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Michele Miller Schaich  
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An Examination of Elementary Preservice Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs for Teaching  
Reading

By  
Michele Miller Schaich

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2016

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Michele Miller Schaich under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

---

Sydney Brown, Ph.D.  
Committee Chair

---

Date

---

Constance Wright, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

Ann Aust, Ed.D.  
Committee Member

---

Date

---

Jeffrey Rogers, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Gayle Bolt Price School  
of Graduate Studies

---

Date

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“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NRSV)

I would like to begin by thanking God, for it is through Him that this work is possible. Without Him, I am nothing. Praise God for giving me the strength to persevere and “run this race to the end.”

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## **Abstract**

An Examination of Elementary Preservice Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs for Teaching Reading. Schaich, Michele Miller, 2016: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Self-Efficacy/Preservice Teaching/Teacher Preparation Programs/Higher Education

In the United States, an alarming number of students cannot read proficiently, though there is best-practice research on how to effectively teach readers at all levels. This study examined the impact teacher preparation courses as well as the student teaching experience had on preservice teachers' self-efficacy for literacy instruction. An extensive review of the literature revealed there is not a large body of research that is literacy content-specific and focused on the preservice teacher efficacy. This study is significant in that the process of teacher preparation in universities is one of continuous improvement. Professors of teacher preparation courses must rely on research to consistently put evidence-based practices in place for improvement to impact student achievement. This study adds to the knowledge base of institutions of higher education to help build preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy, thus making stronger, more efficacious beginning teachers.

The researcher utilized a mixed-methods research design. Data were collected with the Efficacy Scale for Teachers of Reading (EST-R) and through interview questions that determined the extent of preservice teacher perceptions on (a) the impact the student teaching experience had on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading, (b) the impact a senior-level literacy course had on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading, and (c) the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

We have a veritable crisis in our nation. Quite simply, we have alarming numbers of students who cannot read. The 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) indicated that 66% of our nation's fourth graders are not reading on grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Frequently, children who are not proficient readers continue to face this struggle throughout their lives (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008). Research studies have shown that students who are not proficient readers by third grade will most likely not graduate from high school (Hernandez, 2011) nor catch up with their peers before leaving high school (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996). Our prisons are filled with high school dropouts classified as low literate. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2003) Special Report, 75% of America's state prison inmates, almost 59% of federal inmates, and 69% of jail inmates did not complete high school. Data collected by the National Adult Literacy Survey on literacy rates of prisoners indicates the literacy level of inmates is significantly lower than that of the U.S. population as a whole (Coley & Barton, 1996). Even more alarming is the fact that we have 32 million adults functioning at the lowest levels of literacy across the country (White, 2003). Indeed, serious legislative attempts have been made to respond to the issue at hand, specifically *A Nation At Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), *National Reading Panel* (NRP, 2000), *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001), and *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Nevertheless, the gap continues to widen between proficient readers and their nonproficient counterparts (Francis et al., 1996). Since the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), schools have implemented various types of early identification programs as part of Response to Intervention (RTI) in hopes of catching readers before they fail. In fact,

renowned literacy researcher and critic Allington called RTI “our last great hope” (Rebora, 2010, p. 1). Efforts to combat the crisis in literacy cannot be met through RTI efforts alone. Thus, congress is once again sounding the call to remedy the distress at hand with a nationwide emphasis on reading improvement. Many states are enacting legislation involving literacy programs designed to hold schools more accountable for student reading achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2001; North Carolina Read to Achieve, 2012; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013).

Yet the question remains, “With all of the emphasis on reading intervention, why do so many students continue to struggle?” Allington (2012a) said that the solution is acknowledging that at-risk readers need more expert reading instruction by classroom teachers than has been provided. He also stated that we have the knowledge to have every child leave first grade reading on grade level.

In an Education Week interview by Rebora (2010), Allington emphasized, The good news is that, in the past five or 10 years, we’ve had large-scale demonstrations that show that in fact we could do that if we wanted to. We have studies involving multiple school districts and hundreds or thousands of kids demonstrating that, with quality instruction and intervention, 98 percent of all kids can be reading at grade level by the end of 1st or 2nd grade. (p. 1)

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) made a powerful statement about the impact a knowledgeable teacher makes:

Their skill in assessing their students’ progress also depends upon how deeply they understand learning, and how well they can interpret students’ discussions and written work. No other intervention can make the difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process. (p. 8)

Accordingly, Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) described a large randomized field trial design looking at teacher effect on reading achievement. They also found that the single-most powerful variable in effecting student achievement in reading was the impact of the classroom teacher.

In considering increasing teacher literacy pedagogical knowledge and teaching competency, professional development can make a difference. Research shows the effects of high-quality teacher development can be significant and that expertise in teaching reading is crucial to student success (Rebora, 2010). However, the most effective professional development must provide the teacher with the skills to really see and understand children and their learning (Gabriel, Day, & Allington, 2011). Fountas and Pinnell (n.d.) described a Literacy Collaborative that provides in-depth professional development for the entire school. Fountas and Pinnell said the key to literacy pedagogical growth is deepening teacher knowledge of the way children learn to read. This research-based Literacy Collaborative approach is explored in more depth in Chapter 2.

Complicating the matter of raising student achievement in reading is the thinking that some educators hold an outdated system of beliefs and are certain there will always be students who will fail to learn to read. Research is ignored; and coupled with this inerrant belief system, students continue to fail to thrive as readers. It is up to the teachers and administrators to make changes to their belief systems and efforts to enable every child to be a proficient reader (Allington, 2013).

Unfortunately, all of the focus on raising student achievement and state accountability measures has put increased pressure on teachers. Research even points to teaching as a high-risk occupation in relation to practitioners' emotional well-being

(McLean & Connor, 2015). Teachers are burning out faster than ever because of the demands of the profession. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014), approximately half a million U.S. teachers either move or leave the profession each year—attrition that costs the United States up to \$2.2 billion annually. This high turnover rate unduly affects high-poverty schools and weakens the nation’s capability to safeguard all students having the opportunity for effective teachers.

Nevertheless, we know there are teachers who manage the stress and enjoy long, successful careers in education. Research consistently points to teachers’ belief in themselves as having the ability to make a difference in the lives of students. Gabriel et al. (2011) studied exemplary teachers and found,

As studies over the last 10 years have consistently shown, teachers who believe it is their job to reach all students—regardless of the student’s placement, label, or ability—find ways to do so with and without administrative support. Teachers who believe some children are unteachable—or that some children are the responsibility of specialists, parents or special education programs—deliver less appropriate instruction and select less appropriate instructional materials for their students. No such teachers were found in this study. (p. 40)

This attitude constitutes what is known as teacher efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy is “a simple idea with important implications” (de la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007, p. 641). Self-efficacy is defined as “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Research shows a teacher’s sense of efficacy correlates with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Mounting research supports Bandura’s (1977) theory that teacher self-efficacy beliefs correlate with work ethic and investment in teaching, goal-

setting for themselves and their students, and their tenacity in overcoming challenges (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Guskey, 1986).

To really build teacher efficacy, we must go back to teacher preparation programs. However, Fullan (1993) contended, “Teacher education has the honor of being the worst problem and the best solution in education” (p. 14). In other words, we can blame teacher education programs, or we can look at teacher preparation through a new lens.

Intrator (2006), a professor of teacher education at Smith College noted, Any teacher, particularly a novice teacher, cannot teach children well if they are demoralized and overwhelmed. In fact, it is worth lingering on its cold inverse: If our beginning teachers have no strategies for retaining their enthusiasm, rejuvenating their energy, bouncing back from the inevitable dark day, then our children will suffer. High-impact teaching hinges on the presence, energy, and skills of the teacher. (p. 238)

This study looked at the impact teacher preparation courses and the student teaching experience have on preservice teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. An extensive review of the literature reveals there is not a large body of research that is literacy content-specific and focused on preservice teacher efficacy.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Literacy.** “Encompasses reading, writing, and a variety of social and intellectual practices that call upon the voice as well as the eye and hand” (National Council of Teachers of English, 2007, n.p.).

**Self-Efficacy.** A person’s belief in their own ability for a particular situation or how effective that they feel in that situation or task. Bandura (1977) noted that “people’s

perceptions of their efficacy influence the types of anticipatory scenarios that they construct and reiterate” (p. 729).

**Teacher efficacy.** “The teacher’s belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p. 4). According to Bandura (1986), teachers control their own behaviors and choices in accordance with “the effects they expect their actions to have” (p. 129).

**Preservice teachers.** Student teachers in training at an institution of higher education. Training includes field placements in classrooms during which the preservice teachers teach under the supervision of a classroom teacher.

**Professional development.** “A comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 12).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is a new professor of literacy in a junior and senior education cohort model program at a small, private, Christian university in the southeastern United States. The researcher, as professor, strived to establish a positive relationship with each student and build a community of literacy learners. That task was made difficult simply due to timing and transition. Many of the students had a difficult time letting go of a previous professor of literacy under whom they had learned for three prior literacy courses. The transition proved difficult for some students as teaching styles between the two professors were very different. However, the students who did make the transition had numerous positive comments to make such as, “You will always be an inspiration to me to help develop students in literacy” and “your enthusiasm for literacy is contagious” (Student Fall Semester Feedback Letters to the Professor). The expectation was

confirmed that the research process, overall, would be expedited by these positive connections.

### **Research Questions**

1. What impact does the student teaching experience have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAN)
2. What impact does the senior-level literacy course have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)
3. What is the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing, albeit small, body of research for preservice teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. This proposed study had a three-pronged approach. First, literacy teacher preparation courses were examined for factors that related positively to preservice teacher self-efficacy. Second, this study sought to determine if the student teaching experience had an impact on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers. Third, the relationship between coursework and student teaching on preservice teachers' self-efficacy for reading instruction was examined. A fourth ancillary finding is the study will contribute to the construct validity and reliability of the Efficacy Scale for Teachers of Reading (EST-R) developed by Estes (2005).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in that the process of teacher preparation in universities is one of continuous improvement. Professors of teacher preparation courses must rely on research to consistently put evidence-based practices into place for improvement to

impact student achievement. This study will add to the knowledge base of institutions of higher education to help build preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy, thus making stronger, more efficacious beginning teachers.

Tuchman and Isaacs (2011) discussed the importance of the student teaching experiences for shaping beginning teachers' beliefs:

Of the greatest interest, however, are those formative pre-service experiences that help mould [*sic*] a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. These experiences, occurring while teachers' efficacy beliefs are still developing and more easily influenced, can have significant impact on the teaching efficacy of teachers. (p. 415)

Lastly, the study has implications for school administrators for supporting novice teachers' efficacy for teaching literacy (Vesely, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

The subsequent chapters are comprised of significant information necessary for understanding this study. Chapter 2 presents a review of pertinent literature which forms the basis for the chosen methodology of mixed-methods outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the data collected. The study concludes with Chapter 5 which provides an interpretation of the findings as well as discusses limitations and recommendations for further research.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Overview

Institutions of higher education function in a state of continuous improvement. Hence, educators at every level might do well to consider Allington's (2012b) declaration: "Each teacher has a professional responsibility to continue to become more expert with every year of teaching" (p. 35). This statement can apply to teacher educators at colleges and universities who are grounded in the work of continuous improvement. In order to enhance teacher preparation programs, consideration must be made of the most effective ways to turn out preservice teachers at mastery levels who are efficacious and ready to face the challenges of teaching. Research shows that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make a dramatic impact on student achievement (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Furthermore, research shows a teacher's sense of efficacy correlates with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Therefore, the current study sought to determine if preservice teachers' self-efficacy for literacy instruction is impacted by the student teaching experience. An additional purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent that preservice teachers' self-efficacy is affected by literacy program preparation coursework. The review of literature begins with a brief history of Social Cognitive Theory as the foundation of the self-efficacy construct. The teacher efficacy section looks at the theory of self-efficacy as it relates to both in-service and preservice teachers. A measure of teaching efficacy for reading, the EST-R, is described in depth. The section on teacher preparation for literacy instruction will include an overview of best practices for literacy instruction as well as a review of extant research on literacy teacher preparation practices. Bandura's (1977, 1984, 1986, 1995, 1997) research regarding self-efficacy will be a unifying thread

throughout this literature review. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy will be applied to inservice teachers' effective literacy practices as well as preservice teachers' preparation for literacy instruction. Thus, this systematic presentation of Bandura's work will be the basis of the theoretical framework for the study.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura (1986) presented the construct of self-efficacy as part of his Social Cognitive Theory. He postulated that human development is influenced by the intricate interaction of the person, the person's behavior, and the environment. The relationship between these elements is called reciprocal determinism. Bandura (1997) explained that social cognitive theory rejects the idea of duality of self as agent and self as object. Bandura (1997) stated, "It is one and the same person who does the strategic thinking about how to manage the environment and later evaluates the adequacy of his knowledge, thinking skills, capabilities, and action strategies" (p. 5). Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura (1997) went on to distinguish between self-esteem, which is "concerned with judgements of self-worth" and perceived self-efficacy, which is "concerned with judgements of personal capability" (p. 11). Bandura (1997) made the distinction that "perceived self-efficacy and locus of control (Rotter, 1966) are sometimes mistakenly viewed as essentially the same phenomenon measured at different levels of generality" (p. 20). In other words, the two constructs are entirely different. Bandura (1977) outlined four sources of information that individuals employ to judge their efficacy: performance outcomes (performance accomplishments), vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback (emotional arousal). These judgements help individuals decide if they have the capability to achieve certain

tasks. Williams and Williams (2010) noted that “individuals with high levels of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to master rather than as threats to be avoided” (p. 455). Bandura (1997) described how goal attainment is related to self-efficacy:

Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one’s personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established. (p. 80)

According to Bandura (1977), performance outcomes, or past experiences, are the most important source of self-efficacy. Positive and negative experiences can influence the ability of an individual to accomplish a certain task. If one has performed well at a task previously, he or she is more likely to feel competent and perform well at a similar task (Bandura, 1977). Thus, the implications of self-efficacy as related to performance outcomes are great when viewed in relation to the teaching profession. The next section looks at the concept of teachers’ sense of efficacy.

### **Teacher Efficacy**

Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) described the formation of the construct known as teacher efficacy:

Twenty years ago researchers from the RAND organization added two items to an already extensive questionnaire (Armor, 1976). It may have been simply a hunch or a whim, but they got results, powerful results, and the concept of teacher efficacy was born. (p. 202)

The two emotion-evoking statements were

1. “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.”
2. “If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 204)

The study showed that teachers who agreed with the first statement indicated a low sense of efficacy and attributed students’ lack of proficiency in a subject to the students’ mental abilities. The teachers with a high sense of efficacy agreed with the second statement, and students in their classes were successful in learning. It is interesting to note, in light of the focus of this literature review, that the 1976 RAND study was centered on reading programs and interventions (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). As far back as a second RAND study (Berman, 1977), researchers found teacher efficacy to be a strong, positive influence not only on student achievement but on the use of the methods of instruction and projects the teachers implemented in the study.

Similar results were found by Glickman and Tamashiro (1982) who studied three personality variables related to teacher effectiveness: sense of efficacy, problem-solving fluency, and ego development among first-year, fifth-year, and former teachers. The results showed the first-year and fifth-year teachers had a stronger sense of self-efficacy than the former teachers but did not show any difference between first- or fifth-year teachers. The former teachers indicated they did not feel they had much influence on the lives of their students. The study points to higher self-efficacy having a correlation to teacher retention.

A seminal study by Ashton (1984) further refined the construct of teacher efficacy. In her research, Ashton captured eight dimensions that separate the high-

efficacy teachers from the low-efficacy teachers. Ashton's research shows teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy feel a sense of personal accomplishment, have positive expectations for student behavior and achievement, feel a personal responsibility for student learning, have strategies for achieving objectives, demonstrate a positive affect and a sense of control, and involve students in setting goals as well as decision making (p. 29).

Teacher efficacy has been described as "a simple, yet powerful idea" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 802). Guskey and Passaro (1994) added to the description by referring to teacher efficacy as a "multidimensional construct" (p. 636). Guskey and Passaro dismissed the earlier terms of teaching efficacy and personal efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986) from the RAND study and asserted the two dimensions are internal versus external distinctions, similar to locus of control measures. Guskey and Passaro's study contradicted the extension of Bandura's (1977) theory of efficacy expectations by Ashton and Webb (1986) to teaching and personal efficacy. Guskey and Passaro stressed their study focused on one question—"What do teacher efficacy scales actually measure?"—rather than the more important question of "What is teacher efficacy?" (p. 640). The researchers emphasized the need for additional studies that explore the teacher efficacy construct in depth as well as the need to develop more sophisticated measures of teacher efficacy.

Bandura (1997) explained the importance of teacher efficacy:

The task of creating learning environments conducive to development of cognitive competencies rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers. Evidence indicates that teachers' beliefs in their instructional efficacy partly determine how they structure academic activities in their classrooms and shape

students' evaluations of their intellectual capabilities. (p. 240)

Studies that focus on the correlation between teacher efficacy and impact on student achievement have increased since the year 2000 (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). Research shows highly efficacious teachers view difficult students as teachable with extra effort (Bandura, 1997). Teachers of low perceived efficacy tend to state low mental ability as the reason why students struggle academically. These factors were found in a study by Ashton and Webb (1986). They investigated basic skills classes taught by experienced teachers with students facing serious academic challenges. Students progressed well when taught by teachers with a strong sense of efficacy. Likewise, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) explained that teacher efficacy is “a judgement of a teacher’s capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p. 1).

Shaughnessy (2004) recapped comments from “An Interview with Anita Woolfolk,” a well-known researcher in the field of teacher efficacy:

We will never have the perfect curriculum or teaching strategy, but teachers who set high goals, who persist, who try another strategy when one approach is found wanting—in other words, teachers who have a high sense of efficacy and act on it—are more likely to have students who learn. So the question of how to support and not undermine teachers’ sense of efficacy is critical. (p. 157)

Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) model of Teacher Efficacy Judgements was adapted by Cengage Learning (Silverman & Davis, 2009, p. 1, fig. 1). In this model, the consequences of teachers’ perceived sense of efficacy are depicted: higher goals, learning goals, effort/persistence, and resilience; which in turn influence the outcome

performances of student achievement, student sense of efficacy, teacher commitment, teacher innovation, and teacher risk taking. Teachers' sense of efficacy comes from modeled vicarious experiences that are through others' observed goal attainment as well as through verbal feedback from others. Bandura (1997) explained, "The task of creating learning environments conducive to development of cognitive competencies rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers" (p. 240). If teachers' perceived sense of efficacy is high, the result can be higher consequences such as goals; which in turn can impact student achievement, student sense of efficacy, and teacher commitment. These areas will be addressed throughout the literature review.

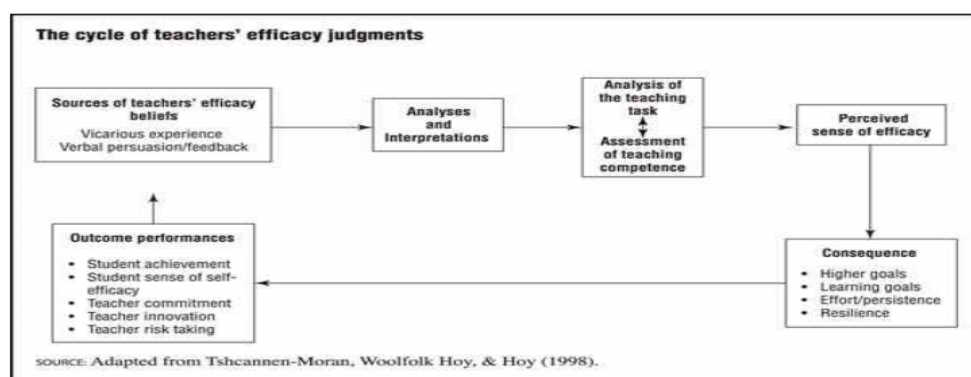


ILLUSTRATION BY GGS INFORMATION SERVICES. CENGAGE LEARNING, GALE.

Figure

*Figure 1.* The Cycle of Teacher's Efficacy Judgements (Silverman & Davis, 2009, p. 1, fig. 1).

## Subject-Specific Teaching Efficacy

Research on teacher efficacy has dramatically increased over the last 15 years (Klassen et al., 2011). Although research on preservice teachers' self-efficacy goes back to 1984, the number of studies specific to self-efficacy for literacy instruction for either preservice or in-service teachers is comparatively small in number. Estes (2005) presented groundbreaking doctoral research about self-efficacy for teaching reading.

Estes explained that “to date, no literature has addressed this specific topic” (p. 35).

Thus, it is appropriate to add to the extant body of research on teacher efficacy for literacy instruction, especially at the preservice teacher level. In doing so, this study used the EST-R Estes developed as a measure for determining the impact of student teaching on preservice teacher efficacy for reading instruction. The EST-R is described in a later section of this literature review. First, factors in the literature that constitute effective literacy instruction are reviewed.

### **Effective Reading Instruction**

Evidence-based practices of effective reading teachers have been shown to increase student achievement in reading (Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, & Alban, 2000; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). Research shows that the most effective literacy teachers know how to pinpoint and teach exact reading skills, actively involve students in purposeful literacy learning, and expect use of reading strategies more often than their less-skilled counterparts (Pressley et al., 2001). Similarly, the International Reading Association (IRA, 2010), in a publication entitled *Excellent Reading Teachers*, made this assertion: “Teachers make a difference. There is a growing body of evidence that documents teacher effects on children’s reading achievement scores (Jordan, Mendro, Weerasinghe, & Dallas Public Schools, 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997)” (p. 2).

Therefore, the underpinning of evidence-based research on student literacy achievement sparked the IRA (2010) to create a position statement on the standards for *Excellent Teachers of Reading*:

Teachers make a difference in children’s reading achievement and motivation to read. That’s why every child deserves to have an excellent teacher in her or his



classroom. Excellent reading teachers engage in these practices:

1. They understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
2. They continually assess children's individual progress and relate reading instruction to children's previous experiences.
3. They know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the methods into an effective instructional program.
4. They offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
5. They use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.
6. They are good reading "coaches" (that is, they provide help strategically). (p. 1)

Excellent reading teachers also motivate children, encourage independent learning, have high expectations for achievement, and help children who are having difficulty. They understand that reading development begins well before children enter school and continues throughout the school years—and beyond.

To ensure that children have the excellent teachers they deserve, IRA (2010) advocated that

1. Teachers must view themselves as lifelong learners and continually strive to improve their practice.
2. Administrators must be instructional leaders who support teachers' efforts to improve reading instruction.
3. Teacher educators must provide both a solid knowledge base and extensive supervised practice to prepare excellent beginning reading teachers

4. Legislators and policymakers must understand the complex role of the teacher in providing reading instruction and ensure that teachers have the resources and support they need to teach reading. Legislators and policy makers should not impose one-size-fits-all mandates.
5. Parents, community members, and teachers must work in partnerships to assure that children value reading and have many opportunities to read outside of school. (p. 4)

In short, excellent teachers of reading are effective because they are knowledgeable and highly efficacious for literacy instruction. The importance of evidence-based reading instruction came to the forefront of American education with the NRP (2000) report. NRP identified five factors critical to reading instruction for beginning literacy learners: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS, n.d.) summarized the scientifically-based findings of the NRP report:

1. Certain instructional methods are more effective than others. Many of the more effective methods are ready for implementation in the classroom.
2. To teach reading well, teachers must use a combination of strategies, incorporated in a coherent plan with specific goals. A teacher who addresses only one area of reading or uses one instructional approach will probably not be successful.
3. Teachers must be provided with appropriate and intensive training to ensure that they know when and how to teach specific strategies.
4. Teachers must know how children learn to read, why some children have difficulty reading, and how to identify and implement instructional strategies

for different children. (p. 1)

Similarly, Serravallo (2010) shared that there are five components to effective literacy instruction. They include “match the individual reader (to instruction), teach toward independence, teach strategies explicitly so that readers become proficient, value time spent, volume, and a variety of reading and follow predictable structures and routines” (Serravallo, 2010, p. 5).

Implementing research-based literacy practices involves a paradigm shift. The combination of the NRP (2000) report along with federal legislation requires rethinking literacy instruction. Darling-Hammond (2010) asserted, “The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires “moving beyond the designation of teachers as ‘highly-qualified’ to an assessment of teachers as ‘highly-effective’ based on student learning evidence” (p. 2). Likewise, Shanahan (2006) emphasized that reading instruction centered on scientifically-based methods can be the foundation of effective reading instruction for all students.

Shanahan (2006) created a document entitled “The National Reading Panel Report: Practical Advice for Teachers” in order to pare down the 500 page NRP (2000) report to real-world, classroom-level application. To aid teachers in delivering effective reading instruction, Shanahan summarized key findings of the NRP report for each of the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Moreover, Shanahan discussed the importance of adhering to the NRP report:

The National Reading Panel Report continues to be the cornerstone of the federal literacy policy. It was completed during the presidency of Bill Clinton, and became the basis of educational law during the presidency of George W. Bush.

This position was overwhelmingly affirmed by the same U.S. Congress that approved the Reading First program, which provides money to low-achieving schools to improve reading instruction for primary-grade children. States are encouraging school districts, even those ineligible for Reading First funding, to upgrade their reading programs to reflect the National Reading Panel findings. Many publishers, likewise, are altering their books and materials to ensure they reflect these research findings. Due to the strong emphasis on trying to improve instruction through the application of research, it is important that teachers understand the findings and how to deliver the instruction that benefits children. (p. 5)

Williams (2002) discussed the necessity of teachers being skilled in instructional strategies. However, many teachers find this type of teaching challenging because they have not been trained on how to teach in this manner. Strickland (2002) discussed the importance of a program of ongoing professional development for improving the reading achievement of struggling readers:

1. How young children learn to read and write and the implications for instruction.
2. Instructional strategies that support what is known about how young children develop literacy.
3. Merging instruction with assessment in beginning reading programs.
4. Evaluating the beginning reading program. (p. 81)

It is not enough to tell teachers what to teach, they must be shown how to teach. In order for professional development to be effective, it must be focused and ongoing (Allington, 2012b). There is mounting empirical research demonstrating the correlation

of student achievement in reading and teacher knowledge of effective literacy instruction (Allington, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; McCutchen & Berninger, 1999).

Accordingly, a study by Taylor et al. (2002) reiterated the need for “classroom literacy instruction to reflect best practices as identified in the research” (p. 278). The researchers contend that *how* teachers teach is as important as *what* teachers teach. They identified the following best practices for literacy instruction: small-group reading instruction, balance between word work and comprehension, phonics instruction introduced in kindergarten, asking higher level questions for comprehension, and active student engagement in actual reading and writing. Hence, the consensus of research presented appears to join forces with the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) and jointly make the proclamation:

What teachers know and understand about content and students shapes how judiciously they select from texts and other materials and how effectively they present material in class. Their skill in assessing their students’ progress also depends upon how deeply they understand learning, and how well they can interpret students’ discussions and written work. No other intervention can make the difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process. (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p. 8)

Consequently, a study by Goodwin et al. (2014) emphasized, Research has shown that the most important factor in terms of student achievement is the teacher; there is a clear relationship between students’ learning and the quality of their teachers, and a weak teacher can actually have a deleterious impact on learners. (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2003). (p. 284)

Perspectives about elementary literacy instruction and teacher sense of efficacy were explored by Abernathy-Dyer, Ortlieb, and Cheek (2013). The results of this qualitative case study show that teacher efficacy is affected by teacher beliefs about students' intellectual ability, faculty influence over decision making, and faculty beliefs about student behavior. In the same study, Abernathy-Dyer et al. quoted Leu and Kinzer (2002) who stated highly effective teachers of literacy instruction do the following: show insight and choose the best available teaching materials, teach decoding skills in a balanced literacy approach, use exemplar works of literature, integrate reading and writing, use vocabulary knowledge to increase comprehension, teach comprehension strategies, use strong assessment strategies, use a wide range of texts, differentiate instruction to meet individual needs, organize the classroom environment to promote literacy learning, and engage in professional development focused on state-of-the-art literacy competencies.

Clearly, research is not deficient regarding best instructional practices for literacy. In fact, Allington (2012a) stated that we have the knowledge to have every child leaving first grade reading on grade level. Through in-depth, sustainable professional development, teachers can learn how to apply evidence-based principles to literacy instruction. One such system of training was developed by Fountas and Pinnell (n.d.) as a result of years of closely following and applying research to literacy instructional practices. This Literacy Collaborative is built on the principles of Clay's (1993) work in developing Reading Recovery. Irene Fountas is quoted in an Education Week interview: "The Literacy Collaborative aims to give schools the expertise needed to turn teachers into systematic observers of reading and writing behaviors. The program fosters 'precision teaching'" (Rebora, 2012, p. 34). The Literacy Collaborative is focused on

intensive lessons and meaningful teacher-student exchanges. Its framework entails schools scheduling daily 2½ hour literacy blocks with the time balanced between word-work instruction and reading and writing workshops. There is whole-class and small-group instruction where teachers involve students in a variety of purposeful lessons including interactive read-aloud, shared-reading experiences, explicit vocabulary and phonics lessons, guided reading and writing exercises, and independent work. The program also emphasizes ongoing formative assessment.

The research-based approach of the Literacy Collaborative is proving to be effective in raising student achievement according to Reborá (2012):

In recent years, the Literacy Collaborative has acquired an impressive research profile. Most prominently, a recently published longitudinal study by researchers at Stanford University found that the program boosted primary-grade students' reading skills by an average of 32 percent over three years. Other studies have tied the Literacy Collaborative to standardized test score gains (including among English-language learners), advances in student writing skills, improvements in instructional quality, and positive changes in both teachers' and students' perspectives on literacy instruction. (p. 35)

Thus, there is ample research that shows student achievement can be raised by increasing the professional knowledge of teachers about evidence-based practices in teaching reading. This focus on developing teacher literacy instructional knowledge coupled with the research demonstrating the impact of teacher efficacy on student achievement needs to be applied to the next generation of teachers, namely preservice teachers. The next section focuses on developing teacher efficacy of teachers in training.

## **Student Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Preservice teachers are student teachers in training. The very nature of the practicum experience, being much like an apprenticeship, is filled with highs and lows. Some student teachers face the practicum experience with overconfidence. The term “efficacy aspirations” has been applied to the inflated sense of efficacy by preservice teachers (Hebert, Lee, & Williamson, 1998, p. 233). Nonetheless, according to Bandura (1997), “A capability is only as good as its execution. The self-assurance with which people approach and manage difficult tasks determines whether they make good or poor use of their capabilities. Insidious self-doubts can easily overrule the best of skills” (p. 35). Bandura (1997) contended that “people’s level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true” (p. 2). Bandura (1997) made the case that efficacy beliefs differ in strength, saying, “the stronger the sense of personal efficacy, however, the greater the perseverance and the higher the likelihood that the chosen activity will be performed successfully” (p. 43). Conversely, perceived self-inefficacy leads people to approach intimidating situations anxiously, and the experience of disruptive levels of arousal may further lower their efficacy as they continue to fail repeatedly (Brown & Inouye, 1978). However, research shows that with a high level of guidance and support during the student teaching experience, the preservice teachers’ self-efficacy flourishes. Research by Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007) centered on the question, “Does burnout begin with student teaching?” (p. 1). Interpretation of the data indicated significant increases in efficacy and gradual decreases in burnout characteristics based on high guidance by the cooperating teacher.

In considering the construct of teacher efficacy, Hebert et al. (1998) postulated the



following: “Bandura (1977, 1986) viewed personal experience as the most important determinant, and preliminary evidence suggests the sense of teaching efficacy is indeed related to teachers’ experiences in schools” (p. 214). Hebert et al. (1998) conducted a study of the impact of years of teaching experience on teacher efficacy by surveying 83 preservice teachers and 156 in-service teachers. Quantitative and qualitative differences in the efficacy beliefs of in-service teachers and preservice teachers were found. The student teachers judged the outward dimension of teacher efficacy, the effect of external factors on student behavior and performance, lower than the in-service teachers. The data indicate an increase in teacher efficacy is likely to result over the course of a teaching career. Student teaching is the culminating experience of teacher preparation designed to provide authentic classroom experience in order to develop teaching expertise.

Klassen and Durksen (2014) conducted a longitudinal study of 150 participants examining the development of self-efficacy and work stress of preservice teachers during a teaching practicum. The data showed a significant increase in self-efficacy and a significant decrease in stress. The researchers attribute this phenomenon to the critical influence of mentor teachers on the preservice teachers’ stress reduction and efficacy building. In similar studies, significant correlations were found between preservice teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and their perceptions of mentor support (Aydin & Woolfolk Hoy, 2005; Moulding, Stewart, & Dunmeyer, 2014).

Measures of self-efficacy help us better understand the construct of self-efficacy as it relates to both in-service and preservice teachers. One of the most notable teacher efficacy measures is the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) developed by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). A study by Brown, Lee, and Collins (2015) used the TES on 71 preservice

teachers and in particular collected data on the student teachers' sense of efficacy and preparedness to teach. The study revealed that preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness and self-efficacy increased significantly during the student teaching practicum. Additionally, these themes were prevalent in the student teachers' responses regarding success of the program: opportunity for hands-on teaching, opportunity to observe experienced teachers, and the supportive relationship with their cooperating teacher.

Similarly, Tobias, Fan, and Bang (2008) developed a measure called the Educational Beliefs Questionnaire (EBQ) to assess preservice teachers' beliefs about self-efficacy and caring. Findings showed the preservice teachers significantly developed their self-efficacy beliefs as well as caring during the progression of their coursework and field placements.

As previously mentioned, Estes (2005) developed the EST-R for her doctoral research citing that no such scales existed at that time. The EST-R consists of 19 items "designed to measure a teacher's beliefs about his/her ability to teach reading and to effect reading achievement outcomes for his/her students" (Estes, 2005, p. 41). The respondent answers the questions based on a six-point Likert-type scale from choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Estes stated the validity of the EST-R was established through expert review by education professors from a medium-sized, private university in Texas with expertise either in literacy instruction or self-efficacy. Estes adapted an existing self-efficacy scale—the TES of Gibson and Dembo (1984). The EST-R is found in Appendix A. The EST-R was used to collect data in this research study regarding preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy for teaching reading both before and after student teaching.

## Teacher Preparation

The fundamental goal of teacher preparation is to develop proficient and efficacious beginning teachers. Teacher educators in institutions of higher education need to think deliberately about how to best develop preservice teachers ready to meet the demands of the teaching profession. To this end, Bandura (1995) stated,

Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. (p. 4)

The construct of teacher efficacy as applied to preservice teachers has great implications for influencing effective beginning teachers. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) stated, "Once efficacy beliefs are established, they appear to be somewhat resistant to change" (p. 235). Thus, if teacher education preparation programs can focus on enabling preservice teachers to have a realistic sense of self-efficacy, this may lead to more teacher retention. Tschannen-Moran et al. maintained,

Student teaching provides an opportunity to gather information about one's personal capabilities for teaching. However, when it is experienced as a sudden, total immersion—as a sink or swim experience—it is likely detrimental to building a sense of teaching competence. (p. 235)

Nonetheless, Shaw, Dvorak, and Bates (2007) found teacher education programs can significantly impact students' thinking and beliefs regarding reading instruction. In their study of 52 undergraduate elementary preservice teachers before and after instruction in a reading methods course, the researchers found the change of beliefs, including self-efficacy, was significant. Data indicated the preservice teachers' literacy

knowledge aligned with their beliefs.

Nolen, McCutchen, and Berninger (1990) surveyed 48 state departments of education and found that requirements were minimal for certification in teaching reading and writing at elementary, secondary, and adult levels. Nearly 25 years later, we can say without a doubt due to legislation requiring greater accountability for student achievement in reading that requirements are no longer minimal achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2001; North Carolina Read to Achieve, 2012; South Carolina Department of Education, 2013).

A quite promising study is that of Laframboise and Shea (2009) who described the need for preservice teachers to incorporate research-based instructional strategies in their teaching, lest they revert back to ineffective strategies they have observed from their own schooling. The researchers state that beginning teachers have difficulty connecting theory and application. Consequently, it is important for prospective teachers to be shown how to facilitate writing instruction including modeling, practice, and implementing writing strategies (Chambless & Bass, 1995).

Returning to the aforementioned quote by Allington (2012b), educators at every level must “continue to become more expert with every year of teaching” (p. 35). Teacher preparation programs must be on the cutting edge—staying abreast of research and in turn continuously improving programs which turn out knowledgeable beginning teachers with high self-efficacy for teaching. The next section examines preservice teachers’ feelings of preparedness for teaching and the accompanying research which shows the correlation to preservice teachers’ sense of self-efficacy.

### **Beginning Teacher Preparedness**

Another important consideration is preservice teachers’ feelings of preparedness

to teach upon graduation. One component of self-efficacy is related to readiness to accomplish certain tasks. Bandura (1997) stated, “perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). It makes sense that preservice teachers would demonstrate a positive correlation between ratings of preparedness to teach and self-efficacy for teaching. With this mindset, Housego (1990) studied preservice teacher preparedness based on teacher program modifications made to the education program at University of British Columbia. The revised program addressed goals of exposing students to “more controlled, standardized, carefully planned, and uniformly supervised coursework; and to involve them in more hands-on laboratory type preparation for an extended period of time” (Housego, 1990, p. 227). The data showed a significant increase in preservice teachers’ feelings of preparedness to teach after the first term compared to their former program counterparts. However, by the end of the first year, there was no difference. In other words, students in the new, enhanced program felt as prepared to teach after 3 months as their counterparts did in the former program after 6 months. Housego attributed this increase in feeling preparedness to revised program goals and the need for teacher educators to create a community of learners and share program goals with the student teachers. Housego asserted,

Theoretically, greater feelings of self-efficacy with regard to teaching lead to improved teaching behaviors which in turn contribute to a richer teaching and learning environment. As well, proceeding in the opposite direction, a richer educational environment may stimulate a broader, more effective set of teaching behaviors to which pupils may respond with improved motivation and achievement and thereby augment a student teacher’s self-efficacy regarding

teaching, a personal cognitive disposition. (p. 224)

Similarly, Darling-Hammond, Eiler, and Marcus (2002) surveyed recent education graduates and identified five factors related to preparedness to teach:

1. Designing curriculum and instruction to promote learning-applying pedagogical and content knowledge to curriculum development and instructional practice;
2. Supporting diverse learners-adapting teaching to the needs of different students;
3. Using assessment to guide learning and teaching—supporting students in assessing their own learning and using assessment of students, information from parents, and reflection on one’s own practice to inform curricular, pedagogical and content choices;
4. Creating a productive classroom environment—creating a positive, productive environment, setting high expectations for students, motivating students, and effectively managing classroom activities;
5. Developing professionally—working with others to plan and solve problems, resolve conflict, and take leadership. (p. 73)

The graduates surveyed were from either the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) or part of a national sample. STEP’s areas of strength were Factor 1 and Factor 2. The data indicate a strong correlation between STEP graduates’ feelings of preparedness and sense of efficacy. In the national sample, the graduates were found to be less efficacious than the graduates of STEP. The researchers attribute this increase of efficacy to STEP’s emphasis on applying theory to practice.

Ashton (1984) discussed teacher efficacy as a paradigm for effective teacher

preparation programs. Ashton stated that teacher education programs must include training experiences focusing on establishing and maintaining trust relationships and allowing autonomy for students. Ashton further contended that preservice teachers need a variety of experiences that mirror situations they are likely to face as teachers.

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) emphasized the need for longitudinal research across teacher preparation programs and across the first years in the field to assess the impact of efficacy practices.

A more current study on preservice teacher preparation for literacy instruction (Wolsey et al., 2013) looked at key aspects of 10 teacher preparation programs across the nation. In this cross-case analysis, the candidates' perceptions of their learning were compared to 2003-2010 Standards for the Teaching Profession of the IRA. Findings indicate that the teacher candidates reported high confidence in the areas of literacy-related curriculum and instruction. The study indicated that the candidates felt unprepared to teach diverse populations. It is interesting that this study did not use the term self-efficacy, but it can be inferred that feeling prepared and confident relates to high self-efficacy.

The research demonstrates a positive correlation between preservice teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach and high self-efficacy for teaching. However, as previously stated, research specific to the combined elements of literacy instruction, self-efficacy, and preservice teaching is a small but growing area of study. Additional research such as this study needs to continue in order to contribute to the construct of self-efficacy as it applies to specific content areas and preservice teaching.

### **Recommendation for Further Research**

Perhaps it is necessary to go back further than simply looking at teacher

preparation programs and look at the requirements for the teacher educators themselves. If classroom teachers have standards of excellence, the question that must be asked is, “What standards of excellence exist for the professors and instructors who prepare our future teachers for the classroom?” This is a largely untapped area for research. Goodwin et al. (2014) stated the data from their study of 293 teacher educators indicate a significant number of teachers who feel unprepared to adequately fulfill their responsibilities instructing preservice and in-service teachers at the college level. However, Goodwin et al. noted that the teacher educators can provide beneficial input in thinking about effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. More studies of this type are necessary.

Additionally, Hebert et al. (1998) described the need for continued research related to teacher efficacy:

Future research is needed which continues to examine the sources of efficacy beliefs or current and future teachers, as well as investigates specific tasks about which they feel more and less efficacious. These topics, unlikely to be probed effectively using the current Likert-scaled instruments, urge for the employment of alternative approaches such as open-ended survey items and interview questions more responsive to teachers’ interpretations and explanations. (p. 224)

The focus of this literature review was on the construct of self-efficacy, refined to teacher efficacy, knowledge of best practices for literacy instruction, and teacher preparation programs related to preservice teachers’ sense of efficacy. This overview of research points to the need to study the impact of the practicum experience on preservice teachers’ sense of efficacy for literacy instruction. It is important as well to determine the factors leading to preparedness to teach. Moreover, to truly impact the literacy



achievement of young learners, institutions of higher education must be well-versed in evidence-based, state-of-the-art practices for literacy instruction as well as methods to increase self-efficacy of the next generation of teachers.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology for the study.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact and relationship between teacher preparation coursework and the student teaching experience on preservice teachers' self-efficacy for teaching reading. The study took place in a small, private, Christian university in the southeastern United States. This section explains the methodology and includes (a) a restatement of the research questions, (b) a description of the participants, (c) a discussion of the validity and reliability of the instruments, (d) a description of the instructional design, (e) the research design, and (f) an explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures. A mixed-methods design employing quantitative and qualitative research was used for this study. Creswell (2005) stated, "Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 5). Thus, this chapter explains the methods used to collect, interpret, and analyze the data.

The following research questions guided this study.

### Research Questions

1. What impact does the student teaching experience have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAN)
2. What impact does the senior-level literacy course have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)
3. What is the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

Permission was sought and granted from the Institutional Review Board of

Gardner-Webb University to conduct this study prior to the commencement of data collection.

### **Participants**

To obtain answers to the proposed research questions, data collection was drawn from participants recruited through convenience sampling from an elementary teacher education preservice program. The participants (N=29) completed their student teaching semester in the spring of 2015 at a small, private, Christian university in the southeastern United States.

### **Instrumentation**

#### **Qualitative Components**

The researcher was the professor of these senior preservice students in a course entitled, "Language Arts Assessment and Planning." At the end of the course in the fall of 2014, the researcher asked the students for feedback concerning the course via the form of a "letter to the professor." These letters were analyzed for trend data addressing the construct of self-efficacy. The letters are also considered archived data and were analyzed for themes and used along with a quantitative survey explained in the next section as a basis for creation of interview questions (Appendix B).

#### **Quantitative Components**

The professor (researcher) also used a self-efficacy scale for teaching reading in an effort to focus on literacy program continuous improvement. The scale used was the EST-R. The researcher, also a former professional developer in the area of literacy, had searched 1 year prior to the study for a self-efficacy scale specifically for reading teachers and found the EST-R in a dissertation written by Dr. Karen Estes (2005), currently a professor at Mary Hardin-Baylor University in Texas. Permission was obtained to use

the EST-R for feedback after delivering literacy intervention professional development (Appendix C). The EST-R was developed by Dr. Estes to contribute to research specifically about teacher self-efficacy for teaching reading as no such scale existed.

**Reliability of the EST-R.** Cronbach's Index of Internal Consistency (Santos, 1999) was used to determine the internal reliability of the pilot version of the EST-R. After removing some items considered to undermine reliability and using the remaining 19 questions, the results from the data gathered during the pilot study ( $\alpha=.8221$ ) indicated acceptable internal reliability. The 19 questions used in the final version of the EST-R revealed a balance between positive and negative statements. This amended version of the EST-R was used for the full study and also the version given to this researcher's preservice teachers (Appendix A). In Dr. Estes's description of the completed research, final analysis supported the internal reliability of the instrument ( $\alpha=.7043$ ).

**Validity of the EST-R.** Estes (2005) stated,

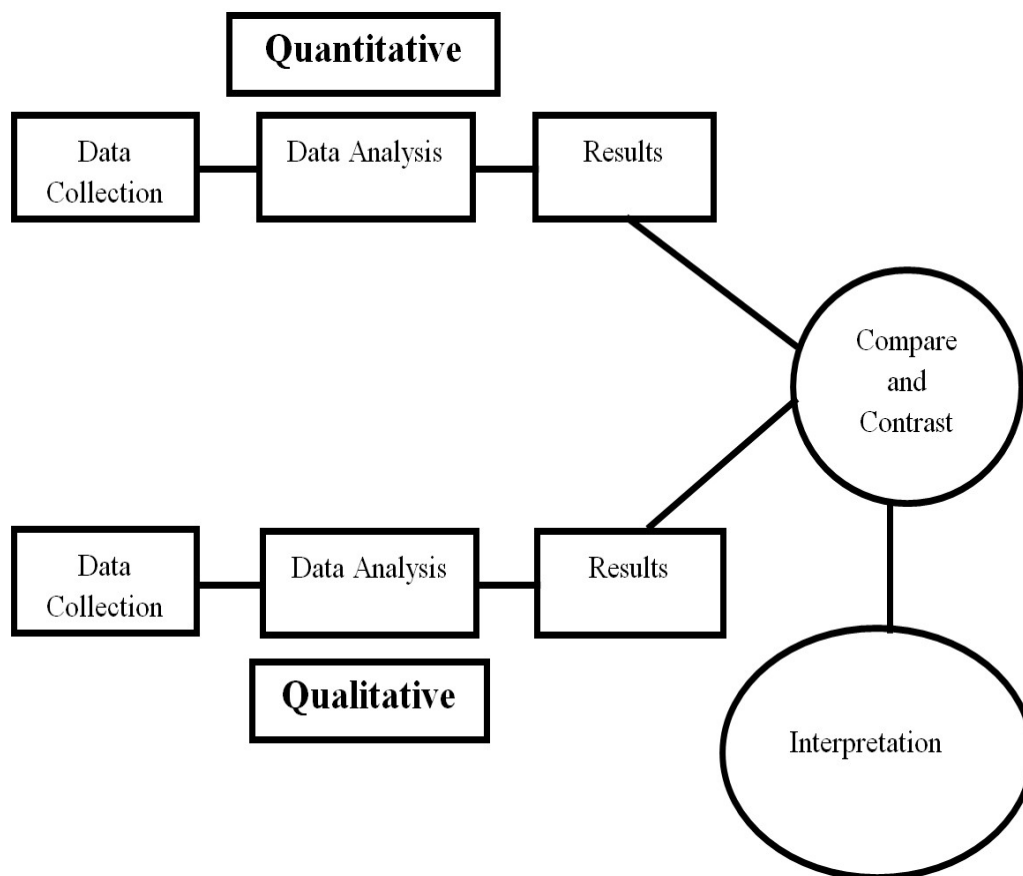
The validity of the EST-R was confirmed through expert review. Education professors from a medium-sized, private university in central Texas ( $n=4$ ) reviewed the EST-R. Three professors who reviewed the EST-R had taught reading in public schools at the elementary level and had taught literacy courses to preservice teachers. The fourth professor who reviewed the EST-R had published in the area of efficacy (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Milson, 2003). (p. 43)

The EST-R provides quantitative data; and since it was given as feedback at the end of the fall 2014 semester, it is considered archived data and was used to provide a pre and poststudent teaching measure of self-efficacy. This survey used a 5-point Likert scale system of response (1—strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree) to determine the participants' levels of preparedness for literacy instruction. The survey data were

analyzed using frequency distribution and central tendency measures via the statistical data analysis software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Upon IRB approval, the EST-R was sent to the 29 preservice teachers who responded to the initial EST-R survey. This data collection was in the form of an online survey through Survey Monkey and took place over a period of 1 week in August 2015. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distributions. The means of the pre and postmeasures of the EST-R were compared using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. This method of analysis was chosen due to there not being a one-to-one pre and postsurvey match, since the original purpose of using the EST-R was for course improvement feedback.

### **Research Design**

**Mixed-methods design.** A mixed-methods approach was utilized in this study. As Creswell (2005) asserted, “By mixing the datasets, the researcher provides a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone “ (p. 7). Since the researcher studied the effects of teacher preparation in an institution of higher education, it is useful to have quantitative data results on which to focus in the process of continuous improvement. On the other hand, qualitative data gets at the heart of the feelings of the preservice teachers themselves and provides the opportunity for their input into improving the teacher preparation program as related to literacy instruction. Figure 2 (Opoku, 2013 ) shows the relationship of quantitative and qualitative research in a mixed-methods design beginning with data collection of equal weight and then analysis of results, which then leads to comparing and contrasting the results of both methods and finally interpretation.



*Figure 2.* Mixed-Method Research Design Approach.

**Quantitative design.** The review of the literature pointed to the need for this study and the necessity of hard data that in turn verifies the need for further research. One benefit of using quantitative data in this research study is that the use of the EST-R scale as a pre and postmeasure generated numeric data for statistical analysis. The data can be input into the ongoing Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, n.d.) self-study process of continuous improvement.

**Qualitative design.** The use of qualitative data has benefits as well. Creswell (2005) explained,

Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data

consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.

(p. 56)

The researcher determined trends in the qualitative data that indicated areas in which the university could make improvements in the preparation of teachers for literacy instruction focused on increasing self-efficacy. Chapter 5 discusses the recommendations based on the findings of the data analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

The initial step was enlisting participants. First, the preservice teachers were notified via email in early spring of the forth-coming opportunity to participate in a research study about self-efficacy and teacher preparation (Appendix D). The preservice teachers were told that data would be collected after their student teaching experience ended through a variety of methods: one Likert-scale survey (EST-R) and focus group conversations. The three data collection methods used ensure triangulation. After IRB permission was granted, 29 letters and links to the online survey via Survey Monkey were sent to the preservice teachers who gave end-of-course feedback to the professor/researcher in December 2014. The email contained an explanation of the research study (Appendix E) as well as consent for participation form (Appendix F). Anonymity was ensured with no identifying return information indicated via survey data collection. Confidentiality was emphasized by the researcher in the email to the preservice teachers. The preservice teachers were instructed to complete the survey within 1 week. Since archived data of the EST-R were considered a pretest, the EST-R was given to the participating preservice teachers as a posttest to determine any change in self-efficacy. The survey data were analyzed using frequency distribution and central

tendency measures via the statistical data analysis software SPSS. Initially, the researcher set out to use a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) but due to the pairs of pre and post not being matched, switched to the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. However, after data were collected, the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test were deemed invalid due to the imbalance of pre and posttest participants. Thus, the researcher used a comparison of the means for the quantitative data analysis. These limitations of the research are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Next, the researcher analyzed the senior-level literacy course, “Language Arts Assessment and Planning,” for factors identified in the research as building self-efficacy. The researcher also analyzed the end of the first-semester letters to the professor for themes, and interview questions were developed for the one-to-one interviews (Appendix B). The preservice teachers (now graduates) were invited to schedule a phone interview or meet at their place of work. The data from the interviews were collected by these methods: The researcher wrote down responses, and the conversations were recorded by two laptops’ built-in sound recorders. The researcher played back the recorded conversations and used a coding process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) to code repeated words and phrases while looking for patterns and a priori themes.

Additionally, all of the qualitative data collected via the end-of-course letters and the interviews were analyzed for shifts in self-efficacy after student teaching.

### **Limitation and Delimitations**

One limitation of the study was that the sample studied is constrained to one university in the southeastern United States; therefore, results may not be generalized to other teacher preparation programs at other institutions of higher education. A second limitation to the study was that data were collected several weeks after the preservice



teachers completed their student teaching experience, and many of them had been hired and were already working in their schools setting up their new classrooms. Thus, it was difficult for the researcher to collect enough representative data. A third limiting factor was the researcher was also the professor of the preservice teachers' senior literacy course. Due to the low participation rate, the students were possibly hesitant to participate in one-to-one interviews or telephone interviews. Additionally, the small scope of this study was due to its exploratory nature as well as the opportunity provided by the relationships developed in the researcher's role as professor and department chair.

The data collected were analyzed and reported, and findings are presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Chapter 5 of this dissertation includes a discussion of the results, implications for preservice teachers and teacher preparation programs, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 4: Results of the Study

### Introduction

Research shows the effects of high-quality teacher development can be significant and that expertise in teaching reading is crucial to student success (Allington, 2002, 2012b). Research also shows a teacher's sense of efficacy correlates with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Additionally, studies indicate that preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy increases with support and guidance of cooperating teachers and mentors (Aydin & Woolfolk Hoy, 2005; Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Moulding et al., 2014).

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine elementary preservice teachers' self-efficacy for reading instruction before and after the student teaching experience. The research study employed a mixed-methods nonexperimental research design using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to determine the answers to the following research questions.

1. What impact does the student teaching experience have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAN)
2. What impact does the senior-level literacy course have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)
3. What is the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

The qualitative data, in the form of individual interviews and end-of-semester letters to the professor, provided information indicating themes in literacy instruction preparation and the preservice teachers' self-efficacy for teaching reading. The

quantitative data provided information about the preservice teachers' shift in self-efficacy after student teaching. This chapter reports the results of the statistical analysis using Microsoft SPSS software and related descriptive data from qualitative thematic coding and concludes by presenting a summary of the study findings.

## **Participants**

To obtain answers to the research questions, data collection was drawn from participants recruited through convenience sampling from an elementary teacher education preservice program. The participants (N=29) completed their student teaching semester in the spring of 2015 at a small, private, Christian university in the southeastern United States. Of the 29 preservice teachers, the majority (93%) were female (N=27), while males (N=2) were only 7% of the total. Ethnicity for the group included African-American (N=1), Hispanic (N=2), and Caucasian (N=26) students.

## **Findings of the Study**

### **Quantitative Measure**

#### **Research Question 1**

What impact does the student teaching experience have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAN)

In this study, preservice teachers' self-efficacy for reading instruction was measured using an instrument that Estes (2005) developed for her doctoral research, the EST-R, citing that no such scales existed at that time. The EST-R consists of 19 items "designed to measure a teacher's beliefs about his/her ability to teach reading and to effect reading achievement outcomes for his/her students" (Estes, 2005, p. 41). The respondent answered the questions based on a five-point Likert-type scale with choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Estes stated the validity of the EST-R

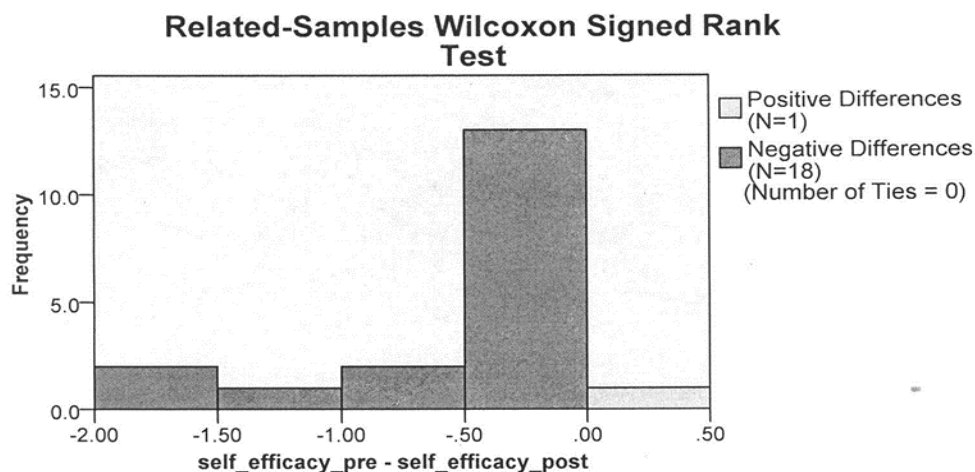
was established through expert review by education professors from a medium-sized, private university in Texas with expertise either in literacy instruction or self-efficacy. Estes adapted an existing self-efficacy scale—the TES of Gibson and Dembo (1984). The EST-R is found in Appendix A.

The EST-R was first given as a feedback measure at the end of the fall 2014 semester by the researcher in her role as literacy professor. Thus, the survey is considered archived data and was approved by the IRB committee to be used to provide a pre and poststudent teaching measure of self-efficacy. Initially, there were 27 of 29 surveys collected. The EST-R was emailed along with a research study participation sheet to the 29 preservice teachers who were given the opportunity to participate in the initial EST-R survey in the form of an online survey via Survey Monkey. Because the preservice teachers had graduated when the survey was sent out and the researcher was concerned the graduates might not check their university email, a survey link and research study participation document file was also posted to a graduate cohort “secret group” on social media. Three reminders were posted to the group about the survey which was available for 1 week. Eight EST-R surveys were completed online via Survey Monkey.

Statistical analysis of the EST-R was completed by using a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test with the Microsoft SPSS, version 23. Originally, when the researcher consulted with the dissertation chair, it was thought that a one-way ANOVA would be the appropriate test to compare means of the pre and postmeasures of the EST-R. However, upon more discussion and further research related to test selection (Statistics, n.d.a), it was clear that due to the samples not being paired and the requirement for a one-way ANOVA to have one independent variable that consists of two or more

categorical, independent groups, another test was clearly the best: the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. Statistics (n.d.b) stated that the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test is nonparametric and is used to decide whether there is a median difference between matched observations. To begin with, the researcher identified the variables: The dependent variable=self-efficacy, and the independent variable=student teaching. Because some of the questions in the EST-R were worded in the negative (i.e., “When a student is having difficulty with a reading assignment, I often have trouble adjusting it to his/her level”) opposed to worded positively (i.e., “When a student does better than usual in reading, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort”), the means for the negatively stated questions had to be recalculated before inputting into SPSS. Instead of comparing means from participant to participant since the samples were not paired due to the EST-R pre being a feedback source only before IRB was granted, the comparison was done question to question, N=19.

Figure 3 shows the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test’s data analysis through SPSS. Results show the standard error of measurement was 24.837. The standardized test statistic was -3.704.



<b>Total N</b>	19
<b>Test Statistic</b>	3.000
<b>Standard Error</b>	24.837
<b>Standardized Test Statistic</b>	-3.704
<b>Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)</b>	.000

*Figure 3.* Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

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Figure 4 depicts the Hypothesis Test Summary. The null hypothesis was, “The means of differences self-efficacy (post) and self-efficacy (pre) equals 0.” The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test showed a positive difference of N=1 and a negative difference of N=18; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The statistical analysis indicates a decrease in self-efficacy for the preservice teachers.

### Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The median of differences between self_efficacy_post and self_efficacy_pre equals 0.	Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

*Figure 4. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Hypothesis Test Summary.*

The huge negative difference was a point of discussion among the dissertation committee; and after some investigation by a committee member, it was determined that the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test were unacceptable due to the mismatch of pre and postsurvey participants. Initially, there were N=27 survey respondents; whereas postsurvey, N=8. Thus, the results were skewed and the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was deemed invalid.

Therefore, the researcher pointed the dissertation committee to Table 1, which depicts the difference in the means of each EST-R survey question, pre and post.

Table 1

*EST-R Pre and Post Means Comparison*

	EST-R Pre	EST-R Post	Difference
1	3.29	3.75	.46
2	3.37	3.75	.38
3	2.55	3.87	1.32
4	4.00	4.13	.13
5	3.62	4.12	.50
6	2.26	2.38	.12
7	3.51	3.87	.36
8	3.56	3.88	.32
9	3.66	4.00	.34
10	3.37	3.63	.26
11	3.70	4.38	.68
12	2.30	4.25	1.95
13	3.31	4.00	.69
14	2.58	2.38	-.20
15	3.51	3.87	.36
16	3.51	4.00	.49
17	2.59	4.12	1.53
18	3.00	3.38	.38
19	3.51	3.87	.36

There were six questions for which the effect size was .50 or greater and therefore statistically significant. Computing the effect size allows the researcher to determine the strength of conclusions drawn in a study (Creswell, 2005). These six questions indicated a positive significant difference.

Question 3: When I really try, I can teach a student how to read. (+1.32)

Question 5: If a student quickly masters a new concept in reading, this might be because I knew the necessary steps to teach that concept. (+.50)



Question 12: When the reading skills of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches. (+1.95)

Question 17: Even though a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement, I am not limited in what I can accomplish toward teaching a student to read. (+1.53)

Since questions 11 and 13 were stated in the negative, the researcher recalculated the means before inputting into SPSS.

Question 11: When all factors are considered, I am not a very powerful influence on a student's achievement in reading. (With mean recalculation equals: "I am a very powerful influence on a student's achievement in reading.") (+.68)

Question 13: When a student is reading below grade level, I am usually not able to determine how to remediate in order to improve his/her reading ability. (With mean recalculation equals: "I am usually able to determine how to remediate in order to improve his/her reading ability.") (+.69)

The researcher then created an alignment chart of the statistically significant questions on the EST-R to Bandura's (1997) framework of self-efficacy factors as depicted in Table 2. The paragraph that follows offers an explanation of the alignment.

Table 2

*EST-R Alignment to Bandura's Theoretical Framework*

Bandura's Theoretical Framework	Mastery Experiences	Vicarious Experiences/ Modeling	Verbal Persuasion	Emotional Arousal
Self-efficacy factors in research	Feel a sense of personal accomplishment (related to learning)	Opportunity to observe experienced teachers	Persistence/ effort	
EST-R Survey Question Responses	5, 11, 13, 17	12	3	0

The majority of the statistically significant responses aligned with Bandura's Enactive Mastery Experiences. Bandura (1997) described Mastery Experiences as being the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy as "they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster what it takes to succeed" (p. 80). Student teaching encompasses many opportunities for experiencing failure or success. Mastery Experiences involve repeated successes. Vicarious Experiences are described by Bandura (1997) as being influenced by models. Certainly, student teachers are exposed to models of instruction by observing the cooperating teacher on a daily basis. Bandura (1997) stated that "perceived efficacy can be readily changed by relevant modeling influences when people have had little prior experience on which to base evaluations of their capabilities" (p. 87). The third source of self-efficacy Bandura (1997) described is Verbal or Social Persuasion. Bandura (1997) asserted,

people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master

given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise. To the extent that persuasive boosts in perceived self-efficacy lead people to try hard enough to succeed, they promote development of skills and a sense of personal efficacy. (p. 101)

The other source of efficacy-building in Bandura's (1997) framework centers on Emotional Arousal. None of the questions indicated this was a factor in the EST-R survey. However, this factor was evident in the qualitative portion of the research which is discussed next.

### **Qualitative Measure**

#### **Research Question 2**

What impact does the senior-level literacy course have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

The researcher collected qualitative data in the form of end-of-semester letters to the professor in her role of professor of literacy. However, first, the researcher identified key elements of self-efficacy for teaching, both for experienced teachers and preservice teachers in the literature review. The researcher read through the literature review and highlighted influences indicative of efficacy building and found the following factors: for increasing teacher self-efficacy, feel a sense of personal accomplishment; have positive expectations for student behavior and achievement; feel a personal responsibility for student learning; have strategies for achieving objectives; demonstrate a positive affect and sense of control; involve students in setting goals and decision making; set high goals; incorporate cooperative learning activities with partners or small groups, establishing goals and expectations for the group prior to their task; persistence/effort;

and resilience (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Guskey, 1986; Woolfolk, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004; Woolfolk Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

The same process was used to identify influences of preservice teacher self-efficacy: guidance and support from mentor teacher, guidance and support from cooperating teacher, opportunity to observe experienced teachers, and opportunity for hands-on teaching (Brown et al., 2015; Tobias et al., 2008).

The second part of the qualitative data analysis involved examining the end-of-semester “Letters to the Professor” (N=29) for the aforementioned course, “Language Arts Assessment and Planning.” The researcher, in her role as literacy professor, on the last day of class requested that the students write her individual open-ended letters with feedback about the course. Suggestions were given to the students to write about what they valued about the course and what recommendations they had for changes to the course. Because these letters were written as a part of the course improvement process and not specifically for the dissertation, the data are considered archived data. The researcher made photocopies of each letter and then circled and wrote on the photocopy themes, following the process as depicted in Figure 5 (Miles et al., 2013).

<b>Second Cycle Coding Methods</b>	
<b>Coding Methods</b>	<b>Functions</b>
<b><i>Pattern coding</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examining initial codes</li> <li>• Identifying trends, patterns, relationships</li> <li>• Assigning labels (they could be categories or themes)</li> </ul>
<b><i>Focused coding</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying “the most frequent or significant initial codes” (p. 264)</li> <li>• Building categories around them</li> </ul>
<b><i>Axial coding</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying core category (“Core phenomenon”) and related categories</li> <li>• Examining the features and dimensions of categories</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">           Causal conditions → <b>Core phenomenon</b> → Strategies →            Intervening conditions → Consequence (Creswell, 2013, p. 86)         </p>
<b><i>Theoretical or Selective coding</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting the core category and related categories to create a storyline</li> <li>• The narrative (proposition/theory) should explain a phenomenon</li> </ul>

(Saldana, 2013)

Figure 5. Coding Method.

The researcher found information related to self-efficacy in the course “Letters to the Professor” indicating factors related to self-efficacy building that were not found in the document analysis of the course, which is described in the next section. The researcher created Table 3 which depicts the alignment of the self-efficacy factors found in the literature aligned with Bandura’s (1977, 1997) Theoretical Framework and indicators of self-efficacy found in the letters to the professor. An unexpected outcome of the analysis of the course letters to the professor was the unintentional modeling of self-efficacy for teaching by the professor.

Table 3

*Alignment of “Letters to the Professor” with Self-Efficacy Factors Identified in the Research*

Bandura’s Theoretical Framework	Mastery Experiences		Vicarious Experiences/ Modeling	Verbal Persuasion			Emotional Arousal
Self-efficacy factors in research	Feel a sense of personal accomplishment (related to learning)	Opportunity for hands-on teaching	Opportunity to observe experienced teachers	Persistence/ effort	Resilience	Set high goals	
Student responses	7	2	0	4	0	1	0

For example, one student made reference to setting high goals in the course. Goal-setting is part of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy framework, related to Verbal Persuasion. One student said, “I saw that I needed to raise my own goals higher than ever before I attended your class.”

There were seven references to the preservice teachers’ own learning, which is part of feeling a sense of personal accomplishment related to learning and is also aligned with Mastery Experiences. One student exclaimed, “You are truly an inspiration to me. I have learned so much!” This same student went on to describe how she wants to pursue a master’s degree:

The more I learned from you about literacy and saw your passion, which is contagious by the way, I made my decision. You have given me a desire and depth of knowledge that I am grateful for. You will always be an inspiration to me to help develop students in literacy.

Another student said, “I want you to know you have made a difference in my learning!”

There were other comments such as “You have taught me a lot” and “the final exam gave me the opportunity to show what I know.” Another said, “You are full of wonderful wisdom and knowledge and we were blessed to learn from you.” Other comments included “thank you for putting the emphasis on learning. I felt that there was a lot of care from you about how we learned”; “I honestly have learned so much about literacy in a new perspective”; and “You demonstrated knowledge and enthusiasm in assessing ELA. I learned a lot about evaluating fluency, writing and comprehension.” One student said, “I could never thank you enough for pushing me to reflect on everything I did. That will always be with me in my teaching career.”

Another preservice teacher said,

This course has been one of the most challenging for me over these past few years. It has often been so easy to slide by (although my overachieving nature often tending to make things harder even in other courses.) I think that since you are so fresh out of the schools, you provided us with more relevant and practical knowledge than another teacher who has been distanced for many years. I think all of the assignments are worthwhile and I certainly feel better prepared to assess literacy. When I attended a Fountas and Pinnell workshop at my school, I was delighted that I already knew a lot of the information that was covered.

Another student said,

I learned a lot about literacy that I had only heard of in passing before. Without speaking ill of other professors, I feel like it’s important to note that few have gone as in-depth as you have. I feel like I have a much firmer grasp on what literacy is and what purpose assessments serve. Assignment-wise, this is one of the few classes I’ve had that requires (what I consider) college-level work. If I

had taken classes at this intensity for every subject area, I would be a much more prepared teacher.

These particular quotes are important to the study because they indicate the unplanned modeling of self-efficacy in the realm of Mastery Experiences by the professor. Hebert et al. (1998) postulated the following: “Bandura (1977, 1986) viewed personal experience as the most important determinant, and preliminary evidence suggests the sense of teaching efficacy is indeed related to teachers’ experiences in schools” (p. 214).

With regard to the factor of Persistence and Effort, a student said, “I really admire your perseverance and dedication to make sure we were as prepared as we should be.” One student said, “Thank you for persevering through this semester with us and staying true to your beliefs about what we need to know.” Another student said, “Despite all the challenges and hardships you faced, you have endured and made a difference in the lives of all of us.”

The alignment of “Letters to the Professor” with self-efficacy factors identified in the research indicates the unintentional modeling of teacher efficacy. The next section further examines these self-efficacy factors in the same literacy course.

When the researcher/professor analyzed the “Language Arts Assessment and Planning” course for factors related to self-efficacy, the finding was only a small number of these research-based factors of teacher efficacy were actually present in the existing course. These included cooperative learning activities such as jigsaw reading of articles related to literacy assessment and small-group presentations on various topics in literacy assessment. The students also engaged in hands-on learning with the Fountas and Pinnell (2007) Benchmark Assessment and other literacy assessments. The preservice teachers



were in a field placement and were required to teach eight lessons, but the lessons were not connected to the “Language Arts Assessment and Planning” course which was analyzed. The course was not specifically designed with the tenets of teacher self-efficacy in mind. However, the researcher’s interest in development of self-efficacy led to an analysis of the course and its impact on the students’ self-efficacy in light of the information on teacher efficacy from the research. Therefore, Chapter 5 includes recommendations for including the factors identified in the research as building self-efficacy for teaching.

### **Findings for Research Question 3**

What is the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers’ sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

The researcher also collected qualitative data in the form of individual interviews. Interview questions were developed based on themes that emerged from the survey data from the EST-R. The questions were asked by the researcher in the one-to-one interviews and centered on the themes of student teaching success, feelings of effectiveness in teaching reading, increased knowledge of strategies for teaching reading, and teaching behaviors that contribute to student achievement in reading.

The researcher used an online transcription service (Voice-Base) to first machine transcribe the three interviews. When those transcriptions came back nonsensical, the researcher paid for human transcriptions also via Voice-Base. The transcriptions were cross-checked by the researcher for accuracy. As described in Chapter 3, a coding process was utilized to analyze the data that were gathered through the transcribed one-to-one interviews. Coding is a process where the researcher assigns labels to themes in

the data. As is customary with qualitative studies, this coding involved three categories: axial, open, and selective (Miles et al., 2013). Figure 5 depicts the coding process the researcher employed in analyzing the qualitative data. Because there were only three one-to-one interviews, a priori themes emerged quickly and early on through multiple readings of the transcribed interviews. The themes were determined to be anxiety in starting own classroom, support of cooperating teacher–successful student teaching, self-confidence, perseverance, personal belief in students, influence/power of the teacher, continuing to learn, foundational knowledge, experience teaching, and preparation for teaching. It was also apparent in the coding process that the themes of the preservice teacher interviews were aligning with the four sources of self-efficacy found in Bandura’s (1997) work: Mastery Experiences, Vicarious Experiences, Verbal Persuasion, and Physiological and Affective States.

Table 4 depicts the emerging themes the researcher identified in the one-to-one interviews within the theoretical framework of Bandura’s (1997) Four Sources of Self-Efficacy.

Table 4

*Alignment of Bandura's Four Sources of Self-Efficacy and Emerging Themes*

Mastery Experiences (Successful student teaching)	Vicarious Experiences/Modeling (Successful student teaching)	Verbal Persuasion (Successful student teaching)	Physiological and Affective States (Starting own classroom)
Support of cooperating teacher	Support of cooperating teacher	Support of cooperating teacher	anxiety very excited nervous overwhelmed
Confidence	Foundational Knowledge	Personal Belief in Students	
Persistence/Perseverance:	Preparation	Influence/Power of the Teacher	
Experience Teaching	Continuing to Learn		

As evident in the table, some of the themes overlap and fit in more than one category of self-efficacy. Furthermore, it is important to note that Bandura (1997) contended that a person's mastery of one domain can transfer to another domain if the person perceives them to be similar enough. Each of these four factors of self-efficacy will be described, and examples from the one-to-one interviews will be extrapolated; providing evidence of Bandura's theoretical framework.

### **Mastery Experiences**

Mastery Experiences are described by Bandura (1997) as the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed.

Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it,

especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established. (p. 80)

All three interviewees declared that they experienced success in student teaching, and all three attributed their success as student teachers to the support of the cooperating teacher.

Respondent 1 said,

I think my student teaching experience was successful mainly because of my Cooperating Teacher. I know other people didn't have the same experience I did. I had a very, very supportive cooperating teacher. Never at any point did I feel like I was on my own. She was always there. She always had resources. She always had something for me. She built my knowledge and built my skill set that maybe I hadn't learned about in my methods classes because it's totally different.

Respondent 2 stated,

I felt like I was the teacher in that classroom during that semester. He also gave me a lot of tools that I could use into my teaching because he was a very seasoned teacher. But having that hands on experience with that seasoned teacher, you just get a lot of resources under your belt that prepare you for your own classroom.

Respondent 3 attributed her successful student teaching experience to the following:

“A lot of collaboration with my cooperating teacher and actually taking the advice she was giving me.”

Two of the interviewees also discussed the factor of confidence-building through the successful student teaching experience. Bandura (1997) stated, “Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy” (p. 80).

Respondent 1 stated,

I feel like I came away so much because I student taught in 5th Grade. Having that direct experience planning a guided reading group for instance makes me feel

way more confident in what to expect out of my 5th Graders this year even though they're basically coming in as 4th Graders.

Respondent 1 continued,

If you don't feel confident in yourself and you don't feel confident in your teaching, your kids will notice and they will pick up on it. They will be able to tell, well she's not sure in what she's saying.

Respondent 2 said,

I think that, it has had an effect on me but, you know, there have been other subjects I've seen that you know, the more confident I became in that subject area, the better my teaching was and the better student assessment scores.

Bandura (1997) emphasized as part of Mastery Experiences that success builds more successes. Bandura (1997) said, "After people become convinced that they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks" (p. 80).

Respondent 1 said, "I think for students' success in reading you have to be persistent and you have to persevere. You can't get pressured if they aren't moving as quickly as you want them to."

Clearly, the students' self-efficacy for teaching reading is strong, and the student teachers were positively impacted by these Mastery Experiences: confidence building, hands-on experiences, and support of cooperating teacher.

### **Vicarious Experiences**

Vicarious experiences are described by Bandura (1997) as "mediated by modeled attainments" (p. 86). This is where people compare their own capabilities with the accomplishments of others. Bandura (1997) asserted, "People actively seek proficient

models who possess the competencies to which they aspire. By their behavior and expressed ways of thinking, competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers skills and strategies for managing environmental demands” (p. 88, as cited in Bandura, 1986a).

Respondent 3 said this about learning from her cooperating teacher,

When it came to reading, because he felt like I was prepared enough to do it, I did, but as far as my teacher, he just kind of let me do my own thing. I felt comfortable enough that I was helping students be successful in their reading with the strategies that and the repertoire that *the university* gave me to use with reading.

Bandura (1997) stated, “Even those who are highly self-assured will raise their efficacy beliefs if models teach them even better ways of doing things” (p. 87).

### **Verbal Persuasion**

Verbal or Social Persuasion is explained by Bandura (1997): “It is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one’s capabilities than if they convey doubts” (p. 101). Though the interviewees did not specifically state ways that their cooperating teacher used verbal persuasion to increase their self-efficacy, two of the respondents spoke about how they as student teachers used encouraging words and demonstrated belief in their students’ capabilities in their experience working directly with children. This is indicative of the student teachers’ self-efficacy.

Respondent 1 said,

I don’t really know if it comes down so much to even lessons, so much as just your personal belief in a student. I mean helping them find books that are on their

level. Helping teaching them those skills to make them more independent, especially in 5th Grade. Teaching them to take control of their own reading lives. Also being enthusiastic about reading yourself and not just as you need to be a good reader so you score high on the ACT. You need to be a good reader so you can succeed at life. Reading is fun and reading is important.

Respondent 3 stated,

I think as far as the behavior towards reading, I was just very optimistic with them and kept gently pushing them to become better readers. What I often did, especially with guided reading, I let them choose books of their own interest on their own level. So I'd ask them, like okay, you let me know what type of books you want to read and I will, we will work towards that goal. And just getting that upbeat optimistic that they can do it, I feel like affected them being able to succeed. Because I had kids who jumped at least three or four guided reading levels within the year that I was with them. So, I just feel like being optimistic, being encouraging, telling the kids that they can do it even though they might be struggling is what's going to be a big contribution to their success.

It is evident the student teachers demonstrated their own self-efficacy through their attitudes and choice of words which indicated faith in the students' abilities.

### **Physiological and Affective States**

The fourth source of self-efficacy is physiological and affective states. None of the interviewees specifically spoke about physiological states regarding student teaching; but when asked how they felt about having their own classroom, the beginning teachers indicated the following. Respondent 2 stated she was "very excited and nervous."

Respondent 3 said, "I feel like I'm prepared but I am very overwhelmed at the moment."

Bandura (1997) stated, “Because high arousal can debilitate performance, people are more inclined to expect success when they are not beset by aversive arousal than if they are tense and viscerally agitated” (p. 106).

Bandura (1997) made the case that efficacy beliefs differ in strength, saying, “the stronger the sense of personal efficacy, however, the greater the perseverance and the higher the likelihood that the chosen activity will be performed successfully” (p. 43). Conversely, perceived self-inefficacy leads people to approach intimidating situations anxiously, and experience of disruptive levels of arousal may further lower their efficacy though they fail repeatedly (Brown & Inouye, 1978). However, research shows that with a high level of guidance and support during the student teaching experience, the preservice teachers’ self-efficacy flourishes. Research by Fives et al. (2007) centered on the question, “Does burnout begin with student teaching?” (p. 1). Interpretation of the qualitative data indicated significant increases in efficacy and gradual decreases in burnout characteristics based on high guidance by the cooperating teacher.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 provided a description of the data that were collected to answer the three research questions. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research study with conclusions, a discussion of limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

An alarm has been sounded across the nation that students cannot read. Prisons are overcrowded with high school dropouts who do not even have basic literacy skills (Coley & Barton, 1996). Research shows that if students are not proficient readers by Grade 3, the gap becomes near impossible to close (Francis et al., 1996; Hernandez, 2011). Over the last 15 years or so, research on self-efficacy as related to teacher efficacy has come to the forefront. A smaller number of studies has focused on measures of self-efficacy among preservice teachers (Hamman et al., 2006; Hebert et al., 1998; Klassen & Durksen, 2014). Research shows there is no more powerful influence on achievement than the classroom teacher (Nye et al., 2004). Thus, if self-efficacy research can be applied to teacher training programs and newly hired beginning teachers launch their careers being efficacious, the assumption is that student achievement will be impacted. The forthcoming recommendations in this chapter center on shaping preservice teachers' self-efficacy. As Tuchman and Isaacs (2011) stated,

Of the greatest interest . . . are those formative pre-service teacher experiences that help mold a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. These experiences, occurring while teachers' efficacy beliefs are still developing and more easily influenced, can have significant impact on the teaching efficacy of teachers. (p. 415)

Along these lines, Shaughnessy (2004) recapped comments from "An Interview with Anita Woolfolk," a well-known researcher in the field of teacher efficacy:

We will never have the perfect curriculum or teaching strategy, but teachers who set high goals, who persist, who try another strategy when one approach is found wanting—in other words, teachers who have a high sense of efficacy and act on

it—are more likely to have students who learn. So the question of how to support and not undermine teachers’ sense of efficacy is critical. (p. 157)

Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to examine the self-efficacy beliefs of preservice teachers for literacy instruction, both before and after the student teaching experience. Additionally, a senior-level literacy course and end-of-semester letters to the professor were examined for evidence of self-efficacy factors. Chapter 1 presented an overview that included the status of literacy in the nation. The statement of the problem, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and key terminology were also addressed. Chapter 2 offered a review of the literature. The foundation of the literature review was Bandura’s (1977, 1984, 1986, 1995, 1997) theory of self-efficacy. Bandura’s theory served as a unifying thread tying self-efficacy theory to teacher efficacy and ultimately to preservice teacher efficacy. The literature review also discussed the importance of teacher knowledge in reading instruction and how student achievement in reading is impacted by factors of teacher training and teacher efficacy. Chapter 3 described the methodology utilized in the study. The quantitative research method of using the EST-R was put forth as well as the qualitative components of student letters to the literacy professor and one-to-one interviews were described. Chapter 4 offered an analysis of the findings of the study including a description of the results of the EST-R survey, analysis of the literacy course, and analysis of the student letters to the professor. Chapter 5 gives a discussion of the findings, conclusion, implications, and recommendations for further research.

### **Research Questions**

1. What impact does the student teaching experience have on elementary preservice teachers’ sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAN)

2. What impact do the junior and senior-level literacy courses have on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)
3. What is the relationship between the impact of coursework and the student teaching experience on elementary preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading? (QUAL)

### **Research Design**

The research design of the study was mixed-methods, combining quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative method utilized archived data collected at the end of the semester which examined preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for reading instruction through the EST-R. The survey was given to 29 students with 27 surveys returned. Of the 32 elementary preservice teachers, 29 went on to student teach, and the EST-R was offered via Survey Monkey to the 29 preservice teachers after the student teaching experience ended. The survey instrument (EST-R) was comprised of 19 questions on a five-point Likert scale. A total of eight graduates of the elementary teacher training program completed the survey through Survey Monkey. The qualitative measures included analyzing the senior-level literacy course as well as the end-of-semester student letters to the professor for factors identified in the literature review as contributing to self-efficacy for teaching. The final qualitative measure was the one-to-one interviews which consisted of three participants.

The subsequent sections of this chapter include a discussion of the significant findings gained from the study and a presentation of the study's limitations and concludes with a discussion of recommendations for further research.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

The quantitative findings of the study, based on the EST-R, indicate an increase in self-efficacy of the preservice teachers after the student teaching experience. In light of Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, it is not surprising to see a shift in self-efficacy during student teaching. Preservice teachers face many challenges in the student teaching experience. Bandura (1997) stated, "If people experience only easy successes, they come to expect quick results and are easily discouraged by failure" (p. 80). In the case of student teaching, preservice teachers may enter the daily experience of classroom teaching with a false sense of confidence based on repeated successes with coursework and isolated teaching experiences in much shorter duration field placements. The term "efficacy aspirations" has been applied to the inflated sense of efficacy by preservice teachers (Hebert et al., 1998, p. 233). However, if student teachers experience repeated successes under the guidance of a strong supervising teacher, their self-efficacy can increase dramatically. This upsurge in preservice teacher self-efficacy is evident in the quantitative aspects of the study as well as the qualitative research. Bandura (1997) stated,

Difficulties provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success by honing one's capabilities to exercise better control over events. After people become convinced that they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks. (p. 80)

Identifying the factors that lead to preservice teacher efficacy thus has great implications for turning out highly efficacious beginning teachers.

## **Limitations**

Miles et al. (2013) quoted Stake (1995) as saying, "Good research is not so much

about good methods as much as it is about good thinking” (p. 104). The researcher feels if that is the case, this is excellent research! The researcher can state that the entire experience is grounded in deep reflective thought, particularly about the flaws in the study, as will be described in this section. In addition, the researcher demonstrates Stake’s reference to “good thinking” with her numerous recommendations for further research which will be described under a subsequent heading.

Indeed, there are multiple limitations to this study. The researcher is employed as a literacy professor and also the elementary education department chair in the university where the study took place. Serving as both researcher and literacy professor could have led to bias in the data collection process. This fact may have limited the participation of the preservice teachers in the research. Thus, the most limiting constraint of the study was the lack of participation of the preservice teachers. The initial EST-R survey was given to 29 preservice teachers with 27 surveys being returned. The post EST-R was typed in Survey Monkey, and a link was emailed to the students as well as posted to a private cohort group on Facebook several times; however, only eight surveys were completed. Even more disappointing was the lack of participation in the focus groups, which turned out to be three separate one-to-one interviews. Hence, the inadequate participation of the preservice teachers was a major limitation. For the students who did participate in the study, they may not have felt free to be entirely forthright in their comments in the one-to-one interviews.

Another limitation of the study was the research design itself. The researcher, as the literacy professor, used the EST-R as feedback on the course and later introduced the data in the study as archived data. This proved to be problematic in the research design as the participants were not able to be pre and postmatched one-to-one. This design flaw

led to a change in data analysis from the one-way ANOVA to a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. Having a one-to-one pre and postmatch would have made for stronger quantitative research methodology.

### **Recommendations**

First of all, during the writing of this dissertation, the researcher found an email in her spam folder from Dr. Karen Estes, the developer of the EST-R, which holds promise for future research. The researcher contacted Dr. Estes to obtain permission to use the EST-R (Appendix C) and did not realize Dr. Estes had sent a second email until over a year later (Appendix G). Estes stated, “Doctoral work is particularly challenging and I’m pleased to find a candidate with similar research interests. Given our diversity in area populations, future study and publication opportunities may exist” (Appendix G). This is a research area the researcher plans to pursue with Dr. Estes, who is a professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas.

Based on the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted for the study as well as the identified limitations, the researcher as professor offers several recommendations for further research. As previously stated, the limitations and flaws of the study include a very important finding: The literacy course which the researcher thought surely had factors that would lead to an increase in self-efficacy did not. This was an eye-opening discovery as professors in teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education certainly must desire to turn out highly efficacious beginning teachers. Nonetheless, as Fullan (1993) contended, “Teacher education has the honor of being the worst problem and the best solution in education” (p. 14). In other words, we can blame teacher education programs, or we can look at teacher preparation through a new lens. Thus, as we design our courses, we need to consider what research says about building

teacher efficacy.

One recommendation is that institutions of higher education analyze their teacher preparation courses for factors that contribute to self-efficacy as identified in the research and listed in Chapter 4. For example, the research factors of teaching efficacy can be applied to courses in which there is a field placement teaching component. Those factors would include opportunity for hands-on teaching, guidance and support of mentor and cooperating teachers, and the opportunity to observe experienced teachers. Involving students in goal-setting is also important and could be done at the beginning of each semester with the students creating goals that align to the course. These factors align with Bandura's (1997) work which points to mastery experiences, vicarious modeling, and social persuasion as having a significant positive impact on building self-efficacy.

Additionally, Gaskill and Woolfolk Hoy (2002, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004) have identified factors for increasing self-efficacy in the elementary classroom. The researcher recommends that these factors be explored for implementation in higher education classrooms, teaching preservice teachers to intentionally include the factors in field placement lesson plans which in turn could impact preservice teacher self-efficacy. These factors which align with elementary teacher self-efficacy and therefore may align with preservice teacher self-efficacy relate to Bandura's (1997) Mastery Experiences. They are

1. Ensure that learning tasks are on an appropriate level for all students.
2. Create opportunities for students to experience the "practice effect" by providing familiar tasks in order to improve their performance.
3. Provide instructional support as necessary to guarantee student success.
4. Help students to maintain incremental views of intelligence and adopt learning

goals rather than performance goals. For example, remove performance pressures by giving feedback and then allowing students to redo and improve work, use portfolios so that students see their own progress, periodically revisit earlier assignments to show students how much they have learned, recognize creativity and partially correct answers—not just perfect papers, and avoid comparing students with each other.

5. Teach cognitive and metacognitive skills such as planning, monitoring, and goal setting.
6. Teach specific self-regulatory strategies that impact student performance such as help seeking, maintaining task focus and attention, applying memory strategies, managing time, and organizing.

Therefore, for mastery experiences, the professors could focus on helping the preservice teachers set goals for their own learning; particularly with regard to teaching experiences in the field placement. Although the preservice teachers do meet with their mentors and/or the cooperating teacher after each lesson taught at the university where the researcher conducted her research, there is no preconference before teaching lessons. Individual conferences could be held with the mentors in the field placement class before the first lesson is taught and with the professor mid-way through the semester to help students set goals based on prior data about teaching experiences. As previously mentioned, because research indicates that goal setting builds self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), goal-setting conferences could be held with the supervising teacher prior to student teaching in the senior year based on lesson feedback from the junior year. A fellow colleague of the researcher (J. Branyon, personal communication, November 24, 2015) suggested,



1. Pre-conference each student teacher with supervisor. Use all FEE and lesson plan data and input from faculty to areas that need improvement (Create a document on each teacher candidate with this information). Conference with the student teacher and kind of have a here is where you are now, where do we need to go in terms of growth and together create a growth plan.
2. Mid-semester: Revisit the growth plan and review all evaluations up to this point. Beef up student teaching by re-instating the FEE or a better version of it anyway to evaluate each lesson observed. Lay out the data. Analyze together, has there been growth, revise the growth plan.
3. Final evaluation conference: Pull out the paper work, look at the evaluations since mid-term, and look at the growth plan. Plot the areas targeted.  
Reflection on what improved and what did not.

Pulling the data regarding the lessons taught in a portfolio-type format could further enhance mastery experiences.

Along these lines, Gaskill and Woolfolk Hoy (2002, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004) have also identified factors for increasing self-efficacy in the elementary classroom related to Bandura's (1997) factor of Modeling:

1. Allow peer models to demonstrate a task, verbalizing their thoughts and reasoning as they perform.
2. Incorporate cooperative learning activities with partners or small groups, establishing goals and expectations for the group prior to their task (Woolfolk Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999).
3. Discourage comparisons between groups and encourage students to develop a whole-class spirit. (p. 159)

Hence, for the modeling component, preservice teachers in the field placement courses could perform practice lessons in small groups before they teach the real lessons in the field placement. Cooperative learning activities in all teacher preparation classes could be enhanced by establishing goals and expectations focused on learning.

Moreover, teacher preparation programs would greatly benefit from using recent program graduates as sources of inspiration for current student teachers. Bandura (1997) stated, “Even those who are highly self-assured will raise their efficacy beliefs if models teach them even better ways of doing things” (p. 87). The preservice teachers would benefit from events such as a panel of beginning teachers, recent graduates who can talk candidly about “survival tactics” for student teaching. This type of event could be held annually prior to student teaching, one that future teachers could look forward to by coming back to campus as first-year teachers for their senior-year peers. In fact, the researcher as professor has already scheduled one such event.

Additionally, Gaskill and Woolfolk Hoy (2002, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004) have also identified factors for increasing self-efficacy in the elementary classroom related to Bandura’s (1997) factor of Verbal Persuasion:

1. Be aware of children’s actual ability to succeed when giving encouragement. Don’t say, “You can do that problem—it’s easy.” Instead, suggest “You might be able to get this one if you take your time and line up the numbers.”
2. Provide attributional feedback that focuses on effort (“Your hard work is paying off” or “I’m glad you did this last revision—your story uses more describing words now”). (p. 160)

The researcher as teacher preparation professor is entirely cognizant of the preservice teachers’ need for encouragement. Sharing the research with colleagues and

making a concerted effort in giving focused feedback and encouragement in lesson plan writing and other tasks will enrich the efficacy building power of verbal persuasion. Additionally, university mentors can be trained in the factor of verbal persuasion in coaching preservice teachers both before and after lesson delivery. Furthermore, it is recommended that the type of coaching mentors use with preservice teachers be examined for efficacy-building factors. An exact coaching model based on these factors could be enacted.

Lastly, Gaskill and Woolfolk Hoy (2002, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004) have also identified factors for increasing self-efficacy in the elementary classroom related to Bandura's (1997) factor of Physiological Arousal:

1. Make sure all instructions are clear. Uncertainty can lead to anxiety.
2. Avoid unnecessary time pressures and remove some of the pressures from major tests and exams. Teach test-taking skills; give practice tests; provide study guides. Develop alternatives to written tests. Try oral, open-book, or group tests. Have students do projects, organize portfolios of their work, make oral presentations, or create a finished product. (p. 160)

There is no question that preservice teachers can feel anxiety in the junior- and senior-level coursework and field experiences. Faculty can make sure that expectations and deadlines are clear in course syllabi and in field experience notebooks. Professors can do well to vary the format of exams and even give students a limited choice in exam and assignment options, in particular focusing on collaborative and project-based ways to enhance learning over rote learning.

Accordingly, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, the teacher education program at the university where the research took place implemented a "Student Impact

Project.” The purpose of this project is to show that our preservice teachers have an impact on student learning by evidence of growth in achievement in one focus area. The project description follows.

Senior Block, Semester 1: Candidate will carry out a small group and whole class instruction. The candidate in close agreement with the cooperating teacher will identify students who need assistance. The candidate will pre-assess students in some way, analyze the assessment, research ways to meet the students’ needs, carry out small group work and individual work, re-assess and monitor progress and analyze the overall impact on the group. Additionally, the candidate will select one lesson and pre-assess students prior to the lesson. Build a lesson utilizing the pre-assessment or at least adjust the lesson using the pre-assessment, teach the lesson, give a post-assessment, analyze the gains, and reflect on the results. Ideally, two lesson periods could go toward the project, but that may not be possible; therefore, working closely with the cooperating teacher is a must.

Senior year, Student Teaching:

Candidates will carry out the Teacher Work Sample as described in the Student Teacher Handbook. The student impact projects will assist the candidate in terms of readiness for this extensive, in-depth, two week unit that must demonstrate impact on student learning. The experience gained in the smaller projects will help the candidate assess students, analyze assessments, plan for instruction, carry out formative assessments, modify instruction, and post-assess students analyzing the impact on student learning. These unique experiences prepare candidates for the important responsibility of instructing students, analyzing assessment data, and differentiating instruction. This project is tied to the field experience and will

be scored by a qualified instructor or course instructor as needed. Data will be collected as evidence that Candidates in the Teacher Education Program of the university impact student learning and develop abilities to assess, research, plan, and analyze student performance and needs. (J. Branyon, personal communication, May 16, 2015)

Consequently, the following factors of self-efficacy as identified in research (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Guskey, 1986; Woolfolk, as quoted in Shaughnessy, 2004; Woolfolk Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) can be achieved via this Student Impact Project: (a) feel a sense of personal accomplishment; (b) have positive expectations for student behavior and achievement; (c) feel a personal responsibility for student learning; (d) have strategies for achieving objectives; (e) demonstrate a positive affect and sense of control; (f) involve students in setting goals and decision making; and (g) set high goals.

Research by Bandura (1997) further illustrated the power of the Student Impact Project: “The task of creating learning environments conducive to development of cognitive competencies rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers” (p. 240). If teachers’ perceived sense of efficacy is high, the result can be higher consequences such as goals which in turn can impact student achievement, student sense of efficacy, and teacher commitment.

### **Summary**

Change is essential in teacher preparation programs as institutions of higher education exist in a state of continuous improvement. Enhancement can begin within our university departments with only a few like-minded individuals who possess a vision and passion for increasing the self-efficacy of beginning teachers. Fullan (1993) stated,

Above all, we need action that links initial teacher preparation and continuous

teacher development based on moral purpose and change agency with the corresponding restructuring of universities and schools and their relationships.

Systems don't change by themselves. Rather, the actions of individuals and small groups working on new conceptions intersect to bring breakthroughs. (p. 17)

For that reason, this study had a powerful impact on the researcher. It is exciting for the researcher to see the possibilities for enhancing the teacher preparation program at the university where she is a professor and Elementary Education Department Chair. What is more, the dissertation committee in part is comprised of the Dean of Education and the Early Childhood Department chair also at the researcher's university. Thus, the implications for impacting the teacher education program are strong, especially in light of the work by another colleague with the previously described Student Impact Project and restructuring of student teacher support model (J. Branyon, personal communication, May 16, 2015; November 24, 2015). The team approach, coupled with a new vision for efficacy-building can have a powerful and lasting impact on preservice teachers, ensuring that they become highly-eficacious educators with an enduring realm of influence.

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Appendix A

Efficacy Scale for Teachers of Reading (EST-R)

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain better understanding of the kinds of things that influence reading teachers. Please indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate response on the form provided. Do not write on this document. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name. Thank you.

1. When a student does better than usual in reading, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort.
2. When a student is having difficulty with a reading assignment, I often have trouble adjusting it to his / her level.
3. When I really try, I can teach a student how to read.
4. When the reading grades of my students improve, it has little to do with the methods I have used.
5. If a student quickly masters a new concept in reading, this might be because I knew the necessary steps to teach that concept.
6. If students have little encouragement to read at home, they are unlikely to respond positively to reading instruction.
7. If a student is a struggling reader, I can usually determine if he / she needs remediation in phonics.
8. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous reading lesson, I would not know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.
9. If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to redirect him/her.
10. If one of my students was assigned to read a passage, I would not be able to accurately assess whether the selection was at the correct level of difficulty.
11. When all factors are considered, I am not a very powerful influence on a student's achievement in reading.
12. When the reading skills of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.
13. When a student is reading below grade level, I am usually not able to determine how to remediate in order to improve his/her reading ability.
14. If parents don't read with their children, it makes it difficult for me to teach reading.
15. When a student reads aloud-I can usually determine what strategies to use to improve his / her fluency.
16. If a student in my class becomes frustrated with a reading assignment, I feel confident that I know the techniques to remediate to meet the student's needs.

17. Even though a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement, I am not limited in what I can accomplish toward teaching a student to read.
18. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities in reading may not reach many students.
19. When a new student comes to my class, I am able to accurately assess his / her appropriate reading level.

Appendix B

Individual Interview Questions

### Individual Interview Questions

1. I know that you have accepted a teaching position. Congratulations! Where will you be teaching and what grades?
2. How do you feel about having your own classroom?
3. Overall, would you say you had a successful or unsuccessful student teaching experience? Please elaborate.
4. How did the student teaching experience impact your feelings of effectiveness in teaching reading? Please give an example.
5. Did your student teaching experience help you build a repertoire of specific strategies in teaching reading? Please explain and give examples.
6. Which of your teaching behaviors do you think contribute to student success in reading?
7. Do you think that your self-efficacy for teaching, or how effective you feel that you are in the classroom, has an impact on your students' reading achievement? In what ways?
8. Do you feel you are a powerful influence on students' achievement in reading? Please elaborate on why you feel that way.

## Appendix C

### Permission Granted to Use the EST-R

**From:** Estes, Karen <kestes@umhb.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 08, 2013 3:53 PM  
**To:** Ms. Michele Miller Schaich  
**Subject:** RE: EST-R Request

Michelle,

For some reason, I just received your email. It appears as if it was sent several months ago.

I'm glad you found my work helpful and you certainly have my permission to use the EST-R and cite my research. I'm continuing to use the EST-R in my current research endeavors. I'd be quite interested in learning more about your proposal. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Blessings,  
Dr. Estes

L. Karen Estes, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor

College of Education  
Parker Academic Building, Office #118  
900 College Street  
Belton, Texas 76513  
254-295-4572 Main Office  
254-295-4480 Fax

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**From:** Ms. Michele Miller Schaich  
**Sent:** Friday, June 28, 2013 9:32 PM  
**To:** [kestes@umhb.edu](mailto:kestes@umhb.edu)  
**Subject:** EST-R Request

Hello Dr. Estes:

I am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina writing my research proposal. I have just read your study on Elementary Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Teaching Reading. Your research meshes so perfectly with one of my research questions: "What impact does the training and implementation of Leveled Literacy Intervention have on the self-efficacy of reading teachers' ability to teach struggling readers?" I have been searching for self-efficacy scales for teachers of reading and was overjoyed to find your study! May I have permission to use the EST-R and cite your research?

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,  
Michele M. Schaich  
Gardner-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC  
828-779-0161

Appendix D

Letter to Preservice Teachers



Dear Student Teachers,

I am writing to inform you of an opportunity to participate in my research study beginning mid to late May 2015. I decided to focus my doctoral research on an area that could benefit our College of Education at North Greenville University. I am studying the self-efficacy of preservice teachers for literacy instruction. I will also be examining literacy program preparation.

Participation will be optional. There will be an online survey and questionnaire, as well as a couple of focus groups for those of you who live close by. There may be telephone interviews. I will explain more about the research protocol in May, but please know that all data will be anonymous. There are several steps that I must complete before I can announce details. I must finish writing the first three chapters of my dissertation and defend my proposal and gain approval to collect research data through the International Review Board. If all goes as planned, I hope to be announcing my official research study to you in six to eight weeks.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Schaich

Appendix E  
Information Sheet for Research Study Participation

In addition to being your literacy professor for the fall 2014 course, “Language Arts Assessment and Planning,” I am also a doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction department at Gardner-Webb University. I am requesting your participation in my research study entitled: An Examination of Preservice Teachers’ Self-efficacy Beliefs for Teaching Reading. Please read this information carefully and ask any questions prior to consenting to participate in the study.

**Purpose of the Research:**

The purpose for this study is to contribute to the existing body of research for preservice teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction. This proposed study has a three-pronged approach. First, literacy teacher preparation courses will be examined for factors that relate positively to preservice teacher self-efficacy. Second, this study seeks to determine if the student teaching experience has an impact on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers. Third, the relationship between coursework and student teaching on preservice teachers’ self-efficacy for reading instruction will be examined.

**Procedures:**

By participating in the study you will:

Complete an online survey about your beliefs about teaching reading to elementary age students.

You will be asked to participate in a focus group in-person interview or a telephone interview about your thoughts of the institution’s teacher preparation program—coursework and student teaching experience.

**Additional Information:**

Participation in the study is entirely optional. Confidentiality will be maintained as no identifying information will be published. Surveys will be conducted anonymously. Research records from the interviews will be stored securely.

Appendix F  
Informed Consent Agreement

**Researcher:** Michele Schaich

**Title of Study:** An Examination of Elementary Preservice Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs for Reading Instruction

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of the study is to examine the impact teacher preparation courses, as well as the student teaching experience has on elementary preservice teachers' self-efficacy for reading instruction.

**Methodology/Procedures of Research/Anticipated time to complete:** The study will be a mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) design. There will be triangulation through an online survey instrument of a Likert Scale of 19 closed prompts and during the week of July 27, there will be the opportunity for a focus group or telephone interview with eight interview questions for open-ended responses. The survey should be completed in 20 minutes and the interview should be completed in a 45 minute time frame.

**Possible Risks:** None

**Possible Benefits:** To be contribute feedback to the Elementary Teacher Education Program at North Greenville University

**Possible Costs:** None

**Right to Withdraw:** Participation is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Privacy of data collected from the study:** Data collection will be anonymous and confidential to protect the privacy of participants. Results will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only known to the researcher. No identifying information will be published in the dissertation.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me in the following ways:

Cell phone: 828-779-0161

Email: Michele.schaich@ngu.edu

**Signatures:** By signing this consent agreement, you agree to take part in the study. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix G

Letter from Dr. Karen Estes

From: Estes, Karen kestes@umhb.edu  
Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2013 2:52 PM  
To: Ms Michele Miller Schaich  
Subject: RE: EST-R Request

Michele,

I received grant funding to continue the use of the EST-R and complete a study to determine if a correlation exists between campus-wide self-efficacy toward teaching reading and particular campus' scores of the state assessment in reading. However, my husband passed away just prior to beginning the work and I declined the funding. I am reapplying for the grant this year.

I've used my work with self-efficacy to create and pilot a scale we used in a study to measure a teacher's sense of efficacy toward self-advocacy in education. That's a particular problem in Texas. The sample in the final study was small, so we decided to publish via ERIC. ERIC is currently unavailable due to the government shut down, but the citation is

Estes, L.K., Zipperlen, M.Z., and Owens, C.A. (2010) Affecting Positive Political Change for Texas Teacher Educators: Preservice Teachers' Perceived Efficacy toward the Political Process (Report No. ED508555).

I'm not sure if this would be helpful or not. It depends on the perspective of your lit review. I'd send you a copy of the article myself, but the computer where it is stored is on the blitz and with IT.

Others have used the EST-R, but I'm uncertain about publications regarding its use. Let me know if I can be of any assistance along the way. Doctoral work is particularly challenging and I'm pleased to find a candidate with similar research interests. Given our diversity in area populations, future study and publication opportunities may exist.

Blessings,

Dr. Estes

L. Karen Estes, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor  
College of Education  
Parker Academic Building, Office #118  
900 College Street  
Belton, Texas 76513