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**The Effects of Professional Development on Collective Teacher Efficacy in the Primary
Montessori Setting**

Rachel Cordova

In fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Submitted on March 15, 2021

Advisor _____

Date _____

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Abstract

This action research examined the effects of professional development on collective teacher efficacy in a primary Montessori setting. The focus group comprised four participants, three lead teachers, and a site supervisor. The methodology consisted of four one-hour professional development sessions including quantitative and qualitative data collection, initial and final surveys and interview questions, a focus group, and weekly teacher self-assessment. There were four critical findings from the intervention. First, a teacher who demonstrated past negative feelings increased self-perception/ capabilities. Second, the top response to the interview questions was to help other staff/ offer assistance. Third, the teacher's self-assessment response improved communication during week one intervention but decreased by the end of the intervention. The last finding was improving the participants' feelings about the program and the school. Potential future action research is recommended to provide longer interventions, more quantitative data tools and be conducted during a non-pandemic situation.

Keywords: collective teacher efficacy, professional development, mentorship, self-assessment, primary Montessori, preschool

Lack of school community affects Administrators, Educators, and Students in the school system due to the lack of teamwork, trust, encouragement, and communication. Administrators thrive to enhance the working relationships of their staff who work directly with students. As a program director at a Montessori primary school, I oversee all staff and have observed that in particular, the teachers lack community and have created a toxic environment in which teachers make fun of other teachers, teachers complain about work duties, do not follow directions, lack motivation, and do not work together. The lack of school community has created teacher turnover within two years due to burnout and the hostile work. In addition, the teachers make other staff feel uncomfortable and not welcome at the school site. The children have been affected because the teachers were discouraged and decided to quit. When a teacher leaves the school, children start acting out and displaying adverse behavior problems. According to Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007), several researchers have found that teacher self-efficacy predicts teaching practices and student learning.

Prior to this research project, to address the problems, we (the administrator and myself) decided to decrease teachers' work hours thinking they had too much time on their hands. We also took disciplinary actions such as giving staff write-ups for their negative behavior with other staff and moved teachers to other schools. Also, we hired a Site Supervisor who can pay full attention to the school staff to ameliorate their problem behavior and a coach to help staff professional development. The goal was to train staff, provide social support (Chung, 2019), have more communication with staff through weekly meetings, promote a sense of belonging to staff that they are the owners of their classrooms, and ask for their ideas for improvement. These issues and attempts to improve the situation led to this research project. How does professional development impact collective teacher efficacy in the work environment at a Primary Montessori

setting? Many research studies suggest that professional development (mentorship, self-reflections, and planned sessions) helps build a community for teachers.

This research examines the effects of professional development on collective teacher efficacy in a Primary Montessori Academy in Pomona, California. Research suggests that professional development may positively impact teachers who are not working collaboratively, lack a sense of belonging to the school community, and a staff's high turnover rate (Chung, 2019). This action research project intends to develop a sense of school community and positively impact staff interactions by utilizing mentorship, teachers' self-reflection, and planning sessions as primary professional development tools.

Teachers feel burned out; therefore, they resign within two years to move to another career or a different job location. They lack teacher teamwork and encouragement from other staff to try their best. Therefore, improving teachers' self-efficacy may lead to teachers' belief that they can learn and complete the tasks effectively, promoting collective agency among all staff, eventually leading to a positive work environment (Chung, 2019). This research investigates how professional development impacts collective teacher efficacy to promote a positive work environment in the primary (preschool) Montessori setting to avoid teacher burnout and lower the teacher turnover rate.

Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes the theoretical framework of collective efficacy, one aspect of human agency in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Albert Bandura (2001) defined collective efficacy as a "person's shared belief in their collective power to produce desired results" (p. 14), and identified "group attainments are the product of shared intentions, knowledge and skills of its members" (p. 14) as well as "interactive, coordinated, and synergistic

dynamics of the transactions” (p. 14). The collective efficacy lens guides this research in the intervention plan to promote teacher’s understanding of the importance of building the school community with other staff. This research focuses on how professional development impacts collective teacher efficacy in the preschool setting through social cognitive theory involving the self-efficacy theoretical framework.

Self-efficacy is defined as “the personal beliefs about one’s capabilities to learn or perform actions at designated levels” (Schunk, 2012, p. 146). Many teachers lack the perception that they can learn and perform the assigned tasks to help children develop skills (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teachers need to believe in themselves that they can complete the daily responsibilities of caring for students' well-being. Collective efficacy is fundamental to encourage an understanding of agency in teachers to work together as a team to positively impact students’ lives.

Self-efficacy functions with improving teacher collective efficacy because it “refers to one’s perceptions to produce actions” (Schunk, 2012, p. 146). Collective teacher efficacy refers to the belief that group work, like team teaching, can collectively overcome challenges and help teachers feel comfortable with their skills. For example, new teachers “doubting capabilities to answer another teacher’s question correctly is a sign of low self-efficacy” (Schunk, 2012, p. 146). New teachers may doubt their capabilities because of a lack of experience and professional development. Teachers wrote self-reflections to evaluate their teaching skills, then they can refine their perceptions and capabilities to implement changes to their actions. Therefore, this study will explore professional development's effects to impact collective teacher efficacy in the preschool setting.

In summary, Loughland and Nguyen (2020), Goddard et al. (2016), Campbell (2016), Laine et al. (2018), McGarry et al. (2018), Chung (2019), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) utilized teacher self-efficacy to investigate teacher's perception about their capabilities to promote professional learning, student achievement, social support, and teacher burnout. In the educational field, the value of social cognitive theory emphasizes the "interaction of multiple factors on a teacher's motivation, disposition, and behaviors" (Loughland & Nguyen, 2020). The researchers named above examined the effects of social cognitive theory with collective teacher efficacy and the importance of professional development.

Literature Review

Negativity, lack of commitment, and lack of cooperation amongst primary Montessori school teachers can create a toxic work environment. Teachers can engage in bullying and rudeness, creating islands unto themselves. Rather than penalize them individually, program directors can use professional development to build a community to create a better work environment and support teacher efficacy. This will increase their self-confidence in handling any challenge, completing tasks effectively, and classroom management. The literature review explores the effects of professional development interventions on collective teacher efficacy in school settings. It discusses the standard intervention plans used, such as group discussions, self-assessments/ reflections, interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and field notes. Although more research needs to be done, professional development positively impacts collective teacher efficacy in the primary Montessori school setting.

Overview of Collective Teacher Efficacy and Professional Development

Collective teacher efficacy is foundational to promoting effective professional development (Loughland & Nguyen, 2020; Goddard et al., 2016; Campbell, 2016; Laine et al.,

2018; McGarry et al., 2018), social support (Chung, 2019), and minimizing teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). These studies used collective teacher efficacy to frame the school communities and staff effective professional learning for teachers.

Loughland and Nguyen (2020) used collective teacher efficacy as a conceptual framework for effective professional learning in a specific context in Australia. They used theoretical coding for the data in a conceptual framework according to mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states as the motivational sources of collective efficacy identified in the literature. They discovered that participation in collaborative professional learning for primary science influences teachers' sense of collective efficacy (Loughland & Nguyen, 2020). Loughland and Nguyen (2020) also utilized a teacher professional learning model with a Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) scale that included collaborative planning, action teacher mentoring, collaborative, reflective discussions, recorded interviews, and classroom observations. According to Loughland and Nguyen (2020), the data from this study propose that mastery experiences and vicarious learning are fundamental to a teachers' sense of collective efficacy when involved in a teacher's professional learning. There was limited but reliable data that social persuasion might influence the development in teacher's sense of collective teacher efficacy. Lastly, in this study, there was limited data that teacher's affective states are a source of collective efficacy.

Goddard et al. (2016) also used collective teacher efficacy, but unlike the other researchers, they measured the impact on student achievement. Goddard et al. (2016) identified teacher self-efficacy as the outcome of a cognitive process belief impacting teacher's effort, persistence when facing difficulties, resilience to deal with failure, and how they will handle the amount of stress needed to cope with difficult situations. Goddard et al. (2016) and Loughland

and Nguyen (2020) utilized mastery experience, vicarious experience, and verbal persuasion in their studies for collective teacher efficacy.

Chung's (2019) research focused on childcare preschool teachers, and he used teacher efficacy to facilitate a social support model in their organizational commitment. According to Chung (2019), "the quality of education cannot outdo the quality of teachers. Teacher efficacy is an important requirement" (p. 2). Teacher efficacy is crucial to efficient and confident educational commitment. Chung's (2019) study suggests teacher efficacy was associated with increased collective self-esteem and organizational commitment. Chung (2019), Goddard et al. (2016), Loughland and Nguyen (2020), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) utilized social persuasion in their studies as a crucial element of the self-efficacy theory to extend collective teacher efficacy.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) develop and analyzed the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. They utilized teacher self-efficacy concerning external control, strain factors, and teacher burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) studied the relationship between teacher's perceptions and self-efficacy to collective teacher efficacy and teacher burnout. Unlike previous researchers, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) studied the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the effects of teacher burnout. They described teacher burnout due to stressors with student's behavior problems, difficult parents, and problems with colleagues in the school setting, but agree with Chung (2019), Goddard et al. (2016), and Loughland and Nguyen (2020) that social and emotional support from colleagues can help teachers cope successfully with those challenges.

Campbell (2016), Laine et al. (2018), and McGarry et al. (2018) studied the influence of professional development on community building, improving collective teacher efficacy. Their

research investigated professional development through teachers' self-reflection, social learning, occupational well-being discussions, and authentic partnerships among staff. Both Campbell (2016) and Laine et al. (2018) studied how professional development in the virtual platform can influence community building and intervention for teachers to reflect on their work management and social learning. Although Campbell (2016) focused on UK open universities and Laine et al. (2018) focused on Finnish and Estonian primary and upper secondary schools, both agree that online learning promotes staff development and networking. Unlike Campbell (2016) and Laine et al. (2018), McGarry et al. (2018) examined program development and implementation with community partnerships utilizing clear and open communication, influencing career and personal development, and found that professional development improves collective teacher efficacy.

In conclusion, the existing literature utilizes teacher self-efficacy as a leading framework to promote school community, partnerships among educators, and professional development, which are fundamental for teachers to continue enhancing their teaching techniques. Professional development is the foundation to introduce teachers to new skills necessary to promote teachers' growth in the school setting while providing social support and learning for staff. The peer-reviewed articles utilized surveys, self-efficacy scales, assessments, discussions, reflections, meetings, and team teaching/ mentors to investigate the effects of collective teacher efficacy in the school setting. Teachers' perceptions of change and how they adapt play a significant role in their thinking, leading to empowerment. Self-efficacy is fundamental to encourage an understanding of agency in teachers so they can positively impact their lives. What can we do to keep our staff and make a positive environment? How do we instill staff values to avoid burnout, lower the teacher turnover rate, provide professional development, and improve

collective teacher efficacy? How do collective teacher efficacy and professional development impact the staff work environment in the primary (preschool) Montessori setting?

This literature's contributions to the educational field are fundamental to guide teachers' learning techniques and work management. The literature examined teacher self-efficacy, teacher's perception of their capabilities, effective professional learning, student achievement, social support, and teacher burnout. There is no evidence that these actions have succeeded in a similar context to that of this study, especially during a pandemic. The overall weaknesses are that most of the literature reviewed focuses on elementary and upper grades up to college in other countries, but very few works of literature emphasize the early stages of preschool (ages three to five years old) teachers in the United States of America. The research fits into the literature review because it highlights professional development's effects on influencing teacher commitments, work management, behaviors, learning, partnerships, and social support. The literature review supports information on ways teachers can improve their perceptions about their capabilities and the school community leading to the importance of networking among school staff.

Methodology

In order to examine the effects of professional development on collective teacher efficacy, the researcher created data tools in the methodology which include quantitative and qualitative data: an initial teacher survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B), a focus group, weekly teacher self-assessments (Appendix C), and a final teacher survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B). This study occurred from January 2021 to February 2021 for an estimated four focus group sessions consisting of one hour per session. The researcher created a procedure for the intervention (Appendix F), which guided the procedures

with detailed step-by-step information on how the sessions in the interventions were conducted. Lastly, the researcher asked participants to take thirty minutes to conduct each pre-intervention and post-intervention survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B).

Initial Teacher Survey and Interview Questions

Teachers filled out an initial data survey (Appendix A) and answered interview questions (Appendix B) in written form about teachers' self-perception in general of skills and capabilities to gain baseline data about collective teachers' efficacy. This process provided quantitative data on how teachers felt about their capabilities and self-perceptions of their self-efficacy. The participants received the sheet with the interview questions (Appendix B), and they wrote their responses individually. This provided qualitative data about teachers' feelings and the school and program. This helped to answer whether teachers' feelings about school and program are positive or negative – an indicator of collective teacher efficacy because teachers shared beliefs that teamwork, trust, and communication will produce program quality. Prior to beginning the focus group sessions, each participant filled out the survey and the interview questions. Only staff interested in being part of the action research project participated in the professional development sessions and completed the data tools mentioned above.

Focus Group

The focus group was comprised of three lead teachers and the Site Supervisor; participants' age ranged from 30 to 60 years old. The researcher started the discussion by asking key questions (Appendix F- Procedures for the Intervention Process) and led the sessions while simultaneously taking field notes (Appendix D). Field notes are the observational data taken by the researcher during the one-hour intervention sessions. The field notes provide qualitative data from the observations about the teachers' questions, needs, and behaviors. During the sessions,

there were ongoing discussions regarding how to deal with difficult situations through resiliency while maintaining a positive attitude, building trust among staff, the importance of team teaching, and what teachers can do to be inspiring mentors. The sessions took place once a week in an onsite conference room and lasted approximately one hour. There was a total of four sessions. During the sessions, there were ongoing discussions regarding how to deal with different situations and build positive relationships among the focus group. After the sessions, teachers were asked to write a reflection about their week's daily work activities in self-assessment #1 (Appendix C).

Following are synopses of each week's focus group.

Session/ Week 1: Teacher Resiliency

This session was intended to help teachers work on a shared mission statement and discuss difficult situations through resiliency while maintaining a positive attitude. We started the first session focusing on teacher resiliency by working on a mission statement together, considering the potential effects on morale for the staff who do not participate in the sessions, and build a mission/vision statement. The mission statement pertained only to this action research and focus group. The participants watched "*The Mission, Vision, and Values Statements*" video (365 Careers, 2018). This guided the discussion for participants to address a mission statement, describe a vision statement to achieve in the future, and reflect on the participants' values to guide their principles. After the video, the researcher facilitated the discussion by asking the participants to reflect on the mission statement to accomplish the mission. The researcher asked the participants to write a mission statement for all staff; then, they discussed the final mission statement. The researcher added another question to continue the discussion by asking the participants how they will accomplish the mission statement

together as a group. The participants shared the mission and passion for working with children to achieve their classrooms' most significant potential. The researcher read prompt #1 (Appendix E) regarding daily teacher interactions to continue with the intervention. Then, the researcher asked the participants to reflect on the material from a different point of view. The participants discussed ways to motivate other teachers as a colleague, a supervisor, and a child. The researcher asked participants to reflect on how the prompt would be different if they were the teacher practicing compassion and positively react in those situations. The teachers shared their input, and some said this session was an excellent therapy for them to express their feelings.

Session/ Week 2: Instructional Needs and Building Trust

This session aimed to reflect on the participants' instructional needs and build trust among staff. The researcher asked teachers to find ten things the participants have in common. Then, asked them to reflect on those similarities, including morals and why they were in teaching, what they would ask for if they had a fairy Montessori godmother, and their perfect work environment. This led to the second part of this session, which aim helps to teachers build trust among colleagues. The researcher read prompt #2 (Appendix E) and asked participants to reflect on how “we trust people who have demonstrated that they have the skill and knowledge to do what they will do” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 101). Then, the researcher asked the participants to describe what trust is, what led them to trust a person, and how others can trust them. The researcher continued the discussion by asking participants how they can build trusting relationships with colleagues and how they can gain the school's trust. After the discussion, the participants finalized the session by stating that good and healthy communication is the most significant trust source.

Session/ Week 3: Team Teaching

This session intended for participants to reflect on their teaching experiences and the importance of team teaching. The researcher asked participants to reflect on their teaching experience and recall a teacher who made them feel comfortable (Wolf, 1996, p. 37). Then, the researcher asked participants to think of the experience from a teacher who made learning activities exciting, inviting, encouraging, and inspiring (Wolf, 1996, p. 37). The participants then discussed how team teaching helped each participant in their classroom and reflected on how a teacher positively impacted their lives. The researcher asked a final question on how they can connect and collaborate to improve team teaching (Aguilar, 2018, p. 103). At the end of the session, the participants stated that team teaching is crucial to classroom management and children's success.

Session/ Week 4: Inspiring Mentor

This session was intended for participants to reflect on their teaching from negative experiences to change their perspective to become an inspiring mentor. The researcher asked participants to reflect on their teaching experiences by recalling a teacher who made them feel afraid to participate or try new activities (Wolf, 1996, p. 37); how they felt about helping or taking charge of any activity in that setting; and how they can improve to be inspiring mentors. The researcher then read prompt #3 (Appendix E) about gossip and toxic cultures and asked the participants to reflect on this prompt. The participants shared their thoughts. The researcher asked participants how they can mentor new staff to avoid gossip and toxic cultures.

Weekly Teacher Self-Assessments

Every week during the intervention, participants wrote a reflection on their teaching, particularly things they felt proud about or found challenging. In addition, they reflected on how they would handle things if they put themselves in the shoes of the other stakeholders – the child,

parent, teacher assistant, and supervisor. Self-assessment #1 (Appendix C) is the weekly artifact used during the intervention week, preferably at the end of the week. This assessment provided qualitative data about the teachers' self-reflection of daily activities. This helped to answer whether teachers were improving self-efficacy after the weekly intervention sessions.

Final Teacher Survey and Interview Questions

After the four-week intervention, teachers filled out the same survey and interview as before the intervention to measure the changes. The researcher used the above tools to gather data to assess the above professional development plan's effects on collective teacher efficacy. This helped to answer whether the intervention affected teachers' perceptions about their capabilities (self-efficacy) by comparing the pre- and post-intervention surveys. The interview questions for teachers with "yes or no" and "short answer" questions provided information about each participant's feelings before and after the intervention to evaluate how the feelings (if any) changed after the intervention.

Some changes occurred that differ from the initial plan. Initially, the researcher planned the focus groups and data collection for Mondays, but due to scheduling conflicts, the focus groups for weeks one and two occurred on Tuesday of those weeks. Another change that differed from the initial plan is that the researcher had planned for ten participants to be part of the action research project, but only four participants volunteered.

Data Analysis

This study aimed to identify how professional development affects collective teacher efficacy in the primary Montessori setting. The research design was composed of pre- and post-survey and interview questions, a one-hour focus group intervention, and a weekly self-assessment to gather information about the teacher's self-efficacy perceptions. This study's

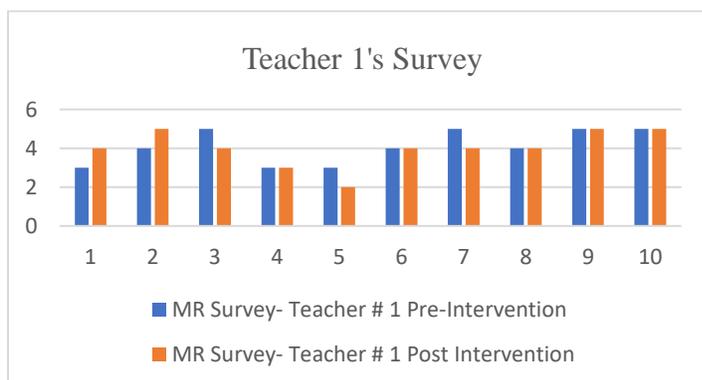
subjects were female staff comprised of three lead teachers and a Site Supervisor working with preschool children (ages birth to five years old) at a private Montessori program in Southern California. The participants were interviewed and surveyed in January 2021. The data analysis is organized below into three sections; Inquiry data consisting of a survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B) before and after the intervention, artifacts consisting of teacher self-assessment (Appendix C), and observational data which are the field notes (Appendix D).

Inquiry Data

Teacher's self-perception and capabilities surveys (Appendix A) were taken before and after the intervention. The researcher asked participants to answer ten questions in which the rating scores start from one through five when rating 1 as cannot accomplish at all, 2 can accomplish some, 3 can accomplish a good part of the activity, 4 can mostly accomplish, 5 can accomplish independently. The researcher organized the data by teacher using first and last name initials and assigning a numerical identifier (1-4) to each. The bar graph below show the answers to the questions before and after the intervention process. The surveys' data were analyzed by teacher as shown in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4; then, the data demonstrated totals per teacher based on the levels of teacher's self-efficacy and capabilities in Figure 5.

Figure 1

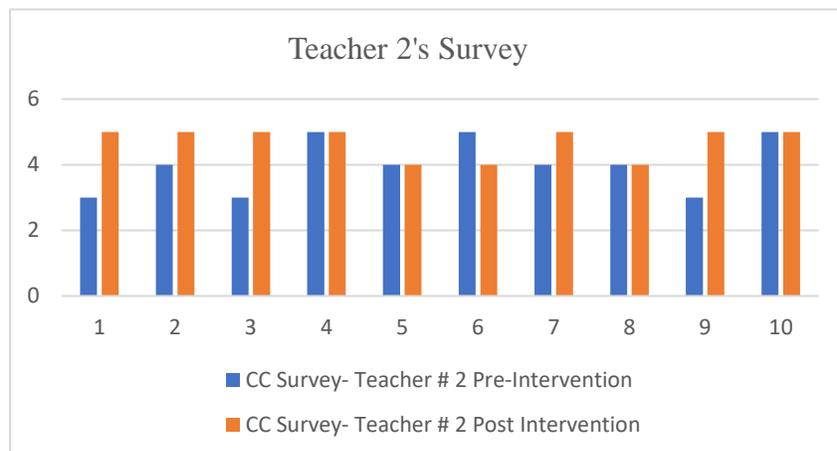
Survey Responses for Teacher 1



The numbers on the x-axis from one to ten represent the survey questions (Appendix A). According to the answers to questions one and two, Teacher 1's self-efficacy perception and capabilities increased after the intervention. According to the answers to questions three, five, and seven, Teacher 1's self-efficacy perception and capabilities decreased after the intervention. Lastly, the answers to questions four, six, eight, nine, and ten, Teacher 1's self-efficacy perception and capabilities remain the same pre-intervention and post-intervention. This means the intervention had no effect on Teacher 1's perception and capabilities.

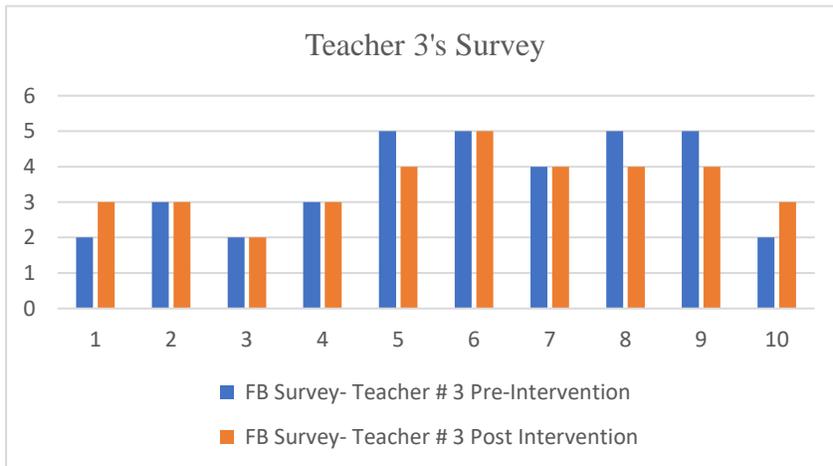
Figure 2

Survey Responses for Teacher 2

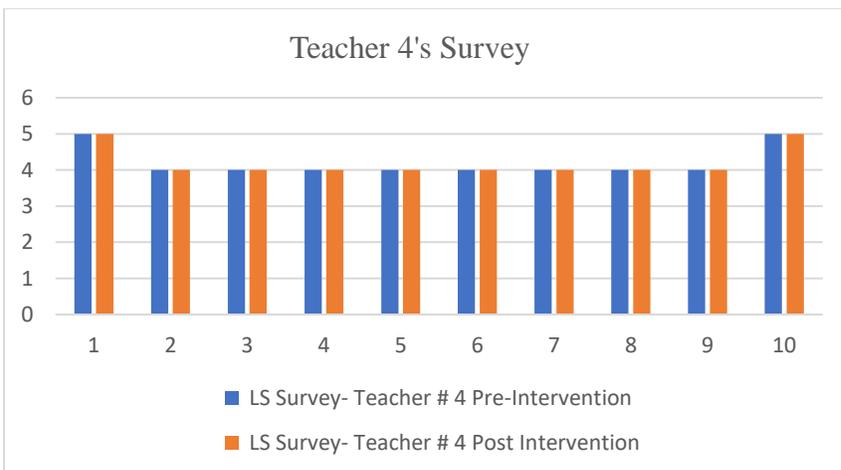


The numbers on the x-axis from one to ten represent the survey questions (Appendix A). According to the answers to questions one, two, three, seven, and nine, Teacher 2's self-efficacy perception and capabilities increased after the intervention. According to the answers to question six, Teacher 2's self-efficacy perception and capabilities decreased after the intervention. Lastly, the answers to questions four, five, eight, and ten, Teacher 2's self-efficacy perception and capabilities remain the same pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Figure 3

Survey Responses for Teacher 3

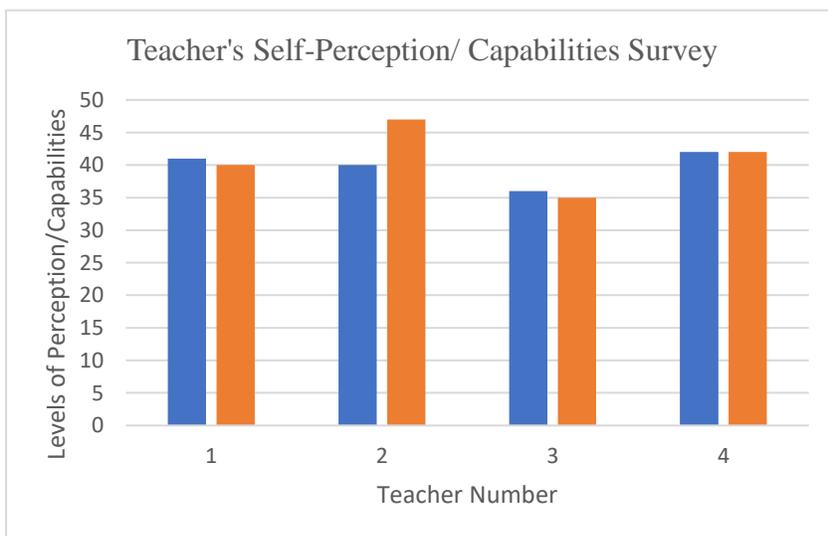
The numbers on the x-axis from one to ten represent the survey questions (Appendix A). According to the answers to questions one, and ten, Teacher 3's self-efficacy perception and capabilities increased after the intervention. According to the answers to questions five, eight, and nine, Teacher 3's self-efficacy perception and capabilities decreased after the intervention. Lastly, the answers to questions two, three, four, six, and seven, Teacher 3's self-efficacy perception and capabilities remain the same pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Figure 4*Survey Results for Teacher 4*

The numbers on the x-axis from one to ten represent the survey questions (Appendix A). According to the answers to questions one, and ten, Teacher 4's self-efficacy perception and capabilities were high before and after the intervention. The answers to all questions for Teacher 4's indicate their self-efficacy perception and capabilities remain the same pre-intervention and post-intervention. Figure 5 demonstrates the total level of perception of self-efficacy by teacher based on the teachers' responses to the survey questions.

Figure 5

Summary of the Survey Data for All Participants



According to the summary of the answers to the survey questions, the levels of teacher self-efficacy perception and capabilities for teacher number 1, 3, and 4 remain about the same before and after the intervention. However, the levels of teacher self-efficacy perception and capabilities for teacher number 2 increased post-intervention.

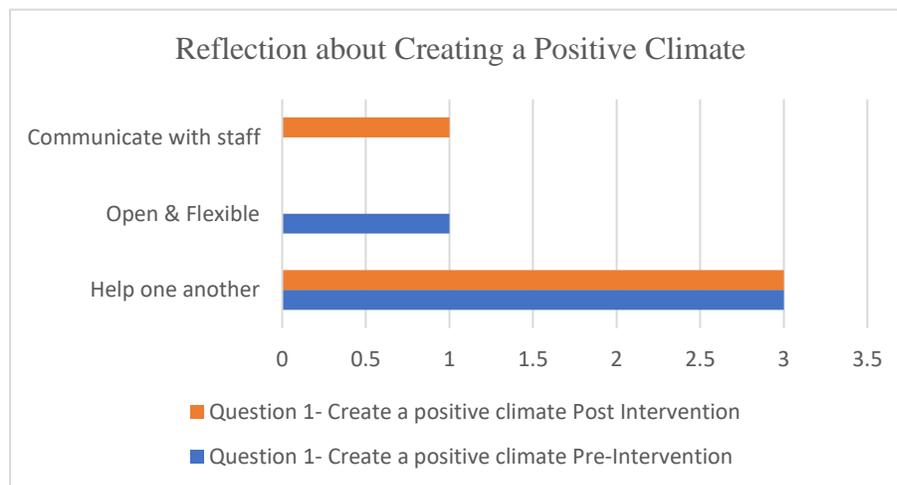
After the intervention, the data analysis for the survey results demonstrated Teacher 2's levels of teacher self-efficacy and capabilities increased. These findings suggest that the intervention worked positively for this teacher. The self-efficacy and capabilities indicators for the other two teachers decreased for three questions after the intervention. These findings

suggest that the intervention had a small negative effect on the two teachers. One teacher remained the same after the intervention. The results of the data collected from the survey are inconclusive as to the effectiveness of the intervention on raising teacher self-efficacy. Further research may modify the intervention process and the survey questions, then implement it, and evaluate it after to reflect if a slightly different intervention works better.

Participants answered interview questions (Appendix B) before and after the intervention. The researcher asked participants to answer four yes or no questions and asked them to explain their answer. The researcher organized the data per question as follows: Question 1- Reflection about creating a positive climate, Question 2- What they would change the program to be productive, Question 3- How to form healthy relationships, Question 4- Promote a positive atmosphere. This data intended to analyze the answers based on how many teachers had similar answers. The researcher used a bar graph to represent the answers to the questions before and after the intervention process. The data were analyzed by question one through four in Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Figure 6

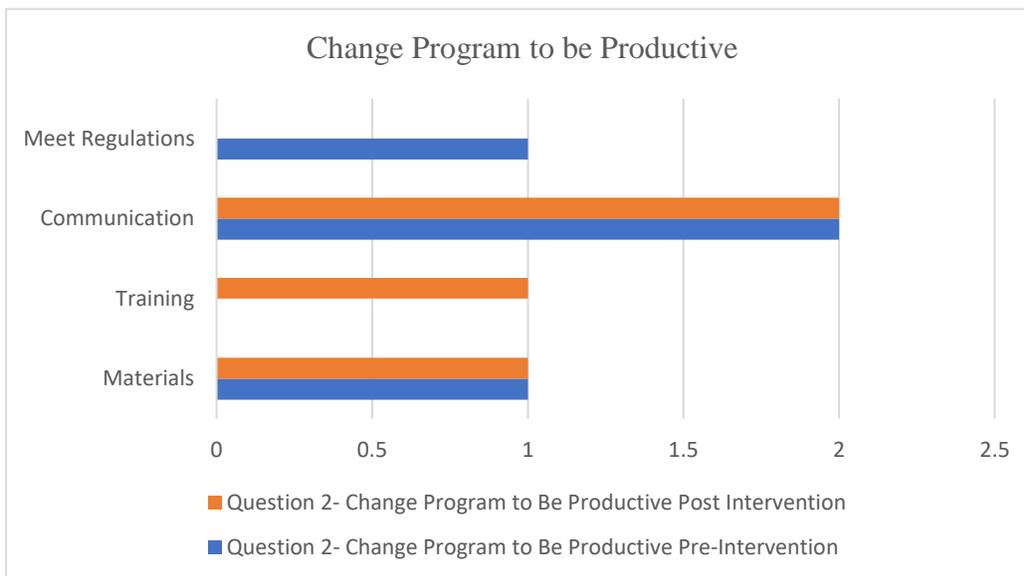
Question 1- How to Create a Positive Climate



Before and After the intervention, three teachers stated that helping one another created a positive climate. Before the intervention, another teacher stated that being open and flexible would help create a positive climate. After the intervention, another teacher stated that communication with staff creates a positive climate.

Figure 7

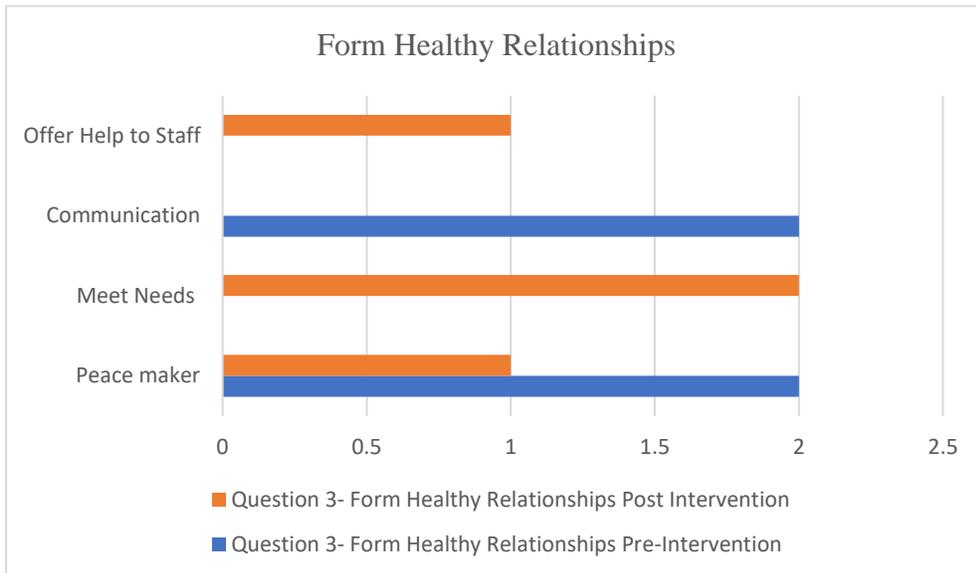
Question 2- How to Change the Program to be Productive



Before and after the intervention, two teachers stated that communication could change the program to be productive. Before and after the intervention, one teacher stated that materials could help the program to be productive. Before the intervention, another teacher stated that meeting regulations would help change the program to be productive. After the intervention, another teacher stated that training would help change the program to be productive.

Figure 8

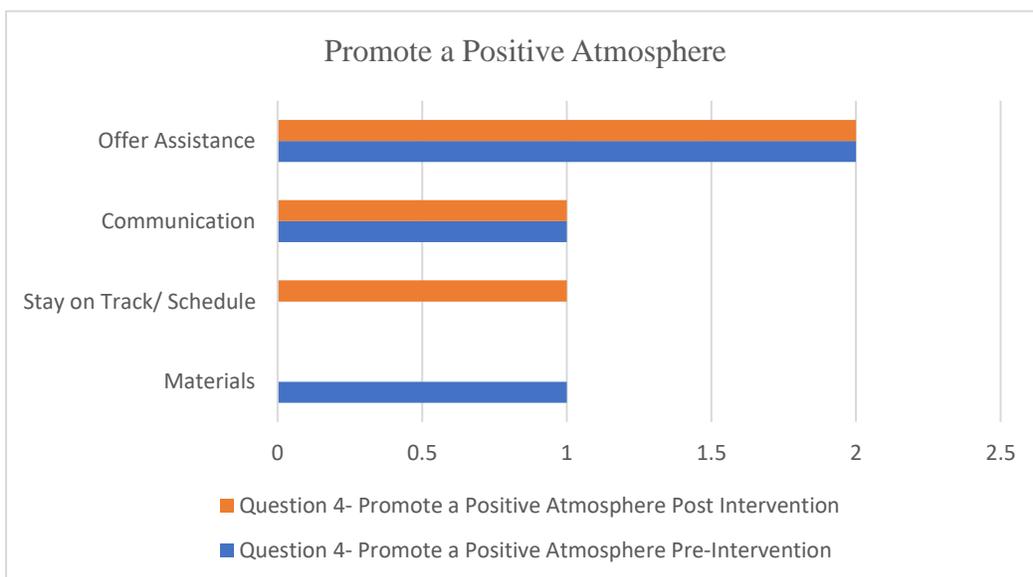
Question 3- How to Form Healthy Relationships



Before the intervention, two teachers stated that communication and peacemakers could form healthy relationships. After the intervention, two teachers stated meeting students and staff's needs; one teacher stated that helping other staff, and another teacher stated that peacemakers could help form healthy relationships.

Figure 9

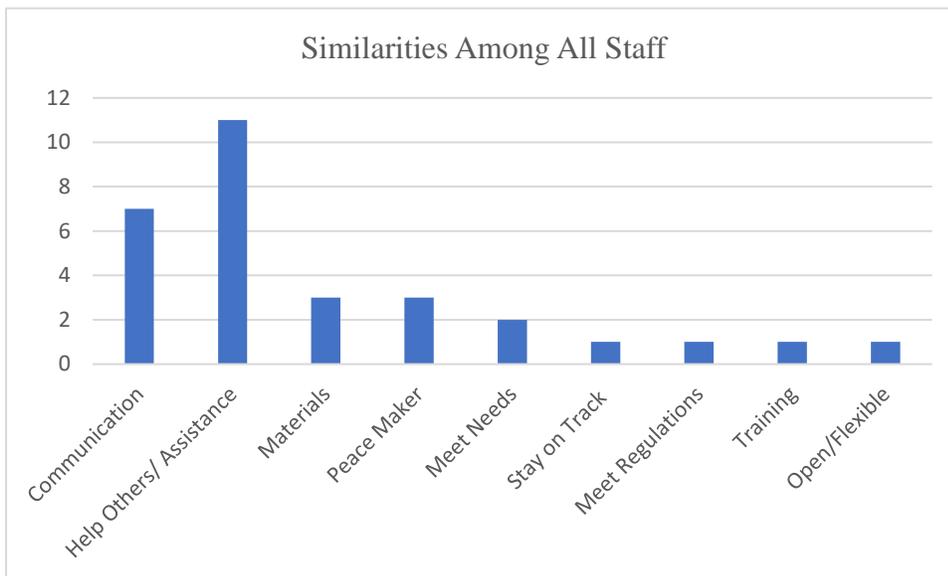
Question 4- How to Promote a Positive Atmosphere



Before and after the intervention, two teachers stated that offering assistance and one teacher stated that communication could promote a positive atmosphere. Before the intervention, one teacher stated that materials promote a positive atmosphere. After the intervention, one teacher stated that staying on track and schedule could promote a positive atmosphere. Figure 10 demonstrates totals for the similarities in all teachers' answers pre-intervention and post-intervention.

Figure 10

Overall Similarities Among Staff Interview Answers



Helping others and offer assistance was the most common answer amongst all four staff. Communication was the second most common answer of all staff. Materials and peacemakers are the third answer that was similar among all four staff. Meet the needs of all staff and children was the fourth answer given twice for the questions. Stay on track, meet regulations, train, and be open and flexible was an answer given once for some of the interview questions.

Artifacts

Teacher self-assessments (Appendix C) were answered by participants each week during the intervention weeks. The researcher asked participants to answer the eleven questions by Friday, weekly after the intervention day, either Monday or Tuesday. The same questions were asked every week to evaluate if the answers changed or were the same every week after the intervention sessions. Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 displays the teacher's answers about their self-assessments/ reflections every week.

Table 1

Week 1- Intervention

Teacher Self-Assessment				
Question	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
1	Communication, positive work environment	Communication	By being patient	Cooperate, communicate
2	Patience, positive thinking	Time management	Understand changes/ Work together	Flexible, adaptable, patient
3	New ways in a positive manner	Communication	Communication	Talking to staff one-on-one
4	Good communication	Communication	Allow help or advise you	Maintain composure, patience
5	Supervisors, directors, and staff	Teachers, supervisors	Administration	Program Director
6	A safe, healthy environment	Conquer challenges	Allow the help	Strong sense of home-school community
7	Classroom activities	Catching up on duties	Writing activity	N/A
8	Able to complete activities	Teach hard work	Accomplish lesson	N/A
9	Hard time sharing for children	Communication	No incident	Communicate effectively
10	Encourage children to share	Communication	Completing paperwork	Facilitate communication
11	No comments	Achievement/ Success	New furniture	Materials

During week one intervention, the most common answer for the teacher's self-assessment was communication for all four participants. Communication was answered eleven times out of forty-four answers. Teacher number one answered communication twice; Teacher number two answered communication for five questions; Teacher number three answered once, and teacher number four answered communication three times.

Table 2

Week 2- Intervention

Teacher Self-Assessment				
Question	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
1	Communication	Communication	Listen	Communication
2	Cope with changes	Ask questions	Don't take it personal	Accept change, adapt
3	Communication	Help, ask for help	Meet the needs	Communication
4	Be calm	Step out	Meet the needs	Patience
5	Co-workers, supervisors	Co-workers, supervisors	Administration	Supervisor
6	Communication	Becomes a teaching tool	Health, safe environment	School environment
7	Sensory bin	Assistant helped prep	Class work	N/A
8	Activities children enjoy	Communication	Meet the needs	N/A
9	Encourage	Getting new students	Got to know parents	Don't follow with duties
10	Communication	Stay organized	Allow helper with class prep	Patient, understanding
11	No Comments	New materials	Become a trainer	Materials

During week two intervention, the most common answer for the teacher's self-assessment was still communication for all four participants. Communication was answered eight times out of forty-four answers. Teacher number one answered communication four times; Teacher number two answered communication for three questions, and teacher number four answered

communication two times. Teacher number three did not answer any questions that communication was needed. Teacher number three had three questions about meeting the needs of the children and the staff.

Table 3

Week 3- Intervention

Teacher Self-Assessment				
Question	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
1	Cooperate, communicate	Listen, learn, communicate	Stay humble	Communication
2	Teamwork, communicate	Ask questions	Stay positive	Accept, adapt to changes
3	Handle as a team	Talk to those you feel comfortable	Meet challenges	Creative ideas
4	Be patient	Review, take notes	Be patient	Re-direct children
5	Supervisor, director	Supervisors, coworkers	Teacher, staff, mentor	Supervisor
6	Positive outcome for child	Learn, achieve, succeed	Growth, understanding	No comment
7	Water color painting	Communicate with assistant	Science activities	Multi-tasking
8	Children engage in activities	Successful partnerships	Improved class environment	N/A
9	Child developing language skills	Students said they missed her	Pay check problems	Counsel staff
10	Enthusiastic to engage children	Stay focus, Communicate	Talk to management	Check on staff periodically
11	No Comments	Success with students and staff	New rugs	New materials

During week three intervention, the most common answer for the teacher's self-assessment was still communication for all four participants; although, it decreased from the previous weeks. Communication was answered seven times out of forty-four answers. Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 4 answered communication, but Teacher 3 did not answer any

questions that communication was needed. This means that communication improved from the previous interventions.

Table 4

Week 4- Intervention

Teacher Self-Assessment				
Question	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
1	Communicate	Communication	Open and available for others	Handle issues
2	Work together	Communication	Positive mind and attitude	Accept changes
3	Be patient	Ask questions	Ask for help	Cope with challenges
4	Keep calm	Patience	Be positive and respectful	Be patient
5	Supervisor, director	Supervisors, staff	Fellow staff, administration	Supervisor
6	Role model	A learning experience	Set balance	Teamwork
7	Playdough making	Zoology, botany topics	Keep children active	Observe and help out
8	Child felt proud	Managing, on task	Positive energy	Enjoy working with children
9	Sharing throughout the day	Lack of communication	Administrator looking out for class	Teachers not taking breaks
10	Sharing with friends	Keep communicating	Allow room to grow	Work with supervisor
11	No comments	Success, fun, growing	Become a trainer	Materials

During week four intervention, the most common answer for the teacher's self-assessment was still communication for all four participants; although, it decreased more from the previous weeks. Communication was answered six times out of forty-four answers. Teacher number one answered communication once, and teacher number two answered communication

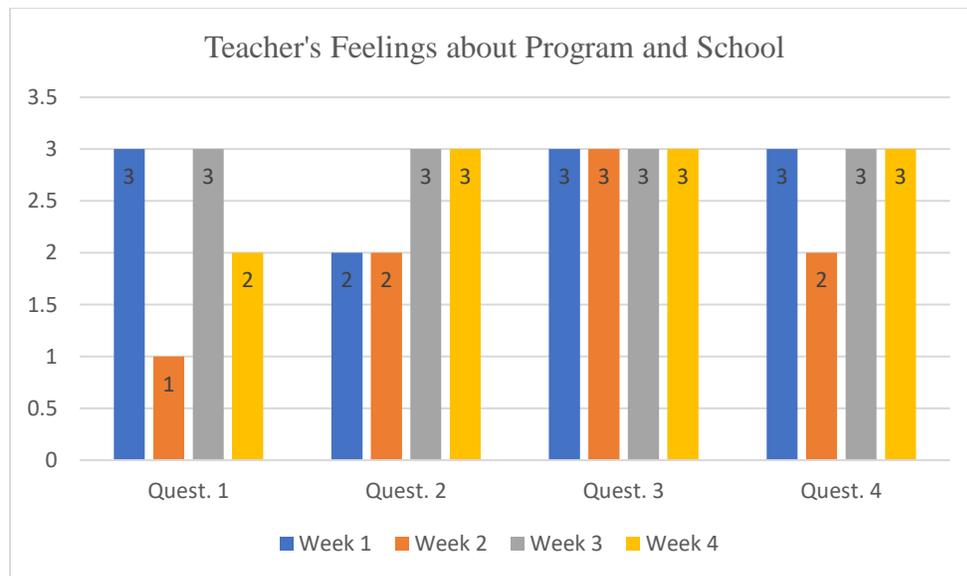
for five questions. Teachers number three and four did not answer any questions that communication was needed.

Observational Data

Field Notes (Appendix D) provided quantitative data for the teacher's feelings about the program and school. Once a week, during the intervention, the researcher took notes of the participant's comments, attitudes, body language, and overall environment. The participants' overall feelings seemed to improve by the third and fourth weeks of the intervention as demonstrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Overall Teacher's Feelings



Action Plan

This research investigated the effects of professional development with self-assessments and weekly mentoring sessions on teacher self-efficacy in the primary Montessori setting. The action research started by asking the participants to answer surveys and interview questions

before the intervention began. During the intervention, participants wrote weekly self-assessments, and the researcher took weekly field notes. The data tools demonstrated an increase for some teachers and a slight decrease in self-efficacy for others. During the sessions, the field notes help the researcher note participants' observations, questions, needs, and behaviors. The research ended with participants filling out the inquiry data tools, a survey, and interview questions. Overall, most of the data gathered reflected a positive impact on the teachers' feelings about the program and the school. This research investigated the effects of professional development with self-assessments and weekly mentoring sessions on teacher self-efficacy in the primary Montessori setting. There were four critical findings from the interventions utilizing the data tools.

One of the most noticeable findings was a teacher who had past negative feelings about the program, and the school demonstrated an increase in self-perception/ capabilities survey. Overall, after the intervention, this teacher demonstrated a significant increase in the answers to the teacher's self-perception/ capabilities survey (Appendix A) than any of the other participants. Two participants decreased their self-efficacy and capabilities response to three questions after the intervention. These findings suggest that the intervention and other possible issues had a minor negative effect on them. One participant remained the same in her level of self-efficacy and capabilities response throughout the intervention. Therefore, as a researcher planning an intervention to meet the needs of all participants is crucial. As a researcher, I need to modify the intervention process and the survey questions, then implement it and evaluate it after, reflecting if it worked.

Another critical finding was the response from all four participants to the interview questions (Appendix B) because the top answer stated was to help other staff/ offer assistance. The participants stated the response to help others/ offer assistance eleven times. The second top answer to the interview questions was to improve communication (seven times) linked to the most common answer in the teacher's self-assessment (Appendix C).

Another critical finding was the teacher's self-assessment response. During week one intervention, the most common answer was to improve communication (eleven times), but the response decreased weekly until week four communication was answered six times. The participants agreed that good communication was increasing over the past weeks, and it was not a concern that needed to improve by the end of the intervention.

The last and most rewarding finding from the action research was improving the participants' feelings about the program and the school. According to the researcher's observational field notes (Appendix D), all four participants demonstrated improved feelings about the program and the school by the third and fourth week of intervention. This action research will positively impact teaching practice because there was some evidence that professional development increases collective teacher efficacy.

The purpose of this action research study was to empower teachers through a four-week professional development intervention utilizing weekly self-reflections, sessions/ meetings, training, and mentoring teachers in a preschool Montessori classroom. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), several researchers have found that teacher self-efficacy impacts student learning. Teachers with increased self-efficacy can deal with difficult situations in the classroom environment, consequently improving student learning. Students benefit from teachers who can

reflect on their teaching skills and modify the learning curriculum to challenge their potential. Therefore, when a teacher is confident in their skills and capabilities, they can modify the curriculum to benefit their students' learning. Most importantly, teachers need to be trained and have positive self-efficacy to provide better services to the students in their classroom. Teachers are fundamental to the student's learning because they guide and provide direct instruction, and without teachers, the students would not be able to learn.

The recommendations for potential future action research investigation would be that more research needs to be conducted regarding professional development effects on collective teacher efficacy utilizing more quantitative data tools and longer interventions. The existing literature demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy is a leading framework to promote school community, but there is no evidence that professional development has succeeded in a preschool setting during a pandemic. This study will fill an education gap in a preschool Montessori setting for professional development to impact teacher's collective efficacy making a significant contribution to the literature review. This study took place during a unique situation due to the pandemic.

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Appendix A

Teacher's Self-Perception and Capabilities Survey

Date: _____ Time: _____ Initials: _____

Please rate how you perceive your capabilities to accomplish the activities below, as of today. All answers will be confidential. Completion of this survey is voluntarily. Completing this survey is completely voluntary and you may quit at any time. Write the number on the column on the right labeled Rating.

1	2	3	4	5
Cannot accomplish at all	Can accomplish some	Can accomplish good part of the activity	Can mostly accomplish	Can accomplish independently

Activities	Rating
1) Teach new material to difficult children.	
2) Provide motivational activities to engage all children.	
3) Work one on one with all children to record strengths and weaknesses.	
4) Help children recall daily activities to review lesson.	
5) Encourage children to stay on task at least 10 minutes.	
6) Promote equality in the environment for all children to care for one another.	
7) Use redirection to help children solve conflict among classmates.	
8) Help children normalize by modeling positive behaviors.	
9) Use inside voices in the classroom to guide children to follow directions.	
10) Communicate with families to support learning at home and school.	

All Comments are welcomed:

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!!

Appendix B

Interview Teachers- Perception of the Program

Date:_____ Time:_____ Initials:_____

This interview will provide qualitative data from teachers about the program and school. This will help guide our decisions on what areas to improve as a school or continue to implement. Please answer honestly about how you feel about the school and the program, as of today. All answers will be confidential. By completing this interview, you are giving your consent to participate in this study. Completing this interview is completely voluntary, and you may quit at any time. Please answer the questions with complete sentences, at least three sentences per question.

- 1) I can support other staff to create a positive climate in the school? Yes or No? Why?

- 2) If there was one thing, I can change to make the program more productive, it will be to...

- 3) I can form healthy relationships with other staff, including solving conflicts with other teachers, work together, motivate and inspire all staff, Yes or No? Why?

- 4) If I was in charge of the school for a day, I would make changes to promote a positive atmosphere... Yes or No? What I would do to make a positive atmosphere is...

Appendix C

I've invited you to fill out a form:

Self-Assessment #1

Please take 10-20 minutes weekly to fill out the questions below with complete sentences.

Reflection Time

How can I cooperate with other staff? school supervisor? parents? *

How can I cope with changes in the school? classroom? *

How can I cope with challenges in school? classroom? *

How can I cope with challenging behavior from children? parents? other staff? *

Who can I ask for help to overcome the challenges? *

What is the positive future outcome of this challenge and/ or change? *

Reflect from within

Name the activities, I was able to accomplish this week. *

Describe how this accomplishment makes me feel about myself as a teacher. Explain. *

Think about any incident that made me feel uncomfortable about this week. How can I change my perception of the incident? What is positive about this incident? *

What can I focus on this week to improve my perception? *

If I had a Montessori wish come true, what would I ask for? Why? *

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Appendix D

Field Notes- Teacher Self-Efficacy

Date:_____ Time:_____ Setting:_____

Special Circumstances:_____

This field notes will provide qualitative data from Teacher's feelings about the program and school. This will help the administration guide our decisions on what areas to improve as a school or continue to implement. All answers will be confidential. Circle positive or negative and give a brief description.

Overall, describe teacher's comments, positive or negative:

Overall, describe teacher's attitude during intervention, positive or negative:

Overall, describe teacher's body language during the intervention, positive or negative:

Overall, is there a positive or negative school environment? Explain.

Questions?	Needs?	Behaviors?

Appendix E

Prompt #1- Building Resilience:

Imagine it's the end of a rainy Friday when children didn't get to play outside and you had to impromptu indoors activities and supervise them. You had only 30 minutes lunch and ate very fast because you are used to 1-hour lunch break. A teacher called out and now you have to do the lesson by yourself and you have 12 children to teach and work one on one. Then, a difficult child refuses to clean up and says something disrespectful to you. The child throws a piece of trash in your face. The other children giggle and watch to see what you'll do.

Pause for a minute to think about this scene.

"This moment between something that happens and how we respond is what this prompt is about. This is the moment when we cultivate resilience. This is the moment that is referenced: "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.'" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 1)

"Educators encounter hundreds of moments like these every day. We are challenged over, over, and over by things that students do, or the unplanned fire drill, or the announcement of a mandatory meeting on Friday afternoon, or dealing with an upset parent complaining 5 minutes before class starts or while other parents are dropping off their children, or changing everyone's schedule because a teacher called out last minute, and many other things" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 1).

"Alone, these are minor inconveniences, but the sum total of these moments feels exhausting, depletes our resilience and contributes to burnout. There is no moment more important for educators to attend to than this one between stimulus and response. If we slow down and examine these moments, if we cultivate new responses, we might just transform our schools into places where we all thrive" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 1)

"Change is a given in life; how you respond is within your control" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 2).

*ALL Above information was gathered from the book "Onward" by Elena Aguilar (Author of The Art of Coaching) page 1- Reference: Aguilar, E. (2018). *Onward: Cultivating emotional resilience in educators*. Jossey-Bass

Appendix E (Cont'd)

Prompt #2- Know Yourself (Purposefulness): Building Trust

Do you know yourself well? Do you understand your emotions, social identities, core values, and personality? If you do know yourself, you gain clarity on your purpose in life and in work. When you know your purpose, then you know how to deal with setbacks and challenges.

Think of a time, when you broke down in hysterical tears in front of your supervisor. Think of this as a moment in your first year of teaching, when you were upset even furious due to a lack of communication amongst staff. You might have felt wronged, disrespected, and unappreciated. Then, you look back at that moment now and think it was overreacting, embarrassed, and avoid talking about it now. Although part of you wants to lock the memory away, once you had a few weeks of rest and perspective available to you, you realized that your meltdown in front of your supervisor pushed you to greater self-understanding. (Aguilar, p. 21 & 22)

*ALL Above information was gathered from the book "Onward" by Elena Aguilar (Author of The Art of Coaching) page 21 & 22 - Reference: Aguilar, E. (2018). *Onward: Cultivating emotional resilience in educators*. Jossey-Bass

Appendix E (Cont'd)

Prompt #3- Gossip and Toxic Cultures

“Interpersonal conflict manifests in many ways, and when it’s not dealt with, it tends to grow and spread. Gossip can be a barometer for the overall interpersonal health of a community. It also seems to be a behavior that can quickly spread if not addressed. Mike Robbins (2007) writes, “Gossip to an organization is like cancer to the body; it slowly eats away at the fabric of the team until the team itself dies” (p. 29). I suspect that many of us have witnessed the destructive impact of gossip in our workplaces. In a gossip-free zone, if someone slips up, you kindly remind them of the agreement” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 117).

“Left unmanaged, rampant gossip fuels toxic cultures, which are further characterized by individuals working independently all the time, warring camps, divisions across racial or ethnic lines, perpetual negativity, hostile faculty meetings, and misdirected values focused on enforcing rules, teaching basic skills, and serving a small group of elite students (Deal and Peterson, 2009). Toxic cultures are contagious. New teachers can become acculturated in only weeks because of the strong negative personalities of the informal leaders in a faculty. Positive staff members tend to leave or are driven out” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 117).

*ALL Above information was gathered from the book “*Onward*” by Elena Aguilar (Author of *The Art of Coaching*) page 1- Reference: Aguilar, E. (2018). *Onward: Cultivating emotional resilience in educators*. Jossey-Bass

Appendix F

The effects of Professional Development on Collective Teacher Efficacy in the Primary Montessori Setting.

Procedure for the Intervention process:

1. Before Intervention

- a. Inquiry Data
 - i. Survey for Teacher's self-perception/ capabilities (10-20 minutes long)
 - ii. Interview Teacher (10-20 minutes long)

2. During Intervention

- a. Artifacts
 - i. Self-Assessment/ Reflection (Weekly on Friday – 4x 10 to 20 minutes long)
- b. Observational Data
 - i. Field Notes (Weekly on Mondays during sessions- take notes, write down observations, teacher's questions, needs, and behaviors).

3. The Intervention process will be in 4 sessions (1-hr. long each).

a. Session 1: Teacher Resiliency -Group A (1pm-2pm), Group B (2pm-3pm)

- i. Work on a mission statement together (5:57 minutes video-
[youtube.com/watch?v=8wem6FZAucw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wem6FZAucw))
 1. Reflect on the Mission to accomplish: What is the common mission for all staff? (5 minutes long)
 2. What is our common mission statement? (5 minutes long)
 3. How are we going to accomplish it together as a group? (5 minutes long)
 4. Share the mission and the passion for working with children to achieve child's greatest potential in our classrooms. (5 minutes long)
- ii. Read a prompt regarding teacher daily interactions at work. (10 minutes long)
 1. Reflect on the prompt from a different point of view separate in three groups (How can we motivate the teacher as a colleague, a supervisor, a child) (10 minutes long).
 2. Reflect on how the prompt would be different if we were the teacher practicing compassion? How can we positively react in those situations? (10 minutes long)
- iii. Wrap up the session and clean up. (5 minutes long)

b. Session 2: Instructional needs and Building Trust- Group A (1pm-2pm), Group B (2pm-3pm)

- i. Ask teachers to find ten things we all have in common with each other (5 minutes long)
 1. What did we find out that is the same for all? Do we value the same morals? Why are we in the field of teaching? (10 minutes discussion)

- ii. If you had a Fairy Montessori Godmother, what supports would you ask for? (10 minutes discussion)
 - 1. What would be your perfect work environment? (10 minutes listening session)
- iii. Building Trust- Prompt #2
 - 1. "We trust people who have demonstrated that they have the skill and knowledge to do what they'll do" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 101) What is Trust? What led you to trust a person? How can others trust you? (10 minutes long)
 - 2. What is everyone's thoughts about trust? How can we build trusting relationships with colleagues? How can we gain the trust from the head of school? (10 minutes long)
- iv. Wrap up the session and clean up. (5 minutes long)

c. Session 3: Team Teaching- Group A (1pm-2pm), Group B (2pm-3pm)

- i. Reflect on your Teaching experience- Recall a teacher who made you feel comfortable? (Wolf, 1996, p. 37) (10 minutes long)
- ii. Think of the experience from a teacher who made learning activities exciting, inviting, encouraging, and inspiring? (Wolf, 1996, p. 37) (10 minutes long)
- iii. How does team teaching help each participant in their classroom? (10 minutes long)
- iv. Think of a teacher who made a positive impact in your life. (10 minutes long)
- v. How can we connect with each other and collaborate to improve team teaching? (Aguilar, 2018, p. 103) (15 minutes discussion)
- vi. Wrap up the session and clean up. (5 minutes long)

d. Session 4: Inspiring Mentor- Group A (1pm-2pm), Group B (2pm-3pm)

- i. Reflect on your Teaching experience- Recall a teacher who made you feel afraid to participate or try new activities? (Wolf, 1996, p. 37) (10 minutes long)
- ii. How did you feel about helping or taking charge in any activity in the classroom? (10 minutes long)
- iii. How can we improve to be a more inspiring mentor than the above-mentioned individuals? (10 minutes discussion)
- iv. Read the prompt #3 about **Gossip and Toxic Cultures** (5 minutes long)
 - 1. Reflect on this prompt- What are your thoughts about this? (10 minutes discussion)
 - 2. How can we mentor new staff to avoid the gossip and toxic cultures (10 minutes discussion)
- v. Wrap up the session and clean up. (5 minutes long)

4. After Intervention

- a. Inquiry Data
 - i. Survey for Teacher's self-perception/ capabilities (10-20 minutes long)
 - ii. Interview Teacher (10-20 minutes long)

