born citizens. The ELL population is comprised mainly of Hispanic and Asian students whose families have come to the US seeking a better life. My great-grandfather's emigration from Lithuania in the early 1900s parallels the stories of some of the asylee refugee students enrolled in RISD, whose transition from war-torn countries

into our schools is difficult; these students need educational support and social and emotional support. My cultural heritage directly influences my passion and compassion for ELL students, and I was mindful of the potential bias as I participated in and conducted this action research study.

Research Design

A mixed-method action research approach was used to investigate how collective inquiry fosters a culture of collective efficacy and the impact on closing the ELL student achievement gap. Mixed-methods research connects qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques into one study (Efron & Ravid, 2020). One advantage of utilizing mixed-methods research is that it draws upon the strengths of both types of research methods to address the problem of practice (2020) while also overcoming the limitations of each type of research method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insight into the problem of practice as opposed to a single view provided by either quantitative or qualitative data.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Kurt Lewin was the first to develop the action research theory, establishing it as an acceptable research method in the social science arena. Lewin maintains action research embodies essential components, including practitioners investigating the localized problem of practice. He further claims the degree to which the lead researcher is an insider or outsider to the problem of practice is relevant, and the research design evolves and emerges throughout the process as the participants and researcher collaborate on the next steps in solving their problem of practice (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This action research focused on empowering teachers to close the achievement gap for ELL students on the social studies state assessment by fostering the power of collective efficacy through collective inquiry. In the 1970s, Bandura (1977) studied interesting patterns of working groups. He ultimately discovered that teams working together with the shared belief in collaborative problem solving could overcome challenges and produce intended results more effectively. Later Bandura further affirmed that when educators believe in their combined ability to influence student outcomes, there are significantly higher academic achievement levels (Bandura, 1993).

Grounded in Bandura's ideas (1977, 1993), this study employed a non-probability, purposeful sample of RISD secondary teachers to participate in collective inquiry. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) define non-probability sampling as a method of selecting individuals that are available and willing to participate in a study; furthermore, purposeful sampling indicates the researcher intentionally selecting (or recruiting) participants who have experienced the central problem being explored. The purpose of this action research study was to discover the impact of collective inquiry and collective efficacy on closing the achievement gap for ELL students; thus, by utilizing a purposeful sample, the most information was gleaned and appropriate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The target population for this study was 8th-grade teachers in a public-school setting in RISD. The purposeful sample consisted of seven participants from one of the eight junior high campuses. The participants met one or more of the following selection criteria: serving as administrator(s) at the junior high and/or teaching junior high, instructional support staff, and/or teaching 8th-grade social studies with classes that

included ELL students. Demographic information gathered included age, sex, race, years of teaching experience, and years teaching ELL students. Because this study sought to identify the power of collective efficacy, ELL achievement data was evaluated in advance of this action research study to determine the most appropriate PLC to participate in this study. I obtained permission from the district's assessment department and participants before collecting research data. A purposeful sample was most appropriate for this mixed-method action research study because it aligned with the typical characteristics of studies in which the participants focus on a problem of practice as co-investigators to discover a shared solution (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

Data Collection & Analysis

Data analysis is a vital part of the action research cycle. The process of data analysis consists of employing a systematic and deliberate approach that results in trustworthy and reliable findings (Efron & Ravid, 2020). According to Efron and Ravid (2020), "*Analysis* is the process of breaking down the whole into smaller bits to discover the essential elements, while *interpretations* provide a description or explanation of the meaning of the study" (Efron & Ravid, 2020, p. 166).

"Mixed-methods data analysis consists of analytic techniques applied to both the quantitative and qualitative data as well as the integration of the two forms of data" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018, p. 218). In utilizing mixed-methods approach, I synthesized and triangulated qualitative and quantitative data among multiple data collection sources to strengthen the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings and recommendations for the study. Mixed-methods data interpretation requires the

researcher to look across the quantitative results and the qualitative conclusions to assess how the information addressed the mixed-methods research questions in a study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis uses statistical procedures to help the researcher further reflect on and study the statistical findings by looking for trends, presenting the data visually, examining the relationship between variables, and comparing groups on selected characteristics (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Quantitative data analysis is a deductive process as opposed to the inductive method of qualitative data analysis. The most common approach to quantitative data analysis is descriptive statistics (Ivankova, 2015). The descriptive statistical analysis process describes and summarizes quantitative data to identify trends, patterns, and relationships among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). Descriptive data analysis is instrumental in practitioner research within a professional setting because it helps inform and develop actions and interventions.

According to Ivankova (2015), descriptive data is typically displayed in charts, tables, and graphs, allowing the researcher to calculate frequencies of occurrence within the data sets. The most common descriptive methods include central tendencies, variability measures, and association or relationship measures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015). Summary displays help the practitioner-research understand the information collected and efficiently communicate the findings to the greater community and stakeholders. Descriptive analysis in mixed-method action research studies is a relatively straightforward statistical procedure easily applied by practitioner-researchers.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis follows several steps: basic organization of the data; organizing the data into schemes consisting of categories and themes; and making inferences, developing models, or generating theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Identifying themes, categories, or patterns helps the researcher answer the research questions without the option of statistical tests to help determine the meaning of the bits of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A system for organizing and managing qualitative data, known as coding, was implemented for the qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). "Coding is nothing more than assigning some shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can retrieve specific pieces of the data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199). I conducted a focus group and individual interviews that were semi-structured and based on a set number of questions. I transcribed the recorded focus group and interview data and used coding to identify trends, themes, and connections between data. The analysis included multiple readings, sorting, coding, and categorizing to decipher themes and ideas to answer the research questions. I kept a research journal to capture reflections, themes, and thoughts after the first set of data and used it to help narrow the study's focus, allowing for the development of additional data sets. In educational research, it is essential to construct valid and reliable research data in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); validity and reliability are particularly critical in applied fields that impact people's lives, such as education. I made sure the investigation was conducted ethically, carefully constructing how the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and how the

findings were presented to ensure the participants' anonymity, rigor, and trustworthiness of the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I used member checks or respondent validation by gathering feedback from the participants interviewed and having them review this data as a means of validating my interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another strategy I included in this action research study was to represent my positionality or reflexivity explicitly, including my biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers should communicate their perspectives, biases, and assumptions to help the reader understand how they might influence the findings (Maxwell, 2013).

Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data collected included pre-and post-surveys using the Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard & Hoy, 2003) to measure teacher self-efficacy in the areas of efficacy for student engagement and instructional strategies. Additionally, the Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard & Hoy, 2003) measures the faculty's understanding of its capacity to achieve meaningful student learning despite obstacles that might make learning difficult. Collective inquiry was the independent variable in this action research. English language learner scores on the social studies assessments were the dependent variable. Quantitative data exploring pre- and post-perceptions of collective efficacy addressed both research questions. The qualitative data was gathered from focus group discussions, observations, and interviews, which helped answer questions one and two. Observations, surveys, and interviews related to the impact of collective inquiry on increasing collective teacher efficacy were used to answer research question number one.

The problem of practice was situational and within the context of the educators participating in this study while also addressing equity and social justice issues for English Learners. This study's mixed-method research design incorporated both open and closed-ended data collection methods to further validate the findings related to the identified intervention. The research study's systematic and cyclical design fostered new research questions and cycles of additional research. The mixed-methods approach and procedures provided the best data related to the power of collective efficacy.

As a district administrator leading a practitioner action research study, I acknowledged and managed the hierarchical structure and implemented methods to diffuse the perception of power by considering how power and control over the research process were distributed (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I established roles, procedures, and protocols to achieve an equitable and democratic collaboration among differences in power and status (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I triangulated the methods and data, as well as employed member checking as part of the data analysis process to validate the data collected through focus group and individual interviews to ensure unintended collusion did not skew the data and findings

Significance of the Study

Research recognizes increased collective efficacy positively impacts student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1977; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). This study's significance was to determine if collective inquiry was an effective way to increase collective efficacy to improve academic outcomes for English language learners. If so, it would be a promising

approach for teacher professional development. Results would include more effective teaching, increased collective efficacy, and increased student achievement for ELL students.

Limitation of the Study

This action research study was restricted to 8th-grade social studies teachers in one junior high school in a large urban school district. The purposeful sampling for the mixed-method action research reduced the generalizability of the study. This study will not be generalizable to other junior schools; however, the new understandings, assertions, explanations, and conclusions (Efron & Ravid, 2020) could be of significant interest for schools with similar demographics.

The study's limitations included a short period of time that teachers had to learn about and conduct collective inquiry action research. There was also the limitation of identifying other factors that may have affected collective efficacy and student achievement during the same period. Specifically, participants may have accessed other professional learning opportunities beyond conducting collective inquiry research, thus skewing the findings.

Organization of the Dissertation

The next section of this dissertation will include a full literature review of the theories that underpinned the study and research related to professional learning communities. The third chapter will consist of a comprehensive examination of the research methods, data collection, and analysis used in this action research study. The

fourth chapter will discuss the findings of the action research. The final chapter will present the conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further research.

Operational Definitions

Achievement Gap The difference in the performance between each student group within a local education agency or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Adaptive Change is "one for which the necessary knowledge to solve the problem does not yet exist" (Donohoo, 2014).

Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1977).

Collective efficacy is the belief of teachers in their ability to positively affect students (Hattie, 2018).

Collective inquiry is a structure in which members of a professional learning community (PLC) come together to systematically examine their educational practices (Donohoo, 2014).

Effect Size is a simple measure for quantifying the difference between two groups or the same group over time on a common scale. In education, 'effect sizes' are the best way of answering the question 'what has the greatest influence on student learning? (Hattie, 2018).

English language learner A student in the process of acquiring English as a second language and has another language as the first native language (Education Commission of the States, 2014).

Professional developments are activities and strategies for providing educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education as well as to meet the challenging state academic standards; professional development is sustainable, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused (Learning Forward, 2020).

Professional learning community is “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 10).

Student achievement is a student’s performance in academic areas such as reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies as measured by achievement tests (Cunningham, 2012).

Teacher efficacy is "people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events” (Bandura, 1993, p. 118).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States educational system has been laboring to keep up with the changing student demographics for the last four decades (Howard, 2010). Texas is ranked number two in the United States for having the largest English language learner population (Sanchez, 2017). Resilient ISD (pseudonym) is not immune from the challenges presented by the changing demographics over the last several decades, explicitly meeting the needs of English language learners. Over one-fourth of the student population in RISD are identified as ELL with more than 80 different languages spoken and many life experiences contributing to educational challenges (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). Teachers are expected to teach content and manage multiple languages and academic problems, as well as sustain their English language learners' social-emotional needs with minimal support and professional learning from the district.

Rationale for Problem of Practice

Educational challenges result in a significant achievement gap between English Learners and non-English Learners; in RISD, it is a 33-point achievement gap on the eighth grade Social Studies State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). One of the most common questions about the drastically changing demographics in schools relates to whether the teachers are adequately prepared to teach in a diverse setting. Numerous research studies have discovered that most teachers have limited experience and interaction with diverse students, often resulting in teachers having lower expectations and negative beliefs about individuals who are different from them (Howard, 2010).

John Hattie's (2018) research revealed that teachers have the single most significant impact on student achievement. Furthermore, Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018) contend a group's collective beliefs and high expectations for student success positively impact student learning. Closing the student achievement gap is possible when the beliefs and actions of educators when they see themselves as change agents and believe it is a fundamental task to evaluate the effectiveness of their practice on students' progress and achievement through collective inquiry (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018). Collaborative inquiry is a structure in which members of a professional learning community (PLC) come together to systematically examine their educational practices (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016).

This study examined collective efficacy and professional learning communities as methods to empower teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to close the achievement gap for their ELL students through collective inquiry.

Research Questions

1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among 8th-grade social studies teachers in a junior high?
2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?

Purpose of the Literature Review

The literature review serves several purposes: it enlightens the reader to the results of similar studies; relates the study to a more extensive, ongoing dialogue in the

literature, potentially filling in gaps while hopefully extending prior studies; and it provides a contextual framework for the importance of the study while comparing results with other studies (Cooper, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Literature reviews are incredibly critical in action research studies. Machi and McEvoy (2016) define a literature review as "a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study. This case establishes a convincing thesis to answer the study's questions" (Machi & McEvoy, 2016, p. 5). The literature review analysis process provides the researcher with a better understanding of the background and the study's context by expanding its depth and knowledge base.

The research presented in this study originated from peer-reviewed journal articles, professional books, professional papers, institutional publications, and documents located on websites related to the impact of collective efficacy and collective inquiry on student achievement (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The researcher primarily used the search engines Education Resource Information Source (Eric), EBSCOhost, Dissertation & Thesis Databases, PASCAL Delivers, Online Academic Journals, SAGE Journals, and at times, Google Scholar. Specific research inquiry included keywords such as *collective efficacy, collective inquiry, professional learning communities, professional development, teacher efficacy, student achievement, collaborative inquiry, adult learning theory, social cognitive theory, achievement gap, English language learners, and andragogy*. The academic articles, professional books, and prior studies referenced supported this action research studies' inquiry of how or if collective efficacy and collective inquiry impact student achievement.

The purpose of this literature review was to examine relevant scholarly research and findings that provided the theoretical framework and context as it relates to social cognitive and adult learning theories that embrace the concepts of collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities. There is a vast amount of scholarship on social cognitive and adult learning theories and collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities. However, minimal research currently exists in closing the achievement gap for ELL students related to these constructs. This study sought to examine collective efficacy and professional learning communities as methods to empower teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to closing the achievement gap for their ELL students through collective inquiry.

Organization of the Chapter

This review presents the seminal research that informed this action research concerning collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities, including Bandura and Knowles' theoretical frameworks and their contributions to adult learning. Deepening the understanding of these principles requires a historical analysis of the perspectives regarding closing the achievement gap and addressing equity and access to high-quality education for ELL students. Additionally, the literature review includes an in-depth analysis of the related research regarding collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986c, 1997) and Knowles's (1968) adult learning theory provided the context for the theoretical framework for this action research project. Social cognitive theory focuses on understanding human learning and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1997), while adult learning theory, or andragogy, concentrates on the art and science of adult learning.

Social Cognitive Theory. Social cognitive theory emerged from Bandura's social learning theory (1960) as a framework for understanding human learning motivation and serves as a theory of behavior change (Bandura, 1986b). Social cognitive theory asserts that learning occurs best in a social environment with dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (LaMorte, 2016). Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986b) is grounded in the belief in the human capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life (Bandura, 2001); Bandura calls this idea *human agency* (Bandura, 1986b). The social cognitive theory involves multiple human agency modes: direct personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency (Bandura, 2001).

Social cognitive theory's social structure is grounded in perceived self-efficacy as a strong predictor of human agents' behavior (Bandura, 2001; Goddard et al., 2000). Perceived self-efficacy strongly influences human agents' reasoning, efforts, motivation and is a significant aspect of an agent's self-regulation mechanism. "Efficacy beliefs are the foundation of human agency" (Bandura, 2001, p. 10). Efficacy plays a substantial role in individuals thinking and choices; efficacy in the sense of coping can reduce stress

and vulnerability while also increasing one's resiliency in the face of adversity. Bandura asserts that efficacy plays a pivotal role in developing individuals by influencing the activities, environments, and personal development of human agents (Bandura, 1986b). Agent's ability to exercise control over the values, beliefs, and interests influences what environments and social settings they chose to join; this notion of efficacy implies that people control their destiny.

Personal agency. Bandura (2001) asserts that individuals control their destinies and the outcomes they seek through their beliefs and actions. Human agency is personified through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of a person's life pursuits (Bandura, 2001). Personal belief efficacy is a central tenet of human agency; one must believe in their ability to produce or alter the outcomes they seek.

According to Bratman (1999), the first attributes of human agency consider individuals' intentionality and forethought. Intentionally indicates a commitment to future actions grounded in self-motivation and actions centered around a specific purpose. He asserts that an essential component of intentionality related to self-regulation is implementing the plan of action successfully. The plan, however, is not entirely generated at the onset; intentional agency asserts the evolution and advancement throughout the execution of the plan as new information is derived (Bratman, 1999). The self-regulating aspect of human agency impacts the successful implementation of individuals' specified intentions as successful implementation often depends on other human agents.

Forethought requires a person to go beyond future planning to include the source of motivation that guides their course of action in future experiences. For example, as people set goals for themselves, they anticipate future actions' possible consequences and design courses of action likely to produce desired outcomes and avoid detrimental ones (Bandura, 1999, 2001; Feather, 1982; Locke & Latham, 1990). According to Bandura (2001), forethought serves as a means of motivation, guidance, and direction while providing meaning to individuals' lives and presenting itself in the form of behavior change and regulation. Intentionality and forethought lead people to become self-directed by adopting personal goals and self-regulating their behavior through self-evaluation outcomes, which are intrinsic rather than extrinsic.

Self-reactiveness is another core attribute of human agency, which requires the agent to assess their motivations and self-reflect throughout the process to continue to mold the course of action and regulate the plan's execution (Bandura, 2001). Linking thoughts to actions results from self-regulating motivation, affect, and actions controlled by the processes of self-monitoring, personal self-guidance, and corrective self-reactions (Bandura, 1986b, 1991, 2001) 2001). As human agents monitor their patterns of behaviors, they incite actions that give rise to self-reactive influence by assessing the personal goals and standards they set forth. As a result, the goals deeply engrained in a value system and a sense of individual identity results in meaningful and purposeful activities. Bandura (2001) asserts that goals set forth by human agents are challenging and include strong personal interests having a quantifiable time frame for execution and achievement.

Bandura (1986b) declares moral agency as a significant contributing component of self-directedness. He includes one's ability to self-regulate right and wrong judgments based on one's set of established personal standards and impose sanctions upon oneself when actions misalign with set standards (Bandura, 1991, 2001). Human agents that can check themselves against personal standards and redirect actions exhibit strong values and ethics. These individuals most often seek to further the general welfare, usually at their own expense. Lastly, this mode of moral agency significantly influences one's behavior regarding humanity. A word of caution by Bandura "is that high moral *selective* disengagers often behave justly, while propagating transgressions and inhumanities in other areas of their lives" (2001, p. 9). This may result in considering one's conduct through diffusion and displacement of responsibility while also experiencing minimal guilt over others' harmful behavior.

The final construct of Bandura's human agency is the notion of self-reflectiveness by agents. He argues that agents are not only planners, fore thinkers, agents of actions but are self-examiners of their purposes (Bandura, 2001). This resonates in the human ability to assess one's values, motives, and evaluation of life's pursuits. This self-reflection level demands individuals to concentrate on their moral conflicts and motivation to judge their thinking's trustworthiness to act accordingly ultimately. Self-reflection is where Bandura associates personal agents' predictive thought to their actions' outcomes, thus inciting a strong correlation between one's beliefs and abilities to achieve intended results (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura (2001), today's informational society plays a significant role in developing personal efficacy through self-development, self-renewal, and self-

reflection. He asserts that the availability and access to rapidly revolutionizing information impact human agents' personal and professional lives, enabling them to govern their learning. Modern society demands individuals to continually grow and develop their professional and technical skills to remain relevant in their profession. This process only occurs if human agents exercise self-regulation, self-reflectiveness, self-development and are self-regulators (Bandura, 2001).

Collective agency. The social cognitive theory expands the human agency theory to include collective agency (Bandura, 1997). Collective agency extends the principles of personal agency to include a group's shared beliefs in the collective power to achieve goals and intended results (Bandura, 2001). The power of collective efficacy is not merely the result of individuals with high perceived personal efficacy together in a group. Collective efficacy relies on the belief in the group's power to incite change, solve problems, and achieve shared goals. Bandura asserts that collective efficacy beliefs function like those of self-efficacy. He further proclaims, based on assorted research, strong perceived collective efficacy leads to the higher groups' achievements, amplified motivational investments, increased resiliency, elevated morale, and more extraordinary performance (Bandura, 1997, 2001). These studies assessed the effects of collective efficacy beliefs' impact on the function of diverse social groups, including education systems, business organizations, athletic teams, combat teams, urban neighborhoods, and political action groups (Bandura, 2001).

Reciprocal interplay. Bandura asserts that human function is entrenched in social systems and is a product of the reciprocal interplay of interpersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory refers to this as

triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1986b, 2001). The triadic reciprocal causation model encompasses three factors that bidirectionally impact the other elements: personal, behavioral, and environmental, as shown in Figure 2.1. Personal determinants include cognitive, affective, and biological influences that influence human perception and actions. Behavioral determinants include economic conditions, socioeconomic status, and educational and family structure which indirectly affect behavior through their impact on an individual's aspirations, self-efficacy beliefs, personal standards, affective states, and other self-regulatory influences (Bandura, 1993, 1999, 2001; Sameroff et al., 1993). The Social Cognitive Theory asserts three environmental factors: the imposed environment, selected environment, and constructed environment. Each setting demands agency malleability based on designated roles and organizational demands within each setting (Bandura, 2001).

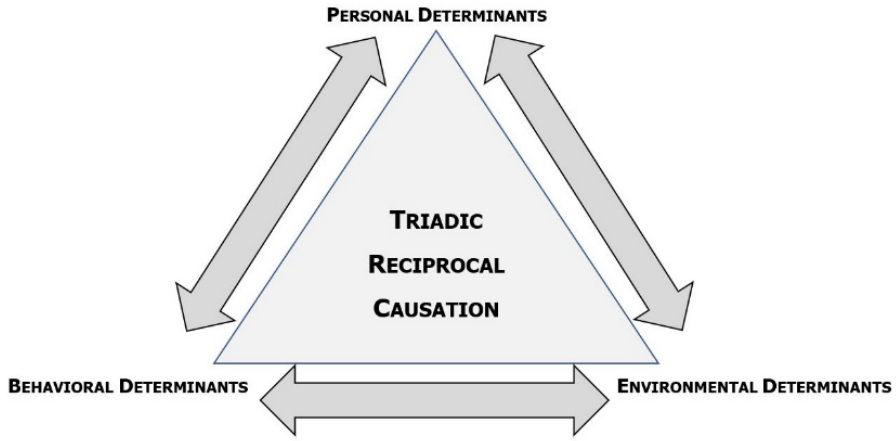

Figure 2.1: Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation model. Adapted from "Social Cognitive Theory: An agentic perspective" by Arthur Bandura, 2001, Annual Review Psychology, 52, 15-16.

The social cognitive theory asserts that for collective groups to achieve goals and collaborate successfully, individuals must possess high levels of self-efficacy beliefs that ultimately underwrite and support the group's collective efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2001).

Since groups are unlikely to initiate action without a definite sense of efficacy, collective beliefs are central to the intentional pursuit of a course of action (Hoy et al., 2006).

Adult Learning Theory. Adult learning theory (Knowles, 1980) examines andragogy, the art and science of how adults learn and how to involve them in the learning process (McCall et al., 2018; McGrath, 2009). Andragogy concentrates on the learning process and the learner's internalized needs rather than the teaching process and outcomes (McCall et al., 2018). Adult education is unique in its approach. It aims to impart information to participants and include them in the learning process (Connolly, 1996) and involves asking learners questions about their workplace (McGrath, 2009).

Background of Malcolm Knowles and Andragogy. Knowles' (1968) adult learning theory was inspired by the pioneering theorist Edmond Lindeman, who laid the foundation for a systematic approach to adult education and identified critical assumptions about adult learners; Lindeman served as Knowles' mentor (Loeng, 2013). Most scholars consider Knowles as the father of adult learning. When Knowles introduced the notion in the 1970s that adults and children learn differently, the idea was groundbreaking and sparked a great deal of controversy and instigated research into adult education (Knowles et al., 2015). The debate around andragogy centers around the disagreement in classifying it as a theory (Knowles, 1989); others termed it as a set of guidelines or philosophy (Pratt, 1993) or a set of assumptions (Brookfield, 1986). Regardless of the terminology, andragogy focuses on adult learning's complex nature (Knowles et al., 2015). Despite the continued critique of adult education, most scholars recognize andragogy's contributions as the most significant philosophy in adult education

and workplace learning, particularly the impact of the core principles in influencing adult learning (Henry, 2001).

As scholars continued to critique Knowles' principles of andragogy over four decades, he was relentless in furthering his theory's development and evolution. He left the adult education world a legacy of precious manuscripts, theoretical expositions, and practice manuals (Henry, 2001). Throughout this time, themes began to emerge from Knowles, such as the role of human relationships, personal authenticity, formal roles, learning from others, and the reality of change. Knowles et al. (2015) applied these same beliefs to himself. They encouraged others to challenge and test his ideas leaving the understanding that his contributions were not personal property to be defended but were to be explored and modified, if necessary. Knowles started his journey in 1950 to create a comprehensive theory of adult learning. Finally, in 1984, he published a model for developing self-directed lifelong learners – the adult learning theory.

Knowles grasped the reality of change and the need for survival, both of which emerged as themes through his theory's evolution. He argued survival was contingent on adaptability and the commitment to lifelong learning to avoid becoming obsolete in a changing society (Henry, 2001). Henry (2001) claims this is important because andragogy emerged as the dominating theme that pushed humans past the danger of uselessness into a future of infinite possibilities.

Assumptions and principles of andragogy. The principles of andragogy include educational philosophies that focus on adult learners' needs and incorporates their life and career experiences (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015; Lindeman, 1926). The

foundation of Knowles' model includes group dynamics, andragogy, self-directed learning, contract learning, and lifelong learning, all of which he deemed necessary, but andragogy was the ultimate bonding agent holding the model together. Andragogy concentrates on the learning process and the learner's internalized needs rather than the teaching process and outcomes (McCall et al., 2018). Adult education is unique in its approach in that it aims to do more than impart information to participants but instead include them in the learning process (Connolly, 1996).

According to Knowles et al. (2015), adult learning warrants clearly communicating the why and includes thoughtful consideration of the learner's responsibility to grow, their lived experiences, readiness to learn, relevant tasks, and considers internal and external motivation factors (Knowles et al., 2015). Andragogy aims to do more than impart information to participants; rather, it aims to include them in the learning process (Knowles, 1968). Adult learning theory encompasses a myriad of considerations: goals and purpose for learning, individual and situation context, institutional and social growth, situational and subject matter differences, and the six core principles of adult learning theory.

The andragogy model is a process model rather than a more traditional content model. The teacher acts as a facilitator in the learning process as opposed to the traditional unidirectional instruction. The teacher serves as a guide, consultant, or change agent as opposed to a manager of content and, rather than preparing the full body of knowledge in advance, prepares a set of procedures for involving the learners and other relevant parties in the learning process (Knowles et al., 2015).

This andragogy process includes preparing the learner, cultivating a conducive environment for learning and collaboration, conducting a diagnostic needs assessment, developing outcomes aligned to needs, designing the learning experiences, and concludes by reflecting on the results and learning needs (Knowles et al., 2015). The core principles and processes of andragogy can be used to design professional learning that engages, inspires, and includes the participant in the learning process. Knowles' andragogy model focuses and emphasizes the learner's role and needs and empowers them to control the learning process (Knowles et al., 2015).

Social Cognitive Theory and Adult Learning Theory

Both social cognitive theory and adult learning theory furnish theoretical frameworks for understanding how adults learn, including motivation factors and guiding principles for instituting effective andragogy practices. Both theories applied together through professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) foster a culture of collective efficacy. A culture of collective efficacy entails educators developing shared beliefs and aligning their actions and behaviors to focus on the group's power to solve real-world issues (Jenni Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Hoy et al.) The power of collective efficacy as supported within social cognitive theory, in collaboration with applying adult learning theory, has strong potential to empower teachers to discover authentic and meaningful solutions to close the achievement gap for ELL students (Goddard et al., 2017).

Historical Perspectives

Understanding the nature and evolution of adult learning is critical to closing achievement gaps for English language learners. Every year, school leaders rely on systemwide professional development to implement an extensive range of teaching and learning strategies to improve student outcomes to develop college and career-ready students (Calvert, 2016). However, while billions of dollars are spent every year on professional learning (Layton, 2015), research studies report that professional development falls short of its objectives and rarely improves educational practices (Calvert, 2016). To better understand the role of how adult learning impacts student achievement, this section will briefly describe the history of adult learning, shifts in adult learning philosophies, and explore the role of professional learning communities in school improvement.

History of Adult Learning. Adult learning has historically centered around two competing theoretical frameworks: pedagogy and andragogy (Knowles et al., 2015). The history of andragogy, the art and science of adult learning, has roots that trace to ancient teachers such as Confucius, Loa-Tzu, Jesus, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who were all teachers of adults (Knowles, 1977). These historical teachers made assumptions about the learning process that were passed down and enculturated within the educational system. These historical teachers saw:

> learning as being a process of enquiry in which the learner had an active role, in fact, the primary role, and the role of the teacher was that of a

> guide to the enquiry, a facilitator of the enquiry and, where appropriate, a resource to the enquiry. (Knowles, 1977, pp. 202–203)

The instructional practices such as case studies and the Socratic Dialogue methods emerged from these teachers and are still widely applied to learning today. This theoretical framework assumes that learning is more than imparting information to students and embodies inquiry as a means of learning (Knowles, 1977).

According to Knowles (1977), the andragogy model endured until the beginning of the 12th century, when new assumptions emerged and schools became secular. This new set of pedagogical learning norms was rooted in basic motor skills, reading, and writing, rather than inquiry and discovery (Knowles, 1977). The newly developed assumptions about learning and strategies for teaching, pedagogy, literally meaning "the art and science of teaching children," has, in recent years, also been applied to adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 36). Pedagogy assumes students learn information that the teacher imparts upon them. The pedagogy narrative dominated the educational system well into the 20th century when the United States and Europe began to consider adult learners' unique characteristics, which ultimately evolved into an integrated theory of adult learning – *andragogy* (Knowles et al., 2015).

Considerable differences exist between the two competing theoretical frameworks, andragogy, and pedagogy, related to adult learning. Pedagogy is a content model in which the teacher's role is authoritative and central to determining what knowledge to impart and the one-directional way it should be imparted (Knowles et al., 2015). In contrast, andragogy is a process model that concentrates on the student's role

and needs while also embracing the notion of a reciprocal learning process. The student and teacher are mutually responsible for designing and constructing the learning (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2015).

To provide additional context, the pedagogical framework aligns with the scholar academic curriculum theory in the sense that the teacher is the authority and transmitter of knowledge and the learner is a docile recipient of the knowledge, and the knowledge is intended to perpetuate and build literacy in a discipline (Schiro, 2013). On the other hand, the andragogy framework aligns more with the learner-centered curriculum theory in which the teacher is more of a facilitator and thought partner, and knowledge is co-constructed through reciprocal dialogue and mutual accountability and relies upon the personal needs and desires of the learner (Schiro, 2013).

Interest in adult learning developed during the early part of the 20th century as scholars began to study the process of adult learning independent from student learning frameworks. (Knowles et al., 2015). This research body suggested that the learning process is continuous throughout a human's lifespan, and learning does not end once formal education is complete. "Learning is the essence of everyday living and of conscious experience; it is the process of transforming that experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs" (Jarvis, 1992, p. 11). The daily interactions and experiences naturally result in a continuous cycle of learning.

Shifts in Adult Learning Theory. Today adult learning in education is in a state of transition from traditional conventional professional learning methods, such as workshops and in-service presentations, to collaborative learning through professional

learning communities and personalized self-directed learning (Rebora, 2018). In a recent national survey, 75% of teachers identified campus and district leaders as the chief decision-makers regarding professional learning. More than half the teachers reported having only "some say" in designing learning (*The State of Teacher Professional Learning: Results from a Nationwide Survey*, 2017). According to Rebora, this survey sparked a national conversation about the quality and types of professional learning offered to teachers. The change in professional learning resulted in abandoning the more conventional pedagogical approach to adult learning to a more andragogical approach that embodies the learner, collaboration, inquiry, and results in meaningful scholarship (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Rebora, 2018). As a result, scholars are inciting changes in the way teachers grow and develop in their learning. Leveraging teachers' expertise and moving away from traditional top-down mandates by empowering teachers to take a more active role in co-designing and co-creating their learning process through collaboration, problem-solving, and flexibility in delivery formats (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Rebora, 2018). The basic transferences in philosophy and beliefs in professional learning align with principle constructs of Bandura's (1986c) social cognitive theory and Knowles' (1977; 2015) adult learning theory.

Professional Learning Communities

During the end of the twentieth century, the industrial education model's scrutiny intensified and acknowledged an outdated model for learning, provoking a need for change in the educational model (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The conclusions from this inquiry found the factory educational model inadequate, antiquated, and ill-equipped to meet the academic demands resulting in students participating in rigorous instruction,

adequately prepared to enter the workforce and compete in a global economy (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This research prompted a call to action to set in motion research of new methods that were more conducive to the changing educational needs of the time and offered the best hope for school improvement. Overwhelmingly, education researchers concluded that the educational model needed to evolve into learning organizations for both students and teachers (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). As cited in DuFour et al. (2008), the following research findings substantiate the new direction in education:

> Only the organizations that have a passion for learning will have an enduring influence. (Covey, 1996, p. 149)

> Every enterprise has to become a learning institution [and] a teaching institution. Organizations that build in continuous learning in jobs will dominate the twenty-first century. (Drucker, 1992, p. 108)

> We have come to realize over the years that the development of a learning community of educators itself is a significant cultural change that will spawn many others. (Joyce & Showers, 1995, p. 3)

> If schools want to enhance their organizational capacity to boost student learning, they should work on building a professional learning community that is characterized by shared purpose, collective activity, and collective responsibility among staff. (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995, p. 37)

DuFour et al. (2008) asserted that this new body of research contributed to the evolution and implementation of professional learning communities in schools, thus transforming schools from assembly-line producers to learning organizations committed

to student learning. DuFour et al. (2016) describe a professional learning community "as an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (p. 10). Initially, this educational research shift was new and innovative, but it did not have a significant impact and changed educational practices. In the early 1990s, scholars observed professional community in schools remained only a minor theme in education. However, the reform efforts were introduced in the 1960s and asserted it was time for the professional community to become more prominent and an embedded process of education reform (Kruse et al., 1994). Finally, in 1998, PLCs began to gain significant traction with the publication of *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker (1998). This book propelled educators to transfer the principles of professional learning communities into embedded daily professional practices. Michael Fullan (2006), a student of school reform efforts, praised the work of DuFour and his colleagues as the "gold standard" (p. 13) for cultivating the development of professional learning communities. As scholars started recognizing the power of DuFour and his colleagues' work, professional learning communities began significantly changing and impacting education and student achievement.

Characteristics of a Professional Learning Community. In a landmark study, Susan Rosenholtz (1989) concluded several characteristics of effective schools. She found that collective commitments enriched schools increasing the focus on student learning, especially in collaborative settings. Rosenholtz's study further found instructional improvement was a collective process rather than an

individual. The study also maintained this process was reliant upon cycles of analysis, evaluation, and experimentation. Rosenholtz's research propelled the notion and importance of teacher collaboration grounded in shared goals focused on student achievement. The combination of these characteristics resulted in increased teacher commitment, motivation, and improved student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989). This groundbreaking research laid the groundwork for norms, shared beliefs, reflective practice, cycles of inquiry into effective practices, and a culture of collaboration. The culture needed collegiality, mutual support, and accountability, ultimately resulting in and cultivating professional learning communities' principles (Donohoo, 2014, 2017; DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016; Rosenholtz, 1989). A distinct characteristic of learning schools embodied a collective responsibility, rather than an individual, for student learning and success.

Four foundational pillars of PLCs. DuFour et al. (2016) contend that four pillars of high-performing PLCs establish a strong foundation for which all future learning-focused work is dependent: shared mission, shared vision, collective commitments, and shared goals.

Shared mission. A shared mission answers the question, why do we exist? According to Dufour et al. (2016), the mission establishes the fundamental purpose, sets the direction, and serves as a compass to guide the team's actions. The mission sharpens the focus and provides clarity in priorities. It is essential to note that the fundamental purpose of a PLC is to ensure high learning levels for all (DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016). One of the most significant functions of the mission is to hold

the PLC members accountable that their actions, practices, and procedures align with their mission.

Shared vision. Shared vision answers the question, what must we become? The vision articulates the processes and procedures necessary to accomplish the mission (DuFour et al., 2016). The vision is instrumental in creating the structure and culture to ensure all students will learn (Mattos et al., 2016) and illustrate a realistic future that portrays what the team hopes to become. DuFour et al. maintain the vision establishes a method for strategically abandoning or adopting practices that align with the mission.

Collective commitments. Collective commitments answer the question, how must we behave? The collective agreements clarify and outline the expected behaviors and attitudes that promote and support the vision's achievement. "Collective commitments guide the individual work of each member of the staff and outline how each person can contribute to the shared mission and vision of the organization"(Mattos et al., 2016, p. 24). DuFour et al. (2016) assert this is one of the most essential pillars of the PLC foundation and yet is one of the least utilized PLC strategies in building a strong foundation. Collective agreements are grounded and fundamental in establishing shared beliefs of the PLC.

Shared goals. Shared goals answer the question, which steps must we take and when? The PLC foundation's final pillar encompasses creating specific, measurable goals and timelines and fosters individual and collective accountability for achieving the goals (DuFour et al., 2016). The authors maintain this element of the PLC

foundation constitutes the written approaches designed to fulfill the mission's intended outcomes.

Three Big Ideas for Professional Learning Communities. DuFour et al. (2016) have further developed, refined, and polished their guiding principles, toolkit, and foundational processes for professional learning communities in the last twenty years. Most educators admit that deep-seated learning occurs during inquiry and reflection cycles due to searching for solutions to professional challenges (DuFour et al., 2016). Their fundamental beliefs in the critical nature of recurring cycles of ongoing inquiry, action research, and reflection are reinforced through each new edition of their book, *Learning by Doing*, as they have continued improving and enhancing the PLC handbook.

DuFour et al. (2016) assert three big fundamental ideas propel the work of PLCs: "a focus on learning; a collaborative culture and responsibility; and a results orientation"(p. 11). They further maintain the success or failure of PLC work is dependent on the extent to which these ideas are understood and embraced by participants.

A focus on learning. "The first (and the biggest) of the big ideas is based on the premise that the fundamental purpose of the school is to ensure that all students learn at high levels" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 11). The authors claim the essence of a learning community focuses on and is committed to learning for all students. It necessitates the construction of a strong foundation of a clear and compelling shared vision. A cultural shift in thinking and beliefs is necessary for professional learning communities as discussions focus on teaching to learning (Eaker et al., 2002). This cultural shift requires

a strong PLC foundation, embodying the four foundational pillars, fully developed and enculturated within the team (DuFour et al., 2016; Eaker et al., 2002).

A collaborative culture and collective responsibility. "The second big idea driving the PLC process is that to ensure all students learn at high levels, educators must work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the success of each student" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 11). Collaboration is not optional nor invitational; every member of the PLC is expected to work together to achieve shared goals; therefore, time and resources are allocated to ensure the collaboration is job-embedded. The essence of a PLC structure is collaborative teams of educators working interdependently to achieve common goals, and the members are all mutually accountable (DuFour et al., 2016). This particular big idea aligns with Bandura's collective agency that a group's shared beliefs in the collective power to achieve goals and intended results (Bandura, 2001).

A results orientation. "The third big idea that drives the work of PLCs is the need for results orientation. To assess their effectiveness in helping all students learn, educators in a PLC focus on results-evidence of student learning" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 12). Based on the evidence of learning, the narrative shifts from excuses like "I taught it" to "did they learn it," resulting in a focus on results rather than intentions. The premise of results orientation in PLCs is to produce improved results. As PLC teams assess learning evidence, they must determine if the strategies and methods result in achieving their goals. If not, they must research and seek "best practices" that will impact the evidence of learning. This process is researched and conducted through collective inquiry (Eaker et al., 2002). Donohoo (2017) defines collaborative inquiry as "a systematic approach for educators to identify professional dilemmas and determine resolutions through shared

inquiry, problem-solving, and reflection" (p. 60). The collaborative inquiry process is an embedded and vital component of the professional learning community and serves as a vehicle for achieving their intended outcomes.

Equity by Closing the Achievement Gap

Access to education has been deemed as the great equalizer. It entwines the belief that education offers its recipients better prospects for economic and social mobility and improved quality of life (Howard, 2010). As a result, copious families have immigrated to the United States in anticipation of providing themselves, their children, and future generations access to free, high-quality education with the hope of improving their economic potential and their quality of life (Howard, 2010; Noguera, 2019). One of the single most pervasive issues in education is the achievement gap (Carter & Welner, 2013; Howard, 2010).

> The achievement gap is the discrepancy in educational outcomes between various student groups, namely African American, Native American, certain Asian American, and Latino students on the low end of the performance scale, and primarily white and various Asian American students at the higher end of the academic scale. (Howard, 2010, p. 10)

The achievement gap dims the hopes and aspirations of those seeking the benefits and promises of education. Howard (2010) asserts that the most prominent achievement gaps persist in schools with large numbers of students of color, low-income backgrounds, and students who are English language learners. Educational research reveals potential long-term effects related to the achievement gap (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016; Carter &

Welner, 2013; Howard, 2010). As students become disillusioned with school, the potential for dropping out increases; thus, increasing the plethora of social, economic, and political consequences that follow when young people drop out of school (Orfield, 2004). Students who drop out of school are more likely to be incarcerated, live in poverty, and earn significantly lower wages. Many scholars, like Howard (2010) and Noguera (2019), argue there is a legacy of inequality in US education and assert closing the achievement gap is necessary because it is the "equitable and just thing to do" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 31).

Collective Efficacy, Collective Inquiry, and Professional Learning Communities

Alan Blankstein and Pedro Noguera (2016) published a call to action to educators in outlining a new paradigm and vision of *Excellence through Equity* for all students. Pedro Noguera's (*2019*) article, *Why School Integration Matters,* explores Brown v. Board of Education's scope. Noguera explores the idea that if the case had extended beyond the scope of integration and included a commitment to equity through the curriculum and needed supports for success would, we would be in a better place today. He further pushes the thinking by questioning possible effects of the educational system making concerted efforts to increasing diversity among teachers and intentionality in preparing teachers to work in racially diverse classrooms by establishing learning communities engrained in respect, trust, and empathy (Noguera, 2019). This section will discuss recent research studies and their findings addressing the correlations between collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities' impact on addressing the student achievement gap.

Professors at the University of Ohio, Goddard, Skrla, and Salloum (2017), conducted a mixed methods research study, grounded in social cognitive theory, to examine the effects of collective efficacy on reducing the achievement gap and increasing equity for students, which represent a void in the literature. Goddard et al. (2017) conducted this research in 47 elementary and middle schools in a large urban district in Texas with a significant sample of 13,472 diverse students and 2041 teachers. A significant finding in this study was that the principals' instructional culture, expectations, and leadership that empowered teachers and encouraged professional learning and risk-taking for instructional improvement was correlated with lower achievement gaps and higher performance for all students (Goddard et al., 2017). The multi-level research findings demonstrated that collective efficacy is positively and systematically associated with reducing the achievement gap and increasing student equity for all students (Goddard et al., 2017). This research study contributed to the support of social cognitive theory and added to the literature by providing evidence that collective efficacy beliefs are positive predictors of closing the achievement gap and increasing equity and excellence in education (Goddard et al., 2017). The Goddard et al. (2017) study provided significant insights and crucial literature for this action research study on the impact of collective efficacy and closing the achievement gap.

Monica McMahon Macaluso (2017) examined the principal and teachers' practices, behaviors, and strategies in establishing and sustaining collective efficacy in a collaborative community in a two-phased mixed-methods study. A small purposeful sample of three schools (part one) and one small school (part two) was used during the study. The study found that the school's instructional expectations and culture

significantly contributed to the collaborative teams' increased collective efficacy. As a result, the teachers were diligent in imposing high expectations for student learning. They considered the high poverty and diversity of their students as an asset fostering their inspiration to ensure all students' success (McMahon Macaluso, 2017). This study provokes additional questions related to the connections between principals and collective teacher efficacy.

A doctoral student at the University of Ohio, Timothy Krier (2014), conducted a quantitative exploratory study examining professional learning communities connected with academic optimism and its impact on student achievement. The sample included 2050 teachers from 113 Ohio schools, with participants representing all sixteen of the state's geographical regions (Krier, 2014). Krier's study (2014) included seven research questions related to the problem of practice, and the findings found no correlation between professional learning communities and academic optimism on student achievement.

Bruce & Flynn (2013) conducted a three-year mixed methods study examining the results of professional collaborative inquiry in mathematics on teacher efficacy. The sample included over 200 teachers and 1000 students situated in Canada. At the end of the three-year study, the researchers concluded that schools that sustained the inquiry-based professional learning model observed greater efficacy and achievement gains in years two and three. This study is significant in supporting the notion that collective inquiry positively impacts student achievement and teacher efficacy.

The related research shows a strong correlation between collective efficacy, collective inquiry, professional learning communities, and student achievement. It shows the degree to which these constructs influence teachers' motivation to learn and their willingness to participate in learning. Although each of the constructs discussed in the literature impacts student achievement, the current study seeks to determine the extent to which collective inquiry impacts collective efficacy and the impact of collective efficacy of a professional learning community on closing the achievement gap for ELL students.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature that guides the action research and informs the researcher of the impact of collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities as a feasible solution to the research questions. As educators seek authentic and meaningful methods to close the English Language Learner achievement gap, campus leadership must be willing to improve professional learning practices by empowering teachers through professional learning communities. Social cognitive theory and adult learning theory established a strong foundation for this study related to adult learning's role, process, and function. A significant factor in closing the achievement gap is ensuring the professional learning community has a strong sense of collective efficacy. They believe in their collective power to accomplish their goals. This literature review supports the importance of empowering teachers through professional learning communities and collective inquiry as a means of expunging the achievement gap for ELL students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse ELL students present complex challenges for school districts and teachers, including significant social-emotional needs of students and academic deficits leading to widening achievement gaps. In RISD, the problem of practice is that ELL students score significantly lower than their English-speaking peers on the eighth-grade social studies state assessment. This study examined collective efficacy and collective inquiry as methods to empower teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to close the achievement gap for their ELL students through established professional learning communities.

Two fundamental perspectives provide the context for the theoretical framework for this action research project: Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986b, 1997) and Knowles's (1968) adult learning theory. When used together, social learning theory and adult learning theory, in conjunction with professional learning communities, can foster a culture of collective efficacy. Educators develop shared beliefs, prompting their actions and behaviors to focus on the collective group's power to solve real-world workplace issues. The power of collective efficacy in collaboration with applying adult learning theory has strong potential to empower teachers to find authentic and meaningful solutions for their English language learners.

Research Design and Intervention

Research Design. Action research is a type of practitioner inquiry in which participants seek to understand and make meaning of a particular local problem of practice that ultimately improves their instructional practice (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, action research, conducted by educators, connects the concepts of theory, practice, and research, ultimately blurring the distinct lines between them (Efron & Ravid, 2013). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), many forms of action research exist; however, all forms share universal principles: focused on a problem, the design is evolving, participants become co-investigators, the degree to which the lead researcher is an insider or outsider to the problem of practice, and the design of the action research study evolves and emerges throughout the process as the participants and researcher collaborate on next steps in solving their problem of practice.

The purpose of this mixed-method action research study was to investigate the power of teacher collective efficacy and inquiry to close the achievement gap of ELL students in eighth-grade social studies. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018), mixed-method research relies on core characteristics in which it combines methods, research design, and philosophy wherein the researcher:

- collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypothesis,
- integrates (or mixes or combines) the two forms of data and their results,

- organizes these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and
- frames these procedures within theory and philosophy. (p. 5)

They also assert that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data can yield additional insight into the problem of practice as opposed to a single view provided by either quantitative or qualitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

An advantage of utilizing mixed-methods research is this method draws upon the strengths of both types of research methods to further address the problem of practice (Efron & Ravid, 2020) while overcoming each type's limitations research method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Jennifer Greene (2007) offers a real-world explanation of mixed-method research as a form of inquiry. She asserts that action research "actively invites us to participate in the dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished" (Greene, 2007, p. 20). Greene's explanation highlights the comprehensive applicability of mixed methods research to generating knowledge that is mutually constructed in diverse contexts and has practical value to everyone involved in the process of inquiry (Ivankova, 2015).

The rationale for applying mixed method action research in the study was to gain more insight and new knowledge into how collective efficacy and inquiry affect ELL student achievement in social studies. The following research questions guided the investigation for this action research:

1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among 8th-grade social studies teachers in a junior high?

2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?

Intervention. This mixed-method action research study examined the power of collective efficacy and collective inquiry through existing professional learning communities as a method to empower teachers to find authentic and meaningful approaches to close the achievement gap for their English language learners. As a reminder, a professional learning community "is an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour et al., 2016, p. 10). Each grade-level and content area at Practical Junior High (pseudonym), including social studies, has a designated professional learning community period in addition to a conference period. The professional learning community members include eighth-grade social studies teachers (one of which serves as the lead teacher), instructional coach, campus digital coach, assistant principal, and principal. A lead teacher facilitates the professional learning community. The opportunity to foster improvements in the educational experiences of students was significant in this study. As an action researcher, it was necessary to evaluate my realm of control and collaborate with teachers to ascertain the required actions needed to create a robust learning environment that promotes equity and equal access to success for all students. The research questions guided this action research and provided necessary insight into whether teachers' collective efficacy within professional learning communities and collective inquiry

generated new knowledge related to closing the achievement gap for English Learners on the state and local social studies assessment.

Research Setting

This study's school is one of eight junior high schools in a large, diverse, urban public school district in north Texas. RISD is the fourth most diverse district in the state of Texas (Niche, 2020). The school district has approximately 39,000 students comprising of 22.1% African American, .03% American Indian, 7% Asian, 37.8% Hispanic, 29.8% White, and 2.9% two or more races. According to district data systems, approximately 55% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, 49% are at-risk, and 28% are English language learners.

The district's English language learner population includes approximately 11,187 students, over 80 identified languages, approximately 74% of the students are at-risk, and about 84% are economically disadvantaged. Three dominant ELL student groups comprised more than 50% of the district's total student demographic population; more than 50% of the district's Asian and Hispanic populations are ELL students. Approximately 68% of the Pacific Islander students are also ELL students. The district's ELL population embodied 15% first-year students, about 12% in second, third, and fourth-year students, 10% fifth-year students, and 22% sixth-year students. In comparison, 18% of the students enrolled in the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs.

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) measures ELL student's proficiency development in the four areas of listening, speaking,

reading, and writing as mandated by the federal government to assess progress towards proficiency in academic use language (Texas Education Agency, 2020). TELPAS scores range from Beginner (1), Intermediate (2), Advanced (3), and Advanced High (4). In RISD, second-year ELL students averaged an overall score of 2.0 on the TELPAS, third-year students averaged 2.4, fourth-year averaged 2.6, fifth-year students averaged 2.7, and sixth-year students averaged 2.8.

According to the Texas Education Agency, RISD, as a district, earned a *B* rating from the state *A-F* rating system. The Texas *A-F* rating system relies on the calculations of three domains: Domain I -- Student Achievement; Domain II -- School Progress; and Domain III -- Closing the Gap (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). A district's rating comprises 40% STAAR performance calculated for ALL students across grade levels and subjects; 40% College, Career, Military Readiness (CCMR) determined by all graduates; and 20% graduation rates (*2019 Accountability System*, 2019). According to Lead4ward's accountability guide (*2019*), Domain II -- School Progress encompasses two subdomains: Domain II-A Academic Growth and Domain II-B STAAR Performance; both subdomains calculate student growth on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness assessment. The report also indicates that Domain II-A estimates all students' growth, specifically reading and math assessments grades four through eight, English II, and Algebra I. In contrast, Domain II-B calculates growth for all students across all grade levels and all subjects based upon students identified as economically disadvantaged. Domain III -- Closing the Gaps computes the best of Domain I or Domain II-A, or Domain II-B and relies upon 50% Academic Achievement, 30% College, Career, and

Military Readiness, 10% federal graduation rates, and 10% English language proficiency as summarized by Lead4ward's Accountability Guide (2019).

According to the Texas Academic Performance Report (2019b), ELL students in Resilient ISD are significantly underperforming compared to their English-speaking peers on the State Social Studies Assessment. The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) measures student mastery levels for assessed content within four categories: Did Not Meet Grade Level, Approaches Grade Level, Meets Grade Level, and Masters Grade Level (Texas Education Agency, 2017). According to the state, the *approaches grade-level* performance band and above represent a passing score. As a district, the 2019 eighth-grade social studies state assessment illustrated a significant achievement gap between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers. Approximately 48.1% of ELL students did not meet grade level, a mere 18.8% achieved approaches grade level, while 9% achieved meets grade level and barely 3.6% attained mastery level (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). Based on the data, it was evident that native English-speaking students were substantially outperforming ELL students, particularly in Meets and Masters Grade Level categories.

Alarmingly, district data indicates of the 640 students that did not meet grade-level mastery on the 2019 Social Studies STAAR assessment, 48.1% of the students were ELL students. Even more concerning, 29.7% of the ELL students were considered long-term ELL students (LTEL), enrolled in the program for six-years (*Performance Matters*, n.d.; Texas Education Agency, 2019a). According to the district database, the ELL students had an average Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System score

of 2.7. Data indicates that the longer a student remains in the English language program, the less likely they are to meet grade-level mastery of social studies content.

The participating junior high is situated in a lower to middle-class socioeconomic community and encompasses a diverse student population. There are approximately 700 seventh and eighth-grade students consisting of 3.4% African Americans, .4% American Indians, 1.8% Asians, 49.6% Hispanics, 42.1% White, and 2.5% two or more races. About 46.5% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, and about 42.0% are at-risk, and 26.3% are English language learners (*RISD Focus Report*, 2020).

Practical Junior High has the second-highest percentage of ELL student populations of all junior high schools. Based on the school's database, it paralleled the district's total English language learner population with over ten languages represented based. Approximately 87.1% of the English language learners were designated as "at-risk," and more than 90% received free or reduced lunch. According to the district's student information system, the Hispanic ELL students comprise about 92.5% of the school's total Hispanic student population, followed by 4.3% white students, 1.6% African American, 1.1% Asian, and .5% two or races. Sixth-year ELL students made up 75% of Practical Junior High's ELL students, followed by 8% first-year students; second through fifth-year ELL students range between one and five percent of the ELL student population.

As noted earlier, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System rating structure spans a four scale between Beginner (1) and Advanced High (4). On the TELPAS assessment, Practical Junior High second-year English language learners

average an overall score of 1.23, third-year students average 1.08, fifth-year students average 1.8, and sixth-year students average 2.8, according to the district database. Notably, Practical Junior High's English language learners were classified between two and five years. The average score was significantly lower than district averages for the same category, all of which fall within the Intermediate (2) range.

According to the Texas Education Agency, Practical Junior High earned an *A* rating from the state *A-F* rating system described above. Of the eight junior highs, Practical Junior High was the only school to receive an *A* rating; the remaining seven schools earned *B* ratings (Texas Education Agency, 2019f). According to Lead4ward's accountability overview (*Lead4ward Resources*, 2019), the state of Texas employs a campus comparison group methodology to determine and assign campus distinction. Within the campus comparison group methodology, schools are first classified and sorted by school, elementary, middle, and high schools. Campuses are assigned a unique comparison group of 40 like schools that closely mirror each other in grade levels served, size, percentage of economically disadvantaged, English language learners, and special education, as well as mobility rates, and students enrolled in early college high school programs (Texas Education Agency, 2019d). To earn an academic growth or a closing the achievement gap distinction, they must fall within the top 25% of its comparison group. To achieve an academic achievement distinction in a content area, a campus must be in the top 50% of their comparison group. Practical Junior High received all seven of the possible campus distinctions designations available, including Academic Achievement in ELAR, Math, Science, Social Studies, the Top 25% Academic Growth, the Top 25% Closing the Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness distinctions (Texas

Education Agency, 2019c). Academic Achievement distinctions are calculated based on the percentage of students achieving Mastery Level performance on subject State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness tests.

Based upon Practical Junior High's state report card (Texas Education Agency, 2019c), 80.2% of the students achieved a score of Approaches or higher; only 42% of ELL students met this standard, while 91% of the native English speakers passed the state assessment. Of the 19.8% of students failing to meet the passing standard, 64% were English language learners. Only 22% of the ELL students achieved Approaches grade-level, 11.3% attained the Meets grade-level, while 2.9% attained Mastery on the social studies assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2019c; *TISD Focus Report*, 2020). This data signaled an astounding achievement disparity between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers at Practical Junior High.

Further investigation revealed that 70% of the ELL students that did not meet the standard were LTEL, six-year, ELL students with an average 2.5 composite score on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (Texas Education Agency, 2019c). Mirroring district data trends, the longer a student remained in the English language program, the less likely they were to achieve a passing standard on the social studies assessment. Recent research indicated that long-term ELL students performed well verbally but failed to progress in reading and writing necessary for academic success, thus increasing the likelihood of students dropping out of school (Ferlazzo, 2020; Haas & Brown, 2019).

Participants

A mixed-method action research design study was used to determine if changes in collective efficacy occurred due to participating in the action research study and the impact on closing the ELL achievement gap. This study employed a non-probability, purposeful sample of RISD secondary teachers. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) define non-probability sampling as a method of selecting individuals that are available and willing to participate in a study; furthermore, purposeful sampling indicates the researcher intentionally selecting (or recruiting) participants that have experienced the central problems explored. The purpose of this action research study was to discover and gain insight into the impact of collective efficacy and collective inquiry within a professional learning community. Especially as it related to closing the achievement gap for English language learners, utilizing a purposeful sample was appropriate (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Empowering teachers through cycles of action research was deemed the most effective means of solving a problem of practice, such as closing an achievement gap, due to the practical nature, participatory and collaborative characteristics of the process, and the importance of reflective practices associated with action research (Ivankova, 2015). The goal was approximately seven participants would comprise the purposeful sample. Participants would have met the research criteria: served as an administrator, instructional support staff, or teacher of 8th grade ELL social studies students at Practical Junior High.

Professional learning community. Practical Junior High's social studies PLC reflected a well-designed, high-functioning team that had been in place since 2017. In

2017, RISD invested in developing 189 central and campus administrators in professional learning communities' tenents. The district implementation plan relied on the campus leadership to introduce the four PLC questions during the 2017-2018 school year to their faculty and staff. However, campus leadership had the autonomy to introduce other components of the structure and processes within the professional learning community framework. In addition, RISD invests close to 2 million dollars each year to ensure every secondary core teacher has a designated PLC period in addition to a personal conference period. The principal of Practical Junior High embraced the structure, processes, and components of PLCs. She developed her staff so that they could implement PLCs with fidelity. Before the global pandemic, teachers were expected to meet four out of five days to collaborate during their designated PLC period. In response to the COVID-19, the traditional schedule was transformed to block scheduling, resulting in a daily collaboration change. However, the expectation of meeting during the PLC period did not waver. The social studies PLC met every B-day during their designated PLC period. The pre-data collected during the reconnaissance phase may be conflated due to the established nature of this PLC.

Teacher Participants. As the heart and soul of the classroom, teachers are the most critical participants in this action research; they are instrumental in generating pertinent knowledge and solutions. The target teacher-participants were three 8th-grade social studies teachers from a public junior high school in a large urban district in north Texas. The three teacher participant demographics for this study comprised of teachers ranging in age from 24 to 50, with teaching experience between two and twenty-plus years, all teach eighth-grade social studies and English language learners. The teacher-

participants identified their genders as two females (66.7%), one male (33.3%), and all identified themselves as white.

Instructional Support Participants. While teachers are essential to action research. A campus instructional support team made up of an instructional coach and campus administration are equally vital participants in this action research as active, collaborative members of the professional learning community at Practical Junior High. This study's instructional support-participant demographics comprised of three females and one male. Seventy-five percent of this group self-identified as white, and 25% self-identified as African American. The demographic report indicates the instructional support team's ages between 43-63, and their current roles range between three and twenty years.

Practical Junior High has experienced significant changes in its student population since 2007, specifically ELL students, yet outperform the other seven junior high schools. Since 2007, the student population has increased by approximately 225 students. Over one-fourth of the student population is now ELL students, an increase from 6.7%; almost half are economically disadvantaged, and around 42% are at-risk. While the student demographics have changed at Practical Junior High, the staff has a low attrition rate for all employees; the campus climate and culture contribute to longevity, loyalty, and the staff's staying power based on yearly staff climate surveys conducted by the district (Yaun, 2019). Eighty-four percent of the eighth-grade social studies professional learning community has been at Practical Junior High for over five years. The substantial shifts in student demographics connected with the campus climate and culture constructed the best setting to conduct this action research. As well as answer the

research questions of how and to what extent collective inquiry impacts collective efficacy amount teachers and English language learner achievement in social studies.

Role of the Researcher. According to Herr and Anderson (2015), a researcher must determine who they are in relation to the participants and setting and provide enough clarity and transparency to protect the research study's validity, trustworthiness, and research ethics. Furthermore, Efron and Ravid (2020) emphasize the importance of acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity and objectivity during the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. They further noted the need for a balance between objectivity and subjectivity by the researcher in action research (Efron & Ravid, 2020). According to Efron and Ravid (2020), a researcher should strive for disciplined subjectivity and explicitly acknowledge the following connections: "(1) your own values, beliefs, and commitments that are related to the study; (2) your past involvement and experience with the topic; and (3) your relationship with the participants" (p. 63). I advocate for all students because all students can learn, grow, and succeed and deserve a quality education. Like Nelson Mandela, I also deeply value education and believe that "education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world"(Krier, 2014).

I was deeply committed to this action research study to create a robust learning environment that promotes equity and equal access to success for all students, especially ELL students. As a classroom teacher in west Texas, I had limited experience teaching ELL students. However, as a district-level curriculum director in a large urban district in north Texas, I have encountered and worked with teachers on closing the ELL student achievement gap in some capacity since 2007. My first significant task as the new director of social studies was to address the social studies rating on the Performance-

Based Monitoring Analysis System, which monitors bilingual education, English as a second language, career and technical education, specific federal programs, and special education for the state of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2007). The district received a two rating for English language learners in social studies for the 2006-2007 school year. The rating system ranges from zero to three, with zero being the target score. The district jumped from a zero to a two between the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2007). My job was to provide teachers with tools, instructional strategies, and pedagogy regarding teaching English language learners, which resulted in immediate yet temporary success and a zero-rating. Short-term success happened because the intervention and treatment were instigated in a top-down approach by the "central" office rather than teacher-generated, owned, and implemented.

With the new social studies state assessment's increased rigor in 2012, Resilient ISD once again found themselves with an undesirable Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System rating of a three in 2014. This rating implied a potential gap between the increased rigor of the assessment and the classroom's instructional practices; simultaneously, the number of ELL students increased by 3000 during this period. In 2018 a new dynamic was introduced when the district undertook a complete reorganization, including dissolving the 58-member curriculum and instruction department, introduced a new 20-member teaching and learning team, and transferred instructional power and responsibility to campus administrators. While in 2007, I could provide necessary top-down interventions, today, systemic change must emerge as a result of teachers within a local school setting researching their practices with the intent to improve those practices, prompting change from within. The new structure provoked

this participatory action research study grounded in a localized problem of practice, conducted by a team of local, invested educators guided by an outside professional researcher—in this case, me (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

According to Efron and Ravid (2020), participatory action research pursues findings and solutions to solve local problems and contribute knowledge that facilitates change in the overall educational system. In the instance of this action research study, Practical Junior High had a notable achievement gap between native English speakers and ELL students on social studies assessments that emulates a district-wide achievement gap on state social studies assessments (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Herr and Anderson (2015) characterize insiders and outsiders based upon the relationship to the setting and participants in the study. The authors would classify Practical Junior High's professional learning community members as insiders seeking to improve instructional practices for their English language learners (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As the researcher in this study and the district social studies director, my positionality vacillated between an insider and an outsider throughout the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). In response to the global pandemic, my role as a participating PLC team member shifted to an observer. This participatory action research harnessed reciprocal collaboration between insiders and outsiders in which equitable power relations led to shared knowledge for both the campus and the district regarding closing the achievement gap for ELL students (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The information gained through this action research resulted in knowledge and implications applied to other junior campuses within the district (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

As the director of social studies PK-12, I was invested in closing the achievement gap for ELL students on social studies assessments. A White female with over 22 years of experience as an educator, I have worked with five of the seven campus participants since 2007 and worked closely with the other two participants for three years. As the designer of this participatory action research study, I participated with the campus PLC as both an insider and outsider during distinctive times throughout the action research cycles. I built a rapport with the participants and closely monitored perceived power relations during the research process. Because I have only worked with some of the participants for three years, there was a strong possibility that initially, they were suspicious of me and the intent of this action research study. Building trust amongst all participants was critical to this action research and reduced participant suspicions. I intentionally, clearly, and repeatedly communicated the *why* behind the proposed research, *what* it consists of, and *how* it ranked with other innovations (Evans, 1996). As an insider that aimed to study myself in relationship to the problem of practice, I clearly communicated and acknowledged my positionality and potential implications to participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

A purposeful sample was most appropriate for a mixed method action research study. It aligned with the typical characteristics of action research studies in which the participants focus on a problem of practice as co-investigators to discovering a shared solution. The purposeful sample represented participants chosen deliberatively based on the predetermined purpose and research questions. The sample was convenient and easily accessible to the researcher (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection Methods

According to Ivankova (2015), a concurrent quantitative and qualitative mixed method action research design facilitates reviewing the comparative results from both data collection types, resulting in well-validated conclusions. The study was conducted in several phases. The reconnaissance phase aimed to identify reasons for ELL students' gaps in eighth-grade social studies and establish a collective teacher efficacy baseline. I used a concurrent mixed methods design to collect and analyze students' assessment test scores, teachers' collective efficacy scores, and data from focus groups, individual interviews with students and teachers to inform the development of more effective instructional practices in social studies (Ivankova, 2015). The study's evaluation phase's goal was to identify the instructional practices' effectiveness as they related to ELL students' achievement in social studies. Using concurrent mixed methods design to collect and analyze students' test scores, student, teacher survey responses, and focus group interviews with students and teachers.

Data collection in a mixed methods action research study incorporates qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). It relied on the researcher aligning the data collection tool to the purpose of the study and the research questions (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Data collection for the study's qualitative component occurred throughout the study, including simultaneously with the quantitative data collection and analysis period. Mixed-methods data interpretation required the researcher to look across the quantitative results and the qualitative conclusions to assess how the information addresses the mixed methods research questions in a study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Employing a mixed method action research design permitted the

researcher to triangulate and synthesize multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources, thus increasing the findings' trustworthiness and recommendations that emerged from this study. For this mixed-method action research study, the qualitative data enhanced the research and garnered insights into the participants' perceptions of changes they may have encountered in their experience with action research. The quantitative data and analysis involved administering an existing instrument, the Collective Sense of Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A), that demonstrated reliability and validity related to teacher-efficacy and collective efficacy.

Quantitative Data Collection. Quantitative data aimed to answer the research questions posed before the action research study and helped compare individuals and groups of individuals on specific measures and tested the relationship between variables (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015). Efron and Ravid (2020) assert that quantitative numerical data collected is processed through descriptive statistical measures in which patterns, trends, and relationships between variables emerge, leading to a definite conclusion. Dissimilar to inductive qualitative research, quantitative data research tends to be mostly a deductive process in which a general principle exists and leads to a specific outcome (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Collective inquiry was the independent variable in this action research. ELL scores on the social studies assessments was the dependent variable.

Observations: In contrast to unstructured qualitative observations, structured quantitative observations focus on predetermined categories using tally sheets, checklists, and rating scales were used to record behaviors as they occur (Efron & Ravid, 2020). As the researcher observer, I will adopt a nonparticipant role, noting the

frequency or level of the professional learning community's behavior being studied on a checklist (see Appendix C) during the observation. Per the author's criteria to develop useful checklists, the observed behaviors were clearly defined and separated into categories and tracked the development of the professional learning communities' behaviors over time correlated explicitly to the professional learning community structure, the three big ideas of professional learning communities, collective efficacy, as well as collective inquiry (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Mattos et al., 2016). According to Mattos et al. (2016), "Collective inquiry means learning together," and not defaulting to "this is how we have always done it" mentality (2016, p. 6). Furthermore, according to the authors, emerging as a professional learning community is a process rather than a program that embraces three guiding principles: "a focus on learning, a collaborative culture, and a results orientation" (Mattos et al., 2016, p. 6). The quantitative observations were conducted before the action research study to establish a baseline, again during the middle of the study, and after the action research study ends with examining the specific behaviors of the professional learning community over time. The observation data will be used to answer research questions one and two.

Surveys. Like focus group interviews, surveys are one of the most common and most efficient means of collecting large-scale information quickly with minimal expenses (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The authors declare the information collected from surveys can be easily and promptly analyzed; they are used to conduct needs assessments, assess beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. The data was used to make informed decisions (Efron & Ravid, 2020). In this study, the quantitative survey data will include an online pre-and post-survey from all participants, using the Collective

Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A). A twelve-item short form was developed by Roger Goddard and Wayne Hoy (2003) to measure both positive and negative group competence and task analysis (Goddard et al., 2000).

The short-from Collective Efficacy Scale was adapted from an original twenty-one-question Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard, 2002). The original survey exemplified a significant change in efficacy scales when it assessed collective group efficacy rather than individual teacher efficacy (Coğaltay & Karadağ, 2017; Eells, 2011). The original Collective Efficacy Scale included 21 survey items and demonstrates a high internal consistency with a reliability of .96 (Coğaltay & Karadağ, 2017). However, in 2002 Goddard conducted another study to reassess the theoretical underpinnings and the psychometric properties of that 21-item Collective Efficacy Scale to improve its measurement by constructing a more conceptually pure and prudent version of the scale. After rigorous validity checks, the theoretical and empirical study resulted in a shortened version of the Collective Efficacy Scale with a high correlation ($r=.983$) to the original scale, signifying that the number of questions does not impair the data results (Goddard, 2002).

Two additional online pre-and post-surveys were used to assess Practical Junior High's culture and climate in facilitating collective efficacy and collective inquiry (Donohoo, 2017). Participants assessed their professional learning community collaborative inquiry characteristics along a continuum answering four questions in five domains (see Appendix G). Including collaborative, reflective, learning stance, the process was driven by practice and actions informed by evidence. Moreover, participants assessed the enabling conditions for collective efficacy using Jenni

Donohoo's (2017) questionnaire, "The enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy" (see Appendix H). Quantitative survey data exploring the pre-and post-perceptions of collective efficacy and collective inquiry will address research questions one and two (see Appendix A).

Artifacts. According to Efron and Ravid (2020), formal and informal physical artifacts provide an array of information about individuals, groups, and schools by constructing a layered and contextual understanding of the research topic. Artifacts present themselves as data sources in the forms of grades, test scores, student self-assessments, essays, portfolios, and various types of communication readily available to the researcher (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The advantage of using artifacts is that they naturally occur within the instructional settings. The researcher reviewed official artifacts, including campus and student test scores, grades, student demographic data, school and district report cards, as well as the professional learning communities' agendas (see Appendix I), historical formative (district/campus), and summative (STAAR and TELPAS) assessment data of English language learners (see Appendix J). Artifacts and document analysis were used to answer research question number two.

Qualitative Data Collection. Qualitative data contributes to the narrative knowledge about individuals' experiences, behaviors, and feelings within the context of their natural setting (Ivankova, 2015). Efron and Ravid (2020) assert that as educators, we are continually collecting data every day that contributes to and influences our insights into educational practices and informs us about our actions' consequences. Qualitative data sources helped identify problems or issues by analyzing stakeholders' words and advancing understandings and potential solutions. As an essential component

of participatory action research, qualitative data served to impact the action/intervention and informed future direction resulting in change action (Ivankova, 2015). This action research employed observations (see Appendix B and Appendix C) and individual (see Appendix D and Appendix E) and focus group interviews (see Appendix F). Ivankova (2015) affirms they are the most common qualitative data sources used in mixed method action research studies.

Observations. According to Efron and Ravid (2020), the observation protocol examines a setting within a specific purpose and provides powerful insight into schools and classrooms' authentic life. The authors further contend that observations allow for a systematic examination of the activities, people, and physical, educational settings while heightening the awareness of nonverbal behaviors, gestures, and body language, which are not typically observed during individual or focus group interviews (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

Observations of Practical Junior High's professional learning community provided the researcher with authentic and compelling insight into the team's inner workings, interactions, and functions (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Initially, the researcher utilized an unstructured qualitative observation protocol to examine the authentic patterns of behavior, interactions, and modes of communication as a means of establishing a baseline understanding of the professional learning community (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The observation form included detailed information, including the setting, purpose, research questions, and descriptive and reflective notes sections (see Appendix B). Per Efron and Ravid (2020), descriptive notes were used to record what was happening during the observation without inferring feelings or responses to what was happening.

While also separately capturing reflective notes and insights about what was happening in the setting by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a second unstructured qualitative observation examining the behaviors, interactions, and modes of communication once the action research process has concluded to assess the behaviors, interactions, and modes of communication before and after the action research study. The unstructured observations were used to answer research questions number one and two.

Interviews. According to (Efron & Ravid, 2020), the interview is an effective data collection strategy in action research and affords opportunities for in-depth conversations between researchers and participants. This inquiry approach explains the participants' experiences from their viewpoints by incorporating their voices, opinions, values, and knowledge on the investigation's issues (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The authors assert the observation typically serves as a springboard to develop individual interview questions, allowing the researcher to inquire and understand to create individual interview questions, allowing the researcher to examine and understand noted behavior from the individual's perspective (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

Individual interviews. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three teacher participants (Appendix D) of the professional learning community and the campus instructional support team (Appendix E). This data collection method helped to understand the current reality, perceptions, needs, and individuals' beliefs, feelings, motivations regarding professional learning communities, collective efficacy, and collective inquiry (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The interview questions are divided into three categories and encompass eighteen total questions related to professional learning communities, collective inquiry, and collective efficacy.

Ivankova (2015) contends one-on-one interviews provided rich, in-depth information from the interviewee's perspective and are noted as the most common data source in action research.

Additionally, this data collection method provided additional insight into the level of perceived collective efficacy of their professional learning communities and the use of collective inquiry to solve local problems of practice. Moreover, a post-action research study interview was conducted with the same participants utilizing the same questions. The use of pre-and post-individual interviews contributed to answering the research questions.

Focus group interviews. Focus group interviews are an efficient technique used to collect ideas, thoughts, and experiences from several individuals simultaneously (Efron & Ravid, 2020). One semi-structured focus group interview (see Appendix F) was conducted to explore the knowledge and perceptions of the critical issues facing the eighth-grade social studies professional learning communities associated with closing the achievement gap for ELL students. The group was made up of the three eighth-grade social studies teachers and the four instructional support staff at Practical Junior High. Five open-ended questions were used to generate initial discussion. Simultaneously, it allowed for fluidity and input from the participants to construct the narrative further and raise and pursue other issues related to the study (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) maintain that focus group interviews are most appropriate when the topics are of interest in everyday conversations, not sensitive, nor highly personal or culturally inappropriate. The focus group interview helped understand the current reality, perceptions, needs, and understanding of collective efficacy, collective

inquiry, and professional learning communities. This form of data collection will address research questions one and two.

Ethical Guidelines

While practitioners conduct educational action research within their settings, it was critical to employ ethical research methods and guidelines, a set of moral principles, to ensure human participants' safety, confidentiality, and well-being (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015). The authors advise for researchers to include and consider ethical factors and guidelines, including obtaining permission to conduct the study, confidentiality of data collected, obtaining informed consent, respect for the research site, the safety of the participants, as well as guidelines and processes for accurate interpretation and presentation of the data (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Ivankova (2015) contends conducting ethical research ensures participants' well-being and prevents any form of potential abuse; while delineating the researcher's responsibilities to ensure they abide by appropriate professional conduct codes.

Permission. Resilient ISD has a systemic process that district employees must follow to research within the school district initiated and monitored by the Accountability and Continuous Improvement department. Employees must complete an application for approval to conduct research that includes the study's purpose and scope and the process for ensuring the confidentiality of the participants' and students' information and data following the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Confidentiality of data collected. The data collected in this study will guarantee the confidentiality of data and findings and protect participants' rights (Efron & Ravid,

2020). This study will utilize pseudonyms and general descriptions for the school district and campus reflected in this study. To protect the participants' anonymity, names and other contact information were removed from documents, observations, surveys, and interviews. Efron and Ravid (2020) further recommend additional measures should be harnessed to safeguard data stored electronically; this study will utilize a passcode for electronic information.

Informed consent. The participants in this study must consent to participate by reviewing the letter of introduction and signing the informed consent form (see Appendix K). Participants submitted their completed consent forms before the start of the action research study. The researcher presented the introduction letter and consent form to participants and allowed them to ask questions about the action research study.

Ethical behavior. As an action researcher, I respected school and participants' goals, priorities, and needs. I also treated participants with respect, ensured open communication, and provided opportunities for them to provide feedback. As the researcher, I assumed a position of neutrality and ensured my behaviors were respectful and nonjudgmental, and established my role as an insider/outsider. Efron and Ravid (2020) maintain participants should have a clear understanding of the researcher's role, the purpose and intent of the research study, and the data collected through the interview, focus group, and observation protocol. The authors further argue transparent communication between the researcher and the participants alleviates the fear of who, what, and how information is shared (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The participants should never be put in harm’s way nor suffer as part of the action research study; as the

researcher, my first concern is for the welfare, well-being, and needs of the students, teachers, and staff (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The problem of practice was situational and within the context of the educators participating in this study while also addressing equity issues for ELL students. The mixed-method action research design incorporated both open and closed-ended data collection methods to validate further the findings related to the identified intervention. The research study's systematic and cyclical design fostered new research questions and cycles of additional research. The mixed-methods action research approach and procedures will provide the best data related to the power of collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is a critical part of the action research cycle and is often considered the most challenging yet rewarding phase of the research process (Efron & Ravid, 2020). The authors maintain this phase of the research cycle is where the research questions are answered as the raw data collected emerges into explanations, conclusions, and new knowledge is gained, leading to a plan of action or implications on instructional practices (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Efron and Ravid describe the process of analysis consists of unraveling the whole into smaller bits that allow the researcher to interpret or make meaning. The study employed a systematic and deliberate approach that resulted in trustworthy and reliable findings.

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) further clarify that mixed-methods data analysis employs analytic techniques applied to both the quantitative and qualitative data and the

integration of both forms of data. By utilizing a mixed methods action research methodology, the researcher will be able to synthesize and triangulate both quantitative and qualitative data among the multiple data collection sources to strengthen the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings and recommendations in the research study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015). Mixed-methods data interpretation required the researcher to look across quantitative and qualitative conclusions and assess how the information addressed the research questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Data Analysis. According to Efron and Ravid (2020), quantitative data analysis aims to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the research study. Quantitative data analysis uses statistical procedures to help the researcher further reflect on and study the statistical findings by looking for trends, presenting the data visually, examining the relationship between variables, and comparing groups on selected characteristics (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Quantitative data analysis is a deductive process as opposed to an inductive method as with qualitative data analysis. The data's numerical nature tends to make the analysis and interpretation phase easier than qualitative data, especially related to determining the types of descriptive statistics used to analyze the data, minimizing subjective or personal interpretation (Efron & Ravid, 2020). According to Ivankova (2015), descriptive statistical analysis is a common approach to practitioner-researcher quantitative data analysis. The relatively easy mathematical nature of descriptive statistics helps inform and develop actions and interventions in practitioner-research. Furthermore, descriptive statistical analysis aids the practitioner research to

visually illustrate and communicate the data trends, relationships, and patterns in the forms of charts, tables, and graphs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova, 2015).

Qualitative Data Analysis. According to Efron and Ravid (2020), the purpose of qualitative data analysis is to organize the large amount of collected data into a logical structure that best enables the researchers to understand the data. Qualitative data is an inductive process that follows a process separating data into segments, organizing it into codes, and identifying recurring constructs and categories (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Once qualitative data analysis has been organized into categories and themes, the researcher can start making inferences, developing models, or generating theory (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The authors maintain qualitative data analysis is about identifying themes, categories, and patterns that help the researcher answer the research question without the assistance of statistical tests to help you determine the meaning of the bits of data (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Efron and Ravid (2020) suggest examining each component of the data separately to determine the different connections, relationships, similarities, and differences to consider their importance to the whole.

The qualitative data analysis established a foundation for interpreting the data that brought together the identified parts into an interconnected understanding of the data's importance based on the categories and constructs' emerging patterns and trends (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Unlike quantitative data, qualitative information is rather dynamic and subjective. It necessitates the researcher to synthesize and interpret the data thoroughly to answer the research questions and explain their meaning in the study's context. Therefore, this process increased the trustworthiness and dependability of the insights

leading to practical implications related to the research study (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As with quantitative analysis, qualitative data analysis and interpretation follow a sequential process of preparing the data for analysis, analyzing the data, synthesizing and interpreting the data, and finally presenting the research and findings associated with the data (Efron & Ravid, 2020). In this study, the researcher transformed the data into readable text and then organized it in a manner that is easily accessible for analysis. Efron and Ravid (2020) explain this process further requires the researcher to transcribe the audio recording, observation notes, and open-ended survey items into typed texts and suggest using a computer scanner to transform images, pictures, and documents into digital copies stored in an electronic database. The researcher developed a system for organizing and managing qualitative data, known as coding, and designed an electronic data file organizer using Microsoft Excel (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define the process of coding as assigning shorthand designations to various aspects of your data so that you can retrieve specific pieces of information efficiently.

In this study, the researcher used audio recordings of the interviews, focus groups, and observations to avoid potential challenges. This process assisted in proper transcription and data analysis to ensure valid results. Moreover, I transcribed the recorded focus group and interview data and used the qualitative coding technique to identify trends, themes, and connections between data. The data analysis and interpretation phase included multiple readings, sorting, coding, and categorizing to decipher themes and ideas that answer the research questions. The researcher also kept a

research journal to capture reflections, themes, and thoughts after the first set of data and use the data to help narrow the study's focus and develop additional data sets.

Validation and trustworthy interpretations. In educational research, it is essential to construct valid and reliable research data ethically; validity and reliability are particularly critical in applied fields that impact people (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher ensured the investigations were conducted in an ethical manner, which entails carefully constructing how the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted and how the findings will be presented to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of the results (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) propose that researchers implement systematic rigor as a way for the researcher to safeguard the trustworthiness of their research. The authors suggest one way to enhance the validity and reliability of a study is to implement interval validity or credibility by ensuring that the research findings are credible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The notion of reliability indicates the results are consistent, dependable, or perhaps replicable (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher and the lens from which they construct the study are significant in certifying the investigation's validity (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

To increase internal validity, I employed multiple triangulation methods that substantiated the findings. Member checks or respondent validation strategies were used by gathering feedback from the participants interviewed and reviewing the data from the interviews to validate the investigator's interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended, I incorporated my position or reflexivity

explicitly—the biases, dispositions, and assumptions the investigators have regarding the research throughout the research study. Researchers should communicate their perspectives, biases, and assumptions to the reader to help them understand how they may influence the findings (Maxwell, 2013). This mixed-method action research study included additional methods to ensure validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described, in detail, the mixed-method action research design and methodology used to address the ELL student's achievement gap in eighth-grade social studies through a campus professional learning community by examining collective efficacy and inquiry, including the theoretical frameworks of social cognitive theory and adult learning theory served as the foundation of this study. A thorough description of the sample, criteria for selection, and the researcher's role were examined in this chapter. Also explicitly noted in this chapter were the specific qualitative and quantitative methods, instruments, and tools that were used to collect and interpret data in this action research study, including surveys, observations, interviews, and artifacts. The remaining portion of the chapter included specifics related to the research procedures and the process for organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the qualitative and quantitative data, including the rigor, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations that served as the foundation of this study. The research design and methodology presented in this chapter served as a basis for the subsequent chapter's data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

A growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse English language learners pose multifaceted trials for educational systems at both the state and national levels. School districts struggle to address the myriad of ELL student needs, predominantly the academic and social-emotional needs (Howard, 2010; Texas Education Agency, 2019f, 2020; US Department of Education, 2018). According to the United States Department of Education (2018), Texas has the second-largest number of ELL students in the United States. More than one-quarter of the student population is classified as English language learners. In RISD, ELL students speak more than eighty different first languages and represent countless life experiences that perpetuate educational challenges. Based on the Texas Education Agency data for this district, ELL students are not performing at the same level as their English-speaking peers. Mirroring the district's ELL population, more than one-quarter of the campus research site's student population are English language learners. Amplifying the challenges confronting teachers are the increased issues and challenges posed by the current Covid19 global pandemic. Teachers are expected to provide instruction to ELL and non-ELL students, manage multiple languages, address academic problems, and sustain their ELL students' social-emotional needs. Still, they are also navigating new instructional expectations of virtual instructional simultaneously with in-person learning during the same class period.

Data presented by the Texas Education Agency highlights the problem of practice in RISD, denoting that ELL students score significantly lower than their English-speaking peers on the eighth-grade social studies state assessment. Therefore, the purpose of this mixed-method action research study was to examine collective efficacy and collective inquiry as methods that enable teachers to find genuine and significant approaches to closing the achievement gap for their ELL students through established professional learning communities. The research site embodied a purposeful sample, including eighth-grade social studies teachers, an instructional coach, and three administrators.

This study was grounded in answering two research questions that explained whether teachers' collective efficacy and collective inquiry produced new insights related to closing the achievement gap for ELL students on state and local social studies assessments.

The following research questions guided the inquiry for this action research:

1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among 8th-grade social studies teachers in a junior high?
2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?

Two theories informed the context for the theoretical framework for this action research project: Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986b, 1997) and Knowles's (1968) adult learning theory. Social cognitive theory focuses on understanding human learning

and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1997), while adult learning theory, or andragogy, concentrates on the art and science of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012).

Summary of the Research Design

The current research study took place in Practical Junior High School, an urban junior high school of about 700 students in a large urban district in the Southwest United States. The participants included three 8th grade social studies teachers and four instructional support participants. The purpose of this study was to examine the power of collective inquiry to impact collective teacher efficacy and the power of collective teacher efficacy to impact students' standardized test scores. The intervention in this study examined the implementation and actions of a professional learning community whose mission was to improve ELL student achievement.

The global pandemic affected the data collection methods, resulting in adjustments to chapter three's proposed data techniques and assessment data. Due to the worldwide pandemic, the state suspended standardized tests. Consequently, the assessment measurement shifted from the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) to local standardized assessments aligned to the STAAR assessment. This study used surveys, interviews, observations, artifacts, and student data to measure and assess how and to what extent collective inquiry could develop the collective efficacy capacity among a PLC focused on increasing eighth-grade ELL performance on social studies assessments.

I utilized a concurrent quantitative and qualitative mixed method action research design that facilitated reviews in phases of the comparative results from both data collection types. The reconnaissance phase examined the potential reasons for English

language learner gaps in eighth-grade social studies, which occurred during the first two weeks of the action research study. In comparison, the evaluation phase examined the effectiveness of instructional practices related to English language learners' achievement in social studies and occurred during the last six weeks. The qualitative and quantitative data established a more comprehensive understanding of the study's statistical and descriptive findings resulting in identifiable themes.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Description of data collection. This study was conducted over eight weeks in two phases, the reconnaissance and evaluation phases. Quantitative and qualitative instruments (surveys, interviews, observations, researcher field notes, a multitude of student data, and artifacts) were used to measure and assess the effects of collective efficacy and collective inquiry on ELL student achievement on social studies assessments.

I prepared for and adjusted the data collection methods in August in response to the global pandemic's impact on instruction and school setting. The first three weeks of the 2020-2021 school year found students and teachers in a virtual instructional environment. Educational setting options presented to parents for face-to-face or virtual instruction after the first three weeks of school lead to 67% face-to-face and 33% virtual students at Practical Junior High. During the study, 77% of Practical Junior High students were receiving face-to-face instruction, while 23% participated in virtual instruction. This study targeted 8th grade English language learners; of the 247 8th grade in-person students, 39% represent ELL students, while 36% of the 87 virtual 8th grade students represent ELL students.

Additionally, I conducted an unstructured quantitative virtual observation of the eighth-grade professional learning community (see Appendix C), assessing the behaviors, interactions, and communication modes. The participants completed three surveys at the end of the action research study measuring the participants' beliefs, conditions, and collaboration perceptions. I used IBM SPSS statistical software to conduct accurate and efficient descriptive statistical analysis, including trends, means, and percentages. Participant names were replaced with pseudonyms and included only responses of contributors who had agreed to participate in the study.

During the initial interaction with participants, I explained the study and gained informed consent for participation (see Appendix K). The research sample consisted of a total of seven (N=7) Practical Junior High educators divided into teachers (N=3) and instructional support (N=4) who agreed to participate in the study by returning the consent forms. In response to the global pandemic, individual electronic Google Form Surveys were used to capture the individual interviews (see Appendices D and E) and focus group interviews (see Appendix F), resulting in a deviation from the data collection methods presented in chapter three. Participants wrote constructed responses to interview questions. The individual and focus group interviews were analyzed and coded for emerging themes that enhanced the research findings. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy and uphold their anonymity throughout the data's reporting.

Reconnaissance Phase

The reconnaissance phase included qualitative and quantitative data collection methods necessary to interpret assessment results and create meta-inferences informing

the intervention. Quantitative data included student demographics and achievement data (see Appendix J). Additionally, participants took the pre-Collective Efficacy survey (see Appendix A) to assess their initial attitudes and beliefs toward collective efficacy that provided insight during the study's evaluation phase. Qualitative data included one unstructured observation (see Appendix B) of the eighth-grade social studies professional learning community. The setting, purpose, behaviors, interactions, and communication modes provided invaluable descriptive and reflective information to triangulate the data during the evaluation phase.

Quantitative data analysis. According to the school's student database, 43.4% of the study site's eighth-grade students are ELL students. The ELL student population includes students currently served in the EL programming and monitored students as required by Texas Education Agency. Furthermore, according to the school's student database, approximately 80% of the school's ELL students are at-risk and economically disadvantaged. Spanish is the predominant first language of the site's English language learners, while additional languages include Arabic, Italian, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Swahili.

An analysis of the ELL language proficiency shows most of the site's students are long-term ELL (LTEL) students—those identified as English language learners for six or more years based on failure to achieve mastery in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ferlazzo, 2020). According to the school's assessment database, long-term English language learners make up 56.4% of the eighth-grade ELL student population. Disconcerting is that overall, 88% of Practical Junior High's LTEL students scored at the beginner rating on the 2020 TELPAS assessment, as noted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 TELPAS Rating by years in U.S. schools

	F	2	3	4	5	6	Total N
Beginning	0	9	4	1	6	74	94
Intermediate	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Advanced	0	1	0	2	3	5	11
Advanced High	0	6	14	10	4	3	37
Unknown	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**2**	**6**
Total N ELL by Year	**2**	**16**	**18**	**15**	**14**	**84**	**149**

The academic student data informed the instructional needs and target areas for ELL instructional practices. According to the school's assessment database, ELL students' average TELPAS rating is 2.53, equivalent to an *advanced* rating, as shown in Table 4.2. However, their average score on the 2019 Reading STAAR assessment was 49.4%, indicating an 8.6-point deficit of the passing score of 58%. In comparison, native-English-speaking students averaged 75%, illustrating a significant gap for ELL students in meeting expectations. The STAAR assessment has three performance bands in rating student achievement: *Approaches grade-level* (58%), *Meets grade-level* (78%), and *Masters grade-level* (88%). However, on the national Measure of Progress (MAP) test, ELL students demonstrate minimum growth between the beginning and end MAP assessments as illustrated by the Rasch UnIT (RIT) and percentile measures. According to the NWEA Connection (2017), the RIT score is a stable scale that measures students' achievement level at any given time and provides an overtime lens for academic growth.

Table 4.2 ELL State and National Assessment Data

ELL	Mean TELPAS	Mean STAAR Reading	Mean Start RIT (MAP)	Mean End RIT (MAP)	Mean Start Percentile (MAP)	Mean End Percentile (MAP)
Total ELL	2.53	46.15	205.2	211.61	51.65	49.9

As part of the reconnaissance phase, I analyzed the target student population to design and develop a plan of action and interventions specific to the identified problem: the achievement gap between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers. The data indicated the targeted student population primarily enrolled in face-to-face, on-level grade social studies courses and comprises 43.44% of the total number of eighth-grade students. Additional considerations resulted from the data illustrating 80% of students are at-risk, and more than 85% are economically disadvantaged. Further, data incorporated into the planning and action phases included that 56.4% of the target student population are LTEL students who are yet to achieve *Advanced High* in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The ELL students' demographic and assessment data-informed instructional practice areas and actions to address the achievement gap between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers.

During the reconnaissance phase, the study participants completed the pre-Collective Efficacy Scale to establish a baseline measure of their beliefs, values, and thoughts regarding collective efficacy. The survey assessed the perceived levels of collective efficacy beliefs of the teachers and instructional leaders. The instrument measured positive and negative beliefs and perceptions within two categories: group competence and task analysis on a six-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to

strongly agree (6) (Goddard & Hoy, 2003). This 12-item Collective Efficacy Scale included a balanced number of group competence and task analysis questions and positively and negatively phrased questions in both categories (Goddard, 2002).

According to Goddard (2002), group competence considers the judgments about the capabilities educators bring to any given situation, including teaching methods, skills, training, and expertise. A positive group competence question is *Teachers in this school believe that every student can learn.* Conversely, a negatively worded group competence question is *If a child doesn't want to learn, teachers here give up.* Task analysis represents the perception of opportunities and constraints, students' abilities and motivation, and parental and community support (Goddard, 2002). A positive task analysis question is Students *come to school ready to learn.* In contrast, a negative task analysis question is *Students here are just not motivated to learn."* Negatively worded items were reverse coded before analyzing this data, including items 3, 4, 8, 9, eleven, and twelve. Responses were totaled and averaged for all 12-items for each participant. Subsequently, the sample's mean collective efficacy score was computed. Combined scores for positive group competence levels averaged the highest of 4.71, while the positive task analysis mean of 3.71 was the lowest of the four categories, as noted in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Collective Efficacy- Pre-assessment (Baseline)

Category	Pre-assessment Mean
Group Competence-	5.24
Group Competence +	4.71
Task Analysis -	4.86
Task Analysis +	3.71
Total Average	4.63

Goddard and Hoy (2003) assert a higher score indicates a higher perception of collective teacher efficacy beliefs. The data revealed the PLC's beginning level of perceived collective efficacy measured a 4.63 mean score, with a .60084 standard deviation (see Table 4.4). The initial survey collecting the participants' perceived collective efficacy levels was used during the evaluation phase to determine whether this action research study impacted their perceived collective efficacy levels as measured by the post-Collective Efficacy scale.

Table 4.4 Pre-Collective Efficacy Descriptive Statistics

N Valid	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev	Variance	Range	Min	Max
7	4.63	.22710	4.6700	3.50[a]	.60084	.361	1.92	3.50	5.42

Qualitative data analysis. The unstructured observation provided valuable insights into how the PLC interacts and behaves with one another in their natural setting (Ivankova, 2015). I served as a non-participant outsider to record descriptive and reflective field notes. The descriptive data included objective insight into who, what,

when, where, and how of observation. Simultaneously, I captured reflective field notes with more meaning and interpretations of the observed context and behaviors (Efron & Ravid, 2020).

Unstructured Professional Learning Community Observation. I conducted a virtual non-participant unstructured observation of the social studies PLC that lasted approximately 1 hour and twenty-six minutes and involved five of the site's participants, including the 3 teacher participants, the instructional coach, and the social studies supervising assistant principal. The purpose of this observation was to examine the interactions and behaviors of the PLC members. Additionally, I focused on the language and beliefs about student learning (collective efficacy), reflections on instructional practices (collective inquiry), and what defining characteristics of PLC were present. The observation was recorded, and I subsequently transcribed, coded, and analyzed the information to discern surfacing patterns and themes. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities.

Three themes emerged from the observation analysis: a collaborative culture, a focus on student learning, and concerted evidence of student learning. The collaborative culture addressed the PLC's commitment and interactions to ensure high student learning levels. The focus on student learning centered on the shared commitment to ensure student success was the team's fundamental purpose. The emphasis on student learning results indicated that PLC actions lead to higher student learning levels by utilizing evidence that confirms which instructional practices positively impacted student achievement.

Collaborative culture. This emerging theme illustrated that the PLC embodies a culture of shared responsibilities, commitment to working together, and systematic agreements amongst the team to work together. During the observation, specific protocols were observed, including a well-defined agenda that included start and end times, meeting date, meeting norms, present members, the four PLC questions, action items, minutes/notes, and administrator feedback. The PLC protocols noted on the agenda provided the structure for how their conversations were conducted and sequential steps to help them stay focused and on task (Mattos et al., 2016). The meeting's action items noted on the agenda followed the same format week to week (see Appendix I), including: *Planning for Instruction; G.A.I.N. Discussion, Homework/ things to do before our next meeting* (see Figure 4.1). The unstructured observation of the PLC substantiated the systematic empirical evidence indicating their singular function is an ongoing process in which they work together in cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve high levels of student learning for all students (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; Mattos et al., 2016)

Action Items	Minutes/Notes	Administrator Feedback
Where did we leave off last meeting?	When we are using grabbag (how to make this digital), Southern colony notes, Name PA - will take a while Gov't, Great awakening Map Test - Tuesday	KS - digital
Planning for Instruction	Keeping track of formative assessments - what are we using them for? Reasons for coming to a new world sort - will start Gov't Pear deck PA2-3 - Mayflower Compact, FOC, VHOB, Magna Carta or EBOR Enlightenment (Locke, Montesquieu,)	LL - Sort and Pear Deck CV - Illustrated Timeline - digital
G.A.I.N. Discussion	Will use PA for GAIN drafting N/A Reasons for exploration and colonization	
New Instructional Business	Revamping lessons to be more student-centered and experience-based. revisit AP Parts - use Kami or Google docs pacing tool 3 Triangular trade slavery - not economy! Reasons (s neglect, distance)	KS: KAMI APPARTS
Homework/ things to do before our next meeting	PEGS cards - digital	CV: Digital PEGS cards
Open Agenda (if time allows)		
Next PLC		

Figure 4.1 Practical Junior High PLC Agenda

Team norms or collective agreements indicated on the agenda included *Starting and ending on time; Be purposeful and engaged in our work; Build collective efficacy as a PLC; and Grow, together,[sic] as professionals.* As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the team listed the collective agreements for how they agreed to work together but explicitly stated what it meant to *Be purposeful and engaged in our work* and *Build Collective Efficacy as a PLC.* The PLC adhered to starting and ending on time; the meeting began promptly at 8:15, and all participants were present, engaged, and worked as a collaborative team throughout the PLC meeting. The department chair shared the agenda on her zoom screen; the instructional coach served as the note-taker. Furthermore, the participants worked as a team, conducted themselves as professionals, and were reflective and open to other team members' ideas.

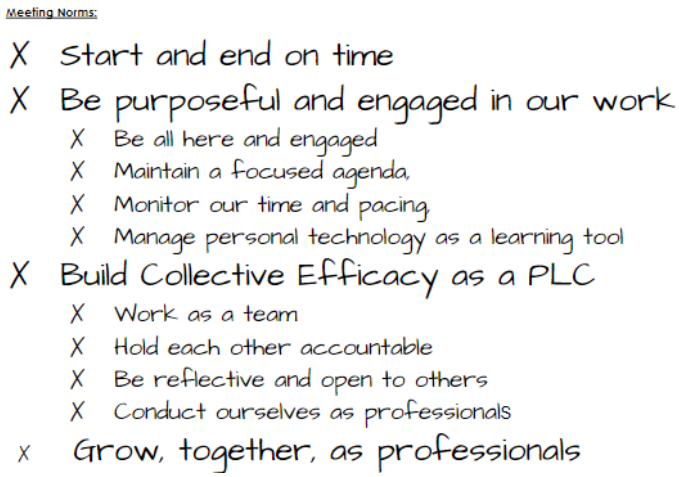

Figure 4.2 Practical Junior High SS PLC Meeting Norms

The unstructured PLC observation illustrated the deeply embedded collaborative culture of working interdependently with high levels of trust to achieve a common goal of student learning (Donohoo, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016). I virtually observed, via zoom, the team of teachers, instructional coach, and the supervising

assistant principal work together to plan intentional instructional strategies that ensured all students, including ELL students, were successful and engaged in rigorous instruction.

Empirical evidence of the collaborative culture illustrated the team's interdependence and mutual accountability to ensuring all students succeed. By the end of the meeting, each of the teachers had volunteered to create, revise, or research instructional strategies and tools to use during virtual instruction with students. The team brainstormed ways to make a grab bag activity appropriate for the virtual setting; Kyla said, "I have a few ideas that can make it digital; I'll take care of creating this for the team. Are y'all ok with that? I will have it ready for the next PLC." The team collectively responded, "Yes." This exchange amongst the group indicated a high level of trust, a culture of shared responsibilities, interdependence, and accountability to one another (Donohoo, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016)

The collaborative culture, the shared responsibility, and trust exhibited by the group were evident later during the meeting when Luna volunteered to review and revise the government sorting activity to support virtual instruction. Luna said to Kyla, "I'll work on making this digital since you are working on the grab-bag activity." The responses from the other members were "awesome" and "that sounds good." Also, Carter volunteered to revise the reasons for the growth of representative performance assessment to ensure students could complete it online. At the end of the social studies PLC, the instructional coach recapped each member's assignments and reminded them of the next PLC deadline. By the end of the PLC, each social studies teacher had agreed to create, revise, and/or review two instructional strategies or lessons.

The meeting promptly started on time and ended early, thus adhering to the meeting norms. The PLC was purposeful and engaged in their work aligning to their meeting norms. The PLC followed the agenda, were mindful of the pacing and time, and used their technology as a learning tool. Furthermore, the PLC's dialogue aligned to the meeting norms of building collective efficacy as a team and learning *together as professionals.* Working as a team, the PLC held each other accountable, was reflective, open to others, and open to new ideas.

Focus on student learning. A focus on learning theme materialized early in the PLC observation, clearly indicating the PLCs commitment to making student learning their priority. By concentrating on identifying what they believed students must know and be able to do, they intentionally monitored the evidence of student learning. Throughout the unstructured observation, the PLC focused on the essential knowledge and skills students must learn and master. The four PLC questions were listed on the agenda (see Figure 4.3). I observed the PLC using the questions throughout the observation, explicitly questions 1, 2, and 3. The use of the PLC questions supported the notion that the PLC focuses on what students should know and be able to do (PLC-Q1) and what evidence they would use to determine mastery (PLC-Q2). They intentionally discussed methods for interventions for students not mastering the content (PLC-Q3).

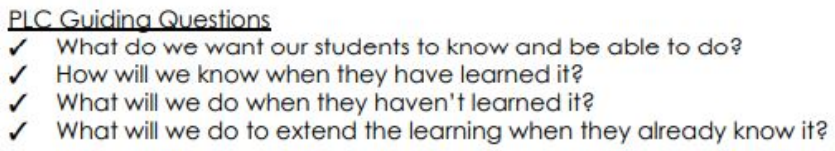
PLC Guiding Questions
✓ What do we want our students to know and be able to do?
✓ How will we know when they have learned it?
✓ What will we do when they haven't learned it?
✓ What will we do to extend the learning when they already know it?

Figure 4.3 Practical Junior High Social Studies PLC Questions

In another exchange, the team discussed using another performance assessment. When River, the assistant principal, inquired whether the content was part of the unit's

essential standards, Luna replied, “It’s not significant on STAAR.” Consequently, Kyla recommended that the team spend more time on the next performance assessment to set the context for the rest of the year, and everyone readily agreed. This specific example illustrates how this collaborative team analyzed the upcoming lessons, reflected upon importance, and resolved to abandon the performance assessment to focus on the students' essential knowledge and skills.

Another explicit example representing a focus on learning was evident when River asked, “What TEKS are essential for this unit?” Luna replied, “8.1A, 8.2A, 8.3A, 8.7C, 8.10B, 8.10C, 8.11A, 8.12B, 8.12C, and 8.23A.” This aspect of the conversation illustrates the PLC utilizing the PLC question 1, what do we want students to know and be able to do and demonstrates a focus on student learning (see Figure 4.3) (DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016). Also observed during the meeting, the instructional coach and the assistant principal asked how they were going to teach a specific TEKS and was it the same way as the last year. The PLC’s response explained the new instructional strategy included a task board with built-in scaffold activities for ELL students that introduced academic vocabulary and the main concepts, indicating the group’s intentionality in regard to ELL students. River’s consequent reminder that the team bring their finished tasks to the next PLC “for critique and feedback before presenting materials to students” illustrated mutual accountability and a focus on learning. The PLC team exhibited multiple examples demonstrating their commitment to focusing on student learning.

Evidence of student learning. Empirical evidence gathered during the observation indicates the social studies PLC purposefully seeks timely, relevant evidence

of student learning and reflects upon whether their practices contributed to that learning. Conversations specifically targeted what and how common formative assessments would inform their work and next steps. For example, Harper asked the team, "How are we keeping track of formative assessment data?" Responses included utilizing performance assessments and Google quizzes aligned to the essential standards and described the process for collecting and evaluating student and standard data. The social studies PLC team referenced utilizing common formative assessments four times during the unstructured observation. Comments like, "what [evidence] will you use to draft students" and "bring student [work] samples to the next PLC so we can discuss them and enter into our spreadsheet with the CFA [common formative assessment] data" demonstrated the PLC's commitment to using student multiple pieces of evidence to support student learning. Conversations included how they would use the student data and how they would reflect on the instructional strategies used to gather the evidence.

A final point regarding the social studies' PLC concentration on student results emphasized specific dialogue regarding English language learners. Regarding formative assessments, Kyla articulated that utilizing both the Google quiz in connection with the performance assessment would give her more informative data regarding her ELLs. The conversation included how the multiple sources of student data-enhanced her ability to "tweak the instruction to make sure they are getting the vocabulary and content." Kyla further indicated that the performance assessment provided more accurate information on her ELLs' understanding of content. The written work alleviated the possibilities of students guessing as they might do on multiple-choice items. The discussion ended with the social studies PLC agreeing to use both forms of student evidence of learning and

deciding to bring student formative assessment samples to the next PLC to enter into their student data tracking form.

Effective systems of intervention. Practical Junior High established tight, effective intervention and enrichment methods through the Getting All I Need (G.A.I.N.) program to support a results-orientated culture. Each week PLC teams use common formative assessment data to determine which students need interventions or enrichments during the G.A.I.N. advisory period. The PLC referenced G.A.I.N throughout the hour and twenty-six-minute observation five times outside the dedicated G.A.I.N. discussion noted on the agenda. Based on the G.A.I.N draft board, 83% of the 77 students identified for intervention based on the data collected due to this conversation were ELL students. Although the G.A.I.N. program is intended for all students, the majority of identified students drafted were ELL students. The most compelling evidence supporting Practical Junior High and the social studies PLC team's effective system of intervention and culture of results is illustrated in the G.A.I.N. process graphic describing its program (see Figure 4.4).

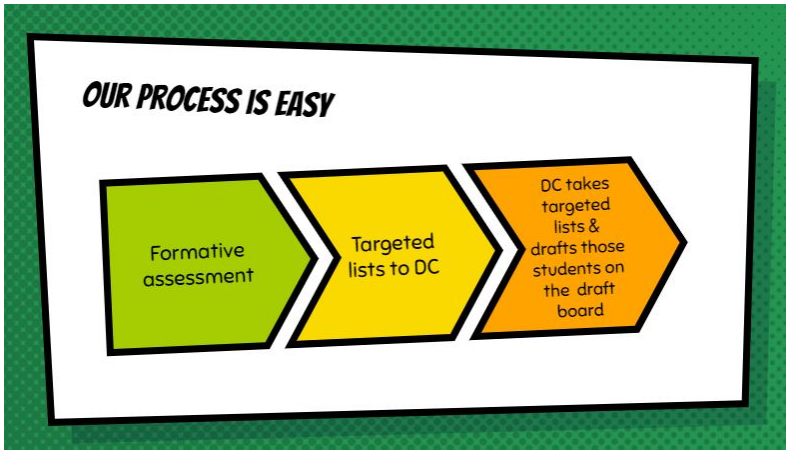

Figure 4.4 Practical Junior High's G.A.I.N. Process

The quantitative and qualitative data collected during the reconnaissance phase unveiled crucial information that served as the foundation for the evaluation phase's data. The quantitative student academic and demographic data provided critical information regarding ELL students' instructional needs during the next phase of the action research cycle. They comprise a large part of the 8th grade, are generally economically disadvantaged, and few move beyond *Beginning* TELPAS ratings. While the student data could have presented a significant barrier for the PLC, the quantitative data gathered from the pre-Collective Efficacy scale revealed that the PLC had relatively high collective efficacy beliefs. The data showed the PLC believes in their abilities to motivate and positively impact student achievement. Finally, the unstructured qualitative observation shed significant light on the setting, purpose, behaviors, interactions, and communication of the social studies PLC. Data collected in this observation resulted in three emerging themes – a collaborative culture, a focus on learning, and a culture dedicated to results.

Evaluation Phase

During this study's evaluation phase, I examined the PLC actions and endeavors and impact on English language learners' academic achievement through analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to determine if the intervention, the social studies PLC, produced the desired outcomes and answered the research questions (Ivankova, 2015). The quantitative data included multiple surveys: the collective efficacy scale, characteristics of collaborative leadership and enabling conditions for collective efficacy, one structured PLC observation, and student academic data. Qualitative data collected

and analyzed during this phase included individual and focus group interviews conducted through Google forms.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Post-Collective Efficacy. The participants completed the post-Collective Efficacy Scale survey; the data was used to evaluate whether participation in the PLC had affected their beliefs, values, and thoughts regarding collective efficacy increased due to participating in this PLC. The post-Collective Efficacy Scale was an identical survey administered during the Reconnaissance phase as the pre-Collective Efficacy Scale. Both were administered and assessed to determine the perceived levels of collective efficacy beliefs of both the teachers and instructional leaders at the end of the action research study. The 12-item instrument measured an equal number of both positive and negative beliefs and perceptions within two categories: group competence and task analysis on a six-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6) (Goddard & Hoy, 2003). The same process was utilized to analyze the post-survey the pre-survey. Negatively worded items were reverse coded, responses were totaled and averaged for all 12-items for each participant. The data revealed the eighth-grade social studies PLC's post-level perceived collective efficacy mean score was 4.74 (SD=0.38), showing a slight increase in their collective efficacy, beginning mean score of 4.63 (SD=0.60) (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Pre-and Post-CES Comparison

N		Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Min	Max
Pre Mean	7	4.63	.22709793	4.67	3.50[a]	.60084464	1.92	3.50	5.42
Post Mean	7	4.74	.14513892	4.83	4.83	.38400149	1.16	4.17	5.33

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Next, the collected efficacy positive and negative group competence and task analysis means were processed. Scores were combined and compared for the positive group competence levels; the post group competence means increased from 4.71 to 5.05. The pre-and post-positive task analysis average scores were the lowest of the four categories ranging from 3.71 to 3.90 (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Pre-and Post-Collective Efficacy Scale Category Comparison

Category	**Pre-Collective Efficacy Scale Mean**	**Post- Collective Efficacy Scale Mean**
Group Competence-	5.24	5.00
Group Competence +	4.71	5.05
Task Analysis-	4.86	5.00
Task Analysis+	3.71	3.90
Total	**4.63**	**4.74**

Enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy survey. Participants took the enabling conditions for collective efficacy survey during the evaluation phase in response to the global pandemic. The survey assessed the six enabling characteristics responsible for fostering a culture of collective teacher efficacy. The 18-item survey measured each of the six categories equally on a six-point scale ranging from *strongly*

disagree (1) to *strongly agree* (6). Responses were organized to determine the mean for each of the 18-items to determine the mean score. The total sample's mean score was 5.13, with a 0.36 standard deviation (see Table 4.7).

I then coded each question to align with one of the six categories to assess each of the six categories' combined mean score. The breakdown of scores for each of the six categories reveals Practical Junior High's leadership is responsive to the campus's needs as indicated by a 5.57 mean score, the highest of all the categories (see Table 4.7). Further analysis revealed that 100% of the participants *Strongly Agreed* (6.0) that the leaders show concern for staff. The lowest mean score was noted in the *Cohesive Staff* category, with a 4.90 mean.

Table 4.7 Enabling Conditions for Collective Teacher Efficacy

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Advanced Teacher Influence	4.95	0.29
Cohesive Staff	4.90	0.07
Effective System of Intervention	5.43	0.12
Goal Consensus	4.95	0.24
Responsive Leadership	5.57	0.31
Teacher Knowledge	5.00	0.31
Total	**5.13**	**0.36**

Characteristics of Collaborative Leadership Continuum. The 20-item survey was divided into five equal sections requiring participants to select answers based on where they believe their collective inquiry team's position is along a continuum ranging from Beginning (1), Developing (2), Applying (3), and Innovating (4). The collaborative

leadership continuum is grounded in leadership practices instead of teaching practices, and participants assess the team's position along the collective inquiry continuum.

I categorized the responses to determine the mean and standard deviation for the 20-item survey and computed the total sample's mean score of 3.14 with a 0.22 standard deviation (see Table 4.8). Further, breaking down the data into two groups established an intriguing trend in the data that revealed a distinguishable difference in perceptions between the teacher and instructional group. The teacher group's collective responses perceive their socials studies PLC closer to the Innovating level on the continuum as indicated by a mean of 3.50 (see Table 4.8). In contrast, the instructional support group identified the social studies PLC team closer to the Developing level with a 2.78 mean score.

Table 4.8 Characteristics of Collaborative Leadership

Category	**Teacher Mean**	**Instructional Mean**	**Total Mean**
Collaborative	3.50	2.75	3.13
Data-Driven Process	3.33	2.67	3.00
Evidence	3.75	3.00	3.38
Learning Stance	3.42	2.67	3.04
Reflective	3.50	2.83	3.17
Total	**3.50**	**2.78**	**3.14**

Structured PLC Observation. At the end of the study, I conducted one structured observation of the PLC that lasted an hour and thirty-eight minutes. This was another adjustment due to the pandemic, as I had initially intended to conduct 3 quantitative structured observations at the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

However, due to the global pandemic, only one structured observation was conducted. Six of the seven participants were present for the observation, including the three teacher participants, the instructional coach, the assistant principal, and the principal.

This observation recorded the frequency of the professional learning community's behaviors and actions on a checklist. The recorded meeting allowed me to examine the behaviors and actions multiple times as I captured them via tally marks. I entered the data into a spreadsheet and created a pivot table to calculate each category's sum. This observation's empirical data affirmed the data from the quantitative surveys and the baseline qualitative unstructured observation at the beginning of the action research study. Evidence of the PLC structure was noted 36 times. The three Big Ideas of PLCs (collaborative culture, focus on learning, and a results orientation) were observed 63 times, and evidence of collective inquiry was detected 21 times (see Table 4.9). This data affirms the application of the embedded PLC's systems and processes. This data clearly demonstrated a collaborative culture focused on students' results within constructs of the job-embedded professional learning community period.

Table 4.9: Structured Observation

Category	**SUM of Number**
Professional Learning Community Structure	36
Professional Learning Community Big Ideas	63
Collective Inquiry	21
Total	**120**

Student Achievement Data. The final piece of quantitative data was used primarily to answer research question number two as it correlates the study's attempt to

ascertain how and to what extent the PLC impacted ELL student assessment data. Since the state assessment (STAAR) was canceled due to the pandemic, I compared student outcomes on the district-created, curriculum-based quarterly summative assessments. The quarterly summative assessments are criterion-referenced tests used to assess mastery of the curriculum standards taught within each nine-week instructional period. They are aligned with the state assessment, thus increasing content validity and reliability

English language learners' mean score on the first district-created quarterly assessment, administered during the study's evaluation phase, was 45. At the end of the study, ELL students' mean scores had increased to 52 on the second quarterly summative assessment (see Table 4.10). The data reflects a 7-point increase in the students' mean scores between the start and the end of the evaluation phase.

Table 4.10 English Language Learner Comparative Assessment Data

EL Flag	QSA #1 Mean Score	QSA #2 Mean Score	Difference between QSA #1 and QSA #2
Total	45	52	+7

As noted earlier in the reconnaissance phase discussion, some ELL students participated in virtual instruction due to the pandemic, while some attended face-to-face instruction. Regardless of the instructional setting, student assessment scores increased between the two quarterly summative assessments by an average range of three to twelve points (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11 English Language Learner Assessment Data by Instructional Model

Current Learning Model Commitment	QSA #1 Mean Score	QSA #2 Mean Score	Difference between QSA #1 & QSA #2
Face to Face Total	41	53	+12
Virtual Total	48	51	+3
Grand Total	**45**	**52**	**+7**

Qualitative Data

Individual interviews. Individual semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions focused on three specific topics: professional learning communities, collective inquiry, and collective efficacy were administered to the teacher and instructional support participants. In response to the global pandemic, the interview methodology shifted from in-person interviews to individual electronic surveys. The teacher survey questions were divided into professional learning communities, collective inquiry, and collective efficacy (see Appendix D). The instructional administrator survey mirrored the same structure as the teacher interview (see Appendix E). However, the language differed between the two interview groups resulting in specific data needed to triangulate the quantitative data related to professional learning communities, collective inquiry, and collective efficacy.

This data provided additional insight into the perceived levels of collective efficacy and collective inquiry of the professional learning communities. The individual interviews contributed to answering research question number one. The data was collected, analyzed, and coded for both sets of interview questions and organized into categories to ascertain emerging themes.

Teacher interview. Several themes emerged from the teachers' data, exhibiting a clear purpose for their team: a focus on student success, a collaborative culture built upon trust and respect, reflection on student data, and instructional strategies to ensure all students grow.

Overwhelmingly the teacher's responses exemplify and embody a culture of collective efficacy built on familial collaboration, trust, shared responsibilities, and shared goals. Comments such as “we are a well-bonded family” that “value one another” indicate that the PLC members feel a close kinship. Trust and shared responsibilities are instrumental to the successful working relationship amongst this PLC, as demonstrated by comments saying that trust “is a huge factor” and “if we did not trust each other, we would have an enormous extra workload trying to work as individuals and not a team.” The teachers indicated their collaborative purpose of ensuring that all students are successful by comments such as “all students receive quality instruction” and a desire “to help us meet the needs of all students.” They also mentioned wanting to stay “focused on the students and how to get the best out of them.”

The data emphasized a deeply rooted culture in which the social studies teachers focused on student success and sharing instructional strategies resulting in professional learning and growth. Luna indicated the team utilizes the “backwards design process to predict what may trip up students and discuss ways to help them with those concepts.” The PLC illustrated a deep commitment to student learning as demonstrated by comments such as, “We spend hours communicating how to get every student to achieve high levels.” Additionally, the social studies PLC exhibits a culture of professional learning within their team, as seen in comments regarding ways to “help students with

tough concepts and “we are willing to try new things to help students succeed.” Also, the PLC explained how they learn from each other “we learn best practices from each other” and “all members of the PLC bring ideas to the group and give input.” Sometimes this focus resulted in heated debates about the “level of difficulty of each assignment” and whether “ELLs can comprehend and learn new academic vocabulary.” Furthermore, the PLC evaluates ELL data to determine if their lessons need to “change, edit, . . . or add readings, videos, political cartoons, or processing activities to ensure comprehension and understanding."

Also, the teachers’ comments illustrated an intentional focus on student results, including discussing evidence of student learning and effective interventions. The social studies team’s responses indicated intentionality in analyzing student's data, whether used to determine which TEKS “need to be spiraled back into current lessons” or “which students will be drafted for G.A.I.N.” The data emphasize a deeply rooted culture in which the PLC focuses on student success and how they share instructional strategies resulting in professional learning and growth. This quote most notably signifies a culture of collective efficacy and collective inquiry: “We are able to learn best practices from each other.”

The social studies PLC data revealed the team’s commitment to collaboratively solving real-world problems they face as a group; they also shared individual strengths and knowledge with the group, resulting in professional growth. The responses indicated the nature in which they utilize their dedicated collaboration time to share ideas. Although they all bring different strengths to the group, “We are able to learn best

practices from each other" and continue to grow as professionals as they "are always looking for more strategies to improve learning outcomes."

Instructional administrator interviews. Similar themes emerged from instructional administration interviews, substantiating the teacher data. The instructional team provided clear expectations and embedded processes for professional learning community teams at the school. The emerging themes included collaboration and focus on student and teacher growth and learning.

The expectation for PLC teams to meet and collaborate consistently during their designated structured PLC period was shared and made clear during the interview process. Faith, the principal, stated that the PLC "is a building expectation and made clear during the hiring process." She further explained that the purpose of the protected PLC period was "to collaborate, plan instructional lessons, analyze data, design interventions, and enrichment lessons, and ensure all students grow."

Another significant comment from Faith illustrated the importance of establishing a safe environment and culture of collaboration: "You have to make a safe environment where teachers feel comfortable sharing what is working and what is not working in the classroom." Luna's comment affirmed Faith's statement, "our instructional team is supportive of our PLC…we never hear way [sic] would you want to do that." Faith and Luna's comments illustrated an environment that lends itself to teachers feeling comfortable sharing strategies and explaining pitfalls, thus opening a collaborative dialogue amongst the team.

The data revealed the importance of the PLC to meet the needs of ELL students. Furthermore, there is a campus focus on supporting English language learners. Faith indicated a myriad of staff development centered on ELL best practices and strategies. Faith also indicated the campus focus "…we are really working hard to close that [ELL] gap with intentional interventions." The Practice Junior High vision and mission aim to ensure that *ALL* students grow by the end of the year. Triangulated data from multiple sources indicated that student growth through PLC participation was a campus-wide expectation among teachers, instructional coaches, assistant principals, and principals.

Focus group interviews. Due to the global pandemic, the focus group interview was converted to an electronic survey rather than an in-person group interview. The semi-structured five-item survey explored the knowledge and perceptions of the critical issues facing the eighth-grade social studies PLC as it linked to closing the achievement gap for English language learners. All of the participants, 7 educators, individually completed the focus group survey. The focus group survey helped me understand the current reality, perceptions, needs, and understanding of collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities.

The data was analyzed by first assigning categories to each of the five questions. Questions one through three were categorized as ELL achievement gap (AG); question number four addressed processional learning community and collective inquiry (PLC-CI), and question number five related to the power of collective efficacy in closing the ELL achievement gap (CE-AG). I then grouped all responses by question, coded each answer, and analyzed the information to discover developing patterns and themes. The first theme that emerged regarding the ELL achievement gap indicated the participants'

belief systems and growth mindset in overcoming ELLs' academic challenges. A second theme involved the social studies PLC's positive role in solving local problems of practice collaboratively. Finally, this study's participants revealed a strong collective efficacy culture; they believe in their collective abilities to close the achievement gap for English language learners.

The group identified potential reasons for the achievement gap, with answers centered around instructional challenges like elevated reading levels, academic and content vocabulary, and the struggle for long-term ELL students acquiring academic language proficiency. Negative responses indicating a fixed mindset were not present in the collection of evidence.

Participants' responses indicated high expectations and growth mindset regarding ELL students. Comments regarding that the newcomer achievement gap "is sometimes huge but will actively shrink throughout the year" demonstrated confidence in the PLC's ability to improve ELL student performance. Faith, the principal, commented, "They [the PLC] do a better job than most using data to improve performance" and reveal a commitment to closing the gap "with intentional interventions."

The third question related to specific strategies the PLC utilizes to ensure ELL students are successful in social studies. Responses to the open-ended question, *What do you currently do to help English Language Learners excel in social studies?* detailed specific instructional strategies they use to help ELL students. Specific ELL strategies referenced in the responses include Kyla's comments like "front-loading academic and content vocabulary, providing students with sentence-stems, using total physical

responses (TPR)" and Carter's remark that using "visuals and images, implementing word walls for each unit, using graphic organizers" help students access the content and make meaning. These comments illustrate how the PLC helps ELL students organize and make meaning of the content while utilizing engaging instructional strategies. The PLC understands ELL student challenges and seeks and implements strategies to overcome those barriers. It is essential to note the instructional strategies reflected in their comments are useful for all students. However, this study focused solely on ELL students.

Finally, questions four and five assessed the PLC perceptions regarding collective inquiry and collective efficacy. The data collected indicates the social studies PLC affirmed their collective job is to collaborate and solve problems. For example, Luna pointed out that the "PLC is a great way to solve problems" and "sometimes it takes multiple ideas thrown out to the group to come up with a solution." Other responses indicated that analyzing student data and asking the right questions "to adjust instruction to fit the needs of the learners" were integral parts of the PLC practices and routines, as noted by Carter and River. One of the most notable comments affirmed a safe culture exists and permeates vulnerability. Luna commented, "It also takes people being honest and will [sic] to admit when something does not work and try a different approach." The data gathered from the focus group interview surveys were critical in triangulating the multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data sets. The amassed data sources collected during this study fused and bolstered the findings of this study.

Converged Findings

The data triangulated from both the reconnaissance and evaluation phases identified four themes related to the research questions:

1. Culture of collective teacher efficacy
2. Collaborative culture
3. Focus on student learning
4. Effective intervention systems

In combination, these elements appear to have a positive effect both on teacher efficacy and improving student success rates. The data indicated Practical Junior High established and nurtured the conditions necessary to foster a collaborative culture environment that focuses on student achievement and growth by implementing clear expectations, processes, and protocols, including effective intervention systems.

Enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy. Triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data from the multiple data sources was unmistakable in revealing collective teacher efficacy conditions. The campus leadership has fostered and nurtured a campus culture that embraces common goals, shared responsibilities, and clear expectations regarding teachers' roles and duties on this campus. The empirical evidence revealed a culture rooted in clear expectations for communication, participation, collaboration, and trust among the social studies PLC noted by their commitment stated norms and administration's expectations that teachers embrace and participate in professional learning. The myriad of statistical data further revealed that enabling collective teacher efficacy conditions are in place and firmly established at Practical

Junior High. Based on the comprehensive empirical and statistical data analysis, collective teacher efficacy conditions are evident and nurtured at Practical junior high.

***Collaborative culture*.** Based on the multiple data sources, the PLC embodies an authentic and successful collaborative culture built upon trust, a strong sense of familial relationships, and shared responsibilities, resulting in interdependence amongst the team. The data revealed the nature of this team's relationship as one that permeates and encourages vulnerability to share and reflect upon what worked and does not work within a safe environment. Numerous qualitative and quantitative data sets supported the social studies professional learning community's commitment to working together to ensure all students succeed at high levels. Beyond doubt, the Practical Junior High organizational structure dedicates time, space, and resources to ensure job-embedded collaboration within the school day to ensure all students' growth.

Focus on student learning. The data collected during both phases of the research process revealed the profound commitment to a collective focus on student learning and growth. The social studies team involves teachers, an instructional coach, and administrators in collaboration to ensure all students receive a guaranteed and viable curriculum through their collaborative work. The qualitative and quantitative data substantiated the team's resolve and profound comprehension of the essential knowledge and skills. They were willing to abandon lessons or activities that did not align with the crucial standards, especially if it would take time away from more critical knowledge and skills. These practices align with and support the notion of collective inquiry.

Additional evidence collected from question five of the focus group interview substantiates the myriad of qualitative and quantitative data collected regarding this

team's high collective efficacy levels. It was evident the social studies PLC values collaboration and believed that together they could grow students. Camila's statement captures the essence and nature of collective efficacy: “It is so important that everyone believes that all students can grow and are intentional in meeting students' individual needs.” The evidence indicated a collective responsibility for English language learners' growth, including teachers, campus, and district educators.

Data revealed the intentional focus on the ELL student groups' needs. The data demonstrated a campus focus on supporting English language learners and indicated a myriad of staff development centered around ELLs' best practices and strategies, as reflected in Faith’s focus group comments regarding the campus focus. According to the principal, the goal is to ensure all students “grow by the end of the year.” It was evident that student growth and PLC participation are campus-wide expectations.

Effective intervention systems and processes. Empirical and descriptive data indicates that the Practical Junior High social studies PLC utilizes a myriad of day-to-day common formative assessments as rich sources of student-learning data to inform which students are achieving academic success and which ones are not. In response to student learning evidence, the group demonstrated effective systems to ensure student mastery of essential standards through embedded, spiraled in-class instruction or through the intervention and enrichment advisory period. The PLC used relevant student data to guide their next steps and instructional strategies to successfully impact student learning.

The investigation of the social studies professional learning community revealed high levels of collective teacher efficacy and the consistent use of collective inquiry

embedded in the school culture. Additional results indicate that the deeply rooted culture and expectations contribute to closing eighth-grade social studies ELL students' achievement gap.

Interpretation of Results of the Study

The purpose of this two-phased, mixed-method action research study was to investigate the impact of a professional learning community's collective teacher efficacy and their practice of collective inquiry in closing the achievement gap of eighth-grade social studies English language learners. Numerous qualitative and quantitative data pieces culminated in answering both research questions.

The first research question asked *How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective teacher efficacy*. Established by the campus expectations and culture, the social studies professional learning community's dedicated time, process, and protocols resulted in recurring collective inquiry cycles. As a result of the cycles of collective inquiry within the professional learning community, the social studies PLC's beliefs in their collective abilities grew, resulting in increased effort and persistence, willingness to try new approaches, and increased commitment for all students to succeed. Therefore, the professional learning community's protocols fostered a culture of collective inquiry, ultimately resulting in increased collective teacher efficacy.

The second research question asked *How and to what extent a professional learning community's collective efficacy impacts student achievement on English language learners' social studies assessments*. As noted by the quantitative pre-and post-surveys, it was inferred the notably high levels of collective efficacy of the social studies

PLC demonstrated their focus on student learning and belief in intentional systems of interventions and enrichments to improve ELL students' success on social studies assessments. Once the qualitative and quantitative data was triangulated to include participants' comments, it was inferred the social studies PLC, their beliefs, and, more importantly, their actions resulted in positive growth for ELL students. The findings are consistent with Mattos et al. (2016) assertion that when a PLC aligns their actions and practices to ensure higher learning levels and are willing to revise or discontinue actions that fail to increase student learning, their focus is on learning. Based on inferences, the data indicated the PLC's processes, reflective practices, and their use of multiple sources of student data contributed to the ELL student growth. As noted earlier, ELL students' mean assessment scores increased between the two quarterly summative assessments by an average range of three to twelve points. ELL students' assessment scores increased by 7-points (see Table 4.11). Therefore, it is inferred, the PLC's collective power positively impacted ELL students' achievement on social studies assessments, consequently answering research question number two.

Conclusion

This mixed-method action research study was based on a purposeful sample of seven participants representing one of eight junior highs in RISD. The English language learner student population at Practical Junior High closely mirrored the district's student demographics. The data suggested that high functioning, well-designed professional learning communities consistently using collective inquiry as part of the PLC process ultimately result in high collective teacher efficacy levels that positively impact student achievement. Chapter five reveals the conclusions drawn from the data collected in the

study. The findings will be summarized, implications for future research will be addressed, challenges faced throughout the intervention period, and an action plan discussed to promote further instruction using guided inquiry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Sanchez (2017), Texas is ranked number two, in the nation, for English language learners in the state's public schools. Twenty percent of the state's 1.2 million students are second language learners and demonstrate a large academic achievement gap compared to their native English-speaking peers (Sanchez, 2017). According to the district databases, statistics from RISD and Practical Junior High reflect that ELL students make up over a quarter of the student population and mirror the national and state trends regarding English language learners. Renowned researchers contend that teachers have the single most significant impact on student achievement (Bandura, 2001; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Hattie & Zierer, 2018; Knowles et al., 2015). Consequently, large ELL populations and their considerable deficit learning gap demand attention and action.

This mixed-method action research study examined the relationship between a professional learning community's collective efficacy and continuous cycles of collective inquiry in closing the English language learners' achievement gap in 8th-grade social studies. The intervention, a professional learning community, was designed to establish an environment in which educators worked together in recurring cycles of collective inquiry as action research to solve issues related to the students they serve (Mattos et al., 2016).

An in-depth literature review of adult learning theory and social cognitive theory grounded and informed this study's work and collection of qualitative and quantitative data sources. I triangulated the data collected from surveys, observations, and student demographic and academic data to ensure the comprehensive interpretation of the findings and enhance the validity of the results by the convergence of multiple data sources (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Ivankova, 2015).

The data collected during this research study answered the following questions:

1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among 8th-grade social studies teachers in a junior high?
2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?

The data clearly illustrated that enabling conditions established by the campus leadership resulted in a culture of collaboration and focus on student growth supported by effective systems of interventions and processes. The evidence collected demonstrated the PLC consistently employed recurring cycles of collective inquiry by reflecting on their instructional strategies and commitment to finding better methods to ensure student success during their dedicated PLC period.

Donohoo (2017) maintains that when teams experience success within their control, the mastery experience leads to increased collective teacher efficacy and expectations for effective performance. The commitment to student success established by the data indicates the PLC's ability to own and develop their craft through collaboration resulted in high collective teacher efficacy levels. They demonstrated a

shared belief in their collective power to positively impact ELL students, thus exemplifying high collective teacher efficacy levels. The global pandemic presented enormous and unusual instructional challenges. However, the PLC team was undeterred by the daunting tasks of teaching virtual and in-person students simultaneously and persisted in their quest to ensure academic growth for all students, as evidenced by the growth between the first and second quarterly summative assessment data. The triangulated data revealed how PLCs impacted collective inquiry and collective efficacy, thus answering question number one. Moreover, the PLC's collective power positively impacted ELL students' achievement on social studies assessments, consequently answering research question number two.

This study's results will be discussed in connection to the literature review conducted before the study, indicating how the data supports and adds to the literature. Based on this study's findings, recommendations will be presented in educational practices and implementation recommendations resulting from the data. Considerations on the mixed-method action research study will address processes and modifications that could improve the study's future replication potential. Finally, research limitations and recommendations needed for future research related to this study will be addressed.

Literature Review and Data Connections

This study was grounded in the theoretical foundations of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986b, 1997) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1968). Social cognitive theory explains human learning and motivation sources resulting in behavior changes (Bandura, 1986b) and supports the ideas of collective teacher efficacy (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Hattie, 2012; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). Bridging the theoretical foundation

with educational practice, professional learning communities functioned as a means of professional learning in regards to addressing equity and achievement gaps. The first research question explored collective teacher efficacy sources within the PLC at Practical Junior High. Knowles' adult learning theory concentrates on andragogy, the art and science of adult learning (Knowles, 1968). Comparatively, adult learning theory supports the foundation of collective inquiry within professional learning communities, which answers question one and provides inferences for research question number two (Donohoo, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016).

Social cognitive theory. Efficacy beliefs played a crucial role in influencing individual thoughts and choices and was pivotal in perpetuating individuals' resiliency when presented with challenges, like those resulting from the global pandemic (Bandura, 1986b). The global pandemic impacted educators, students, and school systems in unprecedented ways. The pandemic presented educators with numerous barriers and potential excuses for student learning results, reasons to give up trying to maximize learning, and lower expectations (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018). Donohoo, Hattie, et al. maintain when a team of teachers embody a culture of collective teacher efficacy and are presented with difficult challenges like co-seated (virtual and face-to-face) instruction simultaneously, they embrace the challenges and approach their work with intensified resolve and persistence. This study reinforced Bandura's (2001) assertation that human function is entrenched in social systems dependent on the reciprocal interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants (see Figure 2.1). Despite the many determinants presented to the 8th-grade social studies PLC, their perseverance and persistence in supporting students never waned, ultimately resulting in continued

academic growth for their ELL students (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016; Donohoo, 2014, 2017; DuFour et al., 2016; Howard, 2010; Noguera, 2019).

This study's data affirmed the importance of the six enabling conditions to foster a culture of collective efficacy, including advanced teacher influence, goal consensus, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, the responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention (Donohoo, 2017). Although researchers do not assert that enabling conditions cause things to happen but maintain they increase the likelihood things will turn out as expected and increase the possibility of establishing a culture of collective teacher efficacy within the school (Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018). The evidence collected and analyzed supports this body of research. As the social studies PLC experienced successes resulting from their collective practices, their beliefs in their abilities increased and strengthened their collective teacher efficacy.

This study's data adds to the current body of collective efficacy literature demonstrating the importance of the environmental conditions necessary to nurture and cultivate a collective teacher efficacy culture. Notwithstanding the global pandemic's challenges, the deep-seated culture at Practical Junior High empowered the 8th-grade social studies PLC to leverage the enabling conditions to ensure the ELL students experienced growth. Evidence of a shared campus goal combined with a cohesive, collaborative staff, responsive leadership, and effective intervention systems contributed to the PLC's success in achieving their goals.

Adult learning theory. Andragogy focuses on adult learning's complex nature, embedding the learner's life and work experiences into the process (Knowles, 1968; Knowles et al., 2015). Adult learning theory purports that group dynamics and self-

directed learning play a significant role in developing adult's professional growth. Knowles' adult learning theory centers on the learner's roles and needs and empowers them to control the learning process (Knowles et al., 2015).

The study affirmed the educational assumptions connected to professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2016). The PLC at Practical Junior High demonstrated efficacy in implementing the four pillars of professional learning communities. The data collected clearly illustrated evidence of a shared mission, vision, collective commitments, and shared goals among the study participants (DuFour et al., 2016; Mattos et al., 2016). Additionally, the three big ideas found within the structured PLC observation category of the same name associated with PLCs were clearly present in the evidence collected. Without a doubt, the PLC embodied a collaborative culture focused on student achievement. The culture established the framework and permeated an environment conducive to professional learning through cycles of collective inquiry.

Adult learning theory suggests adult learners need to know why the learning is essential, feel responsible for their decisions, exhibit personal agency in their readiness to learn, the knowledge is relevant to them personally, and take into account extrinsic and intrinsic motivation sources (Knowles et al., 2015). In alignment with Knowles' adult learning theory (2015), this research study provided additional insight into the notion that professional learning is a highly personalized experience that is practitioner-led, job-embedded, and encourages reflection and self-discovery (Donohoo, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Rodman, 2018; Rosenholtz, 1989). The PLC demonstrated autonomy and ownership of their professional learning through continuous cycles of collective inquiry to ensure their ELL students made progress. Thus, adding to and affirming educational

research's claim that professional learning is collaborative and personal. The data coalesced from this study to further support the notion that professional learning communities empower educators to conduct continuous cycles of collective inquiry (Donohoo, 2014; DuFour et al., 2016; Hattie, 2018; Lockwood, 2018), as evidenced by the PLC systems and functions at Practical Junior High.

This research study's findings affirmed the claim that collective inquiry is a powerful approach for perpetuating educator's knowledge, especially when they engage in cycles of inquiry as a means to examine and reflect on teaching practices and student learning (Donohoo, 2014; Donohoo, Bryen, et al., 2018; Katz & Dack, 2013; Lockwood, 2018). Moreover, the data collected upheld the literature advocating when educators engage in continuous professional learning, the results positively impact student achievement as evidenced by the data and findings (Donohoo, 2014; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Donohoo & Velasco, 2016; DuFour et al., 2016; Hattie, 2015; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). This study adds to the growing body of research examining educators' role and empowerment by ensuring the structures are in place to infuse a collaborative culture that lends itself to successful collective inquiry cycles resulting in student success (Lockwood, 2018). Additionally, the 7-point increase in the ELL students' mean scores on the quarterly summative assessments further supports the notion. It adds to the body of literature related to the power of collective inquiry.

Social cognitive theory and adult learning theory provided the theoretical foundation for this study. To build and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the troubling ELL achievement gap, the PLC embraced collective inquiry and leveraged their collective efficacy beliefs to address this problem. The use of collective inquiry within

their PLC proved a successful method to address the typical challenges students face and overcome the monumental obstacles presented by the academic, social, and emotional difficulties exasperated by the global pandemic. This study illustrated the combined power of collective efficacy and collective inquiry are compelling forces resulting in positive student success for ELL students.

Practice Recommendations and Implementation Plan

This action research examined a professional learning community's inner workings regarding their levels of collective efficacy and practices of continuous cycles of collective inquiry. This study's triangulated data affirmed the previous research that has shown high functioning professional learning communities with elevated levels of collective efficacy execute continuous cycles of collective inquiry to positively impact student achievement (Donohoo, 2014, 2017; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; DuFour et al., 2016). Their methods included reflecting on their instructional practices, evaluating multiple student data sources, and employing effective intervention systems. This study's results further illustrated the campus culture's role and significance, including a critical need for campus leadership to establish and nurture a collaborative culture.

In comparison to this study's findings, Goddard et al. (2017) found a strong correlation between the instructional culture and expectations and leadership in their mixed-method study. Similar results from both studies highlighted the importance of the culture in empowering teachers, encouraging professional learning, and risk-taking. In both studies, the culture, educational practices, and leadership resulted in instructional improvement and higher student achievement performance. Additionally, McMahon Macaluso (2017) study affirmed this study's finding and noted strong connections

between campus expectations and culture in promoting a culture of collective teacher efficacy. Likewise, this study's results found that the campus leader's role was instrumental in establishing a collaborative culture focused on student growth, intentional instruction and cultivated an atmosphere of collective responsibility and growth for students and staff. Based on this study's findings, results from similar education research, and conclusions made by Goddard et al. (2017) and McMahon Macaluso (2017) established a strong precedent for the following recommendations to improve educational practices.

Action Plan. Increasing challenges and demands on the educational system are never-ending. The knowledge and practical applications gained from this action research are essential to equipping educators with the information and skills to confront educational challenges successfully. Thus developing an action plan for sharing and implementing the converged findings from this study is necessary. Sharing the findings with district leadership is crucial to bridging the gap between the theoretical foundation and the practical implications of this studies' findings. Therefore, I propose utilizing Practical Junior High's PLC as the district model of an exemplary PLC grounded in the PLC process's fundamental constructs. Additionally, I recommend forming a Junior High PLC for principals to examine, unpack the PLC processes. This will provide them with the knowledge and skills to replicate and transfer the practices at their campuses.

A recommendation for instructional leaders who learn from this study is to equip and empower campus leadership with the knowledge and skills to effectively foster and nurture a collective teacher efficacy culture that engages in continuous cycles of collective inquiry to improve student achievement. In fact, this recommendation applies

the theoretical principles of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986b) and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1968) with the practical application and principles by designing and implementing a professional learning community (PLC) (DuFour et al., 2016). Together, they develop and grow in their knowledge and skills while resolving common problems of practices. Working collaboratively, principals could practice collective inquiry and build their own efficacy in establish strategies and procedures that will support effective PLCs at their individual schools. During this process, they could increase their knowledge and application of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986b) and the tenets of Knowles (1968) adult learning theory to common problems of practices. Empowering campus leadership with the means and techniques to establish and cultivate a culture of collective efficacy on their campuses by actively engaging in a PLC designed to model and emulate effective systems and processes support educational research and effective practices to implement and sustains change (Fullan, 2006; Senge et al., 2012).

All eight junior high campuses in RISD have common concerns and issues related to ELL students. Currently, each campus works independently to "figure out" how to adequately address ELL students' needs. The research and the findings from this study illustrated the power of working collectively rather than independently in solving local problems of practice. Collective efficacy applies to teachers, but the idea and notion extend beyond the classroom and even school buildings into all aspects of human interactions. Teams with shared beliefs in their collective abilities result in overcoming challenges and produce intended results, which are deemed more effective (Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018). Therefore, it is recommended that RISD establish a Junior High PLC

with members from each school and a focus specifically on addressing the achievement gap for English language learners.

Utilizing Practical Junior High's PLC as the exemplary model will illustrate the standard practices that must be fundamental practices high-functioning, well-designed PLCs. These constructs include and model the importance of common shared goals, visions, and missions and collaborative job-embedded practice deemed necessary by DuFour et al. (2016). Engaging in collective inquiry cycles and cultivating collective efficacy capacity will equip participants from both PLCs to replicate this process with their campus teams. This recommendation affirms the foundations of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2015) and social cognitive (Bandura, 1995a; 1995b) theories by increasing the transferability of the knowledge and application of enabling conditions that cultivate and foster a collective efficacy culture—simultaneously, engaging the learner in personalized professional learning rather than merely having knowledge imparted upon them.

This research study and the encapsulated body of research revealed significant instructional implications and practices that necessitate sharing the findings within the large urban school district and educators outside of the district, state, and nation. This problem of practice is not unique to RISD or Practical Junior High or to English language learners. The findings are relevant and timely for districts and schools aiming to ensure equitable opportunity to learn for a range of marginalized students. Action research is a type of practitioner research that improves instructional practices associated with the localized problems of practice and is not transferable. However, the new understandings and conclusions could be of significant interest for schools of similar demographics and

inform others in solving their own problems. (Efron & Ravid, 2020; Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Reflection on action research

Initially, action research seemed a foreign concept to me. However, as I grew more familiar with its language and processes, I realized that I had practiced action research by implementing continuous cycles of collective inquiry to solve impending educational issues throughout my academic career. Efron and Ravid (2020) maintain that action research is simply a type of research in which practitioners investigate and seek to understand localized problems of practice to improve their instructional practices (Ivankova, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Understanding that action research conducted by educators serves as a bridge between theoretical research and instructional practices reinforced the methodology for this mixed-method action research study. The nature of this study, along with the research questions, warranted an action research methodology.

This action research examined an 8th-grade social studies PLC that demonstrated academic success with ELL students. This study aimed to investigate the PLC's systems, processes, and instructional practices that promoted success for their ELL students in social studies. I researched the impact of the PLC's collective teacher efficacy in connection with the practice of collective inquiry within their PLC to determine if there was a connection to student success on standardized social studies assessments. This study found a strong correlation between the PLC's collective teacher efficacy beliefs and their continuous collective inquiry cycles on their ELL students' success. The findings

also affirmed the theoretical frameworks that served as the foundation of this research study, adult learning theory, and social cognitive theory.

I hypothesized early that collective teacher efficacy would be an influential factor in student success. However, I did not understand or realize the collective power of the school culture, campus expectations, and the fidelity of the PLC's implementation of systems and processes in relation to collective teacher efficacy. Nor did I anticipate the role and impact of the campus leadership in establishing and fostering an environment conducive to collective efficacy.

This study's completion and findings have provided enormous professional and personal value and knowledge that will serve me throughout my academic career and personal life. The results helped me grow as an individual, educator, and action researcher. Personally, the accomplishment of completing this study was fundamental to me as a person. Professionally, the action research skills gained during this study will propel me forward as a leading educator seeking positive educational changes. The findings and the proposed implementation plan will positively impact ELL students in RISD. However, some design and results limitations of this study should be considered when reviewing the results.

Study Limitations and Recommendation for Future Study

One notable limitation of this study was the impact the global pandemic had on the research design and data collection methods. COVID-19 restrictions prohibited face-to-face interactions with the PLC members. Consequently, individual and focus group interviews were transformed into electronic surveys, which limited the back-and-forth nature of interviews. In-person interviews would have allowed me to dig deeper into the

answers and to ask follow-up questions. However, that was not possible. Increased challenges resulting from the global pandemic reduced the researcher and educators' time and capacity to commit fully to the action research study. During the data collection and evaluation phase of this research study, I contracted Covid-19. This illness robbed four critical weeks from me during this research study. Additionally, the educators were consumed with navigating a continuously changing educational setting and the instructional environment resulting from the pandemic's effects.

Other limitations associated with this study include the eight-week timeframe for the action research study's execution and the sample size. The abbreviated time and small sample size inhibited teachers' potential to learn to conduct collective inquiry action research that could have led to more significant individual growth and development and increased efficacy. Moreover, extra additional time could have allowed for follow-up questions about the data and interview questions. For instance, the disparity between mean scores of the teacher and instructional support participant's answers on the collaborative leadership survey characteristics is one area I wish I had prodded deeper. Perhaps replicating this action research study throughout a full school year combined with additional professional learning communities would have yielded different results.

Finally, there was also the limitation of an inability to identify other factors that may have affected collective efficacy and student achievement during the same eight-week period. For example, the failure to identify other professional learning opportunities that participants may have accessed during the action research study may have skewed findings.

Collective efficacy and collective inquiry are well-documented constructs that are proven to increase student achievement (Donohoo, 2014, 2017; Donohoo, Hattie, et al., 2018; Hattie, 2015; Mattos et al., 2016). Relatively, few studies show the impact of collective efficacy and collective inquiry of a PLC in connection to campus leadership and student achievement (Goddard et al., 2017; McMahon, 2017; Ryba, 2018). Further investigations into the sustainability of collective teacher efficacy during a worldwide pandemic are needed to determine what impact, if any, occurs as a result of unprecedented barriers and challenges.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed-method action research study was to investigate the power of collective teacher efficacy and collective inquiry in closing the achievement gap of ELL students in 8th-grade social studies. Fostering collective teacher efficacy and empowering teachers through professional learning communities are fundamental constructs to modern education systems. This study's triangulated data revealed how well-designed, high-functioning PLCs with high levels of collective teacher efficacy and utilization of continuous cycles of collective inquiry positively impact ELL academic achievement. While this study's results are limited, the findings are significant and worthy of review and should ignite future studies.

Social cognitive theory and adult learning theory established a model for how individuals learn, interact, and are motivated. Using researched-based practices, educators have the power and tools to influence behavior, thinking, and the environment to impact student achievement positively. Establishing and nurturing a culture of collective teacher efficacy directly affects student achievement.

Specifically, this study explored the connection between collective teacher efficacy and collective inquiry of a single PLC. It found that the campus culture, expectations, and leadership played a significant part in cultivating collective teacher efficacy. Moreover, the current study identified the enabling conditions of advanced teacher influence, shared common goals, teachers' knowledge about one another's work, cohesive staff, the responsiveness of leadership, and effective systems of intervention that played a fundamental role in establishing and nurturing the collective teacher efficacy at Practical Junior High.

Although much research documents the positive impact of such interventions on student achievement, the body of research is seriously lacking in the sustainability of collective teacher efficacy, especially in unprecedented times. The current study addressed this call to action and advanced the understanding of collective teacher efficacy's relationship and sustainability to impact student achievement positively, even in unprecedented times. This study's results further add to the research literature by affirming previous research related to collective teacher efficacy and collective inquiry.

The strength of the results of this study lies in the practical application of educators' daily work. In the context of the modern educational system, plagued by high stakes testing and unprecedented challenges resulting from the worldwide pandemic, education can feel like never-ending checklists of mundane activities and mandates. Success, at times, is defined by compliance rather than intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to ensure all students achieve success. Teachers are the heart and soul of the educational system. However, campus leadership's role in fostering and nurturing the culture and

environment is critical in ensuring the time, space, and resources promote a collaborative culture that focuses on students learning and success.

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APPENDIX A

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY-SCALE

CE-Scale
Short Form

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Teachers in the school are able to get through to the most difficult students.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
3. If a child doesn't want to learn teachers here give up.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
4. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
5. Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
6. These students come to school ready to learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
7. Home life provides so many advantages that students here are bound to learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
9. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
10. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
11. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
12. Drug and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

Figure A.1 Collective Efficacy Scale -Short Form

APPENDIX B

ACTION RESEARCH OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FORM

Action Research Observation Protocol Form

Date: Time frame:	Location:	Participants: (#, gender, role)
Research question (s):		
Purpose of observation:		Activities:
How does this observation reflect what I want to know?		
What is important here?		
What would I want to focus on more closely if and when I return to this setting?		
Descriptive Field Notes		Reflective Field Notes

Figure B.1 Action research observation protocol form.

APPENDIX C

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Structured Observation Checklist

Date: Time frame:	Location:	Participants: (#, gender, role)
Research question (s):		

Behavior	Observed
PLC Structure	
Shared Mission (CE) Why do we exist? Ensuring high levels of learning for ***all*** students. All means all.	
Shared Vision (CE) What must we become? Creating the structures and culture to ensure all students learn.	
Collective Commitments (CE) How must we behave? Clarifying how each individual will contribute to achieving the vision.	
Shared Goals (CE and CI) Which steps must we take, and when? Identifying indicators to monitor progress.	
Big Ideas	
#1: A focus on learning	
Student learning is the fundamental purpose of the PLC.	
Every policy, practice, and procedure aligns with this question: Will doing this lead to higher levels of learning for our students?	
PLC Q#1 - What do we want students to learn and be able to do	
#2: Collaborative culture	
Commitment to working collaboratively to achieve outcomes. **(CE)**	
Every member of the team works and contributes equally to achieve outcomes. **(CE)**	
Dedicated job-embedded time, resources, & conversations.	
Teachers work collaboratively rather than in isolation **(CE)**	
Teachers have clarified the commitments to each other and how they work together (**CE**)	
#3: Results orientation	
Purposefully seeks timely, relevant information-evidence of learning. **(CI)**	
PLC Q#2 how will we know if students learned it; **(CI)**	
PLC Q#3 how will we respond when students do not learn it **(CE/CI)**	
Collective Inquiry	
Evidence of learning confirms which practices are increasing student learning and which actions are not.	
How can we teach this idea to ensure student mastery?	

Figure C.1 Structured observation checklist.

APPENDIX D

TEACHER PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Participant Interview Questions

Date: Time frame:	Location	Participants: (#, gender, role)
Research question (s):		
Professional Learning Community: 1. What is the purpose of the 8th-grade social studies professional learning community (PLC)? 2. Describe the collaboration and culture of your PLC? 3. How is your PLC used to improve student achievement? 4. How is your PLC used to close the achievement gap for English language learners? 5. How does your PLC collaborate to identify student learning outcomes for English language learners? 6. How does your PLC team collaborate to analyze student data to close the achievement gap? 7. How does your PLC use student data to respond when English language learners do not meet learning outcomes? 8. How has collaboration in PLC impacted your instructional teaching practices for English language learners? 9. How does trust impact collaboration within your PLC? 10. How does your PLC team collaborate to support the mission and vision of the school?		
Collective Inquiry: 1. Explain your knowledge and understanding of collective inquiry as it relates to closing the achievement gap. 2. How does your PLC team use collective inquiry to close the achievement gap for English language learners? 3. How does collective inquiry help your PLC team improve instruction and achievement for English language learners? 4. How does your PLC team use collective inquiry to support the campus mission and vision? 5. How does the instructional support team (instructional coach, digital coach, assistant principal, and/or principal) support or promote collective inquiry to close the achievement gap for English language learners during PLC meetings?		
Collective Efficacy: 1. Describe your knowledge and understanding of collective efficacy. 2. How influential are you individually in closing the achievement gap for English language learners? 3. How influential is your PLC in closing the achievement gap for English language learners?		

Figure D.1 Teacher participant interview questions.

APPENDIX E

INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Instructional Interview Questions

Date: Time frame:	Location:	Participants: (#, gender, role)
Research question (s): 1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among teachers? 2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?		
Professional Learning Community: 1. What are your expectations for professional learning communities (PLC) on your campus? 2. How do you ensure that teachers use collaboration to examine and improve their teaching practice? 3. How do you ensure that teachers collaborate to improve their professional learning? 4. How do ensure teachers use their PLC to close the achievement gap for English language learners? 5. How do you support the PLC in identifying student learning outcomes for English language learners? 6. How do you support teachers in the PLC to analyze student data to close the achievement gap? 7. How do you support and monitor the PLC is responding to student data when English language learners do not meet learning outcomes?		
Collective Inquiry: 1. Explain your knowledge and understanding of collective inquiry as it relates to closing the achievement gap. 2. What is the role of the administrator to ensure collective inquiry? 3. How do you guide teachers to use collective inquiry to guide the development of instructional practices during the PLC meetings? 4. How do you collaborate with teachers to improve their teaching and learning during the PLC team meeting? 5. How do you collaborate with teachers to ensure they use evidence of learning to guide instructional decisions and close the achievement gap? 6. How does your PLC team use collective inquiry to close the achievement gap for English language learners? 7. How does your PLC team use collective inquiry to support the campus and district's mission and vision?		
Collective Efficacy: 1. Describe your knowledge and understanding of collective efficacy. 2. How influential are you individually in closing the achievement gap for English language learners? 3. How influential is your PLC in closing the achievement gap for English language learners?		

Figure E.1 Instructional participant interview questions.

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Focus Group Interview Questions

Date: Time frame:	Location:	Participants: (#, gender, role)
Research question (s): 1. How and to what extent will collective inquiry impact collective efficacy among teachers? 2. How and to what extent will a professional learning community's collective efficacy impact student achievement on the 8th-grade social studies state assessment for English language learners?		
Closing the achievement gap: 1. What are your thoughts regarding the current achievement gap for English language learners in 8th-grade social studies? **2.** What do you feel prevents English language learners from performing at the same level as their native English-speaking peers? 3. What do you currently do to help English language learners excel in social studies?		
Professional Learning Community/Collective Inquiry/Collective Efficacy: 1. What are your thoughts regarding the professional learning community's role in solving local problems of practices through collective inquiry? 2. What are your thoughts regarding the power of collective efficacy in closing the achievement gap for English language learners?		

Figure F.1 Focus group interview questions.

APPENDIX G

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Characteristics of Collaborative Leadership Continuum

Directions: Mark an X along each continuum that you believe best represents your collaborative inquiry team regarding each statement.

Collaborative	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Applying**	**Innovating**
Norms that enable effective communication are in place.				
When meeting as a learning team, our work together is owned by every member of the team				
Decision-making authority is dispersed among individuals.				
Diversity of opinion is promoted and evident in our joint work.				
Reflective	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Applying**	**Innovating**
Routines that encourage and enable individuals to consider and reflect on solutions to their problems of practice are in place.				
Change agents consistently use evidence to self-assess and reflect.				
Team members experiment with small moves and reflect on how well they are doing.				
Actions and interactions are more intentional based on reflection.				
Learning Stance	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Applying**	**Innovating**
Team members not only promote but fully participate in each stage of the Collaborative Inquiry cycle				
Leaders' time together is focused on teachers' learning and/or leadership practice.				
Team members are open to new ideas and actively seek new information from relevant sources to help inform next steps.				
Team members find value in the process.				
Process is Driven by Practice	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Applying**	**Innovating**
Our work involves examining our own and each other's practice.				
We use the practice to discover strategies that work.				
We draw on outside ideas in relation to how they relate to our situation.				
Work is connected to and impacting the work of the professional learning community and wider school improvement efforts.				
Actions Informed by Evidence	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Applying**	**Innovating**
Analysis of relevant and current data is deemed important and is an ongoing priority for the team.				
The team considers teaching practices (in light of student data) and determines approaches that are successful and those that need to be changed.				
The team considers multiple sources of evidence to gain a well-rounded picture of their inquiry.				
Current student learning data is collaboratively examined and provides a basis for considering next steps for the team's inquiry.				

Figure G.1 Characteristics of collaborative leadership continuum.

APPENDIX H

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Enabling Conditions for Collective Efficacy Survey

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Teachers are entrusted to make important decisions on school-wide issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Improvement goals are established and understood by all faculty.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Administrators help us carry out our duties effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The staff holds shared beliefs about effective instructional approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers are provided authentic leadership opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I know about the classroom management strategies my colleagues use in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. There is consensus on school goals amongst staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. The staff agrees about what constitutes effective classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The leaders show concern for the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. There is a system in place to ensure high levels of success for all students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The staff agrees about assessment strategies that are the most effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There are systems in place for tracking and monitoring at-risk students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I know about the feedback my colleagues provide to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The leaders protect the staff from issues that detract us from focusing on learning and teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers have a voice in matters related to school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Students meet with success because of interventions that are in place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I am aware of the teaching practices used by others on staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Teachers actively participate in setting school-wide improvement goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6

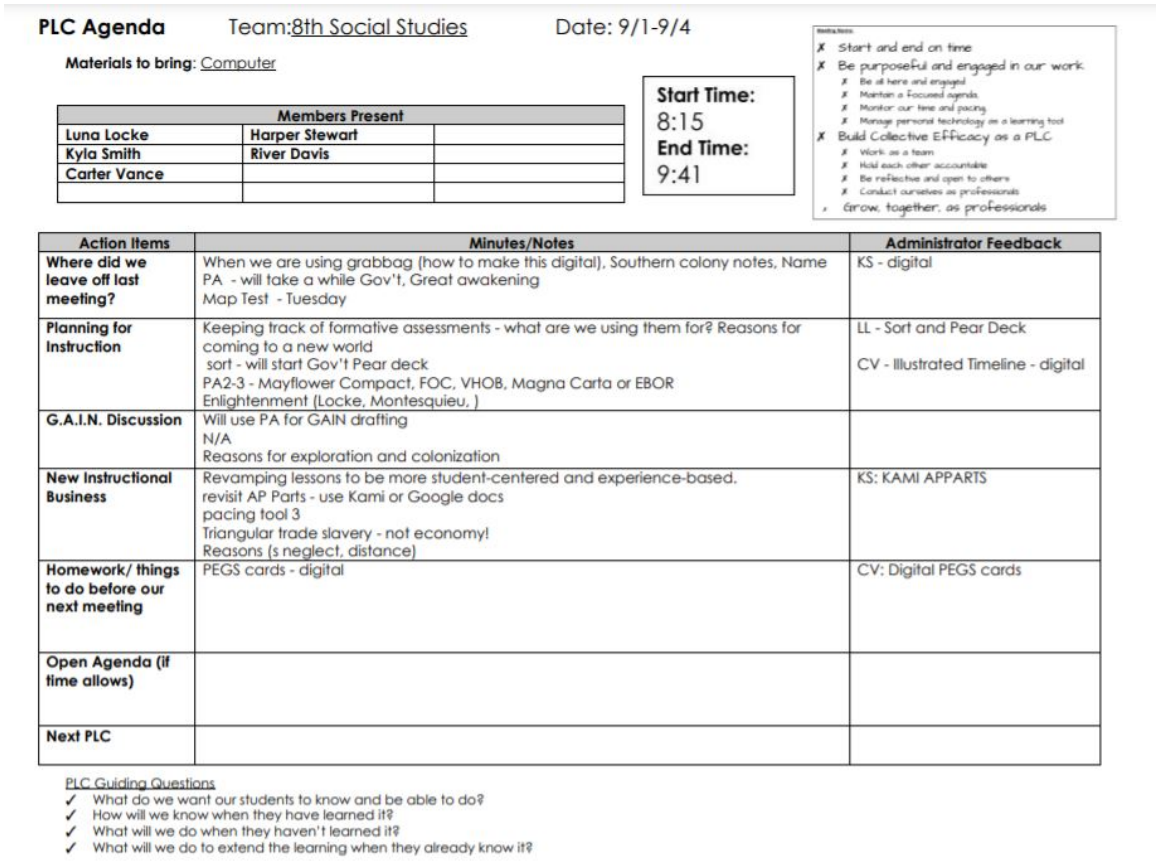
Overall Score – sum of the scores for all 18 items divided by 18.
Advanced Teacher Influence: Sum of items 1, 5 and 15 _____ /3
Goal Consensus: Sum of items 2, 7 and 18 _____ /3
Teachers' Knowledge/Work: Sum of items 6, 13 and 17 ____ /3
Cohesive Staff: Sum of items 4, 8 and 11_____ /3
Responsiveness of Leadership: Sum of items 3, 9 and 14 _____ /3
Effective Systems of Intervention: Sum of items 10, 12 and 16 _____ /3

Figure H.1 Enabling conditions for collective efficacy survey.

APPENDIX I

PJH SOCIAL STUDIES PLC AGENDA EXAMPLE

Practical Junior High PLC Agenda



PLC Agenda Team:8th Social Studies Date: 9/1-9/4

Materials to bring: Computer

Members Present		
Luna Locke	Harper Stewart	
Kyla Smith	River Davis	
Carter Vance		

Start Time: 8:15
End Time: 9:41

- ✗ Start and end on time
- ✗ Be purposeful and engaged in our work
  - ✗ Be all here and engaged
  - ✗ Maintain a focused agenda
  - ✗ Monitor our time and pacing
  - ✗ Manage personal technology as a learning tool
- ✗ Build Collective Efficacy as a PLC
  - ✗ Work as a team
  - ✗ Hold each other accountable
  - ✗ Be reflective and open to others
  - ✗ Conduct ourselves as professionals
- Grow, together, as professionals

Action Items	Minutes/Notes	Administrator Feedback
Where did we leave off last meeting?	When we are using grabbag (how to make this digital), Southern colony notes, Name PA - will take a while Gov't, Great awakening Map Test - Tuesday	KS - digital
Planning for Instruction	Keeping track of formative assessments - what are we using them for? Reasons for coming to a new world sort - will start Gov't Pear deck PA2-3 - Mayflower Compact, FOC, VHOB, Magna Carta or EBOR Enlightenment (Locke, Montesquieu,)	LL - Sort and Pear Deck CV - Illustrated Timeline - digital
G.A.I.N. Discussion	Will use PA for GAIN drafting N/A Reasons for exploration and colonization	
New Instructional Business	Revamping lessons to be more student-centered and experience-based. revisit AP Parts - use Kami or Google docs pacing tool 3 Triangular trade slavery - not economy! Reasons (s neglect, distance)	KS: KAMI APPARTS
Homework/ things to do before our next meeting	PEGS cards - digital	CV: Digital PEGS cards
Open Agenda (if time allows)		
Next PLC		

PLC Guiding Questions
- ✓ What do we want our students to know and be able to do?
- ✓ How will we know when they have learned it?
- ✓ What will we do when they haven't learned it?
- ✓ What will we do to extend the learning when they already know it?

Figure I.1 Practical Junior High social studies PLC agenda.

APPENDIX J

ELL STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND ACADEMIC DATA

Table J.1 Practical Junior High Eighth-grade Student Breakdown

Data	Total N 8th Gr. Students	Total N ELL 8th Gr Students	Total N Current ELL 8th Gr. Students	Total N Other ELL 8th Gr Students
N	N=343	N=149	N=94	N=55
%	50.74%	43.44%	27.41%	16.03%

Table J.2 English Language Program Status

ELL Group	E= EL Prog	L= Parent Denial	A= Alt. Lang Prog	F= First Year Mon.	S= Second Year Mon.	3 = Third Year Mon.	4= Fourth Year Mon.	5= Former LEP After 4th-year mon.
Current N ELL	82	1	11					
Other N ELL		5			11	4	14	21
Total N ELL	82	6	11	0	11	4	14	21
Total % ELL	55.03%	4.03%	7.38%	0.00%	7.38%	2.68%	9.40%	14.09%

Table J.3 English Language Academic Program Status

ELL Group	N	AVID	AVID Excel	At Risk	Sped	504	GT	Eco Dis	Imm.	Ref Asy
Current ELL	94	15	11	91	18	4	0	82	26	1
Other ELL	55	21	3	27	5	2	10	45	5	1
Total N ELL	149	36	14	118	23	6	10	127	31	2
Total % ELL	43%	24%	9%	79%	15%	4%	6%	85%	20%	1%

Table J.4 Home Language

ELL Group	Spanish	Arabic	Italian	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Swahili
Current ELL	90	2	1	1	0	0
Other ELL	**52**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Total N ELL	142	3	1	1	1	1
Total % ELL	95.30%	2.01%	0.67%	0.67%	0.67%	0.67%

Table J.5 TELPAS Years in US Schools

ELL Group	TELPAS Yrs = F	TELPAS Yrs = 2	TELPAS Yrs = 3	TELPAS Yrs = 4	TELPAS Yrs = 5	TELPAS Yrs = 6
Current N ELL	2	9	4	1	6	72
Current % ELL	2.13%	9.57%	4.26%	1.06%	6.38%	76.60%
Other N ELL	0	7	14	14	8	12
Other % ELL	0.00%	12.73%	25.45%	25.45%	14.55%	21.82%
Total N ELL	2	16	18	15	14	84
Total % ELL	1.34%	10.74%	12.08%	10.07%	9.40%	56.38%

Table J.6 ELL: TELPAS Rating and Years in US School

		Years in US Schools							
		F	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Total N**	**Total % ELL by Rating**
TELPAS Rating	**Beginning**		9	4	1	6	69	89	94.68%
	Intermediate							0	0.00%
	Advanced						1	1	1.06%
	Advanced High							0	0.00%
	Unknown	**2**					**2**	**4**	4.26%
	Total ELL	2	9	4	1	6	72	94	100.00%
	Total % ELL by Yrs	2.13%	9.57%	4.26%	1.06%	6.38%	76.60%	100.00%	

Table J.7 Other ELL: TELPAS Rating and Years in US School

		Years in US Schools							
		F	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Total N**	**Total % ELL by Rating**
TELPAS Rating	**Beginning**						5	5	9.09%
	Intermediate					1		1	1.82%
	Advanced		1		2	3	4	10	18.18%
	Advanced High		6	14	10	4	3	37	67.27%
	Unknown				**2**			**2**	3.64%
	Total N ELL	0	7	14	14	8	12	55	
	Total % Other ELL	0.00%	12.73%	25.45%	25.45%	14.55%	21.82%	100.%	

Table J.8 ELL TELPAS: Listen, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

	Current ELL Average		**Other ELL Average**	
Years in US Schools	**Listen/Speaking**	**Reading/Writing**	**Listen/Speaking**	**Reading/ Writing**
F				
2	1.94	1.44	3.86	3.93
3	2	1.5	4	3.75
4	2.5	2	4	3.54
5	2.5	2	3.31	3.5
6	2.83	2.54	3.25	3.67
Total Average	2.68	2.34	3.71	3.67

Table J.9 ELL Instructional Settings and Programs

ELL Group	Face to face	Virtual	On-Level	Pre-AP
Current N ELL	69	25	85	9
Current % ELL	46.31%	16.78%	57.05%	6.04%
Other N ELL	40	15	34	21
Other % ELL	26.85%	10.07%	22.82%	14.09%
Total N ELL	109	40	119	30
Total % ELL	73.15%	26.85%	79.87%	20.13%

Table J.10 ELL National and State Achievement Data

ELL Group	AVG TELPAS	AVG STAAR Reading	AVG Start RIT (MAP)	AVG End RIT (MAP)	AVG Start Percentile (MAP)	AVERAGE of End Percentile (MAP)
Current ELL	2.17	35.09	208.01	217.21	50.73	55.26
Other ELL	3.15	73.89	200.31	201.88	53.26	40.57
Total ELL	2.53	49.44	205.20	211.61	51.65	49.90

APPENDIX K

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Practical Junior High Participants,

My name is Anne Marie Yarborough; I am the PK-12 Director of social studies for RISD (pseudonym) and a doctoral student in the Doctor of Education program at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the power of collective efficacy and inquiry of professional learning communities regarding closing the achievement gap for English language learners. This study is done with RISD's Accountability and Continuous Improvement department's permission and the campus principal. This study's purpose is educational, and the results will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the value of collective efficacy and collective inquiry from the eighth-grade social studies professional learning community and their English language learners. If you decide to participate, the study will involve completing surveys about collective efficacy and inquiry. Individual and focus group interviews discuss the power of collective efficacy and inquiry in professional learning communities.

The study involves the following:

(1) observations of the professional learning community;
(2) pre- and post-surveys related to collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities;
(3) separate focus group interviews with teachers and campus instructional support, i.e., principals, instructional and digital coaches;
(4) individual interviews with teachers and campus administrators; and

(5) review of artifacts including campus and student demographic data, assessment data, school, district report cards, agendas, norms, historical formative (district/campus), and summative (STAAR and TELPAS) assessment data of English language learners.

In particular, you will be asked questions about professional learning communities, collective inquiry, and collective efficacy. You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and may terminate the meeting at any time. The meetings will occur via Zoom at a mutually agreed upon time and should last about forty-five minutes to an hour. The sessions will be recorded so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The recordings will only be reviewed by me and destroyed upon completion of the study.

Participation is confidential and voluntary. Study information will be kept in a secure location and protected by passwords. Data collected from this research study will be used to inform the educational field of curriculum and instruction. The collected data may also function as foundational pieces of knowledge for presentations at state or national conferences and articles in peer-reviewed academic journals. I assure you that your privacy and anonymity will be respected and protected throughout the process; no names or identifying information will be included in my final research report. If you are not comfortable participating in this study, you may, at any time, withdraw.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the study. You may contact me at 214-514-0423 or email me at yarbora@email.sc.edu.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Yarborough

Informed Consent Form: The Power of Collective Efficacy

I _____(name) agree to participate in a research study regarding collective efficacy, collective inquiry, and professional learning communities as a researching processes for closing the achievement gap for English language learners. I understand that if I give this consent, I will be interviewed individually and as part of a focus group; I will be observed during professional learning communities and participate in all pre-and post-surveys.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary; I can withdraw at any time from this study without any negative consequences.

I further understand that my anonymity will be protected, and the name of the district, school, or teachers will not be revealed when reporting the results of this study.

Please sign and return this form.

_____ _____ _____

Printed Name Signature Date

Please initial:

_____I understand the information above and **AGREE** to participate in this research study.

_____I understand the information above and **DO NOT AGREE** to participate in this research study.