

Preface

Fostering collective teacher efficacy is a timely and important issue if we are going to realize success for all students. When a school staff shares the belief that through their collective actions they can positively influence student outcomes, student achievement increases. Collective teacher efficacy deserves the attention of every educator because it was recently ranked as the *number one factor* influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2016). Educators with high efficacy show greater effort and persistence, a willingness to try new teaching approaches, and attend more closely to the needs of students who are not progressing well. They also convey high expectations, foster learner autonomy, and welcome increased parental involvement. In addition, educators who share a sense of collective efficacy get students to believe they can excel in school.

Efficacy beliefs are very powerful because they guide educators' actions and behavior. Efficacy beliefs help determine what educators focus on, how they respond to challenges, and how they expend their efforts. When staffs lack a sense of collective efficacy, they do not pursue certain courses of action because they feel they lack the capabilities to achieve positive outcomes. If educators' realities are filtered through the belief that they can do *very little* to influence student achievement, then it is very likely these beliefs will be manifested in their practice. It is promising to know that educators' beliefs about their capability to impact student outcomes can be shaped and adjusted.

Research in this field is emerging, and more is becoming known about the factors that influence the collective efficacy of a school staff. The purpose of this book is two-fold: (a) to translate the extant research on collective teacher efficacy into a form that is useable by principals and teachers; and (b) to provide practical strategies, tools, and an inquiry framework to help bridge the theory-practice divide. In this book, readers will find

- A rationale for strengthening collective teacher efficacy
- Sources that influence collective teacher efficacy
- A list of enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy to flourish

- Successful leadership practices that hold the potential to strengthen efficacy
- Efficacy enhancing professional learning structures and protocols
- A framework to organize leadership actions for strengthening the collective efficacy of a school staff

Strengthening collective teacher efficacy as a change strategy in schools is a very different approach to bringing about change than what has been done in the past. It is not *another initiative*, usually resulting in teachers rolling their eyes when introduced. It does not require the purchase of expensive programs or new resources. It does not require costly retraining. It does, however, require determination and stamina on the part of leaders and leadership teams. It requires that awareness be built about collective efficacy and its importance in relation to student achievement. It requires that structures and processes be put in place for teachers to come together to solve problems of practice collaboratively. It requires that leaders resist the temptation to direct action and rather empower teachers by involving them in meaningful issues related to school improvement. It also requires that teams of teachers are supported and feedback is provided when interpreting the result of their collective actions.

Understanding what it is, why it is important, and the positive consequences associated with it is the first step. If efficacy beliefs are going to be reshaped, then gaining insight into how collective efficacy beliefs are formed is important as well. Examining school characteristics associated with improved collective teacher efficacy will help readers in determining potential transferable aspects of successful change strategies. Knowing how and why certain professional learning structures and protocols help foster collective efficacy will help educators and facilitators in selecting and utilizing them to their fullest. Finally, by engaging in an inquiry approach to examine ways to strengthen the efficacy of a staff, formal and informal leaders will determine what works and adjust approaches to realize increased collective efficacy.

A key to turning around schools that struggle to support student learning lies in the ability of formal and informal leaders to cultivate collective efficacy. Exemplary leadership practices highlighted in the research and considered highly effective in relation to developing collective teacher efficacy are presented throughout this book. Strategies for creating an organization of shared inquiry and decision making using student achievement data are outlined along with ways to create opportunities for meaningful collaboration and to empower teachers. In addition to the research, readers will find an inquiry framework and tools that will assist them in measuring the collective efficacy beliefs of the staff, determining the degree to which the enabling conditions are in place within their schools, implementing changes in leadership practice, monitoring results, and determining next steps.