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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The high dropout rate in urban high schools, particularly among poor and racial minority students, continues to be a problem confronting public education in the United States (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2007). MacIver (2010) reported longitudinal studies have supported the hypothesis that academic failure has a direct effect on student motivation, which in turn has a direct effect on dropout behavior. Low-achieving students at risk of academic failure need culturally responsive classroom environments, with teachers who care about how well they are motivated to learn, think, and become a contributing member of our economic society. A goal of classroom instruction is engaging students in learning for success in school completion. Johnson (1994) stated that, “the strategies employed by educators to decrease academic failure and to increase academic success are pedagogical in nature” (p. 380). However, student perceptions and teacher beliefs about this expected, and significantly important, achievement goal may not be aligned. In this study, an investigation was made into how students at risk perceive taking responsibility for their own motivation to learn and how teachers believe they are providing an enabling and supportive classroom structure in three alternative education high schools.

Statement of the Problem: Alternative education is a term that covers all educational activities that fall outside the mainstream traditional public school system, including home schooling, special education, gifted and talented students, and special programs for dropouts and potential dropouts, or early school leavers (Aron, 2003; Conley, 2002; Robertson, 1991; Skrtic, 1991; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). “Reconciling the tensions between individual student and community needs and government or federal mandates creates moral dilemmas for administrators and teachers as they attempt to balance the needs of the students and the system”
Without an educational alternative, many students who struggle with the traditional instructional methods utilized in the mainstream bureaucratic educational system may not have options to achieve academic success or prevent dropping out (Fitzsimmons-Lovett, 2001). However, many alternative education programs and schools are designed to provide support structures to struggling learners, poor academic achievers, truants, and those who exhibit negative social behaviors an opportunity to reconcile their students’ motivation to learn and a path to graduation.

During the 1960s, the rise of the free school movement and the counterculture rebellion was against the bureaucratic establishment with pressing issues of alienation and racism (Miller, 2002). Students stayed away from schools because they did not facilitate student learning and growth; instead, they tended to be dull, rigid, and bureaucratic. For example, Skrtic (1991) wrote, “Because bureaucracies are performance organizations, they require a stable environment. They are potentially devastated under dynamic conditions, when their environments force them to do something other than what they were standardized to do” (p. 165). However, schools can respond to pressure for change by simply adding on separate classrooms or programs or by creating new specializations to deal with the change demand (Skrtic, 1991). Specializations were reflected in the proliferation of free schools across the United States and virtually all organizers of the movement sought, in one way or another, power, choice, autonomy, and pedagogical diversity. Many who participated in the free school movement viewed it as an opportunity to change social conditions that were being perceived as oppressive.

Two major themes were anger toward the ineffectiveness of established traditional schools and a need for “organic growth.” Students, freed from the oppressive restrictions of traditional schools, would naturally evolve a new learning community through open, honest, and
trusting relationships (Argyris, 1974). Skrtic (1991) noted that in the 1960s the “organic” organizations were recognized as an ad hoc configuration because they operated in dynamic, uncertain environments, where innovation and adaptation were necessary for survival. They configured themselves as the inverse of the bureaucratic form. Unfortunately, when the teachers and students were given an opportunity to design genuinely free school environments, they created conditions that were minimally free and not particularly effective, as measured by their own criteria (Argyris, 1974). In other words, the environments they created were inconsistently implemented according to their intended design. For example, when students were given power to participate in making decisions, they asked the teachers to continue making decisions as usual. This reduced their personal responsibility. Also, teachers went from deep commitments, enthusiastic work, and high energy, to withdrawal, low energy commitment, doing their thing, and becoming as uninvolved as the students were in the first place (Argyris, 1974).

The fall of the free school and the counterculture came as quickly as its rise and left many of the young adults involved in running the free schools struggling with personal issues of identity, emotional confusion, and anger. The caring, healing environment they sought to create was as much for themselves as for their students (Miller, 2002). One of the reasons for the optimistic view of students was that the teachers and students who first started free schools were growth-oriented, with the intent of designing schools that fit that outcome. For example, Argyris (1974) argued that such learning environments were characterized by requiring and encouraging the following: (a) that human and physical resources of environments become a major resource for learning, (b) the cooperation and respect of fellow students from diverse cultural backgrounds, (c) the assumption by students to have a major role in determining the nature and
direction of their own learning, and (d) a close relationship based on mutual trust and understanding between students and staff (Argyris, 1974, p. 435).

By the 1970s, the term “free schools” was replaced by “alternative schools,” and no longer was suggestive of the counterculture radicalism, but focused more on innovation with a variety of humanizing forms of instruction and learning within the existing system of public education. Miller (2002) reported a fundamental shift in the later 1970s, transforming most alternative schools from experimentation and innovation into safety nets for disaffected youth. The “back to the basic” thrust began in the late 1970s, and, by the1980s, magnet schools sought to establish racial integration and school choice, and joined the public alternative school options.

Insights from working in alternative schools and reading the literature on the alternative schools movement (e.g., Argyris, 1974; Kozol, 1972; Miller, 2002; Sturges, 1979; Swidler, 1979; Wittes, Chesler, & Crowfoot, 1975), have suggested that a more human-development and growth-oriented, rather than deficiency-oriented, student learning environment within alternative schools is still relevant today. Students at risk lose interest in school for a variety of reasons. It was pointed out that, in the 1960s, students demonstrated to dramatize their frustrations (Sturges, 1979). Today, dissidents use absenteeism, disengagement, and, potentially, may drop out. As Argyris (1974) suggested, the intended design and purpose of the free schools was not the actual outcome in real life for either teachers or students. As schools fail to consistently provide the necessary support structures and students fail to take responsibility for their own learning, a contradiction exists between the real-time goal of educating students for academic success and the students’ outcome goal for future success in real life. As Sturges (1979) noted, most students saw little relationship between the curriculum of the school and what they saw in the real world.
Schools must improve measures to prepare students to return or remain in school to prevent dropping out, such as incorporating post-secondary training in the academic curriculum (Polidano, Tabasso, & Tseng, 2015).

**Institutions Examined in this Study**

For the present study, there are three institutions examined: School one, a dropout prevention alternative high school; School two, an alternative charter high school; and School three, a middle college alternative high school. Each of the three is described below:

**Dropout Prevention**

School One, Fairfax Learning Center, is an urban alternative high school designed as a dropout prevent credit-recovery program, housed in a renovated building on the far northeast side of town in the Kansas City, Kansas School District. The school program is in a collaborative partnership with Greenbush, Southeast Kansas Education Management Service Center, Incorporated. Greenbush specializes in serving at-risk students in districts within the state, where resources are low or when their services are requested on a contractual basis. The contract is an agreement to provide a computer-driven curriculum offering credit-recovery classes to enable students to earn makeup credits toward graduation from their designated district high school.

The students are selected and admitted through the school district’s referral process. The age range for most of the students is 16 to 21 years, grades 9-12, with an average enrollment stay of two years. The school has an enrollment of 65 students, but approximately 50 students are in attendance on any given school day. There is one director employed from Greenbush, and the teachers and noncertified staff are employed through the school district’s personnel department.
and Greenbush. In addition, there is one half-time counselor, a half-time special education teacher, and the school attendance secretary.

The computer labs are facilitated by five full-time teachers and two part-time teachers. The block schedule accommodates extended time for students working in an independent self-paced learning environment to focus on a specific subject. Also, the school counselor works closely with the Area Vocational Technical School, currently referred to as the Area Technical School, now owned and operated by the Kansas City, Kansas Community College. This resource provides juniors and seniors an opportunity to attend vocational classes.

**Charter Alternative High School**

School Two is a charter school that provides free choice for parents and their children. In Missouri, there are only two cities that have charter schools: Kansas City and St. Louis. School Two (DeLaSalle) is an Alternative Charter High School, located in Kansas City, converted from the alternative high school for at-risk students and supervised by the local school district staff. Before the conversion, all students were placed there for long-term suspensions or on a referral basis for truancy and other disruptive or negative social behaviors. The school served between 100-200 students who were at-risk of dropping out and exhibiting behaviors such as truancy, suspensions, and engaging in self-destructive behaviors, substance abuse, and promiscuous behaviors. Since the early 1970s, the alternative high school education center has offered personalized education, holistic services, and workforce development through experiential learning to help students focus on their possibilities, not their obstacles.

Currently, the alternative high school has been transitioned from a district operated alternative high school to a tuition-free Charter Alternative High School, with an average class size of 15-18 students, serving ages between 14 to 21 years old. This public charter high school
provides alternative education and behavioral health services onsite. Parents are a very active part of the school and communicate closely with the teachers and staff. The school’s Vision Statement states: “We envision a community in which all young people achieve a quality education that fosters and stimulates their potential.” Its Mission states: “Our mission is to provide a holistic environment that offers students an opportunity to improve learning and life skills.” The charter alternative high school has plans of expanding their services and enrollment as a result of a $6.2 million capital campaign.

The charter alternative has a comprehensive staff, including administrators, teachers, and support staff. For example, there are 12 teachers, one executive director, one principal, three counselors, one social worker, two print shop teachers, one daycare center director, and the board of directors. The curriculum in the classroom is a combination of direct instruction, cooperative learning, and the computer-based accelerated credit recovery program, Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO). The senior seminar program is a requirement for graduation that helps students to investigate their college career options. The school has a student-operated print shop that allows students to learn the printing vocation and fill printing requests from the local school district office and schools, surrounding school districts, and local area businesses requests. This experience can provide students with an opportunity for a career in printing if they so desire.

**Early and Middle College**

School Three is a two year Middle College Alternative High School, located on the School of the Ozarks Technical Community College Campus in Springfield, Missouri. The Middle College opened in August 2008 with 32 students, and in the fall of 2011 began with 103 students, including students from three of the surrounding school districts. The Middle College
was developed to address the needs of high school students at risk of not finishing high school. The students who qualify are identified during the completion of grade 10 and encouraged to enroll through an application process based on recommendations from teachers and counselors from their home high school.

There is a rigorous selection process for acceptance into the program. The qualifications for eligible students are those who have average grades and the appearance of low motivation in school to perform with their best effort. The final selection requires students and parents to sign a contract that explicitly delineates that the program is a college and career prep program, and that all students attend their junior and senior year of high school on the college campus to finish high school credits while simultaneously enrolled in college classes for credit. They start college early through courses focused on technical education and spend time developing employability skills to get ready for internships in the local community during their senior year of high school.

**Comparing Programs**

These three alternative schools have been chosen as case studies because they represent diversity both in organizational structures and student populations. For example, the charter school serves as a choice option for students who were in attendance before the transition from the local school district’s public alternative school and for those students who wanted a smaller and more personable learning environment. For the credit-recovery students, they had no choice and knew they had to be there, while the middle college students were a preferred choice. There was a similar situation for the teachers at each of the three schools. For example, two of the five charter school teachers were there because they had a history with the school, but most of the credit-recovery teachers were assigned there because of circumstances and had been there one year or less. The middle college teachers had a variety of experiences and were recruited or
wanted to teach in the program. All of the students at each of the three schools focused on their classwork and all were equally motivated to be on the path to graduation.

The diversity of each school facility or organizational structure is especially noteworthy: a traditional large red-brick school building for the charter school; a small retrofitted storage building for the dropout prevention program; and a college campus for the middle college. Alternative schools can be created or designed to serve a variety of student needs unmet by traditional public schools. Polidano, Tabasso, and Tseng (2015) suggested that alternative schools that encourage early return for early school leavers and those that develop post-school career plans may be more effective than programs that concentrate on improving numeracy and literacy scores. In comparison, each of the three schools helped students to focus on a real-time and future perspective for success in life.

Four guiding questions for this study will be: (a) What can teachers do to create a learning environment that is growth-oriented rather than deficiency-oriented? (b) Are there factors to consider in creating learning environments, so that students’ and teachers’ optimistic views are congruent with student motivational and developmental needs for school and academic success? (c) How can teachers help students to become confident in taking responsibility for their own learning? and (d) How do these factors or considerations vary across these different institutional environments?

Significance of the Study

The classroom teacher, according to Anastos (2003), has a direct influence on students’ academic achievement, and they are key actors in shaping their students’ learning (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). One of the teacher’s most important tasks is to create a learning environment that
not only enhances and sustains students’ motivation, but engages students in learning (Hornstra, Mansfield, & van der Veen, 2015, p. 363). It’s especially important, therefore, for students at risk to have the best teachers available within an ecological structure. Ecological structures support student development. These “support structures” are resources available to students within the classroom learning environment that are affective and cognitive to ensure they can manage stress or other factors that enable their success. Factors that motivate students to be engaged with school have been identified in psychological theories that seek a better “fit” between students’ psychological needs and their social school environments (Bandura, 1977; Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Dryfoos, 1996; & Margolis & McCabe, 2004).

However, there is a limited body of research in the education literature on at-risk students’ motivation to learn. Alternative schools have focused on traditional goals required for passing state assessment tests for their adequate yearly progress, but Ames (1990) stated, “Effective schools and effective teachers are those who develop goals, beliefs, and attitudes in students that will sustain a long-term involvement and that will contribute to quality involvements in learning” (p. 410). When this happens, at-risk students attending both alternative and traditional schools will be motivated to engage actively in learning tasks within and outside of the classroom, and not just to pass state assessment tests.

**Conclusion**

Academic and personal habits begin to develop during the student’s first years in school. If students are not engaged and motivated to learn, it can be detrimental and may have long-term negative effects, including becoming a high school dropout. When students quickly fall behind their peers in primary grades, teachers regularly place them into inflexible reading and math groups from which they may never escape (Parsley & Corcoran, 2003). The problem seems to
be more important for the students who are at risk or who have been marginalized. Teachers must focus on providing the learning environments that encourage students to take an interest in their own academic learning and future success. Fryer and Elliot (2012) stated,

The challenge of creating an environment in which failure can be seen as a tool for learning may be the most difficult of all because the fear of failure has strong developmental roots in early experiences. One strategy that educators can take is highlighting historical instance relevant to the subject matter when the experiences of failure provided information necessary for the future success (p. 67).
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review of the literature, students’ motivation to learn within the classroom learning environment using the two motivational constructs of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation is investigated. The importance of stimulating instructional strategies in a responsive classroom learning environment is to enhance student self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation within a social cognitive framework.

An Ecological Conceptualization of Educational Risk

School principals and faculty must attend to organizational variables as part of their effort to promote completing high school by focusing on the importance of engaging at-risk learners within an ecological perspective that accounts for the reciprocal interactions of students and their environment (Baker et al., 2001). In ecological theory, student development, learning, and behavior are viewed as manifestations of child-environment interaction being in balance (Brim, 1975; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Johnson, 1994). Blocher (1979) referred to the ecological balance in the classroom learning environment as a support structure, that is, essentially, the set of environmental resources available to students for coping with stress. Basically, the support structure determines the degree to which the student can manage the stress-producing elements of novelty, intensity, complexity, and ambiguity (Blocher, 1979).

Two kinds of resources are built into the support structure. These are the affective, or relationship, resources and the cognitive structures available. Relationship networks that touch the student allow stress reduction to occur through the operation of factors of warmth, empathy, acceptance, and involvement of others. Blocher (1979) suggested that development processes do not just happen but, rather, must be purposefully triggered and carefully nurtured by the environment if full potential for growth is to be reached. Blocher further stated that, “only a
small percentage of human beings maintain intellectual growth or stability throughout the lifespan, while the majority suffer developmental arrest in the mid-teens, a life span of intellectual deterioration looming ahead of them from that point” (p. 491). Many students do not have an adequate support structure in place at home, so students must depend on educators to provide a nurturing environment at school. Educators in school learning environments help to create settings that configure and constrain opportunities for student success (Baker et al., 2001; Conchas, 2001; Pajares, 2008; Peart & Campbell, 1999).

The school structure is one aspect of the learning environment that contributes to school dropout and school completion (Baker et al., 2001; Marvul, 2012). For example, Rumberger and Palardy (2005) reported that schools that are effective in promoting student learning (growth in achievement) are not necessarily effective in reducing dropout and transfer rates. They also suggested that one reason large schools may have higher learning rates is their higher dropout rates among students who are generally low-achieving and are usually discharged (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Rumberger and Palardy (2005) suggested that teachers and principals may differ in how they handle students at risk of dropping out when other factors show that teachers with greater control over curriculum and discipline policies had lower dropout rates, and principals with strong leadership reported higher dropout rates. Balfanz, Herzog, and Mac Iver (2007) stated that “many students in urban schools become disengaged at the start of middle school grades, which greatly reduces the odds that they will eventually graduate” (p. 223). A longitudinal analysis conducted by Balfanz et al. (2007) found, after following 13,000 students from 1996 until 2004, that four predictive indicators reflecting poor attendance, misbehavior, and course failures in sixth grade could be used to identify 60% of the students who would not graduate from high school. These researchers suggested that whole-school reform could
substantially increase graduation rates. Rumberger and Palardy (2005) suggested that failure to use other complementary measures of school performance in addition to test scores could lead to erroneous conclusions about which schools are effective and what characteristics promote school effectiveness.

Some high school students may believe that their low academic performance in school is a reason for dropping out. However, Wehlage (1991) conducted a study of 14 secondary alternative high schools enrolling students at risk of dropping out. The schools consisted of urban, suburban, and rural schools from several states serving Black, White, Hispanic, and Native American youth. The intent of the research was to identify generalizable characteristics of school effectiveness. A year-long study of the schools, their students, and teachers was conducted. In addition to extended observations and interviews, data were collected about dropout rates, attendance, disciplinary problems, and achievement. Tests of reading and writing were administered to students on a pre/post basis. Students were also given pre/post surveys focusing on a number of social and personal variables, including self-esteem, locus of control, and social bonding to school and teachers.

Wehlage (1991) reported that each of the schools in his study dealt with students who had a pattern of school failure but, despite this commonality, there were many differences among the students, including those related to academic ability and achievement. Despite their low grades, some students in each school scored above the 50th percentile on reading and mathematics tests, suggesting that failure and dropping out are not necessarily related to poor academic preparation. Many of these students were alienated from traditional schooling, but they responded to a caring environment and to a personalized style of education that resulted in social bonding to individual teachers and the school (Wehlage, 1991). Renihan and Renihan (1995) pointed out that
responsiveness is central to the education of at-risk students. In order to provide meaningful and relevant experiences for at-risk students, Renihan and Renihan (1995) suggested that there is a need for responsive high schools to structure their success by implementing a whole-school approach of pastoral care, including crisis management and curriculum. The responsive school’s administrators would include empowering parents and students and providing a culture of professional collaboration and interdependence, along with a culture of institutional self-improvement (Husu & Tirri, 2007; Renihan & Renihan, 1995; Schultz, 2008; Smith, 1989).

Understanding the effects of environments on development and schooling outcomes is complicated because environments have both objective and subjective structures. Both a school’s inability to retain students (McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan, & Legters, 2002), due to failure to pass courses and completion are affected partly by the learning environment because organizational structures do affect student motivation and their eventual engagement in school (Baker et al., 2001). Despite federal efforts to help provide the necessary support for high risk migrant children and adolescents, Martinez and Cranston-Gingras (1996) stated that “their dropout rate is estimated at 45%, well over the national average of 25 %” (p. 30). The concern for these students is that their frequent mobility often creates an irreparable gap in their learning. These gaps contribute to a weak foundation in their education, often resulting in grade retention and age/grade discrepancies that can lead to dropping out of school to earn money (Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996). However, Branz-Spall and Rosenthal (2003) noted that states that oversee migrant education suggested education programs have created innovative solutions. For example, Baker et al. (2001) and Deci, Jang, and Reeve (2010) pointed out that engaging students at risk and preventing school dropout requires that schools attend to organizational variables, autonomy support and structure as part of the effort to promote school completion.
Hardre and Reeve (2003) reported how the teachers in one school, when its external resources were limited, relied on other kinds of resources to support the goals of achievement and persistence with low-achieving students who were dropout risks. These teachers provided classroom contexts that fostered situational engagement, nurtured interest, and promoted the development of internal motivational resources. In other words, the teachers created opportunities for the students to take the initiative during learning activities by building instruction around students’ interests and a desire for knowledge, (Meier, 1987), preferences, personal goals, choice making, and curiosity, rather than relying on external sources of motivation such as incentives, “back to the basics,” consequences, directives, and deadlines.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Meier (1987) and Rogat, Witham and Chinn (2014) also supported the importance of teachers connecting class assignments to students’ goals and interest by creating challenging tasks that matched students’ developing skills and evoked feelings that these activities are valuable in helping them accomplish what they choose to accomplish.

Research revealed that motivation is central to the social context of learning and teaching, and it can have an important influence on the motivation of students (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Pintrich, 2003; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Educational engagement in academic tasks is weak for many students at risk when learning does not support confidence in their ability and enable an intrinsic reward that comes from motivating and challenging instructional tasks (Wehlage, 1991). For example, Finnan and Chasin (2007) reported on a success story concerning a student who lacked stimulation and support in school, and also lacked both motivation and confidence. The opportunity to develop academic, vocational, and personal skills helped him envision a path to a better life. This new outlook on his future came from working with teachers who genuinely cared about and challenged him. With their help, he was able to
engage himself in a learning environment that was relevant and enriching and develop the skills that will allow him to pursue his dreams (Finnan & Chasin, 2007). Restructured schools would allow teachers the time, resources, and motivation to learn about the individual cultures and worlds of their students and find alternative ways of engaging instruction to help students engage with learning to help them live productive lives (Ancess, 2000; Barone, 1989; Easton, Condon, & Soguero, 2014; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

**Student Engagement in the Classroom**

Engagement describes the psychological and cognitive state that students need to be in to learn well (Easton, et al, 2014). Student engagement in school is not a predictor of academic success, and academic achievement does not necessarily suggest full student engagement (Zyngier, 2008). The students who are engaged in school are more successful academically, but contributors to the research on engagement suggest that there is a steady decline in students’ engagement with schooling, including their interest, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation for learning in school, beginning in kindergarten and continuing until they complete high school or drop out (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand & Kindermann, 2008).

Many secondary students are disengaged in the learning environment, and risk failing to obtain the necessary education and post-secondary preparation required in our nation’s modern economy (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). Although schools do focus on meeting students’ academic needs, there is a disconnect in addressing their motivational and development needs adequately, and at risk students fall behind the achievement levels of their more advantaged peer group (Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007; McPartland et al., 2002).

It is also important to bring students’ voices into a discussion about improving the quality of school life, and this is especially true for students at risk (Farrell, Peguero, Lindsey, & White,
Swaminathan, 2004). Mitra (2007) suggested that there are institutional constraints in schools that limit the types of roles and voice that students can assume within the school walls. Also, Mitra (2007) pointed out that school teachers and principals may find listening to students may be the first step in introducing student voice into their reform work. Mitra (2007) stated, “If increasing student voice truly means sharing the ownership of school decision making with students, then youth must do more than speak their minds about problems; they must have the opportunity to lead the way toward innovative solutions” (p. 743).

Why students disengage and seem to lack either the interest or the intrinsic motivation to complete high school can be different for each student. Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp (2004) described interest as a motivational construct that combines affective and cognitive functioning. Riley and Docking (2004) suggested that discussions about student disengagement have rarely focused on how to listen to young people and understand their point of view, or how to encourage them to become change agents, rather than problems to be resolved. Yazzie-Mintz (2010) commented on the fact that students provided insight into reasons for lack of engagement on the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) report of 2007-2008. Yazzie-Mintz wrote, “The voices of student respondents to the HSSSE provides the experiences, thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs of students across the country, as well as both their skepticism and hope that adults will pay attention to what they have to say” (p. 1). Boredom is a common and recognizable sign of a lack of engagement with school learning (Finnan & Chasin, 2007).

When students were asked, on the 2007-2008 HSSSE Survey, if they were bored, two out of three respondents (67% in each year), and approximately one out of every six students (16% in 2007, 17% in 2008) were bored in every class. Only 2% in each year reported never being bored. When asked why they were bored, students gave reasons such as, (a) the material being
taught was an issue, (b) the material wasn’t interesting, (c) lack of relevance of the material, (d) the level of difficulty of the work was a source of boredom, (e) the work wasn’t challenging enough, or (f) the work was too difficult (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). A lack of instructional interaction with the teacher played a role in students’ boredom as well. For example, the survey reported more than one-third of respondents (35% in each year) were bored due to no interaction with the teachers (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).

When schools take student voice into account, positive results can accrue for both the students and their schools. For example, Galloway, Pope and Osberg (2007) conducted a workshop on the health risks of stressed-out students (SOS) in grades 5 through 12 as a school reform effort. The findings confirmed for all students that academic stress was a serious problem at their schools. The consequences of academic stress varied but tended to fall into categories: (a) mental and physical health (anxiety, depression, suicide ideation); (b) self-mutilation, eating/sleep disorders; (c) consequences for student engagement in school (disengagement, overscheduling); and (d) consequences for civic/spiritual health (value conflicts, cheating). Students also confirmed that a decreased motivation to learn, as a result of undue pressure to achieve high grades, and academic integrity were compromised. The recognition by both youth and adults that academic pressure must be reduced for healthy adolescent development had allowed the two groups to come together around a common goal (Galloway, Pope, & Osberg, 2007).

The HSSSE report, Yazzie-Mintz (2010), also describes engagement as actions students take to learn:

Time devoted to a task and the importance of the task to the student, represent student effort; rigor, and relevance, which relate to the challenge of classes, the focus of the work, and how it contributes to growth, and relationships, support, and connection, which are affected by the beliefs of teachers, support from adults and peers, safety and fairness,
and connection to school community. (HSSSE report, as cited in Yazzie-Mintz, 2010, p. 11).

These are affected by (and affect) “instructional methods and pedagogical possibilities” (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010, p. 11).

The Significance of Goals in Educational Settings

The goals that students set for themselves affect their motivation to learn in four major ways. Zimmerman (2012) noted that the four ways were:

1. Goals motivate students’ choice of attention to goal-relevant tasks and away from goal-irrelevant tasks. When students perceive that the academic task is challenging and feel that they have the confidence to accomplish or complete the task, then they have confidence in their ability (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). Self-efficacy is defined as one’s confidence in his or her own ability to complete an assigned meaningful task (Graham, 1994; Solomon & Rogers, 2001; Stipek, 1993; Turner, Meyer, Midgley, & Patrick, 2003). Rich (2005) noted that setting goals helped students at risk of performing poorly in school find ways to become more involved in their schoolwork by having a clear understanding of the goal or objective. This is a feeling on the learner’s part both that the material is relevant to him or her and the knowledge that he or she will have the time necessary to master the task (Rich, 2005). Motivation and efficacy affect teachers as well as students. Schunk (1990) pointed out that teachers with low efficacy may doubt their capabilities to influence students’ learning. For example, they may avoid planning activities they believe exceed their capabilities, may not persist in helping students having difficulty, or re-teach content in ways students might understand better (Schunk, 1990).
Learners are motivated by goals to exert higher levels of effort. When students understand success as being a result of their ability and effort, they remain more positively motivated (Wigfield & Wentzel, 2007). As Weiner (1979) pointed out, typical questions in the classroom learning environment might include students asking, “Why did I succeed or fail?” Teachers might ask, “Why do some students persist even when they are struggling, while others quit at the first sign of difficulty?” Cognitive theories of motivation are focused on getting and keeping students engaged in learning tasks (Dweck & Master, 2009; Hickey, 2003). They are also focused on individuals’ beliefs about their competence, efficacy, and their expectations for success or failure directly related to the question, “Can I do this task?” (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). Stipek (1993) stated that, “Students’ beliefs are important determinants of their behavior, whether or not the beliefs are based on objective reality” (p. 181). For example, many struggling learners believe that they lack the ability to succeed, even if they expend great effort (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). In other words, struggling learners have low, rather than high, self-efficacy for academics. The question “Can I do the task” is related to a student’s self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy is a motivational construct related to performing academic tasks. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as the confidence one has for successfully completing a specific task (Bandura, 1986; Lorsbach & Jinks, 1999). Lorsbach & Jinks (1999) suggested that self-efficacy influences students’ perceptions of the learning environment. However, while some students may be able to complete the task, they may not want to do it.
3. Goals motivate students to exert greater persistence over time. Efficacious students take on stronger academic challenges, persist longer when difficulties arise, and believe they will succeed in the future (Wigfield & Wentzel, 2007).

4. Goals motivate students to set higher quality goals to influence students’ learning indirectly by producing heightened arousal and other affective reactions, such as greater self-satisfaction or less defensiveness. However, learning cannot be isolated from other mediating psychosocial and affective processes (Nunn & Parish, 1992). For example, Nunn & Parish (1992) reported that at-risk students’ locus of control was more externally oriented, indicating a greater tendency toward believing that behavior had little effect upon outcomes. These results indicated that some at-risk students’ experiences appeared to be filtered through a belief system that included a marginal sense of personal empowerment for affecting change, coupled with a devaluing sense of personal competence and deflated confidence (Nunn & Parish, 1992).

Ford (1992) pointed out that goals direct human behavior. Eggen and Kauchak (1994) supported that motivation, a force that energizes and directs behavior toward a goal, could be perceived as one of the most important psychological concepts in education. Turner, Meyer, Midgley, and Patrick (2003) wrote that the use of goal theory is one way to conceptualize student motivation because it is concerned with the purposes students perceive for engaging in achievement-related behavior and the meanings they ascribe to achievement. As Combs (1976) noted, the discovery of personal meaning is a crucial aspect of learning that occurs within the learner.
The Social Cognitive Model

Psychologists and educators have considered the role of motivation in student achievement and learning over the past several decades. Since the 1980s, research has been focused on how motivational and cognitive factors interact and jointly influence student learning and achievement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). The integration of motivational and cognitive factors was the result of a shift in motivational theories from traditional achievement motivation models to social cognitive models of motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

There are three assumptions, as suggested by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002). The three assumptions are described below.

Social Cognitive Model: Assumption 1

The first assumption is that social cognitive theory stresses the importance of student perceptions during learning with an emphasis on the idea that people often acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes, by observing others (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In these social cognitive models, it is not assumed that students are either “motivated” or “not motivated” because student motivation cannot be characterized quantitatively. Rather, the emphasis in social cognitive models is that students can be motivated in multiple ways, and the important issue is to understand how and why students are motivated for school achievement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). For example, motivational goals are viewed as representing finalities (Lemos, 2001). Lemos (2001) stated that, “Goals confer direction, meaning, and functional unity to the diversity of observable behavior; they transform a set of behaviors into one purposeful action” (p.129). Lemos (2001) pointed out that “situated motivation” has been used to underscore the importance of examining the contextual embeddedness of motivated behavior and motivation development. There are two contrasting achievement-goal constructs.
that have been differentiated by their linkage to contrasting patterns of motivational processes
and have been named performance goals and mastery goals (Ames, 1992).

**Social Cognitive Model: Assumption 2**

The second assumption of social cognitive models of motivation is that motivation is not
a stable trait of the individual, but is more situational, contextual, and domain specific (Berry
&West, 1993; Lemos, 2001). For example, Bloom (1980) suggested that cognitive entry
characteristics are highly alterable because they represent particular content and skills that may
be learned if they are absent, reviewed if they have been forgotten, and learned to a criterion
level if they have been learned to a lesser level. Bloom wrote:

> Much of mastery learning research demonstrates that the large gains in final achievement
> for mastery versus control groups are attributable to the fact that the mastery students
> were brought to high levels of achievement on the perquisites for each new learning task.
> (p. 383)

Lemos (2001) identified several variables, affective states (Ainley, 2006), and processes that are
relevant for motivation in educational settings, such as intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic
motivation orientations, perceived competence (Connell &Wellborn, 1991) control beliefs, level
of achievement motivation, (Willig, Harnisch, Hill, & Maehr, 1983), and mastery versus
performance goal (Ames, 1992). In other words, not only are students motivated in multiple
ways, but their motivation can vary depending on the situation or context in the classroom or
school (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). This provides hope for teachers and schools and
suggests that instructional efforts and the design of classrooms and schools can make a
difference in student motivation for academic success (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

**Social Cognitive Model Assumption 3**

The third assumption concerns the central role of cognition in social cognitive models of
motivation (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). That is, it is not just the individual’s cultural,
demographic, or personality characteristics that influence motivation and achievement directly, or just the contextual characteristics of the classroom environment that shape motivation and achievement but, rather, the individual’s active regulation of his or her motivation, thinking, and behavior that mediates the relationships between the person, context, and eventual achievement (Wolters, 1999). The students’ own thoughts about their motivation and learning play a role in mediating their engagement and subsequent achievement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

Turner (2001) stated, “Because the focus is on perceptions, cognitive theories of motivation also emphasize individual differences in learners, sometimes rendering the environment a ‘source of information’ rather than an integral part of the experience of motivation to learn” (p. 86). Following from these three general assumptions, social cognitive motivational theorists have proposed a large number of different motivational constructs that may facilitate or constrain student achievement and learning (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). For the purposes of this study, the focus was on three motivational constructs: (a) self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic motivation, and (c) instructional strategies.

Student motivation in the classroom is a prominent concern in all schools and especially in those with students at risk of academic failure (Alderman, 1990; Rich, 2005). Within the context of the complex social environment of the classroom, teachers and students engage in a variety of activities as they work together to accomplish tasks that have academic, social, and personal consequences (Shuell, 1996). Student motivation to engage in academic tasks refers to the quality of a student’s connection or involvement with the academic tasks of schooling and with the students’ activities, goals, values, and the learning environment (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009).
Themes in Achieving Student Success

Given the foregoing, a number of factors can contribute to student success. Ford (1992) described emotions as “an empowering source of information about how to influence motivational patterns” (p.145). Pintrich and Schunk (2002) highlighted Ford’s responsive environment principle, which involved: (a) alignment between a person’s goals and the goals of the classroom, (b) the teacher’s responsiveness to the student’s competencies in a culturally responsive environment, (c) provision of realistic and appropriate task, and (d) support for an emotional climate that fosters trust among teachers and students. These four principles were considered as themes that focus on a classroom structure designed to promote an instructional environment conducive to motivating students at risk to learn.

Theme 1: Classroom Structure: Student and Teacher Goal Alignment

First, alignment between a student’s goals and the goals of the classroom structure is needed to assure that students have an opportunity for academic success (Brophy, 1983; Buck, Lee, & Midgley, 1992; Turner, 2001). Human behavior is goal directed (Ford, 1992). Wiesman (2012) and Wolters (2004) reported a positive correlation between aligned goal structures, such as perceiving a mastery goal classroom structure and reporting a mastery goal orientation. Goal structures describe the type of achievement goal emphasized by the particular instructional practice and policies within a classroom, school, or other learning environment (Ames & Ames, 1984; Shuell, 1996; Wolters, 2004). For instance, the types of tasks assigned, the grading procedures, the degree of autonomy students are provided, and the way students are grouped are thought to affect the achievement goals students adopt and, thus, embody the classroom goal structure (Ames, 1992; Kaplan, Gheen & Midgley, 2002; Wolters, 2004). Buck, Lee, and
Midgley (1992) emphasized that, when students adopt a mastery goal orientation, the effects of the perceived classroom goals are not dependent on students’ self-perception of ability. There are three basic types of goal structures: competitive, cooperative, and individualistic. These adaptations are generally designed to facilitate one type of goal orientation more than others (Ames & Ames, 1984). For example, about adaptation, Dewey (1938) stated:

> Continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience. The immediate and direct concert of an educator is then with the situations in which interaction takes place. It includes what is done by the educator and the way in which it is done, not only words spoken but the tone of voice in which they are spoken. It includes the materials, with which an individual interacts, and, most important of all, the total social set-up of the situations in which a person is engaged. When it is said that the objective conditions are those which are within the power of the educator to regulate, it is meant..... that his ability to influence directly the experience of others….the education they obtain, places upon him the duty of determining that environment which will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worth-while experience. It was assumed that a certain set of conditions was intrinsically desirable, apart from its ability to evoke a certain quality of response in individuals….This lack of mutual adaptation made the process of teaching and learning accidental. (pp. 44-45)

Students at risk need a clear goal structure to understand what it will take for them to be successful academically. Among the potential causes of student academic apathy are students’ low perception of academic competence and lack of strategies to guide the learning process (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Central to a performance goal is a focus on one’s ability relative to others (Wentzel, 2003). Ability is shown by doing better than others, by surpassing norms, or by achieving success with little effort. Public recognition for doing better than others, for example, in the form of grades, rewards, and approval from others, is an important element of performance-goal orientation (Wentzel, 1989). Performance goals and achievement are, therefore, “other-referenced,” such as self-worth is determined by one’s perception of ability to perform and compete successfully relative to external criteria (Covington, 2000). Brophy (2005) suggested
that goal theorists should characterize them as outcome goals or use other terms that emphasize achievement but not competition. Covington (2000) pointed out that when a student tries hard without being completely successful (in terms of the established norms) his or her sense of self-worth is threatened and motivation for learning is reduced. However, Brophy (2005) noted that levels of success that students achieve in acquiring learning outcomes depends not only on their task-relevant abilities and levels of prior knowledge, but also on the degree to which they make optimal use of resources such as task attention, memory, and time investment.

Performance goals for education are pursued by teachers and their students for classroom and intellectual outcomes (Wentzel, 2003). Gifted students are often believed to be highly motivated to achieve and eager to pursue academic challenges (Clark & Tollefson, 1991). While some gifted students are eager to begin and finish a challenging task, others are either hesitant to try a difficult task or choose the easiest route to complete it (Whitmore, 1986). Whitmore (1986) and Hansen & Toso (2007) pointed out that lower or even lack of motivation is an important factor in understanding underachievement among gifted students. From this perspective, motivational characteristics of students contribute to their academic success to the extent that these characteristics match the behavioral expectations and motivational requirements of the classroom (Wentzel, 1989). Ablard (2002) found that, as learning goals became stronger, so did beliefs of the gifted students, and intelligence can increase via effort. Of all students, 4.4% embraced performance goals and had low confidence in their intellectual ability, a combination of beliefs that can place them at risk for later underachievement (Ablard, 2002).

When students have a performance goal orientation, the environment is described as a means to being successful in getting extrinsic rewards, demonstrating high ability, and doing better than others (Gilbert et al., 2014; Midgley et al., 1998; Nolen, 1988). Performance
assessments in school systems, which may be designed to motivate or control people, including deadlines, imposed goals, and competition, have been found to decrease intrinsic motivation. These themes, common to schools, were found to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Ablard (2002) and Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) investigated avoidance approach, avoidance achievement goals, and intrinsic motivation and found that only performance goals grounded in the avoidance of failure undermined intrinsic motivation. Many students at risk of failure are academically capable, but lack the confidence in their own abilities.

Central to a mastery goal is the belief that individual effort leads to success and the learning has intrinsic value (McInerney & McInerney, 1998). A mastery goal structure describes an environment in which the instructional practices, policies, and norms convey to students that learning is important, that all students are valued, that trying hard is important, and that all students can be successful if they work hard to learn (Midgley et al., 1998). Mastery goals stress the development of competence, and performance goals stress looking competent (Nolen, 1988). With mastery goals, individuals are oriented toward developing new skills, trying to understand their work, improving their level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery. Therefore, mastery goals and achievement are “self-referenced” (Ames, 1992). Mastery learning, according to Guskey (1990), is an instructional process the origin of which is generally traced to the work of Bloom (1968, 1976). He proposed a process through which he believed teachers could help nearly all students learn excellently and truly master what had been taught. Brophy (1986) stated that “teacher effectiveness is a matter of definition, and most definitions include fostering students’ affective and personal development in addition to their curriculum mastery” (p.1069). The types of achievement goals stressed by schools have dramatic consequences on whether
students develop a strong sense of self-efficacy and a willingness to try hard and take on challenges at school, or choose to avoid challenging tasks, giving up when faced with failure (McInerney & McInerney, 1998).

Teachers are responsible for teaching students to become Self-Regulated Learners (SRL). Boekaerts (1997) argued that SRL can either be or not be domain specific, and that competent performers in a specific domain rely on different types of prior knowledge related to that domain. Students’ self-regulated learning is focused on processes that learners use to activate and sustain not only behavioral conduct but also their cognitive and affective functioning (Boekaerts, 1995; 1997; Bolhuis & Voeten, 2001; Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2012; Pape & Smith, 2002; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012).

Teachers do many things as they help students acquire the knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes that are the goals of education (Shuell, 1996). Several researchers have suggested that an important goal for teachers is to teach students self-regulatory skills (Ames & Archer, 1988; Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2012; Fryer & Elliot, 2012). It is important for students to develop strategic ways of thinking and strategies that can help them to process information, plan study activities, monitor their attention, and sustain a motivation for learning on tasks (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nolen, 1988). Boekaerts (1997) stated that “these skills are viewed as vital, not only to guide one’s own learning during formal schooling, but also to educate oneself and update one’s knowledge after leaving school” (p. 161).

Students are empowered as a result of strategy in instruction. Pajares (2008) purported that students who are incapable of engaging effective self-regulatory practices do not know how to self-correct their actions. Although the students may be aware of their lack of success, they can neither understand the reasons for their poor performance nor envision the strategies and
behavior changes needed to be made (Pajares, 2008). Shuell (1996) suggested that the way in which these activities are carried out by the teacher strongly influence the way students go about the task of learning and the substance of what they ultimately acquire.

However, motivation is a key process in self-regulated learning (SRL) (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012). For example, self-regulated learners are more attentive, choose a task when given the opportunity, display greater progress than unmotivated students, put forth more effort to learn a difficult task, display higher levels of mastery, and experience greater satisfaction and positive effect when given the opportunity to learn than do poorly motivated students (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999).

Poor self-regulation strategies can be a reflection of students’ inability to self-regulate their academic learning and performance. From a social cognitive perspective, Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986; 1988; 1992) suggested several SRL strategies. These included: (a) self-evaluation; (b) organizing and transforming; (c) goal-setting and planning; (d) seeking information; (e) keeping records and monitoring; (f) environmental structuring to make learning easier; (g) self-consequences of success or failure; (h) rehearsing and memorizing; (i) seeking social assistance; (j) reviewing records; and (k) other things, such as doing what the teacher says. Wolters (1999) and Zimmerman (2012) suggested that students at risk can be helped in learning how to set goals and implement self-regulatory processes to enhance effort and academic achievement. For example, Zimmerman (2012) suggested that a self-regulatory coach, who could be a teacher or counselor or school psychologist, could help low-performing students or students at risk learn regulatory strategies and, subsequently, experience success.

Fryer and Elliot (2012) described self-regulation learning, a major goal in education, as the process of students taking a proactive approach to their own education through the utilization
of knowledge and the strategic oversight and adjustment of their affect, cognition, and behavior in education-relevant settings (Fryer & Elliot, 2012). However, Boekaerts (1997) concluded that prior knowledge was an important component of self-regulated learning, and that it is a complex interactive process involving not only cognitive self-regulation but also motivational self-regulation.

Many school systems tend to reinforce students for achievement behavior that conforms to “standards” that reflect Western values. However, McInerney and McInerney (1998) pointed out that school systems should be aware of providing strategies that may enhance academic achievement in more culturally appropriate ways.

**Theme 2: Classroom Structure: Culturally Responsive Environment**

The teacher’s responsiveness to the student’s need for competency in a culturally responsive environment is important in the development of the students’ self-efficacy. How learners feel about the setting they are in, the respect they receive from the people around them, and their ability to trust their own thinking and experience powerfully influence their concentration, their imagination, their effort, and their motivation to learn (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Ryan (2003) stated that, “Inclusion becomes acutely relevant in situations where children’s home and community culture differ from the culture of the school” (p. 93). For example, Willig, Harnisch, Hill, and Maehr (1983) examined how the culture and structure of the high school influenced teachers’ instructional practices and resulted in contradictory beliefs about students and their families. These contradictions between school culture and structure, instruction, and many students’ home culture contributed to the school’s high dropout rate (Willig et al., 1983).
Dewey (1959) laid out a basic tenet for his progressivism in his “Pedagogic Creed.” Dewey believed that instructional method is ultimately reducible to the order of development of the child’s powers and interests. For example, Dewey stated,

I believe that this educational process has two sides, one psychological and one sociological. Of these two sides, the psychological is the basis…(p. 20). …Education, therefore, must begin with the psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted—we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents—into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service.” (p. 22)

Dewey suggested that educational practices must be adapted to the natural psychological development of the learning processes of the student, and their natural curiosity and propensity to learn will be projected. Covington (1984) suggested that any fully comprehensive set of guidelines for curriculum and instructional development must take into account the student’s motive for self-worth, and the requirement to offset the threat of failure in diverse learning groups by means of equity structures. For example, cooperative learning, contract learning, and teacher-based performance standards are a few types of equity structures.

From a moral perception (Sergiovanni, 1992) and pedagogical responsibility, teachers must not only employ best educational practices but also must consider the unique learning needs of students who have historically been underserved in our educational institutions (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Powell, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera, & Correll. 2016; Stengel & Casey, 2013). More specifically, Stengel and Casey (2013) pointed out that teachers take responsibility for students’ uneven development in the face of uncertainty, and they are also challenged by competing narratives of identity, culture, and community.

Culturally responsive instruction (CRI), according to Powell, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera, and Correll (2016), is more than a series of teaching practices; rather, it proposes to conceptualize a way of viewing teaching and learning that considers the social, emotional, cognitive, political,
and cultural dimensions of every student. The use of CRI expands the traditional canon by incorporating perspectives of diverse others, affirming students’ cultural knowledge (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996; Bowman & Stewart, 2014), and continuously reviewing and recreating knowledge in order to bring to the center the experiences of those who historically have been marginalized. Johnson, Nyamekye, Chazan, and Rosenthal (2013) and Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) characterized teachers who are culturally responsive as those who believe all students can succeed and who help students build conceptual bridges between home and school. In culturally responsive classrooms, students are encouraged to assume responsibility for each other’s learning and to give back to the community. In contrast, Nelson and Guerra’s (2014) results showed that the majority of their study participants appeared to have a general awareness of culture, but also held a number of deficit beliefs about diverse students and their families. Little consideration was given to the social aspects of schooling, such as identity, culture, language, and relationships, which are at the heart of culturally responsive teaching and learning (Nelson & Guerra, 2014).

Foster (1994) stated that “cultural solidarity” or similar background does not guarantee productive, fluid, or uncomplicated relationships between teacher and student. For example, Johnson et al. (2013) explained how a Black teacher used speeches in the math classroom to teach struggling students lessons for life. Johnson et al. (2013) pointed out an excerpt of one of Mr. Lee’s speeches to demonstrate how he implored the grade 9 Algebra 1 students to see that their daily actions will impact their performance on the exam in May:

Mr. Lee: That is good enough for who? It’s good enough for you! That’s not acceptable to me, son. You may be fine with mediocrity but I don’t settle—I don’t accept it. I don’t expect it out of myself and I don’t expect it out of anybody I teach! You understand that. . . . I expect you to be the best. Why? Because I’m teaching you and you are the best” (p. 18).
Johnson et al. (2013) noted that Mr. Lee’s voice at times was animated, but it still showed compassion and care and that he wanted his students to believe in themselves. Teachers of similar background will sometimes judge students more harshly because they remind them of their younger selves (Birky, Chazan, & Morris, 2013). However, Bergeron (2008) stated, 

It is often assumed that a sense of “cultural disequilibrium” will result when the experiences of teachers are incongruent with those of their students. This assumption is particularly prevalent when describing the potential challenges of novice teachers, who are often placed in the most diverse and socially complex classrooms (p. 5).

Cultural differences affect achievement motivation (James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards, & Oetting, 1995; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011). Cultural disequilibrium describes not only the cultural mismatch that may occur between teachers and their students but also the sense of imbalance or confusion that can result when attempts to grapple with situations or experiences for which schools and principal leadership are not fully prepared (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; James et al. 1995). For example, when encouraging greater family involvement in schools serving at-risk students, teachers and administrators must receive appropriate professional development. The case study reported by Bergeron (2008) focused on the critical first year of a novice teacher’s challenges in her relocation from the suburban Midwest to a predominantly Hispanic community in the Southwest. Dharan (2015) pointed out that diversity is complex because understanding it involves knowing and acknowledging that individuals are multidimensional. Dharan (2015) also suggested that school ethos and the nature of professional guidance shape the process of a novice’s learning to teach. “The issues are critical in generating an understanding regarding the most effective means for preparing a new generation of teachers for today’s urban classrooms” (Bergeron, 2008, p. 5).

A primary goal of CRI is to empower students to believe in themselves and their ability to bring about change (Powell et al., 2016). Hidi (2000) and Bergeron (2008) suggested teachers
can help students become engaged in an academic task with a chance that genuine interest and intrinsic motivation will emerge. CRI empowers the students to develop critical consciousness at the same time that they develop academic competence.

Self-efficacy refers to a person’s intuitive judgment about his or her own competence. Bandura (1986; 1997) suggested the capability that is most distinctly human is that of self-reflection, for it is by examining their own thoughts and feelings that people make sense of their experiences, explore their own cognitions and self-beliefs, engage in self-evaluation, and alter their thinking and behavior accordingly. It is also through self-reflection that people make judgments about their capability to accomplish tasks and succeed in the many activities that comprise their lives. Dorman, (2001) pointed out that the classroom environment related positively with academic efficacy. The types of achievement goals stressed by schools have dramatic consequences for whether students develop a strong sense of self-efficacy and a willingness to try hard and take on challenges at school, or choose to avoid challenging tasks, giving up when faced with failure (McInerney & McInerney, 1998). For example, a student may ponder the question, “Can I do this?” Learners with high self-efficacy willingly approach learning activities, expend effort to achieve goals, persist in the face of challenges, and use strategies effectively (Schunk, 1991). However, many students come from academically depleted environments, and challenging tasks, requiring higher-order thinking skills, could easily invoke confusion and low self-efficacy beliefs (Dicintio & Gee, 1999).

Sideridis (2002) found that students at risk of having language difficulties or below average academic achievement appear to have low academic self-concepts and to hold lower expectations for academic performance compared to students without learning problems. In this situation, teachers must structure classroom goals for the students that will enable their self-
efficacy beliefs about their competency skills not to be overstated, which could cause negative student perceptions about the school and the self (Dillon, 1989). For example, Dillon (1989) reported an example of how one teacher’s effectiveness was defined by his ability to do the following: (a) create a culturally congruent social organization in his classroom that accounted for the cultural backgrounds of his students, and (b) vary his teaching style to allow him to communicate effectively with his students during lesson interactions, resulting in increased opportunities for student learning and improved student attitudes and school in general.

Appleby (as cited in Dillon, 1989) used the students’ cultural background as the foundation and jointly constructed the social organization in the classroom with his students. Appleby’s primary goal was to develop trusting relationships with his students. This relationship building, coupled with Appleby’s belief that all students can be successful learners, led to an open, risk-free learning environment. In this environment, students actively interacted with motivating, challenging materials, often working cooperatively with peers or with Appleby, while Appleby varied his actions to meet his students’ cognitive needs. By releasing the typical restraints of the teacher-in-context role and the student-as-learner role, effective teaching and learning was allowed to occur (Dillon, 1989). These self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishments. No matter what other factors may serve as motivators, Bandura (2004) contended, “they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one’s actions” (p. 622). This is because, unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Ames and Ames (1984) and Buck et al. (1992) supported the idea that the criteria for qualitative comparisons among these goal structures does not reflect
whether achievement levels are or will be different but, rather, refers to the way students perceive and interpret information and evaluate their performance.

Bandura (1977) hypothesized that self-efficacy affects an individual’s choice of activities, effort, and persistence. People who have a low sense of efficacy for accomplishing a task may avoid it; those who believe they are capable should participate readily. Self-efficacy theory postulates that people acquire information to appraise efficacy from their performance accomplishments, vicarious (observational) experiences, forms of persuasion, and physiological indexes. Bandura (1993; 1997) proposed that individuals’ perceived self-efficacy is determined by four things: (a) previous performance success leads to strengthening, (b) vicarious learning experiences watching models succeed, (c) verbal encouragement by others, and (d) anxiety/worry leading to a lower sense of personal efficacy. These four are explained below.

Maddux (1995) suggested that performance experiences, in particular clear success or failure, are the most powerful sources of self-efficacy information. Success at a task, behavior, or skill strengthens self-efficacy expectancies for that task, behavior, or skill, whereas perceptions of failure diminish self-efficacy expectancy (Maddux, 1995). Teachers must cultivate, in all students, resistance to negative images of the self (Robinson & Ward, 1991). Teachers must also keep students engaged in learning and help them learn to focus on individual factors, such as perceived control. Perceived control is one of the strongest predictors of students’ performance in school, including locus of control (LOC), which refers to the belief that outcomes are contingent on one’s own ability, and mastery versus helplessness (Meece & Painter, 2012). Instead, students should learn adaptive help-seeking from the teacher when it is really needed (Newman, 2012) and causal attributions for success and failure (Willig et al., 1983) as strategies and capacity beliefs. Some students may reduce their effort to protect
perceived ability when they are threatened by the possibility of failure on an activity they value, thereby protecting their self-esteem (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990). Effort reduction may be one aspect of the process of disengagement from tasks when feedback indicated one’s incompetence (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1983; Leal, Schorr, & Warner, 2013).

A key interpersonal influence on self-efficacy is the vicarious influence from others through social models (Bandura, 1997). The term vicarious is defined by Webster’s dictionary as shared in or experienced by imagined participation in another’s experience. By watching models, students can succeed. Schunk (1986) suggested that people can acquire diverse behavior patterns vicariously, or without actually performing the behaviors themselves. By observing models, people can learn cognitive, communicative, social/interpersonal, motor, and coping skills. Observing the successes and failures of peers perceived as similar in capability contributes to beliefs in one’s own capabilities, such as, “If he or she can do it, I can do it” (Pajares, 2008, p. 116). By observing models, observers may believe that they have learned a skill, which can raise their self-efficacy. Furthermore, modeling implicitly conveys to observers that they possess the necessary capabilities to succeed and will do so if they follow the same sequence of actions. Observers’ self-efficacy is substantiated later as they successfully perform the task. Hardre and Sullivan (2009) noted the opposite of efficacy is a “can’t influence” or helplessness response. Helplessness is learned over time from negative causes, including negative self-talk, negative role modeling, and primarily discouragement from repeated failure experiences (Hardre & Sullivan, 2009). Research on vicarious influence during cognitive-skill learning has important implications for education because students are exposed to many teacher and peer models in school daily (Schunk, 1986; Pajares, 2008). Schunk (1991) and Martin and
Dowson (2009) noted that self-efficacy may be conceptualized in relational terms rather than in solely individual terms.

Self-efficacy information comes from the verbal messages and social persuasions that people receive (Pajares, 2008). Maddux (1995) purported that verbal persuasion and social persuasion are less potent sources of self-efficacy expectancy than performance experiences and vicarious experiences. For example, Pajares (2008) pointed out that, just as positive persuasions may work to encourage and empower, negative persuasions can work to defeat and weaken self-efficacy beliefs, and this can be very disheartening. Verbal persuasion as a source of self-efficacy expectancies can be influenced by such factors as the expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the source (Maddux, 1995). Covington (1984) and Martin and Dowson (2009) pointed out that one reason students may come to equate their worth with ability, conditional on achievement, was by the way significant others communicated to them. Goodenow (1993) revealed that perceived teacher encouragement explained more than one third of the variance in students’ expectations for success. These conditional relationships have a significant impact, positive or negative, on students’ self-worth (Martin & Dowson, 2009). For example, Elliot and Thrash (2004) found that students’ parents were a factor in their fear of failure.

It is important to monitor the relationship between competence and challenge, as the low-skill/high challenge combination may increase anxiety (Dicintio & Gee, 1999; Putwain & Roberts, 2012). Maddux (1995) purported that physiological states influence self-efficacy when people associate aversive physiological arousal with poor behavioral performance, perceived incompetence, and perceived failure. Fear of failure has negative implications for a host of outcomes, including task choice, effort expenditure, persistence, performance attainment, intrinsic motivation, and well-being (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). According to Elliot and Thrash
(2004), fear of failure is defined as the dispositional tendency to orient toward and to seek to avoid failure in achievement settings because one feels shame in failure. It is not failure as much as the fear and the shame together. Elliot and Thrash (2004) pointed out that the individual also experiences anxiety prior to and during task engagement and seeks to protect the self from failure by escaping the situation physically (quitting) or mentally (withdrawing effort) or by pushing hard to succeed in order to avoid failure. In contrast, Covington (2000) noted that students who value ability as a matter of status are often forced to avoid failure, or at least avoid the implications of failure. The failure-avoiding tactics have many guises, but whatever form or character; they are all linked to the fear of failure (Covington, 2000).

Pekrun (2009) suggested that maladaptive emotions like excessive anxiety, hopelessness, or boredom, are detrimental to academic attainment; induce students to drop out of school, and impact negatively on their psychological and physical health (Pekrun, 2009). Discrimination is a pervasive stressor that originates in the sociocultural environment and has a significant influence on the mental health of ethnic minority group members (Torres, 2009). Test anxiety is another prospective emotion relating to threat of failure in an upcoming or ongoing exam (Pekrun, 2009). Pajares (2008) stated that,

The self-efficacy beliefs that students hold when they approach new tasks and activities serve as a filter through which new information is processed. For example, students with low self-efficacy in mathematics will likely interpret the butterflies that invade their stomachs just before an important math exam as precursors of impending failure. In this case, the self-fulfilling prophecy helps ensure that this interpretation will lead to the very failure feared. Conversely, students confident in their mathematics capability will be impervious to what they interpret as normal “nerves” before an important test and may even find them energizing. Students’ emotional states also influence how they interpret the fruits of their labors. (p. 118)

Hill (1984) suggested that low-anxiety students did about twice as well as high anxiety students under the standardized testing conditions. Hill (1984) summarized this by purporting
test anxiety and success-failure attribution measures correlate increasingly with test performance across the elementary and secondary school years for boys and girls from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The problem of debilitating test-motivation and test-taking skill deficits is serious and widespread.

Perceived collective efficacy is a construct derived from social cognitive theory that represents the level of confidence a group exudes in its capability to organize and execute the tasks required to reach desired attainments (Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004). It was confirmed that perceived collective efficacy was critical to explaining how well students performed on the mandatory assessments of achievement for which high schools are held accountable by the state. Goddard, LoGerfo, and Hoy (2004) pointed out that, in an era of increased accountability for schools, collective efficacy is worthy of strong consideration by educators and educational reformers alike who seek to support teachers’ work and students’ effective learning (Goddard et al., 2004). The results indicated that developing a school in which teachers believe in their collective capabilities to educate students is important to meeting the challenges posed by helping all students learn rigorous academic content (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1992; Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2004).

**Theme 3: Classroom Structure and Appropriate Student Learning Tasks**

There is a need for autonomy supportive teachers to make provisions for realistic and appropriate student-task activities that motivate student learning (Reeve & Cai, 1999). To help students, teachers and schools must focus on strategies to promote learning that enables intrinsic motivation. The first perspective on intrinsic motivation is the need for an emphasis on student autonomy. Autonomy promotes a student’s sense of control over the learning activity (Lepper, 1988; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990; Reeve & Cai, 1999; Stipek, 1993). Some theorists
claimed that human beings have a natural need to feel self-determining (Hardre & Reeve, 2003; Legault et al., 2006; Reeve, Ryan, Deci, & Jang, 2012). They want to believe they are engaging in activities by their own volition rather than to achieve some external reward or avoid some negative consequence (Stipek, 1993; Reeve et al., 2012). When teachers are high in autonomy support, relative to when teachers were oriented toward controlling student behavior, their students become more intrinsically motivated for learning, feel more competent while learning, and develop higher levels of self-esteem. Students in autonomy-supporting learning environments demonstrate more positive emotionality and feelings in the classroom, more enjoyment of academic work, and more satisfaction with school than students who were less motivated and less autonomous (Thuen & Bru, 2009).

Autonomy support is the interpersonal behavior one person provides to nurture another’s inner motivational resources and their true self-regulation of action (Reeve et al. 2012). However, the use of self-regulation strategies was found to be practiced more by junior-high students than by gifted high-school students (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Although teachers cannot directly give students an experience of autonomy, they can provide interpersonal conditions that support students’ experience of autonomy.

Traditional instructional environments for at-risk, low-motivated students are teacher controlled and provide low-level routine tasks (Dicintio & Gee, 1999). Lefstein (2002) described how control of student task activities minimizes communication between teachers and students and allows surveillance of all students. For example, Lunenberg (1990-1991) conducted a study on educators’ pupil-control ideology. The continuum ranged from educators with custodial ideologies to educators with humanistic ideologies. Educators with a custodial ideology stress the maintenance of order, impersonality, one-way downward communication,
distrust of students, and a punitive, moralistic attitude toward pupil control. Educators with a humanistic orientation (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) emphasized the psychological and sociological bases of learning and behavior, an accepting and trustful view of students, and a confidence in students’ ability to be self-disciplining and responsible. The question in Lunenberg’s (1990-1991) study was to determine which pupil control ideology would refer the most discipline referrals to the office. Lunenberg reported that the results of his study showed that custodial educators report more severe penalties for those pupils who manifest disruptive behaviors. Humanistic teachers held more permissive views toward misbehavior and were more likely to encourage self-discipline and less severe penalties when students were disruptive.

Another component of the classroom structure is the teachers’ use of authority (Carley, 1994). Classrooms where the teacher is controlling and grants little autonomy are generally thought to reduce a mastery goal orientation and promote the adoption of performance goals (Ames, 1992). Kitzmiller (2013) suggested that teachers must constantly work to maintain the legitimacy of their authority for it is dependent on the students’ recognition of it. Kitzmiller (2013) pointed out a teacher’s classroom that was out of control used apprenticed authority, describing a teacher who used legitimate authority to control his classroom. Subsequently, the classroom became a meaningful learning environment for students despite the overwhelming challenges at the school (Kitzmiller, 2013). When schools are struggling to establish a way to create the institutional authority that teachers normally possess, Lightfoot (1983) pointed out:

The empathetic stance is a crucial ingredient of successful interactions between teachers and students. Empathy is not adversarial; it does not accentuate distinctions of power; and it seems to be an expression of fearlessness. Teacher fearlessness not only comes from a deep understanding of students, it also derives from institutional authority that supports their individual encounters with students. The most explicit and visible signs of strong institutional authority are seen in the schools’ response to violence and other disciplinary matters. (p. 345)
Students’ classroom engagement, academic effort, and subsequent school success and/or failure are influenced not only by individual differences in skills, abilities, and predispositions but also by many situational and contextual factors (Cho, Hallfors, & Sanchez, 2005; Goodenow, 1993; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder Jr., 2001). Among these contextual factors, the quality of school social relationships may be especially important. In the past few years, increasing research attention has been directed toward the influence of social relationships on educational outcomes in research on social interaction as a major source of cognitive development. Goodenow (1993) stated that “the social and interactional processes that lead or fail to lead to belonging and commitment among at-risk students have been targeted as crucial by other educational researchers as well” (p. 81).

School and classroom level changes are also likely to affect students’ sense of belonging. Possibilities include the increased use of cooperative learning tasks, smaller interdisciplinary teaching teams, peer tutoring, and school projects and activities calling on the participation of many students working together (Goodenow, 1993). Murphy and Zirkel (2015) suggested that “sense of belonging” in school is a complex construct that relies heavily on students’ perceptions of the educational environment and educational goals, especially their relationships with other students. That is, a sense of belonging is socially constructed, informed by a student’s experiences in a particular educational context. Rudduck (2007) found that students and teachers’ interview data pointed to three main categories: (a) membership: students felt more included in the school’s purposes; (b) respect and self-worth: students felt positive about themselves; and (c) agency: students valued being able to do something for the school. Rudduck (2007) suggested that such outcomes feed directly into students’ motivation to learn and confirm the observations of Osterman (2000) who stated:
Students who experience acceptance are more highly and engaged in learning and more committed to school…research links the experience of relatedness or belongingness to outcomes of particular significance in education – academic attitudes and motives, social and personal attitudes, engagement, and academic achievement. (p. 359).

Teacher motivation naturally has to do with teachers’ attitudes toward work and their desire to participate in the pedagogical processes within the school environment. Rogat, Witham, and Chinn, (2014) emphasized the critical importance of autonomy in enhancing motivation and learning. They noted that autonomy is conceptualized as experiencing that one’s interests, values, and goals are aligned with their behavior because they endorse the significance of these behaviors as relevant to their own internal goals. Also, students of autonomy-oriented teachers were more intrinsically motivated and had higher self-esteem than students of teachers who were more control oriented (Deci, Sheinman, Schwartz, & Ryan, 1981). The teacher orientation scale also correlated significantly with students’ general feelings of self-worth and with their perceptions of their own cognitive competence. Just as students need autonomy-oriented classrooms to be intrinsically motivated and to perceive themselves as competent, teachers need an autonomy-oriented context within which to benefit from feedback about their own orientations. The measure can also be used for providing teachers with feedback as well as for research purposes. The data from this instrument, presented to the teachers informationally, can help them develop a more intrinsic orientation and a stronger self-esteem. These outcomes should, in turn, filter down to the students as they become more independent in evaluating themselves (Deci et al., 1981; Harter, 1981).

Teachers vary in the interpersonal styles they rely on to teach and motivate students. The styles are relatively autonomy supportive because the teachers’ goals are to support students’ interest in and valuing of education (Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1999). In particular, students in classrooms with autonomy-supportive teachers are more likely to stay in school when compared
to students in classrooms with controlling teachers. Reeve, Bolt and Cai (1999) also found that teachers who said they were autonomy supportive (on the questionnaire) actually taught in ways that supported student autonomy, listened more, held the instructional materials less, resisted giving the puzzle’s solutions, and supported the student’s intrinsic motivation and internalization. Autonomy-supportive teachers also showed a tendency to verbalize fewer directives, asked more questions about what the student wanted to do, responded more to student-generated questions, and volunteered more perspective-taking statements (Reeve et al., 1999).

Ames and Ames (1984) suggested a qualitative view of motivation meant that students and teachers process information from their environment in terms of goals or values. Thuen and Bru (2009) suggested that the teacher’s role is to facilitate students’ learning that is consistent with the view that students are active participants in their own learning processes. This means that specific goals and values affect student and teacher perceptions, attributions, self-evaluations, and beliefs about strategies of action. Maehr and Midgley (1991) stated,

A task focus is likely to develop when students are involved in choice and decision making; there are opportunities for peer interaction and cooperation; grouping is based on interest and needs; and success is defined in terms of effort, progress, and improvement. (p.404).

On the other hand, many high school students lose their focus on school by making choices and decisions that can become detrimental to their educational career and future by choosing to leave high school before graduation or drop out.

These perspectives on intrinsic motivation are all based on the premise that human beings have natural inclinations that render some tasks intrinsically motivated. An activity is intrinsically motivating to the extent that it is performed for its own sake (Ainley, 2006;
Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990; Lens & Decruyenaere, 1991; Wiest et al., 2001), or, in Bruner’s (1966) words, “The will to learn is an intrinsic motive, one that finds both its source and its reward in its own exercise” (p. 127). When applied to behavior, an intrinsically motivated activity is often described as “autotelic” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). These principles are based on the premise that people are motivated to control their environments and to experience themselves as “origins” rather than “pawns” (Lepper, 1988). Lepper (1988) presented four principles for promoting various sources of intrinsic motivation in instructional activities: (a) control, (b) challenge, (c) curiosity, and (d) contextualization.

When achievement is not intrinsically motivated, internalization, then, pertains to the development of internal regulations both for limiting or rechanneling “what comes naturally” (Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). Internalization refers to the process by which an individual acquires beliefs, attitudes or behavioral regulations from external sources and progressively transforms these external regulations into personal attributes, values, or regulatory styles (Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). The domain of internalization concerns all those activities and regulations that are not spontaneously driven or intrinsically motivated (Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). Contrary to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation pertains to a wide variety of behaviors in which the goals of action extend beyond those inherent to the activity itself. For example, Karsenti and Thibert (1995) suggest that there are four types of extrinsic motivation, some of which are more self-determined, along a continuum, and may be performed through self-regulation. From lower to higher levels of self-determination, they are: external, introjected, identified, and integrated regulation.

External regulation corresponds to extrinsic motivation that is an action regulated through external means to an end such as rewards and constraints or going to school to avoid negative
consequences. Introjected regulation results when students begin to internalize the external means regulating their actions. These students attend school because they would feel guilty staying home; they internalize the motives for their actions resulting from past and present external contingencies. Identified regulation is action that becomes valued and truly chosen by the student. For example, a grade 11 student may decide to take an advanced math course that they do not like because they feel it is important for their future. Integrated regulation is the most self-determined form of extrinsic motivation because it occurs when the individual’s action is perceived as personally valued and freely performed. For example, students who, in light of their career goals, decide to follow an advanced science program, to study diligently, and to commit themselves to meeting all academic requirements (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995).

Along with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, a third type of motivational construct is termed amotivation (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995). Students are amotivated when they do not perceive a link between their actions and the ensuing outcomes. Students in such a state are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated; they do not know why they are going to school. These researchers state, “Since amotivation is the type of motivation most significantly related to grade point average, for both boys and girls, across all levels of secondary schooling; it could be an indicator to identify at-risk students” (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995, p.10). Also, amotivated students experience feelings of incompetence and expectancies of uncontrollability; their actions are perceived as caused by forces out of their own control and they may eventually drop out (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995). It appears that an external regulatory style is a central feature in students who are alienated and discouraged in school, those “at-risk” for a variety of adjustment and academic difficulties (Ryan, Connell & Grolnick, 1992). Karsenti and Thibert (1995) note
that important pedagogical implications for professionals who could immediately work with at-risk students, thus possibly preventing them from failing and eventually dropping out.

The central issue of instructional design in this case is how to maintain a sense of control or self-determination on the part of the student without an actual abdication of control by the teacher (Brown, 1988; Lepper, 1988; Stipek, 2002). For challenging activities at students’ appropriate learning levels, it is important that the activity provide meaningful goals about which there are (a) uncertainty about success and (b) clear performance feedback regarding their progress toward these goals. In a study by Sideridis (2002), goal significance for at-risk students was found to be negative compared to a high achieving group, suggesting that these at-risk students did not perceive high achievement as being important and the consequences of this action to be useless. Sideridis (2002) suggested that a possible explanation for this finding is that the behavior of at-risk students is inconsistent, unpredictable, and full of participant error. Another explanation was that goal importance was already low and the sample group was small (Sideridis, 2002). The motivation by curiosity is stimulated by the recognition of some incongruity, discrepancy of new information from prior knowledge, (Tobias, 1994; Abdullah, 2003), or disconfirmation of present expectations (Lepper, 1988).

Students learn to value academic work (Lens & Decruyenaere, 1991; Lepper, 1988; Stipek, 1993). This kind of task-contingent reward, based on engaging in the task, is nearly always experienced as controlling. Intrinsic motivation thus refers to actions that are done out of interest. Thus, many behaviors that provide inputs for development, as well as the natural developmental process through which these become part of the self, are intrinsically motivated. Like all natural processes, however, intrinsically motivated development can either be facilitated or hindered by the social context. Stated differently, intrinsic motivation tendencies require
nutriments from the environment for their expression to be manifested. Specifically, the maintenance of intrinsic motivation, and the vitality and effectiveness of the activity it spawns, is dependent on the satisfaction of three primary psychological needs: (a) competence, (b) autonomy, and (c) relatedness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Due to strong intrinsic motivation, the student is fully concentrated on the task, ignores incidental stimuli, and, thus, the integrity of action is maintained (Vauras, Salonen, Lehtinen & Lepola, 2001). Grolnick, Deci, and Ryan (1997) stated, “Intrinsic motivation encompasses the energization of both behavior and psychological processes” (p. 137). To some degree, all four: control, challenge, curiosity, and contextualization, are overlapping (Lepper, 1988).

Students may ask the question, “Do I want to do the task, why?” Intrinsic motivation or interest in the task may cause the student to engage in an academic activity. Choudhury (2006) stated that “a look at the column of odds ratio shows interest in studies (cared for doing well in studies) as the most important predictor associated with dropping out of school” (p. 5260). He continued, “Compared to those with an interest in studies, those who did not have interest were 7.7 times more likely to drop out” (Choudhury, 2006, p.5260). Ainley (2006) discussed interest, as the immediate reaction to a new learning task is an affective state that involves feelings of arousal, alertness, attention and concentration and is a key variable in the motivation of learning. Interest as general orientation, or individual interest, is also a key factor contributing to on-task feelings of activation and interest and engagement in learning (Ainley, 2006). Ainley stated,

There are combinations of affective and cognitive processes which persist across time as organized processing structures and these structures function as motivation for learning. In new situations perceptual and appraisal processes draw on the content of salient affective cognitive processing structures to generate specific states that contain the impulse to explore and engage further with learning tasks. (Ainley, 2006, p. 399)
Deci, Sheinman, Schwartz, and Ryan (1981) suggested that intrinsically motivated, self-directed learning is the ideal model for education and that students learn out of curiosity and the desire for challenge. They are more involved in and satisfied with the learning and they understand and can integrate the material more fully. Teachers who are successful with low socioeconomic students use logical consequences to direct students to learn appropriate behaviors; they build relationships with students and seek to make learning relevant (Calabrese, Goodvin, & Niles, 2005). In order to connect with students, good teachers make affective connections related to their subject matter and students. These connections are reflected in the teachers’ spirits, and they create a desire to learn among students (Palmer, 1998).

The task dimension concerns the design of learning activities that make learning interesting and help students to establish realistic goals (Schunk, 1991). Shernoff, Tonks and Anderson (2014) concluded that optimal learning environments appeared to be marked by environmental complexity and were frequently created through structured tasks in individual or small-group work with teacher monitoring. Student engagement as well as perceptions of involvement, contributing ideas, positive affect, engagement, challenge, skill use, clear goals, feeling accepted, and effort were all influenced by environmental complexity in which environmental challenge and support are simultaneously present. Shernoff et al. (2014) found that engagement was, on average, relatively high during teacher presentations.

Boekaerts (2009, p. 106) suggested that it is essential to understand that motivation can apply to multiple goals that students bring into the classroom and on how these goals interact. Ames (1992) suggested that research has focused considerable attention on how classroom environments influence students’ views about the nature and purposes of learning. Ames (1992) referred to how the structure of the learning environment could make a difference and how the
classroom environment can influence students’ processing of information. More specifically, by aligning achievement goals of the student, the structure of the classroom environment, and students’ motivational outcomes, students’ perceptions of their academic success or failure can be influenced (Ames, 1992; Lee & Reeve, 2012).

Milner (2010) suggested that when teachers have low expectations of students, they do not allow students to think deeply and to be creative. When teachers expect students to come up with the right answer, students are not allowed to challenge the multiple layers of authority and texts in the classroom, such as by presenting views that differ from those of the teacher or the textbook. The teachers do not believe students have the capacity to excel and to succeed in school. They expect students to meet a predetermined minimal level of expectation.

Simon and Johnson (2015) pointed out that, in high poverty schools, the teacher turnover is high and it is difficult to staff and retain talented, effective teachers. There is a need to pursue retention strategies that are designed to improve the teaching environment (Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Computers represent an answer for many problems currently facing at risk students, such as the shortage of highly trained teachers and declining school budgets (Lepper & Chabay, 1985; Duran, 2002). Day (2002) reported that students at risk felt more motivated to learn, received better grades, felt empowered, and accepted more responsibility for their work in the lab environment. Lepper and Chabay (1985) pointed out that to be most effective, instructional choices must be suited to the motives and interest of students as well as to their cognitive aptitudes and capabilities. They may also provide motivational enhancements that influence learning by affecting the level of students’ involvement and the degree of deep or elaborate processing required by the activity. For example, Warschauer, Knobel, and Stone (2004)
conducted a study in eight schools to better understand some of the similarities and differences between the low and high SES schools in the equity of technology. They identified three overall patterns of technology access and use labeled, (a) performativity, referring to teachers going through the motions without paying attention to larger issues of knowledge construction and purposeful learning; (b) workability, referring to issues of reliability on technologies to work when teachers needed them, and (c) complexity, referring to the complexity for teachers to integrate computers in their teaching (Warschauer, Knobel & Stone, 2004).

The use of a computer-driven, module-based curriculum is a popular option for many dropout prevention programs and alternative schools. Day (2002) noted that the module-based curriculum had more than 50 modules available, including subjects such as engineering, nutrition, careers, flight technology, robotics, and personal finance. Each school can purchase their own module selection of learning modules, but the essentials included with each school’s package are workstations, equipment, teacher-training, and post-training support. In general, there is a need for greater attention to technology use for academic purposes rather than for mastery of software programs (Warschauer, Knobel, and Stone, 2004).

Lepper and Chabay (1985) suggested that instructional programs may benefit from individualization on motivational as well as on cognitive grounds. For example, Means and Knapp (1991) suggested that, by not challenging at-risk students or not encouraging them to use complex thinking skills, teachers underestimated students’ capabilities and, as a result, discouraged their exploration of interests and meaningful work they could accomplish. Dicintio & Gee (1999) stated that, “at-risk adolescents are unmotivated to learn because the tasks they are asked to complete are not motivating to them” (p. 231).
The need for instructional programs to respond differentially as a function of the students’ cognitive accomplishments and failings has been apparent since the earliest applications of computer-assisted instruction (Lepper & Chabay, 1985). However, almost no attention has been devoted to the motivational parameter that might influence the effectiveness of different instructional sequences, despite the fact that the computer seems equally well suited to both tasks. For example, Chen & Looi (1999) reported a group of at-risk secondary students were given a series of linked computer-based business and consumer projects involving work processing, survey design and analysis, and presentation of results with computer graphics. There were clear benefits in terms of the group’s motivation, behavior, and performance on tests, particularly in English (Chen & Looi, 1999).

As the technology becomes more sophisticated, as it becomes easier to make effective use of icons, animation, and speech in educational programs, it will be possible for the computer to be used in a variety of different roles, simultaneously or in succession (Lepper & Chabay, 1985). Or, learners may be offered the option of working with a computer teacher in a relationship of their own choosing (Lepper & Chabay, 1985). Warschauer, Knobel, and Stone (2004) suggested that schools need well-trained teaching staff, need to use technology for scholarship, and need a better approach to address unequal access to home computers. However, close examination of the uses of computers and technology indicates both strengths and challenges within the practices intended to improve learning outcomes of at-risk students (Duran, 2002).

Increased knowledge about effective teacher professional development has important implications for improving classroom instruction and student learning (Stringfield & Datnow, 2002). The schools most successful in building professional community had high levels of
authority to act, both in terms of school autonomy and teacher influence (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Teachers’ professional identity beliefs also matter for their pedagogical decisions and the ways they interact with different types of students. For example, Grissom (2011) noted that teacher turnover in schools may result from a high population of disadvantaged students, poor facilities, and unsafe neighborhood environments.

However, various kinds of teacher beliefs have been posited to mediate the effects of teachers on adolescents’ achievement (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). For example, Garza (2012) suggested that providing preservice teachers in urban settings with authentic educational experiences may be an effective approach in preparing them to teach diverse students. Garza examined preservice teachers’ perceptions of mentoring at-risk high school students. The social interactions with at-risk students fostered a deeper understanding of the importance of relationship building and helped to clear teachers’ negative assumptions about at-risk students (Garza, 2012).

**Theme 4: Supportive Emotional Classroom Climate**

Students need support for an emotional climate that fosters trust among teachers and students (Brown, 1988; McPartland, 1994; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Owens & Johnson Jr., 2009). Trusting others is an important aspect of human learning because learning is often a cooperative process; distrust makes it impossible (Hoy, 2002). When students want to learn and know what they need to do to succeed in accomplishing a task, trust becomes important as student and teacher relationships come to rely on one another to achieve their goals (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994; Owens & Johnson Jr., 2009). For example, the multifaceted definition of trust by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) stated that “Trust is one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable,
competent, honest, and open” (p. 89). Parents entrust their children to teachers, as stewardship represents primarily an act of trust (Sergiovanni, 1992). Hoy (2002) concluded that cooperation between teachers and students and between teachers and parents set the stage for effective student learning in schools. When students, teachers, and parents have common learning goals, then trust and cooperation are likely by-products that improve teaching and learning (Hoy, 2002).

Educational organizations play the initial role as giver in give-and-take relationships that characterize the development of trust among urban youth (Owens & Johnson Jr., 2009). For example, it was reported that the data of the study showed that students took as the program gave for a period of time. Then students gave back to the program in personal and systemically relevant ways once they had determined that the intervention program was able to provide academic and social support. It was suggested that, for this group of students, the reputation of an educational organization may serve as one of the few sure bits of information that helps them initially be disposed to trust its members (Owens & Johnson Jr., 2009).

Attribution theory in the classroom relates to the perceived stability of causes students choose as an explanation for their success or failure in school outcomes. Weiner (1992) defined attributions as beliefs concerning the causes of outcomes. Kelly & Michela (1980) developed an attribution theory that provided testable hypotheses. According to these researchers, attributions represent a process by which people decide on the explanation that best fits the event (Kelly & Michela, 1980). Graham & Williams (2009) suggested that most of the practical significance of attribution theory contributes to the understanding of real-world motivational concerns that unfold daily in school settings, such as emotional reactions to success and failure, acceptance or rejection by peers, and self-esteem. Meyer & Turner (2006) stated that, “In classroom studies it
has been difficult, if not impossible, to separate emotions, cognitions, and motivations captured in observing instructional interactions as well as in student self-reports” (p. 378). For instance, Ortony & Turner (1990) identified emotions as comprising students’ and teachers’ appraisals, action tendencies, desires, feelings, and physiological responses. Schunk (2012) noted that within social cognitive frameworks, attributions are seen as important influences on self-efficacy and as key motivators of self-regulation. Graham & Williams (2009) concluded that attribution theory doesn’t answer complex problems associated with low-achievement or poor peer relations among member of historically marginalized groups, but does offer framework for asking some of the right questions.

Attributions of causality often vary between the perceptions of actor and observer, between students and teachers (Hunter & Barker, 1987). Re-conceptualizing the relationships between emotions and motivation in teaching and learning is becoming increasingly pivotal to making progress in classroom research (Meyer & Turner, 2006). In activity-related emotions pertaining to achievement activities, control and values refer to the action. For example, Hunter & Barker (1987, p. 51) explained that there are three continuums of causality: (a) locus, meaning feelings of self-esteem, shame, or guilt are based on one’s perception of the location of the cause. The locus can be internal or external; (b) Stability, meaning expectations for the future are based on whether the cause is perceived as stable or unstable, subject to change. If the student believes the failure is inevitable, there’s no point in trying because his or her ability or task difficulty can be seen as a stable cause and there is no point in trying. If the student attributes success or failure to unstable causes their expectations can change. (c) Controllability is the student’s feeling of potency to affect the outcome by controlling the cause. Weiner (1985) stated, “All three dimensions of causality affect a variety of common emotional experiences” (p. 548).
In these emotions, the attentional focus is on the action, not on outcomes, implying that appraisals of outcome control and outcome valences do not play a role. For example, Thuen & Bru (2009) found that the perceived meaningfulness of schoolwork was related to externalizing problems. It is possible that students who find work of little interest may perceive school as a worthless institution whose norms should be opposed. Students must accept the fact that much of what happens to them is a result of what they do (Hunter & Barker, 1987). Students who fail to take responsibility for their academic outcomes are at risk for school failure. For example, Schunk (2012) suggested that students seek academic help from teachers and school counselors.

In supportive environments that foster trust, students feel comfortable and safe talking with a teacher or counselor about a personal problem (McPartland, 1994; Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2009). Mowat (2010) argued that the centrality of high-quality trusting and respectful relationships within the school setting, particularly between teachers and students, means teachers and school administrators need to pay careful attention to the nature of the interventions that are adopted to support the social and emotional development of young people and ensure that they know those responsible for implementation of a support group with students that focuses upon the development of interpersonal relationships (Mowat, 2010). For example, Dillon (1989) noted in a teacher’s script that,

> I think it’s more important for a kid to feel he’s got somebody at school he can trust or can talk to or who can cheer him up when he’s feeling raunchy….kids need to feel they can open up and share some of their feelings, which they may not ever do because they may be in a family situation where they get slapped for it or put down. (p. 238)

When those involved with the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) first followed up on the teacher survey, which asked whether a student talked about schoolwork, academic decisions, or personal matters outside of class, they discovered that over 50% of students solicited advice or talked with at least one of their 10th grade teachers about school and personal
matters (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Too often, various personal problems inside and outside of the school can be motivational distractions that can lead to suspensions and dropping out (Darmanin, 2003; McPartland, 1994; Mowat, 2010).

Increased support is a protective factor in shaping individual outcomes. Brion-Meisels (2016) suggested there is a distinction between social support that is perceived and social support that is received. For example, when young people believe that the people in their lives, including providers, friends, and family, are able to offer effective support in times of need, they are said to have perceived support (Brion-Meisels, 2016). In contrast, received support, as measured by those activities offered by providers during time of need, does not have a consistent positive relationship with mental health. For example, support providers are often appointed, which may prevent adolescents from forming intimate relationships with individual adults (Brion-Meisels, 2016). Brion-Meisels (2016) noted, while research on the efficacy of student support services is sparse, student support services have a positive influence on behavior and student engagement and achievement when students can be involved in choosing the kind of support. For example, Wills (1991) identified four types of support: emotional support (empathy, concern, love, trust, encouragement, caring); informational support (advice, guidance, suggestions); tangible support (financial assistance, resources, services); and companionship support (belonging, friendship). Support must be perceived as useful to the student to be correlated with positive outcomes (Brion-Meisels, 2016).

Becker and Luthar (2002) suggested that social-emotional factors affect achievement outcomes, but a supportive relationship with an adult is one of the single most commonly identified protective factors in the literature on resilience. For example, Bowen, Richman, Brewster, & Bowen (1998) noted that teachers play an important role as sources of support in
shifting the balance between risk and protective factors in the lives of at-risk students, especially those students who have difficulty accessing alternative sources of support from adults in their lives. Their actions communicate a sense of caring, respect, and appreciation for their students, particularly those growing up in poor urban neighborhoods, and having family backgrounds where such support may be deficient (Bowen et al., 1998; Becker and Luthar, 2002).

Brion-Meisels (2016) suggested that teachers who demonstrate care take time to learn about their students’ lives, recognize their students’ individual differences, and support students in emotionally challenging times. In Noddings (1995; 2005), pedagogical caring is described as an ethic of caring that is needs based. Brion-Meisels (2016) used the term pedagogical caring to describe care directly connected to a teacher’s pedagogical choices. For example, teachers’ level of passion for the subject area was a sign of care. Other examples of care expressed showed teacher’s willingness to scaffold or differentiate instruction for different learners, to let students make up assignments, to listen to their students personal stories, and adapting their policies and practice accordingly were signs of teacher caring (Brion-Meisels, 2016; Muller, 2001; Smyth, 2007; Wentzel, 1997;). Cooper (2010) found that profound empathy developed through close and frequent interaction and held the most beneficial consequences for moral modeling, learning relationships, and achievement than other types of empathy such as, fundamental, concerned with the characteristics necessary to initiate relationships; functional, empathy becomes relative in order to cope with the constraints of the context and can be used a tool; and feigned, represents deceptive behavior when people exhibit superficial signs of empathy but eventually reveal the opposite (Cooper, 2010). McLaughlin (1991) noted that one of the central ethical tensions that novice teachers face is how to care for their students while establishing and maintaining classroom control.
In considering the functions of emotions in school, Horner et al. (2015) pointed out that academic emotions—emotions related to learning, instruction, or academic achievement—are thought to be precursors to engagement in school and may activate meta-strategies supportive of self-regulated learning. Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, and Campione (1983) wrote, “The emotional cannot be divorced from the cognitive, nor the individual from the social” (p.149). Horner et al. (2015) examined two common emotion-coping strategies: (a) emotional suppression, choosing not to communicate an emotional state; and (b) cognitive reappraisal, constructing understanding of events in ways that change how they are experienced emotionally. Horner et al. (2015) noted that suppression has been shown to have negative consequences for psychological, social, and short- and long-term physiological functioning. Given the perceived likelihood for misunderstanding and frequent mischaracterization of emotional expression as defiance or disengagement, the expression of emotion can be classified, in some particular school contexts, as a high-risk endeavor. A key goal should be developing an understanding of how “emotional competence” in a particular social context in the classroom may be defined and enacted in ways that are healthy for individuals and relationships alike (Horner et al., 2015; Schutz, 2014).

Reducing negative behavior and emotional problems in school is essential for fostering the best possible growth and adjustment in young people. Thuen and Bru (2009) suggested that a central assumption behind research on the importance of school has been that school, as a major context of child and adolescent development, has significant influences on academic, social, and emotional functioning. Acts of instruction, such as listening and encouraging students’ voices nurtures students’ inner motivational resources. For example, Reeve, Ryan, Deci, and Jang (2012) stated that, “Acts of instruction such as providing rationales promote students’ valuing and internalization processes, non-controlling language.” “Acts of instruction such as
responsiveness and communication of perspective-taking statements represent instances of acknowledging and accepting students’ perspectives” (Reeve et al., 2012, p. 232). Wentzel (2009) stated that, “Perceived emotional support from teachers has been related significantly to students’ academic performance and social functioning throughout the school-aged years” (p. 303).

Stringfield and Datnow (2002) suggested that forces at the federal, state, and district levels, at the design team level, and at the school and classroom levels shape the ways in which reforms fail or succeed. The challenge confronting the current generation of educational researchers and practitioners is to provide reliable systemic support for improved educational opportunities for all of our children, particularly those who are most at risk for academic failure (Stringfield & Datnow, 2002).

Teachers in alternative education schools and programs exert a powerful influence on a student’s motivation to learn, particularly when they are at risk (Alderman, 1990; Read, 1999). They can directly influence the intrinsic interest students get from learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) because they are “key actors” who create and shape the learning environment that enhances and sustains students’ motivation and engages them in learning (Hornstra, Mansfield, & van der Veen, 2015). In alternative settings, teachers and administrators strive to create a supportive and caring environment that allows deep relationships to form and that provides individualized instruction that meets students’ unique academic and socioemotional needs (Coyl, Jones, & Dick, 2004; Epstein, 1992; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 1994; Taylor, 1986-1987; Taylor-Dunlop, 1997; Wechsler, 2001).
The At-risk Deficit Paradigm

The deficit paradigm model has been used to analyze academic underachievement of students referred to as at risk in urban schools (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Martinez & Rury, 2012; Placier, 1996). In the dominant framework, called the deficit paradigm, is the explanation that the lack of school success is due to problems in students, their families, their culture (Ahram, Fergus & Noguera, 2011; Land & Legters, 2002; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Webb-Johnson, 2006), or their communities (Kim & Taylor, 2008; Land & Legters, 2002). For example, Ahram et al. (2011) stated that,

Through the use of cultural deficit thinking, teachers begin to attribute their students’ academic troubles to the students’ socioeconomic status, family, and culture. In this respect, cultural deficit thinking has the effect of pathologizing academic and behavioral discrepancies of low-income and minority students relative to White middle-class students by labeling them as disabled. (p. 2256-57)

Land and Legters (2002) pointed out that the trend to extend the at-risk label to a greater number of students has caused concern that risk of academic failure will direct resources away from programs’ services to students with fewer resources.

Underachievement is viewed as stemming from deficiencies in students, so policies and practices to help students succeed attempt to correct their deficiencies (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Land & Legters; 2002). However, many alternative schools and programs that still operate from the deficit model have many problems. These include a lack of qualified teaching staff and inappropriate teaching practices (Kim, 2006). For example, McNulty and Roseboro (2009) used identity politics as the primary lens through which to interpret the experiences of students at an alternative middle and high school. They reported from their study that students’ perspectives of their alternative school were more than an anti-democratic space, it was a structure that reinforced the “bad kid” identity, a message that the students felt defined
them (McNulty & Roseboro, 2009). McNulty & Roseboro (2009) stated that, “Student stigma was reinforced by the collective engagement with others who shared the stigma” (p. 424). This “spoiled image” or “stigma” unfortunately results in failure to meet the need for high expectations of students at risk (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor & Wheeler, 2007; Gregg, 1998; Groth, 1998; Kim, 2008, 2011; Lee, 1999; Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002;).

Under the deficit paradigm, students at risk of academic failure–disadvantaged, marginalized, and disaffected–who are attending alternative schools and programs fail to have their needs met (Souza, 1999). The diversity and the multitude of alternative programs have led to confusion and inefficiency (te Riele, 2007). School officials designing a dropout prevention program for their own locality cannot easily learn from the experiences of others who have attempted the same thing because each of the numerous written accounts of such efforts stands alone as a case study combining different features into a unique program for the given situation (McPartland, 1994). It is unlikely that a program developed elsewhere can be duplicated exactly in another site because local talents and priorities for school reform, the particular needs and interests of the students to be served, and the conditions of the school to be changed will differ (McPartland, 1994). Instead of some brand-name, prepackaged, complete program to be replicated, local school reformers require a coherent set of general components, which can help increase the holding power of schools serving students at risk and can be adapted to fit local circumstances (McPartland, 1994).

**Alternative Education Programs and Schools**

For several decades, alternative education programs and schools have been an alternative to traditional education for students placed at risk. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of the freedom schools movement, alternative schools were very popular.
Alternative schools and programs have evolved over the years to mean different things to different audiences (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Lange and Sletten (2002) stated, “Historically, alternatives have served a wide variety of students with varying interests, backgrounds and abilities” (p. 9). Several researchers have argued that alternatives to the traditional school are imperative to meeting the needs of all students (Barr & Parrett, 2001; D’Angelo & Zemanick, 2009; Goodman, 1999; Kelly, 1993; Raywid, 1994, 1995; Rury, 1994).

Some commonalities associated with effective alternative schools and programs are: (a) those that have clearly defined goals to inform both evaluation and students (Ancess, 2000; Gregg, 1999); (b) a school support structure and links to multiple agencies (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Webster, 2009; Dynarski & Gleason, 1998; Greene & Uroff, 1989; Milliken, 2007); (c) small size between 50-200 (Aron, 2003; Leinhardt & Bickel, 1987); (d) training and support for teachers who work with at-risk populations with or without disabilities (Ashcroft, 1999); and (e) positive school climate that is student-centered (Alfassi, 2004; Ancess, 2000). Without clear vision, alternative schools are destined to remain mere “educational dead ends” (Dunbar, 1999, p. 242). Alternative schools and programs should be purposefully designed with a vision to help students experience school success. The three high school alternative education schools in this study are a dropout prevention program, a charter high school, and a Middle College.

**Dropout Prevention Programs**

Students who attend alternative schools want to succeed. Research suggested there are only a few programs that are effective in preventing students from dropping out (Maclever, 2011). Part of this emerging insight is that what is not needed is simply new, better, or even more programs; what is needed are effective, systemic reforms that will improve a school’s holding power (Montecel, Cortez, & Cortez, 2004). There are many districts and schools in which there
is a significant dropout problem even though a dropout prevention program is in place there. So, what features are the most effective? Approaches to dropout prevention include both dropout prevention programs aimed at individual students, groups of students, and the whole school, and comprehensive school reform. Stringfield and Datnow (2002) suggested systemic supports for schools serving students placed at risk. Boutin & Chinien (1998) suggested retaining at-risk students in school using a cognitive-based instructional system (CBIS). The dropout prevention program in this study is a competency-based credit recovery program designed to help students earn their high school diplomas.

**Charter Schools and Systemic Reform**

The aim of the administrative leadership in most charter schools is to realize an alternative vision of schooling, and that may be one reason why they can stimulate the districts around them to consider reform measures (Wronkovich, 2000). The very success of a charter school with a different vision has the effect of gaining the notice of its counterparts in the public school system (Wronkovich, 2000). The Center for Education Reform is one of the leading organizations that support charter schools. The Center’s officials point to three reasons why the concept has merit: (a) accountability: teachers are responsible for delivering a better product; (b) choice: advocates claim that choice is a recipe for innovation and reform; and (c) autonomy: new paths can be taken that may lead to excellence, length of the school year and day, curriculum content, and new instructional strategies (Wronkovich, 2000).

**Early and Middle Colleges**

Early and middle college high school students have increased engagement with school and have been associated with a host of positive school-related outcomes, including increased academic performance and graduation rates (Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, & Dallas, 2013).
Contributors have suggested that programs designed to reduce dropout rates and increase college attendance among students at risk in middle and high schools are effective and capable of enhancing the achievement of at-risk students (Edmunds et al., 2013; Brown, Johnson, & Grueninger III, 2002; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Lieberman, 1989; Sheridan, 2000; Wechsler, 2001). Over the past few decades, a number of programs designed to affect dropout rates and college attendance have been implemented and evaluated in middle and high schools that service many at-risk students.

The purpose of the middle college alternative high school model was to, “change the structure and organization of public schooling to serve the academic and developmental needs of late adolescent at-risk students” (Wechsler, 2001, p. 1). The middle college officially opened in 1974 on the Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College Campus in Long Island City, Queens, New York. The school’s 500 students were urban, disadvantaged underachievers, with Black and Hispanic groups representing more than half of the population. They came voluntarily from the local Queens, New York junior high schools at the end of the ninth grade, and entered a combined high school-college program on the LaGuardia Community College site (Lieberman 1989; Wechsler, 2001). It was designed to engage high ability but low performing high school students, grades 10 through 12, often from high poverty or minority communities (Borman, 2002; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Holland; 1999; Lieberman, 2004; Wechsler, 2001). Middle college high schools are located on community-college campuses, offer a college preparatory curriculum, and coordinate the transition from high school to college (Borman, 2002). The success of the middle college is due in part to the fact that these schools essentially require students to engage with the schooling experience in a variety of ways. As one student who was interviewed stated, “You can’t hide” (Edmunds et al., 2013, p. 3).
Many middle colleges offer school-to-work experiences and internships and expose students to post-secondary education (van Schaik, van Oers, & Terwel, 2011). Education through work provides students with an opportunity to learn, through the school context, what Dewey (1916, p. 309) called “education through occupations.” The goal is to keep at risk students in school and help them see the linkages between what they can learn in school and their future lives. Collectively, these models show that schools can make a dramatic difference in the dropout rates, school success, and college enrollment rates of at-risk youth (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Dropout prevention programs, charter schools, and middle colleges have been designed to address the academic needs of students at risk of poor academic performance or dropping out. Students attending such programs and schools anticipate what they have to do to succeed.

Rich (2005) noted that setting goals helped students at risk of performing poorly in school find ways to become more involved in their schoolwork by having a clear understanding of the goal or objective. This is a feeling on the learner’s part both that the material is relevant to him or her, and the knowledge that he or she will have the time necessary to master the task (Rich, 2005). Edmunds et al. (2013) noted that the students engage on the three primary dimensions of the engagement construct: (a) behavioral engagement, related to compliance in school and not being disruptive; (b) emotional engagement, also known as affective or psychological engagement as having a positive feeling toward school and a feeling of “belonging;” and (c) cognitive engagement, as reflected in being actively involved in the learning experience or having a “psychological investment” in learning.
Conclusion

Alternative education is a concept that promotes the recognition that all students can be educated and motivated to learn. Classrooms and schools must promote development in students and foster programs that stress goal setting, emphasizing mastery goals, and providing students with experience in monitoring progress toward goal achievement. Unfortunately, many schools and classrooms set performance and extrinsic goals for students through competition and social comparisons, ability grouping and tracking, and public evaluation of performance and conduct based on normative standards of performance. Stringfield and Datnow (2002) stated,

If we, the practitioners, policy makers, and researchers of the 21st century work hard to implement the research and practice gains of the 20th century, then quite possibly much of the “achievement gap” between America’s children of affluence and our “at-risk” students can be eliminated. (p. 284)

Part of this emerging insight is that what is not needed is simply new, or better, or even more programs; what is needed are effective systemic reforms that will improve schools’ holding power (Boykin, 2000; Gilson, 2006; Montecel et al., 2004; Wehlage, 1991). Also, too many of our students of all ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels are increasingly finding schools to be places where they have to go or not go and the real world outside of school as where they want to learn and do learn what they are most interested in or have to learn to survive (McCombs, 2009). McCombs (2009) suggested that the way we think about motivation, learning, and teaching must change if we are to change the current state of affairs for students and those who teach them. This means that assumptions about human capacity, learning, teaching, and motivation must be changed so that a transformational paradigm for education can emerge (McCombs, 2009). Research over the last 40 years has shown that specific instructional tasks are correlated with higher student achievement. Thirty years of studies indicate that teachers can learn these more
“effective” behaviors and techniques when provided with high quality professional development in the content areas (Good & Brophy, 1999; Stringfield & Datnow, 2002).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose in this study was to explore and compare the perceptions of the teachers and students at three alternative high schools in diverse learning environments regarding how their school met the needs of students at risk of failing to graduate. More specifically, the study examined how each of the three school’s teachers and students perceived the three motivational constructs: self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and stimulating teacher strategies, and the learning environment from the respective participants. Using a mixed-method study design, this researcher accommodated student voices to be considered as significant stakeholders in the success of their own education and teachers’ perspective from interview questions.

This section describes the instruments used in this study and the procedures for implementation as follows: (a) Research Questions and (b) Research Design. The research design is a convergent parallel mixed methods approach. The qualitative instruments used in the research design were: (a) an interview questionnaire for teachers, and (b) an interview questionnaire for students. The quantitative instruments used in the research design were: (a) Strategies for Motivating Student to Learn, and (b) Strategies for Teachers Motivating Students to Learn (same survey for both students and teachers).

Research Questions

These research questions have been refined from those presented in the introduction after reviewing the literature on student motivation to learn and the high school dropout problem. The suggestion emphasizing the importance for students to engage in self-directed learning addressed the need for teachers to provide the structure of the learning environment that enables students to learn the strategies. The four guiding questions were refined to the five research questions below
to facilitate the data analysis and the presentation of quantitative results for the motivational constructs in a more concise manner.

1. How do student perceptions of their individual self-efficacy differ from teacher beliefs about their self-efficacy?
2. How do students’ perceptions of their intrinsic motivation differ from teachers’ beliefs about their intrinsic motivation?
3. How do students’ perceptions of their beliefs that teachers use strategies for stimulating their motivation to learn compare to teacher’s beliefs?
4. Does the alignment differ between the types of alternative school students’ perceptions and the collective teachers’ beliefs?

**Research Design**

Both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the two forms of evidence, and using distinct designs that may involve different philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2014) were collected. The design of this investigation of three alternative high schools used a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2014). Stake (1995) suggested that researchers interpret, construct, and substantiate new meanings as a result of recognizing a problem, and study it, hoping to connect it better with known things.

As alternative education in recent years have clearly come to emphasize the holistic viewpoint, holistic educators have defined education in terms of wholeness—the whole, integrated person, and maintaining the uniqueness of diverse values while generating overall harmony among them” (Nagata, 2007, pp. 6-7).

Creswell & Garrett (2008) emphasized that “A need also exists to examine the literature closely to see whose voices are being heard or at least presented” (Creswell & Garrett, 2008, p 322). As noted by Nagata (2007), minority voices, historically, tend not to be heard.
Mixed Methods Design

The rationale for employing a mixed method approach recognizes the legitimacy of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2014) wrote, “The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem that either approach alone” (p. 4). The rationale for the choice of mixed methods as an approach for this research at a general level was because of its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Creswell, 2014). At a procedural level, Creswell (2014) it is a useful strategy to have a more complete understanding of research problems/questions, such as the following:

1. Comparing different perspectives drawn from quantitative and qualitative data.
2. Explaining quantitative results with a qualitative follow-up data collection and analysis.
3. Developing a more complete understanding of changes needed for a marginalized group through the combination of qualitative and quantitative data over time.
4. Having a better understanding of the need for and impact of an intervention program through collecting both quantitative and qualitative data over time.

The type of mixed method is a convergent parallel design. The convergent mixed methods approach analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other (Creswell, 2014). The data analysis key assumption of this approach is that both qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information, often detailed views of participants qualitatively and scores on instruments quantitatively and, together, they yield results that should be the same (Creswell,
Validity of the design, using the convergent approach, should be based on establishing both quantitative validity and qualitative validity.¹

**Qualitative Instruments**

The qualitative instruments consisted of interview protocols for all participants at all three alternative schools, as developed by Kershaw and Blank (1993): (a) the protocol for teachers consisted of 10 open-ended interview questions and (b) questionnaires for students consisted of 15 open-ended questions and one life goal narrative. These questionnaires can be found in Appendix (A and B). Both open-ended questionnaires contained general information questions that pertained to how the participants perceived their present employment as a teacher or their enrollment as a student at their respective school compared to their previous school or schools.

**Quantitative Instruments**

The first quantitative instrument was the *Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn*. These strategies were developed by Brophy (1987). Motivation to learn is crucial for at-risk students who can be discouraged by constant lower-level drills and practice sessions that seem to focus on their shortcomings and repeated failures (Means & Knapp, 1991). In research conducted by Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), it is suggested that the greatest cause of student dropout may be the schools’ inability to effectively assist groups of students to learn (Robledo, 1989). According to Brophy (1983), “Motivation to learn in school means seeking to acquire the knowledge or skill that an academic activity is designed to develop, not merely getting the activity finished or doing the minimum necessary to meet requirements” (p. 200). With a focus on the academic, Martin and Dowson (2009) concluded that high-quality

¹ The threat to validity may or may not be attributed to the small sample size of the participant populations. Interpretation of the data in the convergent approach will be written in the data analysis in Chapter 4 to determine the validity of the construct for the quantitative data of the qualitative themes matching.
interpersonal relationships in students’ lives contribute to their academic motivation, engagement, and achievement. Peart and Campbell (1999) found that at-risk students perceived the ability of teachers to motivate students as an effective teacher characteristic important in their lives, as well as an important factor contributing to the success of their academic achievement and overall school performance.

The Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn survey questionnaire was developed by Brophy (1987) for a study entitled Synthesis of Research on Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn. This survey consisted of 33 Likert-type questions for students and teachers to self-report by circling the number 5 if always true and descending to number 1 if he or she considered the question to be sometimes to never true. The questionnaire was divided into three motivational components, of which two were suggested by Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002): (a) self-efficacy and (b) intrinsic interest. These two components are among many found in social cognitive models of motivation. An important assumption of social cognitive models of motivation is that motivation is not a stable trait of an individual, but is more situational, contextual, and domain-specific (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). For the purposes of this study, the questionnaire focused on three components: (a) self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic interest and (c) teaching strategies that stimulate motivation to learn. The questionnaires for students and teachers can be found in Appendix C and D).

Self-efficacy: Eleven questions (1-11) the components of which were related to developing self-efficacy and students’ motivation to learn: (a) supportive environment: an organized classroom as an effective learning environment that includes encouraging students, patiently supporting their learning efforts, and allowing them to feel comfortable taking intellectual risks without fear of being criticized for making mistakes; (b) appropriate level of
challenge: providing tasks that are optimally motivated by tasks that allow students to achieve high levels of success when they apply reasonable effort; (c) meaningful learning objectives: selecting academic activities for students that teach some knowledge or skill that is worth learning either in its own right or as a step toward a higher objective; (d) variety of strategies: attempts to not use a particular strategy so much that it loses its effectiveness because it is used too often or too routinely; (e) program for success: preparing students for new learning by beginning instruction at their appropriate learning level so they can adjust without feeling too confused or frustrated; (f) goal setting and performance appraisal: assist students in learning to set and commit to goals that are near, specific and challenging rather than too easy or too hard, and to provide feedback and help students use an appropriate standard for judging performance (to compare it with own previous progress rather than with performance of peers; (g) teacher helps student to recognize linkages between effort and outcome: enable students to portray their efforts as an investment, which will produce knowledge or skill development and thus empower them, rather than risking their failure or embarrassment; (h) provide remedial socialization: use performance contracts and mastery learning principles with students; (i) offer rewards for improved performance: in addition to grades, included social rewards such as privileges, praise, and opportunities to go places or do things with teacher; (j) structure appropriate competition: depersonalize the competition and emphasize the content being learned rather than who wins or loses; and (k) call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities: help students see academic activities not as imposed demands to be resisted, but rather as enabling opportunities to be valued. Self-efficacy is typically assessed using self-report questionnaires (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).
**Intrinsic Motivation:** The intrinsic motivation section of the survey consisted of 10 questions (12-21) with the following components: (a) adapt task to student interest: use a variety of examples or activities, incorporated content that students find interesting or activities that they find enjoyable to accomplish curriculum objectives whenever possible; (b) include novelty/variety elements: make sure assignments are not boring to students; (c) allow choices or autonomous decisions by offering students alternative ways to meet requirements and opportunities to exercise autonomous decision making and creativity in determining how to organize their time and effort as long as it is within the constraints imposed by the instructional objectives; (d) provide opportunities for students to respond actively by providing them with opportunities to participate in projects, experiments, role-playing, simulations, educational games, and creative applications that coincide with what is being taught; (e) provide immediate feedback to student responses or opportunities for automatic feedback features that are built into programmed learning and other “self-correcting” materials as well as into computerized learning programs; (f) allow students to create finished products by assigning meaningful tasks that are not just subparts of a larger entity, so students can experience a satisfying sense of accomplishment when they finish; (g) include fantasy or stimulation elements, such as imagination elements in lessons that will engage students’ emotions or allow them to experience events vicariously, by incorporating modest simulation activities into everyday instruction; (h) incorporate game-like features into exercises by transforming ordinary assignments into “test yourself” challenges, puzzles, or brain teasers that require students to solve problems, avoid traps, or overcome obstacles to reach goals or to identify the goal itself and develop a method for reaching it; (i) include higher-level objectives and divergent questions by engaging students in questioning that addresses higher cognitive levels (application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation)
and encourage them to make sense of what they are learning by processing it actively, paraphrasing it, and relating it to their prior knowledge and experience; and (j) provide opportunities to interact with peers by arranging interaction through whole-class activities scheduled around debate, role-play, or simulations that include follow-up activities that permit students to work together in pairs or small groups to tutor one another, discuss issues, or develop suggested solutions to problems.

**Teacher Strategies for Stimulating Student Motivation to Learn:**

The teacher strategies for stimulating student motivation included 12 components (questions 22-33). These components are: (a) model interest in learning and motivation to learn by sharing with students interest in books, articles or mentioning application of the subjects to everyday living, the local environment, or current events; (b) communicate desirable expectations and attributions about student motivation to learn by routinely projecting expectations concerning students’ learning as meaningful and applicable to real life situations; (c) minimize students’ performance anxiety during learning activities by promoting more emphasis on learning than on evaluating performance; (d) project intensity by preparing students by telling them that the material deserves close attention, either by saying so or by using rhetorical devices (slow pacing, step by step presentation with emphasis on key words or concepts when introducing new material; (e) project enthusiasm by presenting student topics or assignments in ways that suggest they are interesting or worthwhile by identifying reasons they should have for finding the topic meaningful and then communicating those reasons while teaching; (f) introduce task interest or appreciation by eliciting student appreciation for an activity by noting its connections with things that students already recognize as interesting or important, by mentioning applications of the knowledge or skills to be learned, or by specifying
challenging or exotic aspects that students can anticipate; (g) introduce curiosity or suspense by putting students into an active information processing or problem-solving mode by posing questions or doing “set ups” that introduce curiosity or suspense elements that motivate them to engage in the activity in order to answer some question, resolve an ambiguity; (h) induce dissonance or cognitive conflict by allowing students to think that they know everything there is to know about a subject and then pointing out unexpected aspects by calling attention to unusual or exotic elements, exceptions to general rules, or challenging them to solve the mystery that underlies a paradox; (i) make abstract content more personal, concrete, or familiar by, when text is too abstract or sketchy, elaborating by filling in sufficient detail to enable students to visualize what is being described and explain it in their own words; (j) induce students to generate their own motivation to learn by having students list their own interest in particular topics or activities; (k) state learning objectives and provide advanced organizers by stimulating student motivation to learn through introducing activities, stating their objective and Preparing students to get more out of lectures, films, or reading assignments by clarifying what teachers want them to concentrate on as they process information, and (l) model task-related thinking and problem solving by teaching students by showing them what to do and thinking out loud as they demonstrate.

Participants in the Study

The participants in this study were recruited and selected by using what some researchers call “purposeful sampling.” Purposeful sampling is used when random sampling is not realistic. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). Patton (1990) argues that, “The logic and power of purposeful
sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those cases which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169).

Due to the exploratory nature of the research questions, and the number and complexity of factors contributing to student attitudes in participating in research, this study was done using a case study format (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The five students selected from each school to take part in this study were chosen by purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). To maximize the verbal information that could be obtained, students were chosen who did not seem hesitant to speak (Peterson-Beeton, 2007). This concept seemed appropriate with these alternative school students because volunteer participants could be selected according to their willingness to participate. This also guaranteed their personal commitment to comply throughout the duration of the two-and-a-half week study. There were 10 participants from each of the three schools: five teaching staff and five students,

**Characteristics of the Three Alternative High School Participants**

**School One-Fairfax Alternative Learning Center**

A total of 10 participants were selected from the Fairfax Learning Center alternative high school in Kansas City, Kansas. There were five Caucasian teachers (two males and three females) and five students. Table 1 shows the summary of teacher participant characteristics for School Two. Table 2 shows the summary of student participant characteristics for School Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject Matter Taught</th>
<th>Experience at School Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Computer-English</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Computer-Math &amp; Health</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Computer-Social Studies</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Computer- Various Subjects</td>
<td>1 semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Computer-Science</td>
<td>1 semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School One: Summary of Student Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity/ Race</th>
<th>Reason for Current Alternative School Placement</th>
<th>Time at Alternative School</th>
<th>Future GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>18 BF</td>
<td>Credit Recovery – Complete the credits needed to graduate on time</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>18 BM</td>
<td>To finish getting credits to get high school diploma</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Engineering In Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>18 BM</td>
<td>Behavior reasons</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>18 BF</td>
<td>Because I was behind on my high school credits for graduation</td>
<td>1 ½ years</td>
<td>Dental Hygiene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>18 BF</td>
<td>I got kicked out of school in 9th grade - need to make up credits</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Registered Nurse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Two: DeLaSalle Alternative Charter High.

A total of 10 participants were selected from DeLaSalle, the alternative charter high school in Kansas City, Missouri. They were comprised of five teaching staff and five students. Table 3 describes the teacher participant characteristics, and Table 4 describes the student participant characteristics.

Table 3

School Two: Summary of Research: Teacher Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject Matter Taught</th>
<th>Experience teaching at School One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English/Credit Recovery</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Print Shop</td>
<td>5 years &amp; 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1 semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 ½ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

School Two: Summary of Research: Student Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Reason for enrolling in DeLaSalle Charter Alternative High School</th>
<th>Time at School</th>
<th>Future GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>HM</td>
<td>For the reason that no other school would take me.</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>This school is better for me. I can work at my own “paste.” At the other school, I wasn’t getting the right understanding.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Cosmetology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Because the school I went to last year closed.</td>
<td>1 year-I am a senior</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>WM</td>
<td>I came to this school for less violence and more opportunities.</td>
<td>1 semester</td>
<td>Conservation Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Kansas City School “wourbaed”</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Chef</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Three: Middle College Alternative High School

The Middle College is located on the Ozarks Technical Community College campus. A total of 10 participants were selected from the Middle College alternative high school in Springfield, Missouri. They included five Caucasian teachers (two males and three females), three of whom were dual teaching for the college, and five students. Table 5 shows the summary of teacher participant characteristics for School Three. Table 6 shows the summary of student participant characteristics for School Three.

Table 5

School Three Summary of Teacher Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject Matter Taught</th>
<th>Experience at School Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Diesel Engines</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 6

School Three Summary of Student Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Reason for Current Alternative School Placement</th>
<th>Time at Alternative School</th>
<th>Future GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>WF</td>
<td>To get away from high school setting and to try something new.</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Cop (Police Officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>WM</td>
<td>I wasn’t successful at a normal high school.</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Diesel Mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BM</td>
<td>I thought it would be a good chance to do better on school work and also earn college credit</td>
<td>1 Semester</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Great program to start on college early. Dad found this school for me.</td>
<td>1 Semester</td>
<td>re-school teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>WM</td>
<td>I came here because I wasn’t going to graduate.</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Diesel Mechanic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures

Permission was granted by the University of Kansas to conduct this study during the fall of 2011, as approved by the Human Subjects Committee (HSCL). Each of the three alternative high schools was contacted by this researcher for permission to conduct this study at their respective school sites. Participants were issued an adult informed consent statement to sign as their agreement to be a volunteer participant in this study. Student participants under the age of 18 were issued a parent-guardian informed consent statement to be taken home for their parent’s signature granting them permission to participate. Students who were 18 or older could sign their own adult informed consent statement. Upon the return of all official consent forms with the appropriate signatures, the research data collection was initiated.

The investigations for all three alternative high schools began between the dates of November 28, 2011 and February 1, 2012. The researcher collected data at De LaSalle Alternative Charter High School in the mornings from November 28 through December 21,
2011, at Fairfax Learning Center during mornings or afternoons from November 28 through December 16, 2011, and at the Middle College from January 20, 2012 through February 1, 2012.

The teacher motivation survey was given to teachers to complete on an independent basis. The student motivation survey was administered by the researcher with each individual student. The process allowed each student to have time to ask questions regarding clarification on any question asked on the survey. This survey was supervised by the researcher to allow each student the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire. In order to assist each student, the researcher read each question on the questionnaire and explained its meaning in detail so that each student would be able to think of, or visualize, at least one of their current teachers who came to mind. Space was available for comments if students wanted to provide an example or further explain. The student surveys were collected when each student finished completing the survey. Standard Deviation and mean scores were the analysis method used for analyzing the Teacher and Student Motivation to Learn survey. The teachers and students used the same survey.

A 10-question interview questionnaire was distributed to teachers to complete independently. The questions to be addressed by the teacher participants at each of the three schools can be found in (see Appendix A). The researcher administered the 15-question interview questionnaire to students, as mentioned in the research design section. Each student participant from all three schools was allowed one hour from class to participate. If more days were needed, permission was granted for extended time out of class to complete the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Field Notes from interviews with administrators, teachers, and students were recorded by the researcher as observational data. The observational data were used to help interpret the
nature of the challenges about which the students and teachers spoke in their interviews (Kennedy, 2009).

Conclusion

This convergent parallel mixed-methods study design was chosen as a comprehensive approach to understand the perceptions of multiple stakeholders committed to equity and excellence in the learning environment of nontraditional schooling for students at risk of failure and for those in students who have been marginalized. The qualitative instruments allowed students’ as well as teachers’ voices in order to compare teachers’ and students’ perceptions on the dimensions of effective learning environments. Deschenes, Tyack and Cubin (2001) suggested that historical perspectives on schools and students who don’t fit them is a “mismatch” between the structure of schools and the social, cultural, or economic backgrounds of students identified as problems. The two quantitative surveys provided data used to analyze the school staff’s perceptions on how well their school fits their students. The intention of the study design was to promote an approach different from a fully quantitative study used in studies emphasizing a performance-based over a mastery performance approach to the teaching and learning process.
CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the qualitative perceptions of the classroom goal structures and value beliefs of teachers and students at three diverse alternative high schools. Qualitative motivation, rather than quantitative, is defined in terms of how teachers and students think, including their perceptions, interpretations, and patterns of self-regulation. The qualitative view of motivation maintains that teachers and students process information from their environment in terms of salient goals and values. The following data represent teacher responses to the 10-question open-ended survey questionnaire described in Chapter 3. Student data present the student response to the 15-question open-ended questionnaire. Given the independent nature of each alternative high school and the small sample populations, it was possible to interview teacher and student participants from each of the schools to identify themes at School One, School Two, and School Three, respectively. The themes are presented in a portrait of each teacher and collectively for the students at each school. The teacher portraits are an attempt to capture their voice and perceptions on how their roles contribute to the success of students, influence their motivation as learners, and support their intellectual and emotional development.

The student portraits are presented as a collective voice describing their experience and their confidence in the school and staff, as providing the opportunity for academic success and enabling engagement and motivation to learn. Some individual expressions voice a difference in perspective from the group. For each of the three schools, a summary of the major themes portrayed in the teachers’ and students’ portraits is discussed.
School One

For School One, a dropout-prevention program, data are presented for the teacher responses to the 10-question open-ended survey questionnaire and from the response portion of the Teacher Motivation to Learn survey instrument. Located on the far northeast side of the city, the school provides the only opportunity for its student population to recover lost credits. Again, the school is operating under Greenbush, an outsourced management company contracted by the school district to serve students who are referred through its Student Services Department as at risk of failure to graduate and to provide the computerized curriculum and teaching staff. The school site, a non-traditional facility, is one that previously had been used for students at risk and staffed with a school principal who was selected from an assistant principal pool of candidates, but now is being used again under Greenbush leadership.

It is pretty typical for students to complain about the school lunch menu, as lunch is prepared by one of the nearby school district’s food service kitchens, but not very many are conspicuously absent from the dining hall area during their lunch period. One ready observation is the lively and jovial student conversations taking place in very limited space during lunch. Beyond their many personal problems, the students seem to perceive the school and the lunch room in particular as their place, an accepting community.

The district executive director in charge of student services oversees the Greenbush school director and the credit recovery program, to assist with students exhibiting a frequent display of noncompliant social behavior, as follow up on specific students with respect to parental concerns, and in keeping the communication lines open with the school district administration.
The purpose of this dropout prevention program is credit recovery. Often, unfortunately, alternative schools are faced with having to select many teachers and other support staff who do not fit the need, just to fill vacancies. A variety of displaced teachers settle for employment needed just to maintain employment before their retirement. This is the case for some teachers at School One. For example, T1 is a case in point, and many teachers have faced similar situations when school districts need to make budgetary cuts, or recruit displaced teachers to fill vacancies.

**Teacher 1: Teachable Moments**

T1 lost her previous job as an elementary librarian due to budget cuts. She previously taught at a rural 2A high school and a Junior College. Her experience has been quite impressive in roles such as lecturer, assignment designer; in addition, she was a facilitator and evaluator. She also pointed out that teachers in the small town were family friends of many students and marinating academic standards was a priority for many. Students were involved in activities that teachers sponsored. The structure and tone of this school goes against the grain of her experience as she stated:

Most of these students are here because… parent, court system, foster care made them. We are an educational team working together to best meet student needs. It’s not about academic excellence as much as earning credits for diploma. Basic structure consists of classroom guidelines–administrative support–in-school and out-of-school suspension. Parents are receptive to our mandated phone calls to them.

Overall themes for T1 were: (a) forced placement (b) earning credits and not about academic excellence.

During my informal interview, the program director did express that hiring staff from an interview does not always provide the kind of information that leads to the right fit. However, Teacher One’s perceptions and actions have played a very important and supportive role for students at risk of academic failure. As she stated, “The computer program reduces a lot of
anxiety, but if a student asks for or appears to need help, I do my best to find a way to help them or pair them with a study buddy.” Her attitude was a vivid display of care, and how good teachers consider student needs a priority regardless of their own concerns.

The computerized curriculum is a standardized program, but there is opportunity for supplemental hands-on assignment tasks that is teacher-facilitator generated. Teacher One does not have to select additional academic activities, so she did not feel the need or opportunity to select meaningful learning objectives. Although many teachers express similar views to her statement that “this is a set curriculum and I do not have the ability to modify,” most do have the flexibility but choose not to allocate the time for extra lessons or supplemental materials because most students indicate a preference for computer assignments.

Theme (b) points to the program structure as designed to help students earn credits and not to achieve academic excellence. If T1 perceives her role as minimized because the students want to earn credits from the computer driven curriculum, then it also limits the students’ opportunity for academic excellence. For example, she notes, “It is a constant push for them to earn credits.” In addition, this may be a missed opportunity to align her classroom goals with her students’ goals for mastery. Alignment enables the students, with a support structure designed to enhance their self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, to achieve academic excellence, but she responded, “They are placed in the classes they need to graduate. Some English classes are not at appropriate levels due to language learners or special needs.”

One of the main purposes of School One is to allow the students to experience success by achieving academic progress toward credit completion. Among faculty members, consensus on the value of this schools’ approach to educating students may be evident, but clear signs of a subtle dissent can sometimes be evident. For example, struggling language learners and special
needs students could benefit tremendously with a support structure for providing reinforcement task activities at their appropriate challenge level for homework. However, T1 did not equivocate in this instance. Instead, she expressed empathy when stating, “If a student is not progressing, I will work with them to see if I can fill an educational gap.” She exhibited a positive and caring attitude that was supportive and made student needs a priority when she vowed to “use tools from my experience to find solutions.” This represented a nugget of wisdom that career educators intuitively draw on. She continued, “Although it is sometimes hard with the grammar and literature, the writing assignments can be easily linked to skills they will use as adults.” She added, “I am constantly using teachable moments to point out appropriate conduct in the work force.” Her words express her commitment to helping students see value and meaning in school as relevant in the workforce. This provides them with awareness for developing a future time perspective in the world of work, and that is her reward for excellence in teaching.

Another example of how Teacher 1 uses teachable moments is her ability to introduce creativity in a computerized lab’s programmed curriculum that is better known as the “Moodle.” She emphasizes her awareness that the academic activities have instrumental value to the students because most have already seen how hard it is to get a job without a diploma. Looking for a way to address a thoughtful concern for students’ exposure to a reward system that only “emphasizes the credit certificates posted in the lobby area,” and for creativity in stimulating instructional strategies, the “Moodle” assignment fits the criteria for creativity; she stated, “Sometimes I let them work as a group for a research project.” This displays her professionalism and commitment, but also a subtle combination of caring for the students and a criticism of the constraints placed on her as a teacher. It also shows how teachers do have the ability to provide
supplemental learning activities that can support learning objectives contributing to academic excellence for students regardless of their risk factors. More importantly, students may also benefit, to their surprise, by experiencing a spark of enthusiasm and excitement that can come from the intellectual rigor in research investigations.

Teacher one demonstrates what working together as a team looks like. It doesn’t always mean working and planning together in a group, but can be reflected in the novelty of activities that stimulate learning not by accident or a passing of time, but in a deep personal commitment exhibited that is quite intentional. This could be professionalism that comes from her values in doing what she probably feels will meet the long-term needs of her students. An example that also reflects her values lies in a “no-nonsense” philosophical perspective for computer classroom instruction. She specifically noted that, “I actually, usually, try to suppress social interaction- I motivate to work hard and assist where needed.” In essence, T1 characterized her relationship with the students at risk as “good” and that, “our relationship has orally developed over the course of the semester.” This may imply that verbal confrontations or arguments are diminished or occurring with less frequency. Her students must also know that her “no-nonsense” perspective includes, as she has stated, “I don’t consider discussing outside issues in class as important.” The administration established a school policy that requires all teachers to make at least 10 phone calls to parents per week to encourage school/home communication. Teacher 1 responded with a comment that indicated that teachers were not in agreement that the phone calls really worked or made a difference.

**Teacher 2   Zero Tolerance**

T2 teaches math and electives half days and shares the other half day position with T4 who has taught a variety of elective classes at School one for the past five months. He
mentioned that all of his teaching experience has been in alternative schools and he has had experience using the computerized curriculum for two years. T2 had previously worked for the Greenbush organization and was rehired for this job. He said:

Teachers have to play more roles: social worker, counselor, and parent—have to be very strong classroom managers because students are easily distracted and have trouble respecting authority. Teacher expectations for students are: show up, work, and behave. Other schools offer more choices and freedom—discipline—zero tolerance—very few parents take initiative in their child's learning.

Overall themes for T2 were: (a) low teacher self-efficacy and multiple teacher roles, (b) low student motivation and excessive negative student behaviors, especially discipline problems

Low teacher self-efficacy, theme (a), plays a major role in teacher behaviors and may have negative effects on student achievement. Teacher 2 feels overwhelmed with his inability to help all of his students and wants assistance from a paraprofessional so he can have time to work or engage with his students one-on-one. In fact, he requested a paraprofessional in every class. He told the building administrator that his students become bored and cause discipline problems and things quickly get out of control. The fact that adding staff was not an option because of budgetary reasons and feeling he was being questioned about why he was having discipline problems in the first place, his energy was not focused on the process of teaching and learning.

When teachers have experience in regular educational settings rather than a setting as in School One, most prefer the regular setting. This is the case for T2 when he points out that “I am doing the teaching in a regular classroom; but in a computer class, I am assisting the students and the computer does the teaching.” On the other hand, T2 did disclose his views about teaching in a computer class by striving “to help the students learn and succeed at their own pace while providing a safe, friendly, and comfortable environment.” Given his classroom disciplinary problems, it seems that there is a contradiction when he claims to promote
environmental amenities enabling student success. Maybe he is voicing ideals in spite of what is actual practice.

As a half-time teacher at this school, T2 is not an exception because all teachers are expected to perform similar roles on an informal basis in a small school with a nurturing environment. Since he has worked for the management company for a while, he may be used to the zero-tolerance policy and therefore is unsympathetic to students who are neither focused on classwork nor well behaved. Teacher 2 is at a disadvantage because he has to leave for another school each day and does not have adequate time to meet with other teachers who may be having similar problems with certain students. In some instances, teachers who transition between schools can prefer one teaching assignment over the other or, for good reasons, may be unable to make an adequate investment of time in one or both schools.

Theme (b), low student motivation can be a reflection of oppositional behaviors and can include defiance of authority. If Teacher 2 communicates a message of low expectations for student achievement, then negative behaviors may result.

T2 does not mention the weekly mandated phone calls to parents and doesn’t provide any indications that he reaches out to them. Some teachers “get it,” meaning that they know parental relationships between school and home do not magically happen; they have to be cultivated by teachers and administrators reaching out first in building trust. Some teachers do dread making the phone calls because some parents of at risk students aren’t as open to receive communication from teachers if their previous experiences have not been positive. It can be an arduous process. Also it’s not an uncommon tendency for teachers to overlook parental needs that go unnoticed by school staff. The pedagogical challenges of teaching between two schools, as portrayed by T2,
may be overshadowing his commitment to responding to the whole child’s strengths and abilities.

**Teacher 3  Student Advocate**

T3 was recruited by the administration after his previous work history for the Greenbush Management Company. He described his previous experience with the company as being similar to a quasi-administrative assistant in charge of discipline. He was deferred to as the quasi-administrative assistant/social studies teacher because he was perceived as the male staff in the building to whom teachers could send students for problematic non-compliant behavior. He also described himself as a person who was able to defuse the conflict between students or de-escalate a situation too combative or potentially volatile. The advantage for students was to allow them space to “cool down” and an opportunity to reflect on how an inappropriate action or reaction created a situation that could have been avoided. He compared other schools as different because here:

We don't kick students out of class unless they are totally out of control. Students don't believe in themselves. We don't get upset when we are yelled at, cursed, or a student refuses to work. Teachers redirect and remotivate students. Teachers and parents have to work as a team.

Overall themes for T3 were: (a) Low student and teacher efficacy: discipline, (b) Low motivation

Low student and teacher efficacy, Theme a, surfaces as students begin to feel a lack of communication because the lines are not open. T3 expressed himself as one who is eager to listen to students over-reacting to a situation without proper information to be fair to students and give them the benefit of the doubt. He voiced his candid comments:

“I believe that every student should be listened to and heard from. In our society today, we listen but we don’t hear or we hear but we’re not listening. Students need teachers to hear what they are saying as well as listen to how they are saying it, whatever it is.”
Spoken as a teacher of social studies and a student advocate, T3 supported his comments with a scenario that occurred between him and one of his colleagues whom he chose to identify as Mr. Tough Guy. He explained how Mr. Tough Guy was complaining about how rude, mean, and verbally aggressive his students were to him in his class. He constantly had to call the administration for support. One of his students actually called him a bad name and refused to sit down where he had asked her to sit. Power struggles, a disgusted T3 acknowledged, should be avoided at all cost, and the teacher has the responsibility of de-escalating it.

T3 may be demonstrating his previous role as a conflict resolution actor advocating for what he truly believes is an educator’s duty or responsibility, especially in an at-risk program. Some students come to school with lots of already accumulated “baggage” in the first place. Some of the advice T3 gave to Mr. Tough Guy was quite appropriate for working with students at risk. For example, T3 gave him three suggestions: (a) that he build up a tolerance to student cursing, (b) implement the re-direct policy to demonstrate the appropriate response to a verbal assault, and (c) conduct a role play reversal between the teacher and student. T3 said he felt angry at the way this teacher responded to the students and very disappointed in the lack of compassion that every teacher needs. Finally, T3 reminded him that these students have been yelled at and cursed out routinely, and they know when an adult is angry and use it against him. This suggests that teachers have to earn students’ trust by respecting them even though they may not show respect in return. Low student and teacher efficacy are often the result of both feeling exhausted and a lack of needed support. Teachers want administrative support they feel will enable them to exert a positive influence in the learning environment and working with students. Students need support to feel listened to. This is not the case for T3. In fact; he is highly confident and appears to have a positive response from students as well as from some teachers.
Every school faculty needs an encourager for a colleague who can reassure teachers and model. T3 stated, “Behavior, if the behavior does not change the academics will fail.”

Theme (b), low motivation, and theme (a) low efficacy, can be the result of the other. In other words, they don’t have an inverse relationship, but a reciprocal one in certain instances. His motivation enables him to practice what he believes is important in working with students and to “listen.” Unfortunately, when he gets discouraged, intrinsic motivation may dwindle. His belief in working with teachers as well as students did not specifically mention teachers and parents working as a team for mandated phone calls.

Teacher 3 portrayed himself as an advocate for at-risk students primarily as a means to an outcome. As he stated, “I …re-motivate students …the academics will fail if behavior doesn’t change.”

Teacher 4 Can You Hear Me?

T4 worked for five years as a para in a self-contained, behavior-disordered school and had three years of teaching experience at the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF). Her full-time job is split into half-time at School One and half-time at PRTF. She expressed frustration because:

This is all online and I feel I do not get to teach, just keep records and babysit behaviors. A few teachers are here because they needed a job and didn't know what they were getting into. I've had lots of experience with behaviors of students with mental illness, but these students don’t have mental illness, just lazy, feel entitled, and disrespectful. The goal here is to get them out and at other schools is for them to learn. Very little progress until recently. Now, at the end of the semester, students are struggling to earn credits.

Overall themes for T4 are: (a) Low teacher self-efficacy: frustration, and (b) Low teacher motivation
Self-efficacy beliefs are self-reflections that include an individual’s thoughts and feelings to make sense of their experience in this school setting. Self-reflection is a person’s judgment about his or her capacity to accomplish the task, in T4’s case teaching, and whether or not she can motivate herself in the face of adversity. T4 is frustrated with her teaching position, the computer lab classroom format, and communication problems with the administration regarding her shared assignment, especially, the split teaching schedule.

T4’s low efficacy, Theme (a), reflects her frustration with the shared teaching position with T2 and the unaccommodated split schedule between schools. T2’s and T4’s shared position was intended to share the same students on the same days; but their schedule assignments did not allow the days to be arranged in this manner. Instead, T4 and T2 were assigned to each school at opposite times, T4 on mornings at School One and T2 on mornings at other school. For example, T4 was always at her other half-time school in the mornings when T2 was in School One in the afternoon, and the reverse was true for T2.

T4 had made a suggestion to the administration that she thought was a simple solution to the problem, but was told by the administrator, “We are not changing any schedule. I told you all last week that we would not be looking at any schedule change (Speaking very loud).” She said, “I felt humiliated that the administrator would raise her voice to me in front of my peers; and, I felt a sense of wonderment as to why administrator 1, the school director, would ask me for my input if she was not going to listen to me.” T4 described an email that she received from administrator 2, the school district supervisor, that read, “Attached you will find the schedule for the year. Look it over and see if there are any mistakes.” T4 sent a reply to his email:

“I see that I will never see Group 1 students and T2 will never see Group 2 students. If T2 and I were to flip-flop our Tuesdays and Wednesdays- problem solved. I have the same problem at the other school and both problems would be solved without changing the buildings’ schedules.”
T4 voiced frustration about being admonished by the director for doing what she was asked by administrators, who urged her to discuss the situation. Toward the end of the first semester, T4 was told that she and T2 will have a schedule change so that they are at one school for the entire quarter at the same time and then switch at spring break. This way both will teach all groups next semester and won’t have to keep changing the schedules. T4 voices that she felt both satisfaction and frustration toward the administration:

“I felt satisfaction that finally it was being recognized that I might be able to figure out a solution to a problem that would have benefited both schools and T2. I also felt frustrated that the recognition was too little, too late, and that T2 and I had to spend each quarter at different schools and they didn’t use my solution this year.”

In some instances, one problem can be culpable or the cause of many. For example, T4 may feel that the lines of communication were not open and, therefore, did not avoid problems or extinguish others before they surface in the unforeseeable future. This could be the root of an Achilles’ heel or vulnerable spot for T4’s issue with the building administration and its effect on her other concerns, but not necessarily.

Computer labs are fairly common in school settings for dropout prevention programs because of the user friendly avenue for students to recover the necessary credits to satisfy graduation requirements fairly quickly, compared to traditional instruction approaches that may have been previously unsuccessful for students at risk. Students like the independent style of learning in the computer lab, and T4 does not. Her comments about not feeling that she gets to teach the students is synonymous with her remarks; “just keep records and babysit behaviors” support this perception. It is apparent that student discipline is foremost in her mind, but the comments could suggest unintended negativity. However, most teacher participants corroborate T4’s perception on student disciplinary concerns. The discontent she expresses with the
employment location and the computer lab environment may cloud her motivation to perform the teaching duties she enjoys.

Theme (b) low motivation is a reflection of T4’s frustration with her perception of the computer lab. For example, she explained her view of the computer lab as maintenance of behaviors and record keeper, but the students’ goal was to get credits and graduate.

T4 is used to working at the other school in a quiet facility with 3 or 4 students under clinical observation, and very minimal problem behaviors for 4 hours daily. She referred to the students at this school, her regular class, “I actually get to teach in my regular class.” Some teacher participants feel the social component in a dropout prevention program is an important strategy to promote, but T4 stated that she felt just the opposite because, “I have to squelch the social component and motivate them to get work done.” T4 was having difficulty perceiving the importance of allowing students to discuss issues outside of schoolwork in the computer lab. For example, she stated,

“At the right time students need to discuss their lives outside the subject, but when some do not ever stop socializing, and are disruptive to peers trying to learn there is very little for me to do. We cannot ask for the disruptive students to be removed from class—that decision is for the administrators to decide. When I pressure students to begin work, they become vindictive (targeting and ganging up on me, the teacher) and more disrespectful.”

T4 also voiced frustration in the breakdown of communication from the administration she felt is necessary to support her belief that she can perform her teaching tasks. This also may contribute to her feeling less motivated than otherwise is evident at her regular school. T4 did not mention parental involvement.

Teacher 5  Frustrated–Too Much, Too Little, Too Late

T5, a science teacher, was a part of the alternative school program staff when the dropout prevention program was housed in the old three-story brick elementary school building last year.
She expressed frustration because she felt less support from the administration now, less consistency in discipline policy, more demands on staff time, not enough plan time, and not enough time to eat. T5 compared the support she felt with a district building principal and a supportive administrative assistant at the old school site to the way she felt now. She stated:

“I’m more afraid–have less choice in classrooms. Teachers facilitate rather than prepare lessons. Good people, mixed qualifications–students are street smart, history of school failure, behavior issues; more are unmotivated or afraid of failure. Less consistency and less effective… Reason is lack of constant follow through. Parents can help by encouraging work at home instead of hindering by attacking staff verbally without doing enough inquiry.”

Overall themes for T5 are: (a) low teacher self-efficacy, and (b) teacher motivation: discipline.

Several factors can enhance or diminish a teacher’s self-efficacy, such as the feeling of personal gratification that comes from performing tasks well; a positive school climate and open lines of communication between teachers and administrators; and good working relationships built on respect among colleagues, administrators, students, and parents. Low or diminished teacher self-efficacy can result if teachers feel any of these factors are not evident. T5 made a confession that may rest at the heart of other concerns and frustrations she feels as she stated,

“I no longer feel highly valued, as I once did with this same organization. I feel systematically discredited and undermined. I have started to understand domestic abuse victims. I need the money, but am ashamed of the extent to which I have allowed myself to be demeaned to keep my paycheck coming in.”

T5 was transferred from the previous dropout prevention site at the old elementary school and now does not realize her previous success. For example, she expressed a strong sense of personal gratification for her successes in working with extreme behavior problems and maintaining a calm classroom. In a scenario T5 discussed, the situation is different now regarding the discipline problems with students in her classroom. The two administrators meet with T5 to discuss how things are going, but she indicates that she felt like “a deer in the
headlights, but I must have mumbled something.” T5 noted that her success did not seem to impress the administrators. She suggested a need for student consequences for their actions because it may convince them to make better choices. However, the suggestion was not well received, causing her to respond negatively:

“I am frustrated by the lack of control in my classroom. I feel that I have all the responsibility for the behavior and none of the choices regarding consequences. Only one behavior plan is allowed and it is ineffective and not well received by any of the teachers.”

T5 does not feel personal gratification because her history of success with the most extreme behavior problems that she has experienced in the past does not seemed to be reaffirmed by the current administration. She indicated that one of the suggestions from the director was to build better relationships with her students. Open lines of communication within a school setting between administration, teachers, students and parents contribute to a positive school climate. T5 said that she told the director she was in agreement and was trying to do that, but she indicated, in silence, what she was thinking and feeling:

“I remember the surprise email reprimanding me for using games earlier in the year, even though the principal had approved the games and offered to pay for them. There were no gentle requests made that I no longer use them. I remember how unfair that felt, but stay polite. Since the article she gave me recommended games, I try one more time.”

T5 told the director that she gives examples of what is working and with whom. She stated,

“The article you gave me recommended games and puzzles. When I used games as rewards for getting lessons done, the students responded very positively. Discipline problems were down and attitudes were improving dramatically. Relationships were quickly shifting in a positive direction and more work was getting done. Is there any chance we could use them as a reward for those who get their work done? They would have to earn the game time, just as they did before. They could play the last few minutes of class.”

T5’s communication with the director seemed contradictory because she thought she was implementing the recommendation she was given to improve the relationships with her students,
but it was apparent that was not the case now. The nature of the other administrative demands overwhelmed her in trying to cooperate with the recommendations she was given for improving classroom discipline that didn’t seem to work.

Teacher motivation, Theme (b), or motivation is best addressed contextually. Good work relationships that are built on respect among colleagues, administrators, students, and parents can have a positive influence on human motivation. An emotion, for example frustration, can be explained as it relates to a specific cultural setting. The literature suggests teacher self-beliefs can enable one to exercise a measure of control over their attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions that affect how they behave and, subsequently, motivation. T5 is one of the teachers who is the most frustrated at the dropout prevention program and continues to feel devalued. She further explained that, “I was dismayed to receive an official reprimand by email, copied to upper level management, saying the director was reviewing the lunchroom rules with me.”

The district administrator visited T5’s classroom and she asked him, “Is it okay for them to leave me with the students while they heat their food and I eat a cold lunch?” She noticed that he seemed surprised by asking if what she said was true. This was a time for her to confide in him why she had a feeling of powerlessness and often doesn’t feel respected by an uncertified staff left in charge when the director is not available. T5 volunteered, “The teachers have to be subject to this. If respect for teachers was modeled for the students, they might get the idea.” She finally asked him, “What can I do to make this thing work? You know that there is no limit to the work I will do to do things right.” He replied, “I know that. That was never in question.” With sincerity, she expressed, “I was very successful at our other facility and have had an outstanding career.” The district administrator responded apologetically by saying, “I know you
have and I am sorry this is happening to you at this point in your career.” T5 said, “Thank you for saying that.”

It was an interesting visit from the district administrator because T5 discussed it as incredible, and her students responded differently to her after he left her classroom. She felt stronger and more confident, as she stated, “It was amazing how great it felt to be treated with such respect. It took me back to happier days.” T5 revealed a thought, “I don’t mention the day a district administrator answered the director’s call to my room.” A conversation with the district administrator had an impactful influence that contributed to her renewed confidence and her subsequent motivation.

The school is more than the facility inhabited by educators, students, and other support staff or where it’s located in the city, but the people inside who run the day-to-day organizational operations and who facilitate teaching and learning. These portraits arrest a nuanced moment in time. Teachers’ human imperfections and the dichotomy of cultures influence their perceptions and job performance. Collectively, these portraits should not suggest immunity, resistance to alternative programs; instead they provide envisage to what the myriad of explorations and examples to consider that connect school climate and student motivation to learn in any educational alternative setting.

**Key Points of School One Teacher Portraits**

There are three main areas of concern, not unique to School One, viewed from three perspectives. First, teacher motivation and self-efficacy of the teachers seem to be diminished resulting from miscommunications. Second, teachers are committed to teach students at risk, but preferred to be the teacher rather than a facilitator. Third, there was a need for professional
development for teachers to learn the importance of goal setting for the school, teachers, and students.

**School One Student Perspectives**

The overall student themes were: (a) self-efficacy, classwork is challenging sometimes; (b) intrinsic motivation, computers; (c) students feel teachers care and support staff help some. Self-Directed Learning’s three components: autonomy, competency, and belongingness are important for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Theme (a): All of the students expressed positive comments about the challenging tasks. Most felt the work was easy and others felt it was an appropriate challenge level because it was not too difficult. Theme (b): Intrinsic motivation was enhanced with the computerized curriculum. Students preferred the opportunity to progress at a self-paced rate. Theme (c): When teachers develop and maintain positive relationships with their students, they give the support their at-risk students need to succeed. One of the major roadblocks to the success of at-risk students is an external locus of control.

When students were asked how they felt about the school and courses they were taking, all of them responded that things were going well and the school was a good program. Students preferred the school for various reasons. S1, S2, and S4 said, “You see what credits you need or you take that class you are missing on your transcript to make up the credit.” The small school size made it easier to work at their own pace, and it was faster to make up credits. S5 specifically noted, "Because we work on computers at our own pace [sic]." The computerized curriculum made it convenient for students to engage in SRL. Students had control over their own learning and could progress as quickly as the effort they put forth. All of the students were
18 years of age and had made a choice to return to school to get the credits needed to complete the requirements for their high school diploma.

Students explained how they felt their teachers were different from their previous teachers at other schools. S2 said, “The teachers push you to do your work.” S3 and S5 felt, "Teachers want to bond with their students and they can focus on less students." S4 noted, "There [sic] more strict helping students graduate." None of the students named a particular teacher to whom he or she felt close, but S3 stated, “All my teachers are equally cared about.” Student responses were very supportive of teachers, and the students wanted to make sure they were successful in earning the needed credits. Sometimes students expressed more positive perceptions than teachers because they knew this was their last chance to get this opportunity. The other option may not be as desirable, getting a G.E.D. certificate (General Education Diploma or Development).

Two students felt there weren’t any major differences because they were all there for the same objective, to finish school, but S2 made a point of saying, “they are cool and everything but I keep my distance with some.” S3 said, “Relationships with my friends are very close and that we do stuff outside of school.” S5 said, “Their [sic] wild like any other high school, I don’t too much talk to them.” S5 was very focused on becoming a registered nurse and wanted to make sure she did not get distracted. Although the school is a separate facility, some students may still have had friends they associated with outside of school. These relationships may be adult level rather than old high school friends.

Students’ descriptions of the school guidance counselor were widely varied. For example, S1 and S5, respectively, stated, “Yes, it's only one, but barely get to interact with him.” S2 and S4 thought he was a good person, helpful, and especially at guiding the right path.” And
S3 said the school didn’t have a counselor. The school’s displaced counselor is a half-time position shared with the half-time special education teacher. Their shared position may alternate their schedule between mornings and afternoons during week. Students were aware that an appointment can be made in advance when there is a need to meet with the counselor.

Some students felt the principal is different from other principals and their response ranged from, “She alright [sic], could have a better attitude sometimes,” as stated by S2. S4 commented, “No, she's straight forward, I think she does a good job with the rules.” S3 said, “She is more conversative [sic], with the students.” S5 reported, “Yes, she's more concerned about us graduating and makes sure we come to school daily and stay focused.” The school’s program director is a Greenbush employee with a philosophy of why she runs the school like a business.

The students responded to whether they felt classwork and homework were challenging. S2 stated, “The class work is simple but sometimes challenging, but exceed when I ask for help.” S4 said, “Most of it I understand and can do very well; there is some work that is challenging.” S5 stated that, “it's not challenging as long as you stay focused and believe you can do it. Some of it is short, some is long, but it’s not hard.” Some students’ self-efficacy beliefs are that the academic tasks may be at an appropriate level for them, while others maybe not.

Most of the students responded “yes” or “sometimes” addressing their thoughts on whether teachers, counselor, or principal had helped them with their problems. S4 stated very confidently, “yes, I feel that they’ve helped me a lot and I’m glad I came to this school. S5 said, “School wise a little bit.” In my informal interview with the director, she mentioned all the at-risk students enrolled at the school have poor study skills, missing credits, social emotional
issues, and problems with needing daycare for their child or children. The positive responses from the students may also imply that many appreciate the support service available if needed.

All students were positive about their academic progress or their improvements made. For example, S2 and S4, respectively, noted that “My academic progress has increased because of my attendance,” and S4 admitted, “I would say I have really improved academically by coming to this school.” S5 was especially proud when she stated, “all of our work is on the computers, but I’ve been getting credits every week.” Student autonomy is supported by students who like working at their own pace to accomplish what they know they need to do.

Student compliments are noted: “I stay focused to get work complete; its uplifting, I’ve learned a lot since I’ve been here so I would say it was superior,” and one said, “Quick and easy!”

Students acknowledged their perceptions on the behavioral progress, and, in some cases, an explanation was provided to support the response, such as S2 who stated, “My behavioral progress has been at the same level because I know how to control myself.” However, S3 felt he was, “getting better.” S4 thought, “Behavior was not a problem for me,” but S5 honestly admitted that, “It changed. I’ve changed a lot seeing this school is my last and only option and I want to graduate.”

Students responded concerning their parents’ feelings about the school. S1 said, “They feel good. They think that it is a great chance for me to graduate on time.” S3 reported, “my parents feel that as long as I'm getting my high school diploma from a school their [sic] fine. It's a [sic] OK school.” S4 stated, “My momma thought it was a good idea for us to come here … she's glad we came.” S5 said, “My parent likes this school because it’s a smaller environment and I still get the opportunity to graduate. But now we barely discuss school.” In some
situations there are students who do not have parental support, such as S2, who was not living with his parents.

Students’ responses on what they liked most about the school and if there was anything they would change, did not differ much. Most liked the self-paced, computer-driven curriculum and catching up on missing credits so they could graduate. The only comments on what needed to be changed were the one-minute passing periods and what S1 said: “I like it at your own pace and my least is that their [sic] strict for nothing sometimes.”

The students at School One have a unique learning environment because all of their classes are taken on the computer with a teacher facilitator who assists them when they need help. These students do have one advantage because they are learning an important life skill. For example, each student is a self-directed learner autonomously working at his or her computer station. One of the most common responses when students are asked about SDL is working at their own pace with the option to work on their computer at home. They felt competent in managing the challenge level of each task activity in working towards completing their credits. Their feelings of belongingness were evidenced in their comments about feeling cared for and caring for all of their teachers in general. Teachers who consistently communicate the belief that all students have the ability to learn and succeed make a large difference to at-risk students. These students had a high sense of school community and appeared to be more bonded to the school than to their teachers. They had moderate attachment to the teachers but more commitment to the school, possibly because of their need to be there. In response to the question: What keeps you motivated in the class or school? the students said credits accumulate and being with peers.
Individualistic goal structures imply independence of goals among individuals (Ames & Ames, 1984). This is interpreted as meaning that all students are working on individual prescribed tasks, but such an interpretation is more akin to descriptions of an individualized curriculum that is critical to a definition of an individualistic goal structure. The students in School One are in a noncompetitive individualistic structure. They are focused on the task, and the effort in trying is perceived as the route to mastering the task. Students are not focused on questioning their ability, and the underlying presumption is that they can do it if they try. The task’s difficulty is based on perceptions of present goals relative to students’ prior achievements.

School Two

School Two is an alternative charter high school located in Kansas City, Missouri. The five teacher participants were selected from a total of twelve, and consisted of approximately 42% of the instructional staff. School Two is a charter school that provides choice for parents and their children. In Missouri, there are only two cities that have charter schools: Kansas City and St. Louis. School Two (DeLaSalle) is an Alternative Charter High School in Jackson County, converted from what was originally an alternative high school supervised by the local school district staff. School Two alternative high school serves between 150-200 students who, by exhibiting behaviors such as truancy, suspensions, and engaging in self-destructive behaviors, substance abuse, and promiscuous behaviors, are at risk of dropping out.

Since the early 1970s the alternative high school education center has provided students a personalized education, holistic services, and workforce development. The staff promotes the opportunities for experiential learning to help students focus on their possibilities, rather than the obstacles. Currently, the alternative high school has been transitioned from a district operated alternative high school to a tuition-free Charter Alternative High School serving students.
between the ages 14 and 20 years old. This charter alternative provides alternative education and behavioral health services onsite. Parents are a very active part of the school and communicate closely with the teachers and staff. The school’s Vision Statement states: We envision a community in which all young people achieve a quality education that fosters and stimulates their potential. Their School Mission states: The mission of School Two is to provide a holistic environment that offers students an opportunity to improve learning and life skills. The charter alternative high school has plans to expand their services and enrollment as a result of a $6.2 million capital campaign.

The curriculum is a combination of direct instruction, cooperative learning, and a computer-based accelerated credit recovery called Program Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO) designed for K-12. The senior seminar program is a requirement for graduation that helps students to investigate their college career options. The school has a student operated print shop that produces district and other printing requests. The five teacher participants are presented.

School Two Teacher 1 Compliance: Just Teaching Students to Think

Teacher 1 lost her previous job because of budget cuts in another district. However, she indicated that her entire teaching career had been devoted to teaching students at risk. She described the students in her classes and a building administration issue. There was a strong need for improved student academic performance and for tighter structure within the school. She stated her students were:

High-spirited, not always self-motivated…some bad choices…difficult things happen to them. The goals focus more on getting students prepared for the work world and less on college. Many parents are very involved…do what it takes to keep their child in school.

Overall themes for T1 are: (a) low student self-efficacy and (b) high teacher motivation,
Low student self-efficacy, Theme (a), may be exhibited through inappropriate classroom behavior. However, because of T1’s experience in working with students at risk, she understands that some poor choices students make can have negative effects on them. T1 described her science students as high-spirited and not always self-motivated and said a tighter structure is needed. In other words, student engagement is not as consistently focused on the learning tasks as desired. The school goals are focused more on getting students prepared for work than on college preparation. Perhaps the students lack the confidence in their academic ability to succeed in post-secondary education, or the issue may be that they have not been encouraged to pursue college. Parental involvement is visible and highly valued as a viable resource for support within the school.

During my interview with T1, she expressed a concern that the science department was out of compliance in handling the disposal of chemicals and the need for administration leaders to become informed on this matter. She has a background in industry work and is knowledgeable about the regulations for proper disposal of hazardous chemicals as a safety standard. She felt this issue in the science department needs to be brought into compliance with the regulation standards in industry. Therefore, she communicated this to the executive director. Her interest in addressing the problem became paramount for the protection of the school and her science class students.

High teacher motivation, Theme (b), results from personal interest and value beliefs within a context that can motivate, support and direct their behavior. The literature suggests the idea that there are multiple pathways in which to examine how different personal and contextual factors interact to generate different patterns of motivated behavior for teachers as well as for students. The use of organizational and management structures that encourage personal and
social responsibility to provide a safe, comfortable, and predictable environment is a design principle (Pintrich, 2003). In accordance, teachers can adapt general design principles to fit their goals and the affordances and constraints of the local instructional context and culture.

It is this principle that motivates T1 to be proactive in seeking the proper avenue to establish a process to bring the science department in compliance and to keep the students and local school environment safe, comfortable, and predictable. T1 explained that she knows the last thing the administration wants to hear is the need for money to take care of the problem, but “it is left up to the teacher to make sure that the administration understands that there may have to be some money spent to bring our school up to regulatory compliance.” Resource management involves thinking about how teams can allocate responsibilities to accomplish a task.

T1 met with the executive director, but a thought came to her: “The chemical storage is a mess!! Even if we get rid of some, our storage units are not up to par. Need to start getting rid of these first.” Now, she opened the conversation:

I’ve been looking over our chemical supplies and we definitely have some that we need to dispose of properly. We are going to need contact with someone who specializes in hazardous materials to come and help us get rid of the material.

He responded, “Do you know what kind of cost that will be for the school? I was under the impression, after talking with other school administrators in the area that you could take care of it without needing others.” Before responding, T1 said she was thinking that the other schools had help, since she knows some of the teachers and they have real chemistry labs, not just table space. Important thought: “Someone could get sick with the fumes that come off.” T1 then said, Well, there are some that probably could be taken care of if we had the right safety equipment. Most schools have fume hoods in their chemistry rooms to help remove harmful fumes that usually occur when working with the chemicals. We don’t have that, so it is not safe for me to be working with these materials and try to make them safer.
The executive director responded by asking, “Couldn’t you just open a window? Isn’t that enough?” She said, “No.” Her thoughts: “Great way to make the whole school sick and end up on the news! But, I know that he’s not as familiar with lab safety as I am.” T1 Then replied, “In fact that could be even more dangerous, as the fumes could be pushed further into the building rather than out of it. A fume hood pulls the fumes out of the building.”

The executive director responded again in trying to suggest another way that does not require spending money: “I don’t know if we have the budget to hire someone. Could you take the chemicals to another school or maybe to UMKC to see if they can help with disposal?” T1’s thoughts were: “I’ve only had a couple of accidents, several years ago, but with my luck, I’d have one with a trunk load of chemicals. Firefighters would not love me then.” T1 answered, “Unfortunately, no. Putting chemicals in a car that is not meant for hazardous material transport would be very unsafe for me. Plus, if an accident should occur, others could be harmed. It’s best not to transport chemicals that way.” He replied, “Well, I still don’t think we have the budget for it. Maybe it’s best to just leave things like they are.” Now T1 was deeply thinking, “That’s been the problem not only here but at other schools. Ignore it and hope it goes away. I don’t think he’ll want to do that, especially if he thinks about it.” Then, she stated,

Well, leaving things like they are could work for a while, but if we are ever audited, we could be fined for not being in compliance with the law. That could be more costly than paying for disposal. Plus, if an injury occurs while working with these chemicals, the school could be out of worker’s compensation benefits, which again would be more expensive for you.

By this this time, he was open to any suggestions. T1 thought,

Well, this is a start, but not far enough yet. Hopefully, he’ll at least see that I’m making an honest effort to take care of the issue. We still have to work on storage, but that can come later at this point, once we know how much storage we will need.

She replied:
Well, I’ve contacted the Missouri Department of Conservation, as they have helped schools in the past. When I give them a list of the chemicals, they have said they could help us decide the best way to dispose of the chemicals at the most economical cost. I’m still getting the list together, but we may still need to pay to dispose of some of them. Hopefully, we will be able to take care of most without too much trouble. Then we will need to figure out how to safely store the chemicals we do keep. Our cabinets are not in great shape, but I have put a project on ‘Donors Choose’ to try to get some more.

The meeting ended with the executive director, “Sounds good. Keep me informed about how things are going.”

This scenario can be a motivational activity to help students think through the importance of careers as a conservationist and to use to cooperative and collaborative groups to allow for research on environmental-science job opportunities to attain social and academic goals.

School Two Teacher 2 It’s About Expectations

The circumstances, six years ago, that led her to teaching at School Two resulted from the district school closing plan for declining enrollment. When the school where she was teaching closed, she was transferred as a recruit from the district to work at School Two. She described the school’s three counselors and one social worker who work closely with students as one of the most significant differences in comparison to other schools in which she taught. One of the attributes that T2 ascribed to the teachers at School Two is their ability to employ open lines of communication as a collaborative team with high expectations for all students. For example, she explained that the beginning of the year was designed for all new students go to an orientation called “Discovery,” where they learn the school’s expectations. The students also learn that School Two is committed to the success of all students by providing a space for those in need of time to think about a violation of school behavior expectations. For example, most students are not suspended but are sent to the “Recovery” room for an appropriate consequence for behavioral infractions. She stated:
My students do not have an achievement gap. They have been convinced that they are not intelligent and that they do not have the ability to learn. They definitely exhibit improvement in behavior, relationships, and in development. Parents’ expectation …is that they will be a problem in school.

Overall themes for Teacher T2 are: (a) low student self-efficacy and (b) low student motivation.

One of the guiding principles for building self-efficacy is to provide clear and accurate feedback regarding student competence. Low self-efficacy, Theme (a), is a lack of the students’ confidence in their own ability to achieve. This may suggest evidence of the personalized effects of failure that contribute to self-devaluation. As T2 said, “They’ve been convinced they do not have the ability to learn.” Designing tasks that offer opportunities for students to be successful, but are challenging, supports the principle of adaptation. For example, T2 uses a pass/fail system of grading in her classroom and the computer-driven PLATO curriculum. Students must achieve an 80% mastery to earn credit for each subject assignment or course. Providing feedback stresses the process nature of learning that includes the importance of effort, strategies, and potential self-control of learning. The majority of the students, 80%, are 18 and 19 years of age or older and understand the importance of making up for lost time. It’s the self-efficacy of the computer lab teacher, who has strong background qualifications in working with students at risk, that will assure her students that she has the confidence in her own skills to help them have confidence in theirs. This approach provides one example of an adaptive self-efficacy that supports competency beliefs to motivate students.

Adaptive attributions and control beliefs motivate students. Theme (b)’s emphasis on low student motivation results from students’ lack of self-confidence. The design principle is to build supportive and caring personal relationships in the community of learners in the classroom. T2 is a very warm and caring teacher who understands the needs that students at risk have in belonging to their school. She provides a supportive environment that encourages students to
feel comfortable about taking risks without fear. For example she stated, “I don’t grade while students are learning. I always emphasize correct responses or effort or both.” She also pointed out that she compliments their thinking process although the answer they arrived at is incorrect.

T2 also discussed the role parents play in helping students to succeed. However, she stated:

Parents expectation of their children is they will be a problem in school. Often, I call to compliment a student and the parent’s response is, ‘This is a surprise!’ This is the first time that I have ever had a call from school that was good.

T2 agreed that students are making progress at this school: “They definitely exhibit improvement in behavior, relationships, and in student development.” Consequently, it is no longer the case that students refuse to try.”

School Two Teacher 3 It Takes Time to Plan

T3 is the print shop teacher, who was a member of the instructional staff prior to the school’s conversion from the district alternative high school to a public charter alternative high school. In the search for a teaching job, she indicated that her graduate advisor informed her about this print shop position open at the alternative school. T3 has been teaching at School Two for five years and starting her sixth year. Her experience teaching at a four-year university while she was completing her graduate work does not compare to her teaching role at School 2. She emphasized that teachers need patience and a passion to work with students at risk. Although it is challenging, it is rewarding at the same time, and she stated:

We constantly think of how we can help each individual student. We use many... instructional strategies. We...follow the redirect policy for classroom management. Some students become more cooperative. While...at School Two, I have started seeing some parental involvement since we became a charter school.

Overall themes for Teacher T2 are: (a) student motivation: discipline, and (b) teacher motivation
Student motivation, Theme (a), was the indication that these students have freedom to informally walk around and talk with their classmates, causing a classroom management problem. Students chose the print shop class as an elective and, for many, to acquire the knowledge and skills for working in the printing business after graduation or becoming an entrepreneur. The redirect policy helps students to refocus their attention on meaningful task activities. All teachers follow the redirect policy for classroom management. T3 also felt that, “They are resilient. They act like they are tough, but they are soft inside and seek attention.” T3 said, “I often see a huge stride in students' academic performance. Some students become more cooperative and required [sic] less discipline [than] while they were at School One.”

T3 stated that, “Students sign a contract map in each class and must complete caption projects by reflecting how they met learning goals and mastered the required skills.” T3 stated that “I didn’t see many parents involved until we became a charter school [and] started seeing some parental involvement. I have witnessed many success stories.” She has the advantage of being able to compare school before and after the charter school status and noted that parental involvement has since increased. She stated, “Our students have a very short attention span, so I try to come up with more creative and entertaining assignments in lesson planning.”

Teacher motivation, Theme (b), begins with their goals. This suggests teachers who process information about their behavior and the performance of students in the context of a value belief that assigns a level of importance to various goals related to teaching. For instance, T3 makes an inference that all teachers, administrators, and counselors work closely together by stating, “We constantly think of how we can help each individual student.” For example, T3 stated, “We use many graphic organizers, writing steps, and Socratic seminars as instructional strategies.” One example viewed as an illustration of “Socratic” is tutoring strategies to expose
inconsistencies and incompleteness in a student’s knowledge structure, but this was not a clarification.

During our interview, one of her concerns rested with the lack of time during the school day to work on curriculum development within the current school schedule. The premise is based on the need for improvement in the areas of curriculum development, classroom preparation, and organization to improve teaching effectiveness and the quality of student learning experiences. She brought this issue, with some trepidation, to the attention of the administrator, suggesting her second thoughts were about what others would think of her for doing this. When she finally met with him, she opened with the statement, “We need to review the school schedule and increase more prep time for teachers.” She explained that last year’s schedule allowed one hour for a planning period and 45 minutes after school, but this year does not give any time for teachers other than the one hour planning period. She acknowledged that Wednesday afternoons was for meetings and professional development workshops, but the increase in the number of students enrolled in classes requires teachers to spend more time with grading student work. He responded, “I understand that this year’s schedule is very tight.” T3 expressed a sigh of relief because he acknowledged the situation and asked, “Do you think we will continue to use this schedule? The executive director stated:

“We are not sure, but it does not mean we can’t change it. Also, we have to understand the importance of complying with hours required by state law. We may not be able to change the schedule right away even though we may think that is a great idea.”

In her thoughts, T3 quietly questioned, “Maybe he’s just trying to make me feel better. Can I think this issue will be seriously discussed in the larger group of teachers? I don’t want this issue to die.” With a convincing plea in her voice, T3 said,
I understand, but I do not want this issue to go away. It may not happen right away, but we have to recognize the issue and find solutions. I think better allocations of time for teachers can improve teacher effectiveness as well as student learning.

The executive director then asked, “What would you like us to do?” She said, “Maybe we can discuss this issue with other teachers by asking them how they feel about the current schedule and what can help their instructional preparation.” T3 felt there may be hope after all when he said, “Okay. Let me discuss it with my administrative staff.”

**School Two Teacher 4 Just a Little Help for Myself**

There are a variety of circumstances in which teachers become or find themselves employed at alternative schools. However, T4 expressed his desire to teach in a school with a supportive learning environment because he wants to be part of a collaborative team who understands the needs of students placed at risk and truly cares about them. T4 has been at School Two for the past 6 months and feels that, “The staff at the school understands the need to nurture students at risk emotionally and intellectually. The teachers take time to know the needs of their students.” He described his students as enthusiastic learners when they are motivated; but says, “It’s hard for them to see the world beyond their birth environment.”

In the qualitative view of motivation, it is maintained that students and teachers process information from their environment in terms of salient goals or values. When T4 was asked to describe the ways his goals and expectations for student performance at this school were different from the experience at his previous school, he responded, “We are encouraged when possible to use alternative instruction and assessment if needed.” Goal structures may be an unfamiliar concept, which define the goals students are to accomplish, how they are to be evaluated, and how they are to relate to each other and to the task. Teacher 4 may need some assistance in meeting the needs of his students.
Parents are an important resource for schools when teachers communicate a need for their participation in working with their son or daughter. T4 stated, “If parents care, students care. Parents are often distracted by adult concerns.” Perhaps his response was from his experience.

Overall Theme for T4 is: (a) motivational teacher strategies.

In the case of a task-focused teacher motivation, Theme (a), teachers are less concerned with making attributions and judging cause for the purpose of establishing blame, instead they are more concerned with developing strategies to increase student learning and performance. For example, T4 pointed out that his students were enthusiastic learners when motivated, but then mentioned their “birth environment” as a distraction. This example is the basis for T4’s interest in developing his skills as an effective task-oriented teacher in dealing with student behaviors that interfere with student motivation and learning.

During my interview with T4, he discussed his decision to meet with the Instructional Coach (IC) after first wondering if she would take the time to talk and really listen to him. The meeting started off in a casual manner when T4 sat down to visit. Then, she asked him, “How is it going?” With some reservation, T4 paused with a thought: “Should I add ‘for the most part?’ I don’t want to give the impression that I’m having a hard time controlling any of my classes.” So T4 said, “It’s going pretty well. The kids are really responding well to what we’re doing for the most part.” After the IC said, “Good,” he spoke up right away and said, “Of course you always have that one class that is more challenging than the rest.” She responded with, “Yes, of course!” And, T4 felt more at ease and thought to himself, “Thank Goodness!”

So he began to discuss the real purpose for requesting a meeting with her, “I find myself wanting the opportunity to look at what other teachers are doing. I want some ideas on how other teachers deal with these same kids who are giving me problems.” The IC reassured him,
“Of course! We encourage that.” T4 responded, “I have sat in a couple of classes and gotten some good ideas on activities and management. I’d like to sit in on T2’s class though, but that’s hard since we have the same planning period.” She answered, “Well, we’ve discussed that before. You can get Chad to sit in your class; just make sure he has a clear and complete lesson plan.” T4 entertained the thoughts, “Is she going to give me time to practice what I learn in other classes? We talk about team teaching and collaboration. Let’s see how this goes.” So T4 stated,

“Well, what I’m really thinking is there has to be some system we can develop to allow teachers to regularly sit in content classes. Perhaps we can start a double sided sign up list. One side is to request to observe a class. The other side is where teachers can sign up to volunteer to sub for that hour or at least part of the hour.”

The IC agreed that might be a good idea, but “You know teachers as well as I do that they are reluctant to give up their planning periods for any reason.”

T4 thought, “It has to be worthwhile.” T4 said, “Well, that’s a decision for you and the administrative team. Maybe we could offer an incentive such as additional sick time or extra pay.” T4 thought, “I hope they are flexible like they always ask us to be.” The IC responded, Oh. I just don’t think that will be possible. The organization is in a financial crunch as it is. I really don’t think we could get the executive director to sign off on that. Besides, that would be like rewarding greater efficiency with more time off and, therefore, less efficiency.

T4 asked himself a question: “How else will we learn? He suggested that, “You could add the requirement that the days could only be used at the administration’s discretion. Or, only reward partial days for each hour as a substitute.” T4 thought, “This sounds better the more I talk about it.” The IC responded: “I don’t even feel comfortable taking this to everyone. How about we form a committee to come up with a more thorough plan that doesn’t involve money and then we will present.” T4 asked, “So, are the sick days off the table all together?” T4 thought, “I want to get this done faster than this.” The IC answered, “Not necessarily, let’s draw it up. Find two or
three people for a committee and draw something up and get back with me in a week or two.”
T4 ends the conversation: “Will do. And thank you for your time.”

It is not conclusive how successful T4 was and/or will be in getting a peer observation
program scheduled so he can watch and learn from teachers who may be good examples as
models. What T4 and the other building teachers need is to have professional development
training in using effective teacher strategies to help students engaged in learning activities.

School Two Teacher T5 More Than Just Good Enough

After T5 joined *Teach for America* during his senior year in college, he was assigned to
teach math at School Two through the *Teach for America* program. He acknowledged that, since
this was an alternative school, he felt his most important role was not as an educator but as a role
model and mentor, which has caused him, at certain times, to prioritize personal relationships
with students more highly than teaching:

My students are generally well behaved but lack many of the academic and
organizational skills needed in order to excel at school…it’s difficult for my students to
obtain and maintain good grades. I feel like we encourage our students to be "good
enough" grades, behavior, and attendance. Statements like "70% attendance is good
enough for our kids." Behavior and social skills have generally improved; academics
may have improved slightly, but students still lack basic SCANS (Secretary’s
Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) when they graduate. Parents have a huge
role in helping students succeed!

Overall themes for Teacher T5 are: (a) student self-efficacy, and (b) low teacher expectations.

The relationship between the classroom and self-efficacy is close. T5 expressed his
concerns in a single package that many of his students lack the academic skills for school
success, Theme (a), which may be that the students lack confidence in their ability to achieve
success. The change from the teacher’s perspective to the student’s may be an attributional
question, “Why did I succeed or fail?” Or possibly, “Why did I not do well in math?” For the
student, classrooms are environments for the satisfaction of motivations other than achievement.
The need for a supportive learning environment for students at risk is to provide a challenge at their appropriate level, as well as establishing positive relationships with peers and teachers. T5 mentioned that building student relationships were, at times, more important than teaching. The literature suggests that the goal orientation of the classroom environment in a particular subject area, such as math, is context-specific and related to the perceived academic efficacy in that subject area (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

There seems to be some concern that there is also low collective teacher self-efficacy and motivation from T5’s perception. For example, when asked, “In what ways do the goals and expectations for student performance at this school differs from those of other schools?” he wrote, “At this school, I feel like we encourage our students to be ‘good enough.’ They are expected to have good enough behavior, good enough grades, and good enough attendance. They are never challenged to achieve academic excellence.” However, I have been unable to invest the students in the goal and most just seem to forget about [it].”

Teacher 5 is a first year teacher, acknowledging his only other experience was at one high school in Los Angeles and that this school is a better facility, although it lacks basic instructional materials (e.g., textbooks).

Theme (b), low teacher expectations, was an illustration from my interview with T5, we discussed his school concerns resulting from a meeting he was requested to attend. The meeting with the IC took place in her office. At the beginning of the meeting, T5 thought, “I am unsure what to expect. Meetings with the IC can be ambiguous and its make me a little uneasy.” The meeting opened with the IC stating, “I wanted you to come up so that we could take a look at what D.W. needs to graduate.” T5 was surprised, but asked, “D. W.? Is he graduating?” The IC said, “Yes, he wants to graduate by the end of the year and he needs three math credits.” T5 was
speechless, “Hmm…” The IC said, “He wants to graduate, and we want him to graduate. What would he need to do to get three math credits this year?” T5, very surprised, repeated, “Three?” And the IC responded back, “Yes, three.” Now, T5 thought, “I am astounded that the IC would suggest a student complete 3 years of math in one.” T5 said, “Well… I mean, that's really a lot of math work. It would be difficult to teach it to him in a way that means anything.” The IC responded, “I understand your concern, but we have to provide our students with what they need. And he needs credits so he can graduate. We just have to make sure the work load is reasonable. Now T5 thought, “I am disappointed that she would expect this of me. It’s impossible! How does she expect me to succeed in accomplishing this?” So T5 told her, “Well, in my opinion, three math credits in one year, by any stretch of the imagination, is not reasonable.” The IC said, “Okay, but we need to consider this. If D. W. graduates, he can get a job and help out his family with food and utilities. How could we possibly deny his family?” T5 thought: “I am insulted and angry that she would expect me to be influenced by such an emotional appeal. This makes me suspect that she doesn’t respect my opinion.” T5 replied, “Well, yes…but our concern is really more with educating students. Is D. W.’s situation that bad?

The IC still continued to insist, “That’s really not the point. We just think he should be able to graduate and I’m sure he’s serious about it.” While the IC was talking, T5’s thoughts were,

Her avoidance of my question makes me think that she does not know anything about D. W. or his situation. I’ve resigned myself to the fact that she will not take my opinion into account. I have no say in the matter. I’m upset and a little hurt by her lack of consideration. I feel she’s treating me like a child. Now, I know she doesn’t value my opinion.”

The IC said, “Well, he’s in your class and he’s already in PLATO……so we just need to get him caught up and get him one more class. , Any ideas?” T5’s meeting ended with his
response that he didn’t have any ideas, so she said, “Okay….well, keep me posted….we’ll get this credit…. figured out. Thanks for your help!” T5 left the meeting with the IC thinking that she couldn’t mean what she just said. This case scenario with T5 seemed to be an example of what he felt about the expectations for students is just good enough. This ties into the narrative of just good enough.

In summary, this section described three major themes that were found across all of the teacher participants in the School Two charter alternative high school. These themes were: (a) low self-efficacy, (b) low student motivation to learn and (c) strong caring and support services for students academically and behaviorally. The theme (a), low self-efficacy, was reflected by most teacher comments on students lacking the necessary academic skills. Theme (b) low motivation was reflected in comments on low motivation and behavioral challenges; theme (c) for strong caring and support services was emphasized by several teachers commenting that this was a positive attribute for the school as a team. When given the opportunity, none of the participants commented specifically on their instructional strategies or professional development activities that led to enabling student motivation to learn.

**Student Perspectives**

All of the students were 18 or 19 years of age with the exception of one 14-year-old student in grade 9. Most of the students’ responses could be summarized as indicating a mix of answers about why they came to this school such as: “because my previous school had too much violence, the district was bad,” or “no other school would take me.” The themes of a “caring teacher” and smaller classes were reflected in most of the students’ comments about why this school is different from their previous school. For example, one student commented, “The
teachers don’t give you a lot of work to do and you have all your classes in one day.” This was an indication that the previous school was on a block schedule, where classes were scheduled on an “A Day–B Day” basis (certain classes taken every other day for a longer class period).

Students were overwhelmingly positive about working relationships with their teacher and support from the counseling staff, including the administrative staff. One student commented that “the teachers here are more like family to me. I get along better with the teachers here than both of my previous schools. They just do a lot to help me here.” Some students feel like they can name at least one teacher they feel close to and trust. For example, “One student specifically noted that she felt the teachers “wanted her to be successful.” Two of the students were very open about naming a teacher who they felt helped them more than their teachers at previous schools. One student mentioned feeling comfortable with one of his teachers, and another student mentioned that his math teacher also helps him with subjects other than math.

Student reported very similar responses in regard to how they felt about peers at their other schools. Their answers echoed that their peers in previous schools were about the same with similar kinds of problems, but indicated that each had a goal to graduate from high school. The youngest student said, “Some students are rude, but I think it’s because they’re trying to get attention. I have many friends, but most of them are women.” He continued by acknowledging that “the other students don’t like a lot of things that other people I know like. They’re somewhat more mature.” The students viewed the counselors and principals in a respectful way. For example, the general feelings about the counselors were really good because they described them as helpful and more engaged with the students and their individual needs than the counselors were at their previous schools. Most of the students felt the class work and
homework were not challenging. However, all of the students answered in the affirmative, stating that teachers, counselors, and principals have helped them with their problems. For example, “Yes, they have made it ‘easier’ for me to get out of school.” “Yes, they have helped me a great deal.” “Before I came to this school I was a mess.” “They helped me become a better person as well as a better student.” “Mostly everyone who works here has helped me from shyness to moneywise.” Only one student stated that “I really didn’t have any problems.”

Most of the students had positive comments of feeling better about their academic improvements and behavioral progress. For example, one student’s comment summed up what most of them said in reference to grades: “I would say that it’s better than it would have been at my old schools.” All of the students felt their academic progress had improved from previous years. All of the students felt that they were getting along much better with others or, as one student admitted, “I just stay to myself really.”

All but one student said their parents or mother liked them attending this school and wished they had been there at the beginning of their high school experience. One student stated she wasn’t sure because her mother had not expressed an opinion one way or another. The students took the opportunity to say what they liked best about the school and what they would change if it were possible. Their responses included:

S1: “If you have a problem they care and try there [sic] best to help.”
S2: "I like everything about this school, even though at times I get bored. I wouldn't try to change anything. The teachers try their best; not that many teachers would like to help inner-city kids. Sometimes I think that it’s the students that don't want to help themselves."
S3: "We get to work at our own paste [sic]." "Don't get a lot of homework." "The classes are not big." "If I need help I can get it." "What I don't like about the "s" [school] is the student."

S4: "I like the teachers. The thing I don't like is the studins [sic]. I would change the studins [sic]."

S5: “I like that teachers and staff at School One give many opportunities to achieve your goals in life, for me that is. I think the only reason why students would have bad grades is if they don't care about an education.

**Major Themes**

One frequent response from all the students was teacher support. Their answers varied: (a) they liked the teachers, (b) they want to see me succeed, and (c) they are caring.

It could be interpreted that the students were overwhelmingly positive about their school, counselors, and teachers. For example, they were asked: Is there a teacher that you feel especially close to at this school? Explain why? Student answers were: no, haven’t been here long enough; yes, I talk with all of them; no; no; yes, (student named a teacher). The results showed that 60% of the participants had a “No” response for teachers they felt close to. The one student who had a positive answer to all of the questions received special education services.

The students were also asked: Is the class work and homework challenging to you? All five students’ answers were: “work here is not as hard as my old school; at time it’s a challenge, but it depends on how well I listened to the instructor; sometimes kind of challenging; not challenging; and not challenging for some reason.” It could be interpreted that their self-efficacy was high because they were able to accomplish their task activities with ease or with little
academic difficulty. When teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge or difficulty, tasks are optimally motivating to allow success when reasonable effort is applied (Brophy, 1987).

In summary, School Two students had a more positive feeling of self-efficacy and were confident in their own ability to succeed on the assigned academic tasks. It could be interpreted that the responses of feeling the assigned tasks were not challenging is somewhat different than what teachers reported. For example, teachers answered the question: In what ways do the goals and expectations for student performance at this school differ from those of other schools? The teachers’ responses varied from goals focused on workforce; pass/fail system; learning goals and mastery oriented skills required; alternative assessment; and just good enough. It could be that some students felt intrinsically motivated because they had a choice of which school they would attend and the second chance to graduate from high school.

School Three

School Three, a middle college alternative high school located on the Ozarks Technical Community College (OTCC) campus is designed to encourage students to finish high school, begin college early and facilitate college and career readiness. The Middle College was established in 2008 with the Springfield Public Schools for the purpose of helping engage underperforming students in active learning, assist underserved, amotivated potential dropouts, and talented students finish high school and gain access to higher education. The school enrollment has increased from 103 students to 130 and data show that the students attend college or become fully employed after graduation at the rate of 95% or higher.

Local school districts may participate through a tuition based agreement which equals 80% of the current total expenditure per average daily attendance (ADA) based on the yearly report from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Local
districts retain 20% of the total expenditure per ADA reported. The OTCC middle college supervisor and the middle college alternative high school director/principal have a 24-member board council of local school community donors and business partners who oversee the progress of the program.

Students leave the traditional high school setting behind and join other students choosing a different pathway to earn their high school diploma. The students with at least a 1.90 grade point average are selected by a referral process at their home school to commit their last 2 years of high school on the college campus. The students have an opportunity to explore vocations and careers in Early Childhood Development, Computer Sciences, Medical Services, Health Professions Academy, Diesel/Auto Technology, and Agriculture. The program requires parent/s and students’ signatures on a contract of agreement to follow the guidelines for acceptance and continued enrollment in the middle college. A middle college student wrote a personal testimony:

This program shows equality and fairness to the students who are hidden in a traditional high school setting. It has opened me up to be the person I am today through college classes, internships, and a dynamic college environment. I am really motivated to seek the change I want to see in the world- Current Student.

The middle college is a department on the OTCC campus, and staff includes teachers hired from Springfield Public School (SPS) district and assigned college campus instructors to teach designated classes for college credit courses for the middle college alternative high school students.

Teacher 1 Hold Students Accountable

T1 had been working in the auto repair industry for several years and decided to make a job change into the teaching field. During the past fifteen years, he has been employed as the diesel mechanics instructor at OTCC. Serving in a dual role, T1 has been the diesel mechanics
teacher at the middle college for three years. T1 has been employed with the technical college for 15 years, and the middle college hired him to teach the diesel mechanics class for the middle college students. He mentioned that students came from a restrictive high school atmosphere to an open college campus, which promotes autonomy and helps them to be responsible. His only other response to the interview questions was: “Parents are required to interview with students in order to be accepted into the program.”

The overall themes for T1 were: (a) teacher efficacy, and (b) high student self-efficacy: autonomy.

Theme (a), teacher efficacy, includes establishing efficient learning environments that support effective instruction. T1 and middle college teachers hold high expectations for all of their students. T1 uses the industry’s engine repair technical manual for the curriculum along with his vocational experience in the field, which provides students with authentic first-hand knowledge and valuable hands-on training. The advantage for the middle college students is they get to be in class with the regular college students, and this gives them the same learning goals for mastery. Students have to master the material, and this leads to self-efficacy judgments on the idea that effort leads to success.

Theme (b), student self-efficacy, is their belief and confidence in being able to achieve certain task with success when at the appropriate challenge level. Teachers use their knowledge and expertise in their field to help students by teaching using hands-on learning to be successful in the field, as is the case for T1 in the diesel mechanic class. In addition, students are expected to learn as though they were already working as a mechanic in the field. T1’s students learn how to be self-directed learners and autonomous. T1 says that this may be especially important in problem solving for vehicle repairs in the diesel mechanic industry.
The internship program is an integral part of the middle college school. Students sign up for a one semester internship at a business whose owners participate with the school to provide work experience for qualified students. During my interview with T1, he discussed the nature of some problems he faces with some of the students on their internships. T1 discussed one of his student’s intern placement experience as his teacher mentor, which is central to the success of the student’s outcome. For example, he spoke about a problem concerning a student who was not showing up on time for work. T1 thought to himself, “Boy, What is wrong? I worked so hard to get you this job.” The student and he discussed: T1 asked the student, “Hey, your boss called and said you were late.” Student: “I was on time except for that one time.” T5 thought to himself, “Take responsibility for your actions.” T5 told the student, “You should realize how important it is to be there.” T5 thought, “I don't think so.” Student: The city bus was running late. T5 thought, “You didn't tell the truth—take responsibility!” He said, “Well another student that was on that bus was there on time.” When the student shrugged, T5 thought, “I hope this helps you keep your job! T5 finally explained, “Honestly, and how that affects ones’ view of a person—and explained, "If they don't go to work on time, they lose their job."

T1 uses problem situations on internships as learning opportunities for his students and employment skills development. Helping students improve in job skills and character building contributes to the success of these students at risk.

**Teacher 2 Students Know We Care**

Teacher 2 indicated that her experience with at-risk students influenced her decision to apply for the posted position. The positive working relationships between teachers and students have provided an assurance to students that teachers are willing to work with them and their parents so they can experience academic success.
The goals and expectations for students are to make progress and if they don’t, they go back to their home school. If you can’t behave you don’t get to stay. Students realize we want them to pass and that we are willing to work with them to get them to pass their classes. We make lots of phone calls to parents and have lots of parent conferences. Parents get their students to school and want them on the college campus.

The technology education program requires teachers to use multiple instructional strategies and play a variety of roles in supporting students and a focus on technology education. T2 also stated: “Students are academically capable, but lack motivation. Most have grown up in families where education was not valued. The goals and expectations are to make progress or go back to home school. Fighting warrants dismissal.”

The overall themes for T2 are: (a) Collective Teacher Efficacy: and (b) student motivation.

T2 has been an instructor at the college for 4 years, but has taught 3 years in the middle college since it opened. Theme (a), collective teacher efficacy, is a perception that is reflected in her desire to join the staff as part of a team that exudes the confidence in its knowledge and skills to provide the support structure needed to build the self-efficacy of the students. “Our students quickly develop relationships with teachers and staff. The working relationship is different because we work closely as a team and we meet weekly to discuss students.” These middle college teachers’ collective efficacy perceptions as a group have a positive impact on their students’ school success and their lives.

Also, when the teachers operate collectively as a team within the school rather than as isolates, the school becomes efficacious. T2 asked to teach students at risk, as well as care about and relate to each one on an individual basis. Her experience both with students at risk and as a college instructor in English enable her with a high sense of instructional efficacy to educate and motivate the students and she operates on the belief that difficult students are able to
be achieve success. With a desire to relate with each student on an individual basis and through appropriate teacher strategies, students can overcome the limits of having grown up in a family where education was not at the top of the list of things to do or given a strong place of value.

T2’s mention that teachers meet weekly as team to discuss the students is another example of the middle college collective school efficacy. Teachers with a strong sense of instructional efficacy create positive school climates for academic learning by devoting time to share important academic activities, convey positive expectations of student achievement, and make plans to reward students’ academic success. The small size of the middle college learning environment also facilitates continued face-to-face communication among faculty for planning and joint decision making. The middle school model gives teachers the autonomy and authority to control admissions and dismissals from the program.

T2 pointed out that the teachers make a lot of phone calls to parents and have a lot of parent conferences. Most parents want their sons and daughters in school, especially when it is on a college campus. Teachers with a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy are secure in their capabilities to reach out to parents. Some school staff has mixed feelings about parental involvement in school, especially when it subjects teachers to critical scrutiny and pressures to produce higher academic achievement. Also, some parental participation can be dismissed because many parents, especially less educated ones, might not be interested in being involved. Student motivation, Theme (b), for those at risk can be significantly enhanced as they experience autonomy, competency, and strong relationships all on the college campus. As these junior and senior high school students are treated as regular college students on campus, one of the most attractive features of the efficacious middle college is the freedom and feeling like an adult. However, one of the most important features of the middle college school is an agency for
cultivating students’ self-efficacy. School is the place where students develop cognitive
competencies, acquire knowledge, and learn problem-solving skills essential for participating
effectively in society and the world of work. T2 said the focus of middle college is on
technology education. A fundamental goal of education is to equip students with self-regulatory
capabilities that enable them to educate themselves. Self-directed learning not only contributes
to success informal instruction, but also promotes life-long learning. Each of the students’
academic subjects is connected as an integrated and/or interdisciplinary curriculum focus on
technology. As students develop a high sense of self-regulatory efficacy, and regulating their
own motivation by applying strategies that contribute to mastery of academic subject matter,
they can raise their academic aspirations. Selecting an internship is part of the process.

Students seem to feel readily comfortable with the staff in developing positive staff and
student relationships, but teachers do not let them forget that high expectations and standards for
achievement pervade the environment of efficacious schools. For example, T2 mentioned that
the middle college is on a college campus where students are expected to achieve or leave. This
“No Nonsense” middle college attribute is serving to reaffirm to the students the message that
they already know: Yes, “We care,” as T2 noted above.

Although students know the discipline code consists of no fighting or you are dismissed,
T2 acknowledged that, occasionally, they can become a little testy. This may be one example of
the variety of roles all teachers play at one time or another, the role of disciplinarian. The
interview with T2 involved an issue T2 had with a student. T2 contemplated about the student
breaking her classroom rule: “The rule is not sleeping in class and I think this student is
sleeping.” So, T2 approached the student and told him, “You can’t sleep in my class.” The
student said, “I was not sleeping.” T2 described the student’s position: “The student is lying
back in his chair with his feet stretched out and his eyes closed.” In efficacious schools, in-class behavior is managed successfully, so she thought, “here we go again. This student has been a problem in the past and blows up every time you try to correct him.” If troublesome behavior threatens to get out of hand, it is dealt with quickly and firmly. Again, T2 replied by saying, “It looks like you were sleeping because your eyes are closed.” As the student continued to deny sleeping: “I was not sleeping in class,” the teacher tapped the student’s shoulder and asked him to open his eyes and told him that he “cannot sleep in my class.” T2 said, “I feel frustrated because I have had this student before and this has been a problem in the past.” She said, “If you need to sleep, then you need to leave my classroom.” The student repeated, “I was not sleeping in your class.” T2’s thoughts were, “I’ll let this slide, but I know that I can contact Dr. Bauer, and we will meet about this student’s behavior to come up with a plan to correct this behavior. I also know that I have documented this issue in case there is an issue later on.” Sometimes, “tough love” can be a method to demonstrate “we care enough” not to allow unacceptable behavior work against a student’s best interest.

Teacher 2 explained how some students at the middle college have to face consequences for inappropriate classroom conduct and the progress in place that is used to document incidents. The accumulation of behavioral infractions can call attention to the need for conferencing about the student’s continued program placement under the discipline code of conduct. Some students are made an example for other students to see the seriousness of the program designed for success.

Teacher 3  We Will Care Until You Do
Three years ago, T3 was encouraged to apply for the position after her principal left one of the district schools. Working together as a team, having time to get to know and care about each student, resulted in their academic and behavioral progress. T3 stated:

We have to "retrain" them when they get here. I have learned to change teaching as needed based on the mixture of students. Having fewer per class helps to do what's best for each individual student. We focus on teaching "employability skills." We worked as a team. We do what’s best for the student. I have seen students who have failed in traditional high schools find their niche and succeed.” We treat our students as college students – responsible for their own actions. We do bring parents in for orientation and Parent-Teacher conferences as needed.

Overall themes for T3 are: (a) Teacher strategies, and (b) Student intrinsic motivation

Teacher strategies, Theme (a), and practices are extremely important for students because they influence the goals students pursue within the classroom. Teachers’ educational goals for their students influence their instructional practice. T3 placed an emphasis on the need to “retrain” students when they arrive at the middle college and begin their learning. To “retrain” a student exemplifies a need that T3 understands has to be aligned within an efficacious school structure. This insightful observation reinforced why mastery oriented teachers establish the classroom goal structure to ensure students’ goals and expectations for achieving academic success are aligned. Therefore, students learn to “rethink” how the expectations at middle college are different from what they have been accustomed to at their home school and make adaptations. Students need structure in order to move through the curriculum and to focus on the rich learning activities designed to enhance their cognitive development and enable strategies to self-regulate their own motivation to learn. T3 takes this as her responsibility for each individual student, and she said that it can happen in a variety of ways, but first teachers have to “get to know their students.”
In most secondary schools, no teacher could get to know many students well, and many students may not have been known by any teacher. T3 made the point that it’s important to get to know her students first because “I have learned to change teaching as needed based on the mixture of students.” This is an important decision-making teacher strategy that high efficacy teachers do naturally with a mixture of individual student needs and, as T3 denoted, to do what is best for each individual student.

The efficacious middle college school is a consortium with an intentional focus specifically on the improvement of the junior and senior high school years. Principals and teachers are in full control to examine what might be done to invigorate teaching with stimulating strategies in the academic subjects. For example, T3, as a math instructor, knows, Teaching one of the four basic subjects required for college admission can be a little too abstract for students at risk. However, mastery oriented teachers select a few concepts that should be learned through a variety of approaches while, at the same time, teaching students real-world life experiences. T3 said that, “We work on teaching students ‘employable skills.’” The high schools with academic and vocational courses in a planned program of study linking students to the real world are blended. T3, with teacher strategies that encourage higher expectations in academic and vocational related concepts, engages her students actively in learning.

Students who experience (b) intrinsic motivation are those who engage in school tasks because they enjoy the activity. T3 indicated she has seen students find their niche and succeed when they have experienced past failure in traditional schools. This outcome probably results from at least two factors. First, the performance-orientation goal structure is a competitive approach to achievement outcomes. Although reform initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has targeted the underachievement of African American males and other lower-
performing students, there is still little evidence that such interventions have resulted in increased achievement of high school students identified as “as risk.” The failure students experience in traditional high schools results from interpreting the purpose of learning as demonstrating ability. Other students use boredom as an excuse of epic proportions.

Second, the change to a mastery-oriented goal structure has a support for student learning not based on ability alone, but on the criteria for understanding what the expectations for success require. Performance learning goals are salient; however, mastery learning goals are operative. Students concentrate on the process of learning to improve their own performance. Learning-focused students are less likely to view failure as a threat to self-esteem. In mastery-oriented learning environments, teachers, through instruction practices and teacher strategies, promote meaningful learning and adapt instruction to the developmental levels and personal interests of their students. Teachers, through their mastering-learning teacher strategies, establish learning structures supportive of student autonomy and peer relationships, and emphasize the intrinsic value of learning.

Students at risk of dropping out of school have identified low quality school interactions and disconnect from their teachers as main reasons for disengaging or dropping out. As the literature above suggests schools are recognized, as in the case of this middle college, as important developmental contexts for academic and socioemotional development, especially when students attend college. As with school belonging, research on the influence of peers and adolescents’ functioning, at a young age, a sense of school belonging at the university may be an important component in a comprehensive model predicting college students’ adjustment. It is not surprising that students can find their niche to succeed when they are intrinsically motivated and they know that their teachers really care.
In the interview with T3, she said, “I want what is best for my students. I am not just giving homework to give homework. I want them to be successful in math.” T3 stated, “We need to find ways to get our students to do homework outside of class to prepare them for college classes.” Admissions, “You know our students have too much going on when they leave school. Why do you feel that is so important?” T3 said, “I have to help them build work habits, that’s my job, retraining.” T3 told the admissions staff, “We have to help students make school a priority. I’m not saying 50 problems of math each night…just a few.” Admissions responded, “Why does it need to be outside school assignments? Can you do in class activities and get the same results? T3 responded, “I want them to be successful in college classes so instructors don’t have to take the time to focus on good work habits.” T3 took a breath and stated,

In class activities are just part of the learning process. Homework helps build individual problem solving skills, critical thinking, and being challenged. There is a direction correction between homework and test scores. I created a graph one, remember. They will not be successful in the college math classes if they don’t do the work.

Admissions staff asked, “so what are your thoughts? How are you going to handle a student who doesn’t do homework?” T3 thought and responded: “Every student enjoys being successful, even the student who doesn’t care. I have to care until they care.” T3 made her final statement: “I’m going to use my sticker charts again this semester. I will always give a little time at the beginning of class to answer questions.”

Teacher 4 Leadership Communication

T4 expressed that, as a social studies teacher, the goal and mission of middle college appealed to him, both because it was more student oriented and because of the relevancy of teaching students skills that they will use in the real world, instead of just focusing on test scores and other statistics. Teachers at School Three placed strong emphasis on developing positive
relationships with students and mentoring; as these are among the many roles teachers play. In doing so, the students progress and mature. T4 stated:

The goals and expectations of middle college focus on getting students graduated, but also on effectively transitioning them into college, technical training, and a job in which a future can be established. Most importantly, as students progress and mature, huge leaps are seen in their self-esteem as the value and importance students place on education increases. Parents can play a key role in student success; unfortunately, this is not always the case with many middle college students. A large number of students have little if any contact with parents. Many parents model behavior that is not conducive to student success.

Overall themes for T4 are: (a) collective instructional efficacy, and (b) collective school efficacy

Theme (a), collective instructional efficacy, (Brophy, 1997), is the quality of the school environment. The quality of the learning environment is generally characterized in terms of teacher attitudes and behaviors conducive to academic learning within school climates. T4 noted that the middle college appealed to him because of the learner-centered philosophy and because of a greater emphasis on teaching students skills relevant to the real world versus standardized testing. Teachers who choose to teach at the middle college have a perceived self-efficacy of their confidence to promote and implement teaching strategies relevant to the real world and graduation and transition into college, employment, or post-secondary training.

The literature suggests (Brophy, 1997) that an integral part of teaching students real world skills is to teach them what it means to act with their interest and self-endorsed value. In other words, this means teaching students learning to learn. Teachers, who must be autonomy-supportive, can suggest “interest-enhancing strategies” to support internalization and integration in students who do not want to engage in uninteresting tasks. Collectively, through the social context, acknowledging negative feelings, and relatedness, teachers support students’ capacity to transform socially valued activities, behaviors, regulations, and values into their sense of self so
that these integrated internalizations can subsequently act as inner motivational resources or integrated values.

Interest-enhancing strategies include a goal for students to try to reach, such as, for example, doing a repetitive task in different ways, and working in the company of friends. When enacted, these strategies help students self-regulate (enhance) their interest, engagement, perseverance, and emotional well-being. As educational development for success, collective instructional efficacy involves an accelerated education for students at risk using instructional strategies that support workforce demands requiring increased levels of cognitive competence. Middle college teachers with collective instructional efficacy can provide rationales that explain why their recommended ways of thinking or behaving might be personally useful for students. As T4 stated, “This can help students effectively transition into college, technical training, and a job in which a future can be established,” with a measure of success.

Mentoring can build collective trust and emphasize academic excellence that can help support student autonomy and self-regulated learning. Many students have to depend on the role models provided at school or the learning environment when the appropriate role model/s may not exist at home. Teachers who view intelligence as an acquirable attribute, and believe students can attain academic success despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, promote a collective sense of efficacy.

Collective school efficacy (b) is also the combined competency of a team of teachers who plan and implement program curriculum materials that might help them to teach more effectively, but soon find themselves in a large and fragmented circuit of different perspectives. T4 described the efficacious middle college school as student oriented, indicating a practice in a mastery goal orientation. Instructional programs in organizations should be aligned with factors such as unity.
of purpose, a clear focus, and shared values for student learning. It is important so students can progress with academic success. As T4 stated, “Most important, the value students place on their education increases as they progress and mature, and make huge leaps in their self-esteem.”

Middle college leadership creates a school climate with a strong academic emphasis and serves as advocates on behalf of teacher instructional efforts and enhances beliefs in their instructional efficacy. This communicates strong support to teachers, as T4 related.

During my interview with T4, he discussed his concern with an issue revolving around the curriculum. T4, thought to about a curriculum issue that he felt needed to be resolved. When he met with the leadership, he mentioned, “After working with it for a few weeks I am starting to figure it out, but I know that I still have quite a bit to learn and another teacher is willing to answer my questions.” T4’s thoughts were that

it has created a scheduling problem and is going to make it difficult for a few of our students to meet graduation requirements. I know people are upset because we are not offering World History as credit acquisition this year but, if students don’t need credit recovery, then they could take it in a regular class.

In summary, the conversation focused on those students who have not taken World History and will have to take it in school although most middle college students should have the course satisfied prior to acceptance into the program. T4 communicated his concern to the leadership, and it was resolved with a simple solution that met the needs of their students.

**Teacher 5  Students Are You Ready Yet?**

T5 was employed by the school district and chose to teach science at the middle college. She described the school as college preparatory within a self-regulatory climate. Students are expected to comply with the discipline code followed by the traditional college campus students. The teachers are very focused on providing the learning environment that enables students to build confidence in their ability accept the challenge of achieving for graduating from high
school. The administration leaders provide teacher support through open lines of communication building strong staff working relationships. She mentioned that students have improved in several areas, such as confidence, employability, and social skills. However, T5 also expressed concerns:

Some students lack motivation in science class; they sit [at] the back of the room sleeping, disengaged, and may start slipping through the cracks. Some parents have their kid stay home to babysit, don’t back up the teacher, don’t enforce rules applying to school, and don’t support teacher decisions.

Overall themes for T5 are: (a) student self-efficacy, and (b) teacher self-efficacy

Theme (a), student self-efficacy, can be low when teacher instructional strategies do not seem to be reaching disengaged students in the classroom. Students are neither behaviorally nor affectively participating in the learning experience. These students did not seem to be psychologically invested in an effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge skills or crafts that academic work is intended to promote. Although all of the students are not disengaged, the few that are must get involved in the learning activities. When students disengage, there are a variety of reasons; and among them is alienation (a construct akin to that of amotivation). Even though students may have a supportive classroom structure, they may still feel school dulls their motivation or even suppresses it entirely.

Students who display more amotivation respond to authentic instructional activities. The literature suggests (Dillion, 1989) that disaffected students at risk respond to authentic activities that contribute to the standards of intellectual quality, higher order thinking, depth of knowledge, substantive conversation, and connectedness to the world beyond the classroom. For example, some students at risk perceive academic curriculum as unstimulating and irrelevant to their needs. Although, some students prefer a vocational over an academic curriculum, a positive
school learning environment and authentic instruction engages students to make the psychological investment needed to participate in the academic activities.

Theme (b), and teacher efficacy in science that builds confidence in their capabilities and an educational climate supporting student needs for competence, engages students in their learning. Teachers vary in their interpersonal style to teach and motivate students, but must find ways to enhance student self-efficacy.

During my interview with T5, she discussed one of the issues that concerned her. To address the problem, T5 met with the school administrator as she was thinking that “I am concerned that the students are still not ready for college courses when they graduate from Middle College.” T5 started the conversation by saying to the administrator, “We need to find ways to prepare the students for college but also ensure they are successful in high school.” The administrator replied, “You should try to align your curriculum to the college curriculum to make sure your students are ready for the college courses.” T5 thought, “I feel that there is a mixed message of whether the program should be focused on college prep or on getting the kids to graduate.” T5 then said, “If I implement study skills strategies, it makes it difficult to get through all the college content. What suggestions do you have? The administrator replied: “You should be able to teach the content while implementing some different techniques.”

T5 thought: “I know both are important, but what level of importance needs to be placed on each one. How do you stress one without making the other one seem less important?” So, T5 asked, “What should I be doing about late work?” The administrator told her, “As a high school teacher you should be flexible and accommodating to individual students. You should always accept late work but maybe for reduced credit.” T5 acknowledged that “I am glad you have decided to implement a late work policy that is consistent with all the teachers. I also think the
attendance policy will help with some of the issues we have been seeing in the classroom. T5 thought, “I feel like I have the support of the administration and that they recognize it is a difficult balance between preparing the students for college and to go on getting them through high school.” The administrator closed the meeting with this statement: “Each year students try to figure out the system so they can take advantage, so it’s important for us to watch and make adjustments.”

The middle college concept is designed as collaboration between a high school and the local community college. The purpose is to prevent capable students from dropping out of school by creating an academically enriched learning environment that fosters students’ social and personal development. These themes exemplified a school that continues to assess ways to meet student needs through post-secondary training and education. The major themes reflected by the five teachers were collective teacher efficacy: care, flexibility, employment skills, behavioral expectations, student motivation and self-efficacy.

School Three   Student Responses

The following data present an analysis of the five students who participated in this study from School Three. Students were administered a 15-question open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix (B) for the survey questionnaire). The students compared School Three with their previous school and all of the students responded positively. S1 said: “It's a better learning setting and you get one-on-one help when you need it.” S2 replied, “More freedom here, the teachers actually care about us, and we have many more opportunities.” S3 stated, “The teachers and the students are more helpful with you. I understand the work a lot better.” S4 noted, “It’s more mature.” S5 stated “School Three is different in many ways for starters. There's no drama, you get treated like an adult, plus you get college credits on top of high school credits.”
Students responded to questions on the difference between their teachers at this school compared to previous schools and if they had bonded with any particular teacher? All students mentioned how teachers put forth extra effort to make sure the students received the help they needed because they wanted all students achieve success. Four of the students mentioned the name of a teacher to whom they felt close; one student said she felt close to all of her teachers.

Students compared the students at School Three to those at their previous schools. S1, S3, and S4 made similar comments: “We are one big family, no drugs, no drama, and good attitudes; we might brake [sic] every now and again, but we always help each other out.” S2 and S5 alluded to students at School Three as more responsible by acting like mature adults and not fooling around like those at their home high school.

Student perceptions of the school guidance counselor were very similar. For example, S1 specifically stated, “The counselor here is a lot different than at my home high school because she actually has time for me and gives me edvice [sic] so I don’t make stupid choices.” The other students pointed out that the counselor cares about students, is easy to talk to, available when I have a problem, and S4 commented that, “She checks on you and makes sure you doing ok.”

The principal is different from other principals as many reported. For example, S1 stated, “She is amazing, a very understanding person, keeps me on my feet and helps me keep going and not give up.” S2 noted that, “She takes her job very seriously and wants everyone to succeed.” S3 pointed out “she is a little more ‘stricted,'[sic] but in a good way and she doesn’t pick favorites or give anyone special treatment; I like her.” S4 stated, “Yes, because you get to see the principal here talk to the children, but at a high school you never see one most of the time.”
S5 was very open and pointed out: “She’s great, I hate going to her when I get in trouble. She’s way different; she talks it out with me besides just kicking me out.”

The students had a variety of perceptions about whether classwork and homework challenged them. Most responses ranged from “yes it’s easy” to “no it’s hard, but you can get help from the teachers.” S2 responded, “the class and homework are harder, but the teachers do a much better job of explaining the subject so it doesn’t seem as hard.” S3 pointed out “the class work was pretty easy as long as you don’t fall behind and fail to ask for help when you need it.”

All of the students responded “yes” in answer to whether their teachers, counselor, or principal had helped them with their problems. S1 answered, “Yes, I have become a completely different person by being here, my attitude has changed and I now have a motivation to graduate.” S3 stated, “Yes I do because they are there for me and I feel like I can trust them with anything.”

All students said their academic standing had greatly improved, especially S1 and S5. Both acknowledged that their grades at their home high school were Ds and Fs and now they are making A’s, B’s, and C’s. The other three students mentioned they had definitely improved a great deal, and S3 added that he was passing everything and understanding it all. Students viewed their behavioral progress in terms of feeling or being more mature by staying out of trouble and acting like an adult since they were on a college campus.

Concerning their parents’ feelings about the school, S1 and S2 referred to their parents as feeling good about their placement because of the opportunities and the positive changes they’ve noticed in them. S2 clarified by saying, “My mom has seen a change in me for the better. She likes this school because it gives kids a chance to “relize” [sic] what they are really capable of doing.”
All students liked the school and they wouldn’t change anything. Students had positive comments about teachers, freedom, autonomy, and a great program. The overall student themes were: (a) caring teachers and (b) freedom: school located on a community college campus.

In summary, middle college students commented on caring, Theme (a). As mentioned in the review of literature, several researchers have identified that caring involves adults helping to see others reach their potential (Schussler & Collins, 2006). The middle college students at OTCC described care as one of the most important attributes of the school because they were made to feel that their teachers wanted them to succeed and were given the freedom to feel like a mature adult.

In conclusion, the qualitative section of this mixed method design enabled this researcher to compare different perspectives from the open-ended responses by each school participant. The themes that were generated from each of the three schools participants’ responses were interpreted within two categories: self-efficacy and motivation. However, these instruments were designed to identify general information.

**Major Themes**

There were three major overall themes from the qualitative data on all three schools. First, teachers realized that the students haven’t had successful school experiences in the past. Also, although teachers exhibited problems in goal setting for their students, they continued to support them even though certain resources were not easily accessible or available. Second, although teacher circumstances on how they arrived at the school varied, all of the teachers showed their commitment to supporting the students and helping them to overcome their weaknesses and to achieve academic success. Finally, all of the students were satisfied with the academic setting they were in. For example, their comments were much more positive than
CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

As indicated in Chapter 3, this study utilized a survey methodology to collect systematic data from student and teacher participants in each of the three schools, and the results are discussed below. The qualitative themes in Chapter 4 are complementary to this chapter’s quantitative analysis. Complementarity seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method (Greene et al, 1989). Four guiding questions were refined to the four research questions below to facilitate the analysis of the quantitative results from three motivational constructs: (a) self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic motivation, and (c) teacher strategies. The three constructs are important in order to examine the alignment of student and teacher beliefs regarding student motivation to learn.

The alignment between student and teacher perceptions is significant in helping students understand teacher expectations in the classroom, and teachers must understand what students need to become motivated. Students and teachers are physically, emotionally, cognitively, and physiologically different from each other and, therefore, may have different perceptions of the effectiveness of a variety of motivational practices. For example, students may be more likely, resulting from the goals they adopt, to attribute their own motivation to intrinsic desire to learn. On the other hand, teachers may believe students are more likely to be motivated as a result of their instruction. The alignment indicates that student perceptions are in agreement with the teacher expectations on each of the three motivational constructs. This suggests that, as teachers establish classroom conditions to enhance students' academic performance, the students

those of the teachers, but the students may have been more grateful for their second chance or school choice opportunity.
understand what is expected in the classroom in order to be successful. If educators wish to maximize student academic achievement, they must understand how to motivate students successfully (Wiesman, 2012).

Visual Representation of Data

The colored bar graphs utilized herein are the visual presentation of data that display the results from the student and teacher responses on the Motivation to Learn Survey questionnaire for each of the three alternative school sites. One set of bar graphs shows how students from each school compare on the three motivational constructs: self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies. Additional bar graphs also show how teachers from each school site compares on the three motivational constructs. The alignment bar graph represents how each school compares to the others on all three motivational constructs.

To summarize, the bar graphs display the quantitative measures of average score ratings and the alignment of teachers and students on the three motivational constructs of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies. The results are presented separately for Schools One, Two, and Three.

Research Questions

After reviewing the literature on student motivation to learn and the high school dropout problem, the research questions for this analysis have been refined from those presented in the introduction. In the literature, the importance of students engaging in self-directed learning was suggested. Teachers must structure a learning environment that enables students to learn the strategies.

RQ1. How do students' perceptions of their individual self-efficacy differ from teacher beliefs about their self-efficacy?
RQ2. How do students’ perceptions of their intrinsic motivation differ from teachers’ beliefs about their intrinsic motivation?

RQ3. How do students’ perceptions of their beliefs that teachers use strategies for stimulating their motivation to learn compare to teachers’ beliefs?

RQ4. Does the alignment differ between the types of alternative school student perceptions and the collective teacher beliefs?

Quantitative Data Analysis Presentation–Three Alternative High Schools

The data analysis for each of the three schools show results from the teacher and student Motivation to Learn self-report questionnaire on the motivational constructs of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies. At each school, teachers’ perception of (a) personal self-efficacy, being confident in their own abilities to establish a mastery-orientated learning environment for their students; (b) intrinsic motivation, having a natural interest from within; and (c) implementing stimulating strategies that ignite students’ desire to engage in learning were examined. Student perceptions of their belief that teachers had established and implemented a goal structure for the enhancement of their personal self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and had provided stimulating strategies that influenced their opportunity for academic success were also examined.

Mastery Level Score

Mastery is a term used as a competency-based standard that refers to the level of student comprehension on coursework or a task activity. A Mastery Score is set at 80% comprehension, corresponding with the percentage used for lesson comprehension in the PLATO computerized curriculum software. The level ratings are 1 through 5. A level 4 rating is thus used as Mastery Level, as equivalent to 80%. Both teachers and students were asked to rate each question on a 5-
point scale from 1-5, with the higher rate indicating greater frequency of occurrence or consistency. If a score is below level 4, then the score would be below mastery. The level ratings are indicated as follows: A level 1 rating means the condition is never evident; a level 2 rating means the condition is rarely evident; a level 3 rating means the condition is sometimes evident; a level 4 rating means the condition is evident most of the time; and a level 5 rating means the condition is always evident.²

**The First Motivational Construct—Self-Efficacy**

The first research question for self-efficacy was addressed by analyzing the Motivation to Learn survey questionnaires for teachers and students, with data displayed on bar graph visual presentations. Self-efficacy consists of eleven components (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of these components). Eleven questions (1-11) addressed components related to developing self-efficacy relating to students’ motivation to learn: (a) supportive environment, (b) appropriate level of challenge, (c) meaningful learning objectives, (d) variety of strategies, (e) program for success, (f) goal setting and performance appraisal, (g) teacher helps student to recognize linkages between effort and outcome, (h) provide remedial socialization, (i) offer rewards for improved performance, (j) structure appropriate competition, and (k) call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities. The combination of these self-efficacy ratings for each of the five student and five teacher participants is the average level score on the bar graphs.

With respect to Research Question 1, the results are shown in Bar Graph 1, self-efficacy for individual students, and Bar Graph 2, self-efficacy for individual teachers. Each of the five colors on Bar Graph 1 represents students 1-5, and Bar Graph 2 represents teachers 1-5 at each of the three alternative high school case-study sites.

²Factor analysis was attempted, but the study’s small sample made results difficult to interpret.
Self-efficacy among the students in the study varied from one school to the next. Results for School One show a self-efficacy mean score of 3.68 and SD of .75. School One's student self-efficacy mean score indicates that this condition is evident more than sometime. School Two, in comparison, has a higher mean score of 3.8 and a lower SD of .31. The mean 3.8 indicates that School Two Students' self-efficacy is a condition evident more than some of the time. Finally, School Three students have a self-efficacy mean of 4.16 and an SD of .37. In comparison to
School Three, Schools One and Two have substantially lower mean scores. School Three students' self-efficacy mean of 4.16 indicates this condition is evident more than most of the time.

In comparing the Schools, the organizational context of the settings may have some influence on the students. For example, School One serves students who are referred because of credit deficiencies, but School Two and School Three students chose the school or were recommended by a counselor or teacher. Although the self-directed pace provides for autonomy in meeting their mastery oriented goals towards credit recovery for graduation, School One students work independently. School Two and School Three have a setting that allows for more group engagement than does School One. School Three respondents know that they were preferred students, and their responses may be reflective of appreciation for an opportunity that many students do not have. The college campus learning environment at School Three is conducive to the students feeling confident, and also encouragement that they can be successful.

**Self-Efficacy for Teachers**

Results of self-efficacy for teachers are shown in Bar Graph 2. Again, there is substantial variation in the response of teachers across these three schools. School One has a teacher self-efficacy mean score of 3.04 and an SD of .32. The results show two teachers below the mean. The mean score implies School One teachers believe that their self-efficacy is a condition evident only some of the time. School Two teachers have a self-efficacy mean of 3.8 and an SD of .31. Comparing School One’s mean with that of School Two, School Two has a higher mean score difference of .76 higher than School One, but the SD for both schools is close. School Two teachers’ self-efficacy mean score indicates a condition evident more than just sometime.
Finally, School Three teachers report the highest self-efficacy mean of 4.14 and an SD of .22. School Three's mean score indicates teacher self-efficacy as a condition evident most of the time.

Bar Graph 2

School Summary Self-Efficacy for Students and Teachers

The responses to the research questions are the results from the visual representations of the data in mean scores and standard deviations. The task of creating learning environments conducive to developing cognitive competence rests heavily on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers. The students in School One may have more confidence in their ability to be successful in school compared to teachers’ belief in providing the necessary conditions for student success.
The collective student portraits indicate positive relationships with teachers, but most teacher portraits indicate student discipline problems and low motivation. Although teachers are more in alignment with each other than the students, it could be suggested that the teachers are more in agreement with each other than the students, especially the two students with the higher scores.

School Two results indicate that the student perceptions and teacher beliefs for self-efficacy have the same mean score 3.8 and an SD of .31, indicating that students and teachers are better aligned than those in School One and School Three. This positive goal alignment between student perceptions and teacher belief suggests a learning environment that is conducive for all students to learn and become successful.

School Three students and teachers are more in alignment with each other than both School One and School Two. School Three teachers have the highest mean score compared to School One and School Two, but School Three Students have a mean score higher than teachers and students at each of the other two schools. As suggested in the literature, each of the teachers in all three alternative school sites could benefit from professional development activities designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve student learning. In all three school cases, it is important to learn how to design educational goal structures with a mastery orientation.

**The Second Motivational Construct: Intrinsic Motivation**

The second question, regarding intrinsic motivation, was addressed by analyzing the Motivation to Learn Survey questionnaires for teachers and students data display on bar graph 3 and bar graph 4. The intrinsic motivation section of the survey consisted of 10 components (questions 12-21), which address: (a) adapt task to student interest, (b) include novelty/variety elements, (c) allow choices or autonomous decisions, (d) provide opportunities for students to
respond actively, (e) provide immediate feedback to student responses, (f) allow students to create finished products, (g) include fantasy or stimulation elements, (h) incorporate game-like features into exercises, (i) include higher-level objectives and divergent questions, and (j) provide opportunities to interact with peers. The combination of these intrinsic motivation ratings for each of the five student and five teacher participants is the average level score on the bar graph 3 and bar graph 4.

With respect to Research Question 2, the results are shown in Bar Graph 3, intrinsic motivation for individual students, and Bar Graph 4, intrinsic motivation for individual teachers. Each of the five colors on Bar Graph 3 represents students 1-5. Those on Bar Graph 4 represent teachers 1-5.

**Intrinsic Motivation for Students**

The bar graphs are the visual display of the data for student motivation to learn. As in the discussion of self-efficacy, there is considerable school-to-school variation in intrinsic motivation among students. Results from School One show an intrinsic motivation mean of 3.42 and an SD of .70. The two students below the mean are also below two SDs. School One students’ intrinsic motivation mean indicates this condition is evident more than just sometime. School Two, in comparison to School One, has a higher student intrinsic motivation mean of 3.72 and a lower SD of .36. School Two students’ intrinsic motivation mean indicates that this condition is evident more than just some of the time. School Three has the highest student intrinsic motivation mean of 4.28 and an SD of .44. Compared to School One and School Two, School Three's mean is higher, but not its SD. School Three students’ intrinsic motivation mean indicates this condition is evident more than most of the time.
As in the discussion of self-efficacy, there is considerable school-to-school variation in intrinsic motivation among students. Results of School One show an intrinsic motivation mean 3.42 and an SD of .70. The two students below the mean are also below two SDs. School One students’ intrinsic motivation mean indicates this condition is evident more than just sometime.

School Two, in comparison to School One, has a higher student intrinsic motivation mean of 3.72 and a lower SD of .36. School Two students’ intrinsic motivation mean suggests that this condition is evident more than just some of the time. School Three has the highest student
intrinsic motivation mean 4.28 and an SD of .44. Compared to School One and School Two, School Three's mean is higher, but not its SD. School Three students’ intrinsic motivation mean indicates this condition is evident more than most of the time.

**Intrinsic Motivation for Teachers**

Bar Graph 4

Similar patterns are evident among teachers. School One has a teacher intrinsic motivation mean of 2.86 and an SD of .30. School One teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean shows the condition is evident more than just rarely. School Two teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean is 3.42 and it has an SD of .48 and, compared to School One teachers' mean score, it is
higher. School Two teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean shows this condition is evident more than some of the time. School Three has a teachers’ intrinsic mean of 4.18 and an SD of .39. School Three, compared to Schools One and Two, has a higher mean. School Three teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean shows this condition as evident most of the time.

**School Summary of Intrinsic Motivation for Students and Teachers**

The responses to Research Question 2 are results from the visual representations of the data in mean scores and standard deviations. School One students have an intrinsic motivation mean higher than teachers’ intrinsic motivation by .56. Students may be more motivated to focus on getting the necessary credits completed for graduation. Hidi and Ainley (2012) noted that the emotion of interest tends to arise in any context that offers change, novelty, or a sense of possibility and is appraised as important and requiring effort and attention. Teachers, however, did not show as high an intrinsic motivation, as reflected in their lower mean. This may be an indication of how teachers feel in making sure they do everything possible to enable students to reach their graduation and life goals. Contextual influences could also be a factor for teachers in School One (Raudenbush, Rowan & Cheong, 1992).

School Two students have an intrinsic motivation mean of 3.72 higher and a lower SD of .36 than teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean and SD. School Two students may be more intrinsically motivated because of school choice. Many students mention, in their collective school portraits, why they chose to attend School Two: they felt more positive about it compared to their previous school and perhaps for some of the various other reasons listed above. School Two teachers’ mean score is lower than that of the students, but the high SD of .48 could indicate that the two teachers above the mean may be very intrinsically motivated, as both students and teachers share the same self-efficacy mean score of 3.8 and SD of .31. School Two students
mean score for intrinsic motivation is higher compared to the mean score for intrinsic motivation of School One students’ and School Two students' SD is lower.

School Three students’ intrinsic motivation mean score of 4.28 is higher than Teachers’ intrinsic motivation mean of 4.18, but teachers are better aligned among other teachers with a lower SD of .39 than the students' SD of .44. School Three students have the highest mean score compared to all students and teachers at the other schools. The middle college model, with the vocational component, for students at risk has been reported in the literature as having higher academic performance and graduation rates, and this is the case for School Three. It has been suggested that programs designed to reduce dropout rates and increase college attendance among at risk students are effective and enhance achievement. As suggested in the literature, teachers must embody the desire to provide opportunities for student autonomy and promote strategies that enable students all students, at all schools, to become intrinsically motivated and engage in task activities because they want to.

**The Third Motivational Construct: Teacher Strategies**

Questions 22-33 were focused on the measure of teacher strategies to stimulate students’ motivation to learn. The 12 questions centered on the following: (a) models interest, (b) communicates desirable expectations, (c) minimizes student anxieties, (d) projects intensity, (e) projects enthusiasm, (f) introduces and builds task interest, (g) introduces curiosity or suspense, (h) induces dissonance or cognitive conflict in making students think, (i) makes content personal, (j) makes abstract content more familiar or students’ existing knowledge, (k) states learning objectives, (l) provides advanced organizers, and (m) models problem solving. The combination of these teacher strategies ratings for each of the five student and five teacher participants is the average level rating score.
With respect to Research Question 3, the results are shown in Bar Graph 5, teacher strategies for individual students, and Bar Graph 6, teacher strategies for individual teachers. Each of the five colors on Bar Graph 5 represent students 1-5 and, on Bar Graph 6, teachers 1-5.

**Teacher Strategies—Students**

Bar Graph 5
Here, two differences between schools were substantial. School One students have a mean for teacher strategies of 3.48 and an SD of .76. School One students have a teacher strategies mean that represents this condition as evident more than just some of the time. For School Two students, teacher strategies have a mean of 4.06 and an SD of .43. Compared to School One's mean, School Two has a higher mean. School Two students’ mean score for teacher strategies showed this condition as evident most of the time. School Three students’ teacher strategies have a mean of 4.20 and the SD of .43 is higher than the other 2 schools. For School Three students, the teacher strategies mean indicates that this condition is evident most of the time.

**Teacher Strategies–Teachers**

Bar Graph 6
This pattern was also evident for teachers. School One teachers have teacher strategies with a mean of 2.94 and an SD of .40. Teacher strategies mean for School One teachers showed this condition is evident less than some time. School Two teachers have teacher strategies with a mean of 3.6 and an SD of .42 compared to School One, and School Two's mean is higher. School Two teachers' strategies' mean shows that this condition is evident more than just some of the time. School Three teachers' teacher strategies have a mean of 4.08 and an SD of .20. Compared to School One and School Two, School Three teacher strategies mean is higher and the SD is lower. School Three's mean for teacher strategies shows this condition is evident most of the time.
Teachers at each of the three schools work in very different organizational contexts. From the teachers’ perspectives in their theme portraits, School One teachers were the least pleased with their assignment. School One teachers consistently noted that the computer lab modules provided the teacher so they felt limitations placed upon them to implement a variety of teacher strategies. Compared to School One, School Two teachers used various strategies and some wanted more opportunities to observe other teachers and more planning time for improving lessons and their skills. One difference between School Three and the other two schools is teachers meet weekly to discuss concerns as a team. School Three teachers seem to work more collaboratively as a team than School One and School Two teachers.

School Summary of Teacher Strategies for Students and Teachers

The responses to Research Question 3 are results from the visual representations of the data in mean scores and standard deviation. School One student perceptions of teacher strategies compared to teacher beliefs are higher. The SD of .76 for School One students is much broader or widespread than the SD of .40 for School One teachers, which indicates teachers are more in agreement about their lack of opportunity to supplant computer program teacher strategies. Also, students may be rating the computer teacher rather than the facilitator teachers. However, teacher portraits reflected some efforts to take advantage of opportunities to provide supplemental curriculum materials for some students.

Compared to School One, School Two student perceptions of teacher strategies and teacher beliefs have an SD that is very close, indicating students and teachers are close in alignment. It also implies that School Two implements a learning environment with a mastery goal orientation close in alignment.
School Three student perceptions of teacher strategies compared to teacher beliefs are higher, but the teachers' mean is closer aligned. School Three students' SD of .43 is higher than the teachers' SD of .20 and twice the distance from the mean. Compared to School One, School Two and School Three teachers have 4 teachers at or above the mean score.

Suggested in the literature is that a teacher’s instructional efforts are governed more by what they believe they can accomplish than by their view of other teachers’ abilities to prevail over environmental obstacles to effective teaching. The task of teachers is to create learning environments conducive to developing cognitive competence in students and rests heavily on the talents and efficacy of teachers. This is also tied to the teachers’ intrinsic motivation to teach with confidence that they can and desire to provide the necessary strategies that engage student confidence and intrinsic motivation in learning.

**Student Motivation to Learn Alignment of Student Perceptions and Teachers' Beliefs**

With respect to Research Question 4, the results are shown in Bar Graph 7, Student Motivation to Learn Alignment of Student Perceptions and Teacher Beliefs for each of the three alternative school sites. Each of the six colors on Bar Graph 7 represents the three motivational constructs for students and teachers at each school.
As was the case with other constructs, considerable school level variation is also evident on this one. The alignment for the School One dropout prevention program on self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies has a mean of 3.23 and an SD of .32. The alignment for School Two, the charter high school, for self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies has a mean of 3.72 and an SD of .21. In the alignment for School Three, the middle college high school, students and teachers have a mean score of 4.18 and an SD of .08. The results show that School Three clearly has the highest mean compared to School One and School Two. It is evident that the School Three constructs for students and teachers on self-efficacy,
intrinsic motivation, and teacher strategies are closer in alignment and are a condition most of the time.

The alignment is the mutual adaptation between teachers and students on the process of teaching and learning. As suggested in the literature, continuity and interaction provide the measure of educational significance and value for the student. Teachers have the responsibility to select the objective conditions for understanding the needs and capacities of the individual students who are engaged in learning at a given time. It is the teachers’ responsibility to regulate with an ability to influence the educational experience of students and creating a learning environment which will interact with the needs of the students. When the conditions for learning are assumed to be suitable, students can become intrinsically motivated to learn. In addition, the alignment is an indication of a school organization’s collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is the perceptions of teachers in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can execute courses of action required to positively affect student achievement (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

Bandura (1997) developed social cognitive theory to explain that the control humans exercised over their lives through agentive actions is powerfully influenced by the strength of their efficacy beliefs. Bandura defined efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce a given attainment” (p. 3). Teachers operate collectively within an interactive social system rather than as isolates. Therefore, educational development through efficacy enhancement must address the social and organizational structure of educational systems. The theory is anchored in human agency, as will be discussed in the following conclusion.
CONCLUSION REGARDING THE QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Given the exploratory nature of this analysis, relevant literature and the data display can illustrate some organizational factors that appear to affect these three alternative schools’ teacher efficacy and collective efficacy. Social cognitive theory assumes that teacher perceptions of group capability influence behavior; thus, collective efficacy beliefs also shape the normative environment of the school and influence both teacher behavior and student achievement (Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith, 2002). However, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) extended collective teacher efficacy to the organizational level, while also emphasizing the importance of individual teacher efficacy.

Results from the data on teacher efficacy show insights into the effects of alternative school organizational environments for teachers. Also suggested in the literature is how schools can be designed to enhance teachers’ efficacy and their collective efficacy (Raudenbush et al, 1992). Teachers operate collectively within an interactive social system rather than as isolated individuals; therefore, educational development through efficacy enhancement is needed to address the social and organizational structure of educational systems (Bandura, 1997). Goddard et al. (2000) reported that certain elements of collective teacher efficacy, group competence, and task analysis are highly related in schools.

As Bandura (1986) argued, having the knowledge and skills needed to perform an act does not, in and of itself, guarantee that an actor will perform efficaciously. Instead, effective actions depend also upon the personal judgment that one can mobilize such knowledge and skills to perform an act successfully under varied and unpredictable circumstances. Within the three schools, telling differences in collective teacher efficacy mean scores show that School One has a mean of 3.0; School Two a mean of 3.7; and School Three a mean of 4.1.
These three alternative school models represent diversity in organizational structure. This connects the school with its environment. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) stated,

Specifically, a healthy school is one in which the technical, managerial, and institutional levels are in harmony and the school is meeting both its instrumental and expressive needs as it successfully copes with disruptive external forces and directs its energies toward its mission. (p. 358)

The school context plays a significant role in the development and maintenance of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Collective efficacy is an emergent group-level attribute, the product of the interactive dynamic of the group members (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2000). In view of the results reported above, School One has the lowest collective efficacy mean score, compared to School Two and School Three. The largest contrast is between School One and School Three on all three of the motivational constructs. In view of this, the qualitative data in Chapter 4’s teacher portraits provide a richer understanding of these school contexts, and complement the quantitative results above. Of course, these data are always open to alternative interpretations.

School One data are shown, in view of the qualitative data, as a link to the source of influences that contribute to the low mean score. Also, the results reflect the school organization factors that influence alternative school collective efficacy, school structure, and school climate (Newmann et al., 1989). First, the organizational structure is an important factor influenced by an orderly learning environment and academic excellence (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Although academic climate was outside of the scope of this inquiry, teachers did mention that the school was not about academic excellence because credit recovery was its main focus. The qualitative data reflect School One teachers reporting that student discipline was a major concern. They described students in their classroom as discipline problems and that many were disrespectful, felt entitled, and were lazy. Others were described as students who have little belief in
themselves. The teachers mentioned that many were enrolled because they were teen parents, in foster care, or in the court system and were ordered to be in school. The student population was individuals with whom some teachers had not worked with before and, therefore, they felt tension. These discipline problems appeared to affect teacher self-efficacy and the school’s collective efficacy.

School climate is an organizational factor that can be positive or negative, as a reflection of the school’s success or failure to achieve orderly behavior, but also meeting instrumental needs. These instrumental needs include an academic emphasis on high expectations, teacher involvement in collaborative teams, decision making to influence student learning, and administrative leadership responsive to the needs of teachers (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Newmann et al., 1989). School One teachers did not feel intrinsically motivated with high expectations for students in general. For example, some teachers felt they were not able to teach in the computer lab setting because they functioned as facilitators rather than instructors. There were teachers who complained of excessive role demands and shared teaching positions, which also could diminish teacher efficacy. Two teachers shared a position, one half-time in School One and the other half-time scheduled at another building site, and did not feel administrators were open to changing schedules. This created frustrations and tension because the schedule created an inability to communicate with other teachers about problems they share in common. These issues caused teachers to feel the administration was not responsive to their concerns and needs regarding these issues.

In comparison, the school structure in the third institution is an example of one associated with orderly behavior. The main reason for this is that students were advised that the school policy is no suspensions because behavior problems are not allowed. Instead, the consequence is
that students will return to their district home school. The college campus and the firm and fair school discipline policy prompts students to realize that inappropriate school behavior is not tolerated; so teachers and administration have control over orderly environmental conditions. Also, teachers in this school mentioned that parents are actively engaged in their children’s education. For example, parents must first sign a contract for permission to enroll, and to commit to supporting school rules and regulations for the students. Compared to School Three, School One's parents were not actively engaged with the school unless they were called about a discipline problem. However, School One teachers were mandated to make at least 10 calls a week to parents. Both School Three and School Two have an open door policy for parents to communicate on any level and at any time.

School Three has the highest mean score and appears to have high levels of collaboration, as evidenced in the portraits. This has an influence on school climate. Teachers work well in teams and meet on a weekly basis. Collective teacher efficacy has the potential to contribute to how schools differ in the attainment of their most important objective, the education of students (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2000). In fact, Goddard et al. (2000), stated, “If collective efficacy gains enhance organizational performance, reciprocal causality suggests that resulting performance improvements may, in turn, strengthen collective organizational efficacy” (p. 483). The school seems to have a team focus on employability skills and a strong student support system. Trust in colleagues can be positively related to collective teacher efficacy. Schools with highly trusting teachers offer enhanced levels of collegiality and, therefore more opportunities for vicarious learning than are found in schools where teachers perceive less trust (Goddard et al, 2000).
School Three teachers also contribute to a positive school climate by finding ways to enable student academic success. For example, teachers spoke about caring as an important practice academically, and discussed student internships that contribute to the goal of college preparation or employment after graduation. School Three teachers report responsive administrative support whenever they have a problem with a student in class. These conditions of a school structure that is orderly and a productive school climate have a positive influence on teacher efficacy and collective school efficacy.

School Two data showed a higher mean score than School One, but lower than School Three. The teachers at School Two reported the need for a tighter school structure. Some teachers reported discipline problems by describing student behaviors as high-spirited, with low student efficacy, and lacking confidence in their own ability to learn. However, teachers use the school’s redirect policy on a consistent basis with the goal of keeping students in school rather than suspending them. One interesting finding is that the self-efficacy mean score for teachers and students is the same at School Two. This appears to be a positive development that could explain the collective teacher commitment in working toward orderly school student behavior. The alignment between teacher and students could be an indication of a mastery goal orientation for the classroom and school structure. Goddard et al. (2000) argued that the sources of efficacy information postulated by (Bandura, 1997) operate at both the individual and collective levels. Also, just as schools learn vicariously from other schools, they are also influenced by leaders (social persuasion) and affective states that result from collective conditions such as successes or tragedies that impact all school members (Goddard & Goddard, 2001).

School Two’s climate enables teachers to think conceptually in proactively planning and organizing for future needs in addressing student learning and teacher development. For
example, teachers report their desire to improve teaching strategies through peer classroom observations. A positive school climate is evidenced by teachers helping each other and planning and organizing for improved class management and time for grading student work. School Two teachers focus on helping students excel beyond being just good enough. Teachers report that using their varied backgrounds from industry help students learn how to think creatively and to believe in themselves. School Two teachers feel they have responsive administrative leadership because they can communicate openly about concerns regarding school improvement, student academic progress, and planning. These issues have a positive influence on teachers’ self-efficacy and organization collective efficacy.

With increased exposure to efficacy-building, vicarious learning likely leads to higher collective efficacy (Goddard et al 2000). For example, School One and School Two may also become efficacious by observing other schools, such as School Three. School Three has an effective organization structure and climate, attributes that could be considered in a school’s improvement plan and through professional development training for teachers. An individual teacher may be highly inefficacious, but that teacher might perform differently depending on whether the majority of teacher colleagues in a school share strong perceptions of collective efficacy. In other words, the effect of an individual teachers’ efficaciousness may be either attenuated or enhanced depending on the level of collective efficacy in a school organization (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1992).

Professional development can help organizations with restructuring and to focus on the factors that can allow teachers to cope more effectively with the uncertainties of teaching and increase their feeling of efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy is not reducible to the individual measures from which group-level aggregates are constructed. Yet, collective teacher efficacy,
along with many alternative school organizational features such as school size and climate, teacher control over instructional conditions (discipline), staff collaboration, and a responsive administrative leadership can be experienced individually by each teacher and or organizational member.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on motivation to learn and students at risk who fail to engage in learning that contributes academic success and high school graduation. When students are motivated to actively engage in academic learning tasks, they can prevent the problems that accompany a high school dropout. As schools prepare students at risk to remain in school to prevent dropout, schools may fail to provide the necessary support structure they need while students fail to take responsibility for their own learning. The purpose of this study was to investigate the conditions needed today to influence students’ motivation to engage in the classroom learning activities that enable academic success and graduating from high. These conditions center around the learning environment in a supportive mastery goal-oriented classroom structure and three motivational constructs of self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and stimulating teacher strategies.

This investigation focused, within the social cognitive structure, on the similarities and differences between three diverse alternative high schools on three motivational constructs. In review of the extant literature on student motivation, four guiding questions are as follows:

1. What can teachers do to create a learning environment that is growth-oriented rather than deficiency-oriented? Theme (1) in the review of literature suggests that the classroom structure must be in alignment with the teacher and student goals. From this perspective, motivational characteristics of students contribute to their academic success to the extent that these characteristics match the behavioral expectations of the classroom. Students at risk need a clear goal structure to understand what it will take for them to be successful academically. There is a positive correlation between aligned goal structures. A mastery goal structure describes an
environment in which the instructional practices, policies, and norms convey to students that learning is important, that all students are valued, that trying hard is important, and that all students can be successful if they work hard to learn.

2. Are there factors to consider in creating learning environments so that students’ and teachers’ optimistic views are congruent with student motivational and development needs for school and academic success? Theme (2) in the review of literature suggests a classroom structure that is congruent with a culturally responsive environment is important in developing students’ self-efficacy. Of course, self-efficacy refers to a student’s intuitive judgment about his or her own competence, but it is through self-reflection that students make judgments about their capability to accomplish tasks and succeed in the many activities that comprise their lives. The student can feel the respect that the setting and people around them provide. Self-efficacy is enhanced when students have a supportive learning environment that builds their competence in knowing what is needed for their academic success. The classroom environment is positively related to self-efficacy.

3. How can teachers help students to become confident in taking responsibility for their own learning? Theme (3) in the review of literature suggests that the need for autonomy supportive teachers to make sure learning tasks are at the appropriate challenge level is important in promoting students’ sense of control over their own learning activities that contributes taking responsibility for becoming a self-regulated learner. To help students, teachers and schools must focus on strategies to promote learning that enables intrinsic motivation. Students have a need for autonomy, but also, they need autonomy-supportive teachers to create environments for students to develop the confidence and ability to be self-disciplining in attaining their goals.
Educators with a humanistic orientation support the psychological and sociological bases of student learning and behavior, trustful view and confidence in students’ ability to be responsible.

4. How do these factors or considerations vary across the three different institutional environments? Guiding question 4 was refined to Research question 4. Does the alignment differ between the types of alternative school student perceptions and the collective teachers’ beliefs? The qualitative section drew contrasts between each school as an organizational institution in relation to their school structure and climate.

These 4 guiding questions were refined after reviewing the literature. For example, guiding questions 1 and 2 were refined to Research Question 1 on self-efficacy. How do students perceptions of their individual self-efficacy differ from teacher beliefs about their self-efficacy? Guiding question 2 was refined to research Question 3 on teacher strategies. How do students perceptions of their beliefs that teachers use strategies for stimulating their motivation to learn compare to teacher beliefs? Guiding question 3 was refined to Research Question 2 on intrinsic motivation. How do students’ perceptions of their intrinsic motivation differ from teachers’ beliefs about their intrinsic motivation? Guiding question 4: How do these factors or considerations vary across these different institutional environments? This guiding question was refined to research Question 4 on the alignment. Does the alignment differ between the types of alternative school student perceptions and the collective teachers’ beliefs?

The qualitative section drew contrasts between each school as an organizational institution in relation to their school structure and climate. The mixed methods design help to shed light on the findings in both the complementary qualitative data with the quantitative analysis. Three observations seem to be obvious incongruences between the three alternative schools as organizational institutions serving students at risk of graduating from high school.
First, the portrait of School One represented a failure to manifest student-environment interaction as being in an ecological balance. Instead, School One reflected an imbalance by demonstrating a more reactive and un-empathic than a proactive and caring stance in creating conditions for the learning environment that would enhance students’ self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and feelings of belongingness. For example, School One reacted to the situations and conditions that seemed to be preventing them from teaching the students the way they wanted and had been used to teaching. Whether it was the lack of a responsive administration, students, or the combination of uncharted territory of the program structure and their needs; teachers had a view of the problems as the metaphor glass half-empty rather than a glass half-full or not even full at all.

The purpose of School One credit recovery was to contribute to lowering the dropout rate by making sure that no student in the program would be contributing to the dropout statistic. The teachers could not get beyond the obstacles to meet the students where they were. However, the students may have had greater obstacles to overcome than many of their teachers; and yet, they were able to adjust as the goal of getting a high school diploma was paramount. Students saw their glass almost full. In other words, students had positive attitudes and did not allow obstacles to interfere with their ability to accomplish what they were there for. Students also had positive comments about their teachers and the school program because they could progress at their pace.

The portrait of School Two represented a school in ecological balance more so than School One. For example, the quantitative self-efficacy mean scores were the same for teachers and students. Compared to School One, School Two’s ecological balance reflected a set of environmental resources available to students to cope with stress. There is an atmosphere of trust between the teachers and students; and the students respond to the caring teachers. The charter school has 3 counselors and a social worker, along with a day care center for the teen
parents. Also, the teachers displayed empathy, a form of institutional authority (Lightfoot, 1983) toward the students, especially in the area of discipline. Another sign of caring is when teachers adapt policies and practices accordingly, it was a sign of teacher caring. For example, the redirect policy was consistently implemented by all of the teachers and the students were well aware of this policy practice. Ecological balance does not just happen, it must be nurtured. This is a difference between School One and School Two. For example, School One staff reacted in frustration when the students presented behavior problems because discipline was handled by the administration, but School Two planned a student orientation as a way of communicating to them what the school behavioral expectations were.

The purpose of School Two is to proactively prevent high school dropout. The school has mechanisms in place, such as student orientation to make students aware of what is expected of them before they experience negative consequences. School Two’s students intentionally chose to attend the charter school, as they expressed in their portrait, because they felt that the previous school was not as good or it had closed. This is one example of how students start to bond with the school staff and limit the potential for dropping out of high school. The students seem to have an internal compass that is aligned with the ethos of the school because they do not want to do anything that will jeopardize their enrollment.

The portrait of School Three manifests a student-environment ecological balance. The support structure is a strong student-centered learning environment designed for student success. The students at School Three met selection criteria before they were considered and ultimately accepted into the program. However, the teachers are a collaborative team who prepared for the success of all students. The dual enrollment on the university campus provides students with a positive atmosphere that makes students feel the confidence to achieve as expected of the regular
college students. The student recruitment, selection, and admission process is the most unique of all compared to School One and School Two. It is procedural for middle college students to be a select group. For example, all of the participating schools from feeder districts were educated about the program and that their student referrals needed to be a certain type most appropriate for the program. The school has strong parent participation and they are required to participate in the final signing of the contract that communicates academic and behavioral expectations of the program. This is as another form of the students support structure for most of the students.

Teachers feel the administrative support on any student concern or curriculum issue.

The purpose of School Three is to create a bridge between secondary and postsecondary educational programs. The goal is to be an effective avenue for student in their last two years of high school to be successful in completing college level credits while simultaneously satisfying the requirements for graduating from high school. For example, School Three provides students with a jumpstart to post-secondary education and vocational training while completing high school credits for completing high school on OTCC campus. This dual arrangement is designed to prevent students from dropping out who might be at risk of doing so. Students are aware of their privilege and work hard to do well.

Compared to School One, School Three has a supportive learning environment that is ecologically balanced. The congruence of the student-environment as a prerequisite for students to feel confident and intrinsically motivated to experience academic success is very important. Teachers and students share a positive relationship in an autonomy-supportive learning environment.

The second observation that is a contrast between the 3 schools is the number of years of experience that the teaching staff has at their school. For example, School One teachers have the
least amount of average experience at the school. Teacher comments from the portraits indicated that some teachers were displaced and others were there because they needed employment. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the school site and the disciplinary issues. The average number of years teaching experience was 6 months at School One. Compared to School One, School Two had an average of 2 and one half years of teaching experience at the school, and School Three had an average of 5 years of teaching experience at the school and university. The teachers at School Two and School Three chose to work at the school because of their experience and desire to teach students at risk, which is not the case for School One. Also, School Two and School Three had a mean score significantly higher than School One. The school setting at School One had a major influence on School One teachers’ perceptions on their role as facilitator rather than teacher.

Finally, the third observation is the contrast between the organizational cultures of each of the three schools is an important issue that gets limited attention in alternative schools. Although the organizational culture of the school context is an important factor, it was not considered for this study. School practices are scrutinized in relation to students’ cultural backgrounds and neither stands apart (Gitlin, Margonis & Brunjes, 1993). These researchers suggest that it is important to understand how to examine the criteria and the way they inform a set of practices which may contribute to student failure.

However, the organizational culture of School One students and their teachers were a cultural mismatch. Cultural disequilibrium describes not only the cultural mismatch that may occur between teachers and students, but also the sense of imbalance or confusion that can result when attempts to grapple with situations or experiences, such as those experienced in School One, for which schools and principal leadership are not fully prepared. Compared to School
One, School Two has a more diverse student and teacher backgrounds and the organizational culture was a better match. School Three did not have a cultural mismatch. Perhaps it was the mix of all students from various backgrounds attending school together on a college campus.

Professional Development

Professional development in alternative schools for teachers is not only necessary, but mandatory for all alternative schools to engage in careful study of their own institution. Educators can design a framework that identifies and build upon the strengths of the students, staff, and community (Kretovics, Farber, & Armaline, 2004). School staff and teachers must be trained to assume different responsibilities by becoming skilled in evaluation and organizational planning (Timar, 1989). Teachers, principals, and other school staff can collectively work as a team in each alternative school to identify specific areas for improvement, plan strategies for implementation, and engage in consistent monitoring on a scheduled basis. Michael (1990) pointed out using the model of Contingency and Congruence, in particular, forces the evaluator to attend to potential mismatches between program conceptualization and implementation as one means of better understanding shortfalls in desired outcomes.

School organizations can utilize student voices to help evaluate alternative schools. Yonezawa & Jones (2007) reported that students’ voices and experiences affirmed research on the vital importance of highly trained and knowledgeable teachers. Teachers and administrators commented on the value they placed on student perspectives and felt the it was more helpful than aggregate standardized test scores that often pointed them in too few or too many directions. In each of the schools, students made positive comments about the teachers, and in some cases they were a reflection of how surprisingly observant they were and can be when asked. Professional
development for teachers in alternative schools and programs on goal setting can be enhanced by engaging teachers and students to help identify problems areas in need of school improvement.

**Policy Implications**

Policy implications for alternative schools and programs can be considered at the school site level. An alternative school can be an intentional school that depends on reliable, useful information about programs and practices that enable it to enhance students’ academic success (Slavin, 2002). The idea is not to reinvent the wheel, unless there is nothing available from external sources capable of helping the school accomplish its goals. With the advent of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD), there are many sources of information about whole-school reform models and, to lesser degree, about individual programs and practices. Also, local consultants, state departments of instruction, and other information sources are able to help schools make informed decisions about effective programs and practices. School staff need not have advanced degrees to evaluate research on alternative programs, but should have enough background in research to seek programs and practices that have been evaluated in comparison to control groups (Stake, 2002).

As Donmoyer (1993) suggests, structuring policies, programs, and practices so that they can accommodate the idiosyncracy of at-risk students is the major challenge facing educators today. Timar (1989) notes that over the past several decades the schools response to external demands have been to multiply programs and regulations. The Policy makers’ role is to specify situations and provide potentially useful props, to set the stage so to speak, for rich educational encounters. Their job is not to write the script. This must be done by teachers and students as they interact with each other in the classroom (Donmoyer, 1993).
Limitations of the study

The features of the study, motivational constructs, guided the focus for the investigation. However, they were also sources of several limitations. These related to the sample size, student population, and the researcher. The small sample study participants made the results significant to the unique school and not generalizable. Also, self-reports general surveys were used to collect data from teacher and student participants. The researcher was the sole collector of the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the research suggests, (Henson, 2001), alternative schools can provide teachers with training and development by participating in action research. For example, teacher self-efficacy has been consistently linked with positive teacher behavior and student achievement. A research investigation on the influence on students at risk in an alternative school that focuses on professional development action research training for teachers on mastery learning principles in relation to the three motivational constructs in this study. Teacher research initiatives provide rich opportunities for teachers to collaborate with peers and make critical instructional decisions and assume control of the implementation of teaching strategies in their classrooms promotes teacher empowerment.

Teaching students Self-Related Learning (SRL) strategies and the influence on academic achievement are important recommendations. Hidi and Ainley (2012) have suggested that there is a close relationship between self-regulation and self-efficacy. For example, students with a high self-efficacy are more likely to self-regulate and perform better than students with feeling of low self-efficacy. In other words, a student’s judgement of self-efficacy is positively correlated
with self-regulation and actual performance. Helping teachers learn how to teach for students being accountable for their own learning is a good topic for professional development.

How effective are alternative schools in contributing to the decreases in the dropout rate? This can be answered when schools engaged in their school self-evaluation completed by the staff and in some cases student input. Program participants can be the best evaluators if they are sincere about school improvement and student achievement.

What remains unanswered by the study? How the culture of the organizations are uniquely different. Educators need to design a framework that identifies and builds upon the strengths of the students, staff and community. Educators must develop an understanding of the social, cultural, and economic differences students bring to the classroom. Also, teachers must be aware of what the antecedents are in human actions? For example, teachers and students actions prior to the consequences of the actions must be known in order to apply the appropriate consequences to the student. More specifically, what did a student do or say prior to the point of teacher frustration in School One.


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Kitzmiller, E. M. (2013). "You can’t control me!" Cultivating authority in a struggling urban high school, Teachers College Record, 115(12), 1-43.


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Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy.


APPELLIX A
TEACHER PARTICIPANT
SURVEY INTERVIEW SHEET

1. How long have you been at this school?
2. What circumstances led to you becoming a teacher at this school?
3. How is this school different from other schools you have taught in?
4. Do you perceive that teachers at this school are different from those at other schools? In what ways? (roles they play, personal characteristics, instructional strategies, qualifications)?
5. How would you describe your students? How do they compare with other students you've had at other schools?
6. Do you perceive the working relationship with teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors to be different from those you've experience in other schools? If, so, what ways are they different?
7. In what ways do the goals and expectations for student performance at this school differ from those of other schools?
8. In what ways do instructional strategies, discipline code, and behavior management approaches differ from those in other high schools? If there is a difference, what is the reason for it?
9. What progress do you see in your students during their stay at this school (academic performance, behavior, relationships with others)?
10. What role do parents play in helping students succeed? What kinds of things do parents do that get in the way of students succeeding?
1. How long have you been at this school?

2. Why did you come to this school?

3. Tell me about this school. How is it different from your previous school?

4. Tell me about your teachers. How are they different from other teachers you've had?

5. Is there a teacher that you feel especially close to at this school? Explain why?

6. How would you describe the students at this school? What is your relationship with them?

7. Are the students at this school different from the students at other schools you have attended?

8. How would you describe the guidance counselors? Are they different than your other school counselors?

9. How would you describe the principal at this school? Is he or she different from your previous school principals?

10. Tell me about the class work. Is the class work and homework challenging to you?

11. Do you feel that your teachers, counselors, and principals have helped you with your problems?

12. How would you describe your academic progress at this school?

13. How would you describe your behavioral progress at this school?

14. How do your parents feel about your being at this school? What do your parents think about this school?

15. What do you like best about this school? Least? Would you change anything?
APPENDIX C

Student Questionnaire
Strategies for Motivating Students to Learn

SELF-EFFICACY: Essential Pre-Conditions

1. Supportive Environment. (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes       Never

Does your teacher organize and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment. This includes encouraging students, patiently supporting their learning efforts, and allowing them to feel comfortable taking intellectual risks without fear of being criticized for making mistakes? Explain.

2. Appropriate level of challenge/difficulty. (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes       Never

Does your teacher provide tasks that are optimally motivated by tasks that allow you to achieve high levels of success when you apply reasonable effort? Explain.

3. Meaningful Learning Objectives. (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes       Never

Does your teacher select academic activities that teach some knowledge or skill that is worth learning, either in its own right or as a step toward a higher objective? Explain.

4. Moderate Optimal Use (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes       Never

Does your teacher over-do motivational attempts by using a particular strategy so that is loses its effectiveness because it is used too often or too routinely? Explain.

5. Program for Success (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes       Never

Does your teacher prepare you for new learning by beginning instruction at your appropriate learning level so you can adjust without feeling too confused or frustrated? Explain.
6. Teach goal setting, performance appraisal, and self-reinforcement skills. (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher assist you in learning to set and commit to goals that are near, specific and challenging rather than too easy or too hard? Provide specific detailed feedback and help students use appropriate standards for judging performance (to compare it with own previous progress rather than with performance of peers)? Explain.

7. Helps students to recognize linkages between effort and outcome. (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher portray your effort as an investment, which will produce knowledge or skill development and thus empower you, rather than as a risk of failure or embarrassment? Explain.

8. Provide remedial socialization (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher use performance contracts, mastery learning principles? Explain.

9. Offer rewards for good (or improved) performance. (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher, in addition to grades, include social rewards such as privileges, honor roll, praise, and opportunities to go places or do things with the teacher? Explain.

10. Structure appropriate competition (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher depersonalize the competition and emphasize the content being learned rather than who wins or loses? Explain.

11. Call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities. (Circle one)  

Always       Sometimes      Never

5  4  3  2  1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher help you to see academic activities not as imposed demands to be resisted, but rather as enabling opportunities to be valued? Explain
## Motivating by Capitalizing on Students' Intrinsic Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Adapt task to student interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your teacher use a variety of examples or activities, incorporate content that you find interesting or activities that you find enjoyable to accomplish curriculum objectives whenever possible? Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
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<td>13. Include novelty/variety elements.</td>
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<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher make sure that your assignments are not boring to you? Explain.</td>
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<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>14. Allow choices or autonomous decisions</td>
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<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher offer you alternative ways to meet requirements and opportunities to exercise autonomous decision making and creativity in determining how to organize your time and effort as long as it is within the constraints imposed by the instructional objectives? Explain.</td>
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<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>15. Provide opportunities for students to respond actively.</td>
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<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher provide you with opportunities to participate, for example, in projects, experiments, role-playing, simulations, educational games, and creative applications of what is being learned? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>16. Provide Immediate Feedback to Student responses.</td>
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<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>Does your teacher provide immediate feedback or opportunities for automatic feedback features that are built into programmed learning and other &quot;self-correcting&quot; materials as well as into computerized learning programs? Explain.</td>
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<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>17. Allow Students to Create Finished Products</td>
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<td>(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher assign meaningful tasks that are not just subparts of a larger entity, so you can experience a satisfying sense of accomplishment when you finish. Ideally, this task completion will yield a finished product that you can use or display such as a map, essay, a scale model or something other than a workbook page? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always 5 4 3 2 1</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Include fantasy or stimulation elements</td>
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<td>Does your teacher allow times for introducing fantasy or imagination elements that will engage your emotions or allow you to experience events vicariously, by incorporating modest simulation activities into everyday instruction; Such as, stimulating you to think about the motives of a literary author or scientific discoverer or imagining yourself living in the historical time or geographical place under study? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Incorporate game-like features into exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher transform ordinary assignments into &quot;test yourself&quot; challenges, puzzles, or brain teasers that require you to solve problems, avoid traps, or overcome obstacles to reach goals. It could also entail helping you explore and discover in order to identify the goal itself in addition to developing a method for reaching it? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Include higher-level objectives and divergent questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher engage you in questions that address higher cognitive levels (application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation) and encourage you to make sense of what you are learning by processing it actively, paraphrasing it, and relating it to your prior knowledge and experience? Explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Provide opportunities to interact with peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher arrange for you to interact with your peers through whole class activities scheduled around debate, role-play, or simulation that includes follow-up activities that permit students to work together in pairs or small groups to tutor one another, discuss issues, or develop suggested solutions to problems? Explain.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Strategies for Stimulating Student Motivation to Learn**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Model interest in learning and motivation to learn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your teacher share with you his/her interest in books, articles or mention application of the subjects to everyday living, the local environment, or current events? Explain</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
23. Communicate desirable expectations and attributions about student's motivation to learn.

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher routinely project expectations concerning your learning as meaningful and applicable to real life situations? Explain.

24. Minimize students' performance anxiety during learning activities.

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher promote more emphasis on learning than to evaluate performance? Explain.

25. Project Intensity

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher tell students that the material deserves close attention either by saying so or by using rhetorical devices (slow pacing, step by step presentation with emphasis on key words or concepts)? Explain.

26. Project Enthusiasm

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher present topics or assignments in ways that suggest they are interesting or worthwhile by identifying their own reasons for finding the topic meaningful and then communicate those reasons while teaching it? Explain.

27. Introduce task interest or appreciation

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher elicit student appreciation for an activity by noting its connections with things that students already recognize as interesting or important, by mentioning applications of the knowledge or skills to be learned, or by specifying challenging or exotic aspects that you can anticipate? Explain.

28. Induce curiosity or suspense

Always    Sometimes    Never

(Circle one) 5  4  3  2  1

Does your teacher put students into an active information processing or problem-solving mode by posing questions or doing "set ups" that introduce curiosity or suspense elements and motivate students to engage in the activity in order to answer some question, resolve an ambiguity, or fill in gaps in their knowledge?
29. Induce dissonance or cognitive conflict

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher allow you to think that you know everything there is to know about a subject and point out unexpected aspects; calling attention to unusual or exotic elements; noting exceptions to general rules, or challenging students to solve the mystery that underlies a paradox? Explain.

30. Make abstract content more personal
concrete, or familiar.

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher help students relate new or strange content to their existing knowledge by using examples or analogies referring to familiar concepts, objects, or events; where a text is too abstract or sketchy, elaborate by filling in sufficient detail to enable students to visualize what is being described and explain it in their own words? Explain.

31. Induce students to generate their own
motivation to learn

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher ask you to list your own interests in particular topics or activities, to identify questions that you would like to have answered, or to note things that you find surprising as you read? Explain.

32. State learning objectives and provide
advance organizers.

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher stimulate your motivation to learn when introducing activities by stating their objectives and providing advance organizers. Prepare students to get more out of lectures, films, or reading assignments by clarifying what the teacher wants you to concentrate on as he or she process the information? Such as, distributing outlines or study guides, making suggestions about note-taking or calling attention to structural features of the presentation that can help you to remember it in a organized way? Explain.

33. Model task-related thinking and problem
solving.

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Always       Sometimes      Never

Does your teacher teach by showing students what to do and thinking out loud as they demonstrate? Explain.
APPENDIX D

Teacher Questionnaire
Teacher Motivating Students

**SELF-EFFICACY: Essential Pre-Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Supportive Environment.</strong> (Circle one)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you organize and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment. This includes encouraging students, patiently supporting their learning efforts, and allowing them to feel comfortable taking intellectual risks without fear of being criticized for making mistakes? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Appropriate level of challenge/difficulty.</strong> (Circle one)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you provide tasks that are optimally motivated by tasks that allow students to achieve high levels of success when they apply reasonable effort? Explain.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Meaningful Learning Objectives.</strong> (Circle one)</td>
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<td>Do you select academic activities for your students that teach some knowledge or skill that is worth learning, either in its own right or as a step toward a higher objective? Explain.</td>
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<td><strong>4. Moderate Optimal Use</strong> (Circle one)</td>
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<td>Do you over-do motivational attempts by using a particular strategy so much that it loses its effectiveness because it is used too often or too routinely? Explain.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Program for success</strong> (Circle one)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you prepare your students for new learning by beginning instruction at their appropriate learning level so they can adjust without feeling too confused or frustrated? Explain.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6. Teach goal setting, performance appraisal, and self-reinforcement skills. (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you assist your students in learning to set and commit to goals that are near, specific and challenging rather than too easy or too hard? Do you provide specific detailed feedback and help students use appropriate standards for judging performance (to compare it with own previous progress rather than with performance of peers)? Explain.

7. Helps students to recognize linkages between effort and outcome. (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you enable your students to portray their efforts as an investment, which will produce knowledge or skill development and thus empower them, rather than risking their failure or embarrassment? Explain.

8. Provide remedial socialization (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you use performance contracts, mastery learning principles with your students? Explain.

9. Offer rewards for good (or improved) performance (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you, in addition to grades, include social rewards such as privileges, praise, and opportunities to go places or do things with you? Explain.

10. Structure appropriate competition (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you depersonalize the competition and emphasize the content being learned rather than who wins or loses? Explain.

11. Call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you help your students see academic activities not as imposed demands to be resisted, but rather as enabling opportunities to be valued? Explain.
### Always       Sometimes      Never

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Circle one</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Adapt task to student interest</td>
<td>(Circle one)</td>
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<td>Do you use a variety of examples or activities, incorporate content that</td>
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<td>your students find interesting or activities that they find enjoyable</td>
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<td>to accomplish curriculum objectives whenever possible? Explain.</td>
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<td>13. Include novelty/variety elements.</td>
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<td>Do you make sure that your assignments are not boring to your students?</td>
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<td>Explain.</td>
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<td>14. Allow choices or autonomous decisions</td>
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<td>Do you offer your students alternative ways to meet requirements and</td>
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<td>opportunities to exercise autonomous decision making and creativity in</td>
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<td>determining how to organize their time and effort as long as it is</td>
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<td>within the constraints imposed by the instructional objectives? Explain.</td>
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<td>15. Provide opportunities for students to respond</td>
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<td>Do you provide your students with opportunities to participate, for</td>
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<td>example, in projects, experiments, role-playing, simulations,</td>
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<td>educational games, and creative applications that coincide with what</td>
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<td>is being taught? Explain.</td>
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<td>16. Provide Immediate Feedback to Student</td>
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<td>Do you provide immediate feedback or opportunities for automatic</td>
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<td>feedback features that are built into programmed learning and other</td>
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<td>&quot;self-correcting&quot; materials as well as into computerized learning</td>
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<td>programs? Explain.</td>
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<td>17. Allow Students to Create Finished Products</td>
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<td>Do you assign meaningful tasks that are not just subparts of a larger</td>
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<td>entity, so students can experience a satisfying sense of</td>
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<td>accomplishment when they finish. Ideally, this task completion will</td>
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<td>yield a finished product that they can use or display such as a map,</td>
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<td>essay, a scale model or something other than a workbook page? Explain.</td>
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18. Include fantasy or simulation elements

Do you allow times for introducing fantasy or imagination elements in your lessons that will engage your students' emotions or allow them to experience events vicariously, by incorporating modest simulation activities into everyday instruction; such as, stimulating them to think about the motives of a literary author or scientific discoverer or imagining themselves living in the historical time or geographical place under study? Explain.

19. Incorporate game-like features into exercises

Do you transform ordinary assignments into "test yourself" challenges, puzzles, or brain teasers that require your students to solve problems, avoid traps, or overcome obstacles to reach goals? It could also entail helping them explore and discover in order to identify the goal itself in addition to developing a method for reaching it? Explain.

20. Include higher-level objectives and divergent questions

Do you engage your students in questioning that addresses higher cognitive levels (application, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation) and encourage them to make sense of what they are learning by processing it actively, paraphrasing it, and relating it to their prior knowledge and experience? Explain.

21. Provide opportunities to interact with peers

Do you arrange for your students to interact with their peers through whole class activities scheduled around debate, role-play, or simulation that includes follow-up activities that permit students to work together in pairs or small groups to tutor one another, discuss issues, or develop suggested solutions to problems? Explain.

22. Model interest in learning and motivation

Do you share with your students your interest in books, articles or mention application of the subjects to everyday living, the local environment, or current events? Explain.
23. Communicate desirable expectations and attributions Always Sometimes Never about student's motivation to learn.

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you routinely project expectations concerning your students' learning as meaningful and applicable to real life situations? Explain

24. Minimize students' performance anxiety Always Sometimes Never during learning activities.

(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you promote more emphasis on learning than on evaluating performance? Explain.

25. Project Intensity Always Sometimes Never

Do you prepare your students by telling them that the material deserves close attention either by saying so or by using rhetorical devices (slow pacing, step by step presentation with emphasis on key words or concepts when introducing new material? Explain.

26. Project Enthusiasm Always Sometimes Never

Do you present to your students topics or assignments in ways that suggest they are interesting or worthwhile by identifying reasons they should have for finding the topic meaningful and then communicate those reasons while teaching it? Explain.

27. Introduce task interest or appreciation Always Sometimes Never

Do you elicit student appreciation for an activity by noting its connections with things that students already recognize as interesting or important, by mentioning applications of the knowledge or skills to be learned, or by specifying challenging or exotic aspects that students can anticipate? Explain.

28. Induce curiosity or suspense Always Sometimes Never

Do you put students into an active information processing or problem-solving mode by posing questions or doing "set ups" that introduce curiosity or suspense elements that motivates them to engage in the activity in order to answer some question, resolve an ambiguity, or fill in gaps in their knowledge?
29. Induce dissonance or cognitive conflict  
(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you allow your students to think that they know everything there is to know about a subject and then point out unexpected aspects; calling attention to unusual or exotic elements; noting exceptions to general rules, or challenging them to solve the mystery that underlies a paradox? Explain.

30. Make abstract content more personal, (Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you help students relate new or strange content to their existing knowledge by using examples or analogies referring to familiar concepts, objects, or events; where a text is too abstract or sketchy, elaborate by filling in sufficient detail to enable students to visualize what is being described and explain it in their own words? Explain.

31. Induce students to generate their own motivation to learn  
(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you ask students to list their own interests in particular topics or activities, to identify questions that they would like to have answered, or to note things that they find surprising as they read? Explain.

32. State learning objectives and provide advance organizers.  
(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you stimulate student motivation to learn through introducing activities, stating their objectives and providing advance organizers. Prepare students to get more out of lectures, films, or reading assignments by clarifying what you want them to concentrate on as they process the information? Such as, distributing outlines or study guides, making suggestions about note-taking or calling attention to structural features of the presentation that can help them to remember it in an organized way? Explain.

33. Model task-related thinking and problem solving.  
(Circle one) 5 4 3 2 1

Do you teach by showing students what to do and thinking out loud as they demonstrate? Explain.