

Exploring teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy
when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs

by

Sharmila S. Sukhan

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to gain insight and a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students' diverse social-emotional needs. Four research questions were asked and answered to explore the problem statement. Teaching is a very demanding profession including evolving expectations, parental, community, and stakeholder demands, and provincial mandates. Stressors include managing student behaviour, high workloads, lack of contact with colleagues, lack of support from parents, and demands from administrators.

Teachers are expected to fulfill their professional responsibilities as student numbers increase, financial and human resources decrease, and students' social-emotional and academic needs become more complex. These responsibilities and requirements weigh heavily on teachers to care for their own wellness, sense of balance, and organizational skills ahead of committing to the wellness of their students. The lack of consistency in the teaching profession can lead to anxiety, stress, frustration, and burnout, which research states contributes to low teacher self-efficacy (Hagenauer, Hasher & Volet, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Sokal et al., 2021; Tze & Betts, 2010; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010). In addition to ever-evolving teaching demands, at the time of this research, a global pandemic was occurring, which created more uncertainty.

To better understand teachers' perception of their self-efficacy when responding to the diverse social-emotional needs of their students, eight classroom teachers were interviewed over video conferencing. The researcher's autoethnography was documented to triangulate evidence pertaining to literature on teacher self-efficacy and related topics which integrated the theories of self-efficacy and self-determination. Six themes emerged from the data, including: 1) job stress, burnout, and self-care; 2) challenges of meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of students;

3) the importance of teacher-student relationships; 4) the value of creating an emotionally safe classroom; 5) the political exigencies of schooling during a pandemic; and (6) sociocultural factors of teaching and learning.

The findings of the study indicated the need for ongoing dialogue on teacher self-efficacy; professional learning opportunities on self-efficacy; burnout; the importance of self-care and wellness for teachers; resources for teachers to access social-emotional supports; and future research on the impact of teacher self-efficacy and the global pandemic.

Keywords: self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, self-determination, social-emotional needs, emotionally safe classroom, self-care, job stress, burnout, global pandemic, political exigencies, sociocultural factors, autoethnography

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my grandpa, Doodraj Bayney, my father-in-law, Kenneth Leppky, and my sister-in-law, Leslie Leppky. I know you are all watching down on me.

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Acronyms

- ART-Anti-Racism Training
- ASD-Autism Spectrum Disorder
- CASEL-Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
- CFS-Child and Family Services
- CRT-Culturally Responsive Teaching
- CTE-Collective Teacher Efficacy
- EAL-English as an Additional Language
- EBD-Emotional Behaviour Disorder
- DEI-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- ITTIC - Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care
- LRSD – Louis Riel School Division
- LRTA Louis Riel Teachers' Association
- MTS -Manitoba Teachers' Society
- PBDE-Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education
- PFA - Psychological First Aid
- PTSD-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- REB 2- Research Ethics Board 2
- SDT-Self Determination Theory
- SEL – Social Emotional learning
- SES-Socioeconomic Status
- TCPS – Tri-Council Policy Statement
- TSE – Teacher Self-Efficacy
- TSR-Teacher-Student Relationship
- WHO-World Health Organization
- WRHA-Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Chapter One: Thesis Introduction

Teaching is a very demanding profession (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Hung, Oi, Chee & Man, 2007), including evolving societal expectations, parental, community, and stakeholder demands, and provincial mandates. Stressors include managing student behaviour, high workloads, lack of contact with colleagues, lack of support from parents, and demands from administrators (Klassen & Chui, 2010).

On any given day, teachers are expected and contracted to, provide programming and planning for students (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2014). Some prescriptive demands are classroom management, teaching the curriculum, assessing students, supervising extra-curricular activities, performing administrative duties, and attending school-based professional development activities (Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012; Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2014). These expectations and demands weigh heavily on teachers to care for their own wellness, sense of balance, and organizational skills, ahead of committing to the wellness of their students.

Areas that are less prescribed are: meeting the social-emotional needs of diverse students including newcomers; refugees; English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners (Stewart, 2011); students with mental health issues; those who have experienced trauma, in care of Child and Family Services, living in poverty (Silver & Sjoberg, 2019); dealing with family life changes through parental remarriage, divorce, or adoption; students who need support with behaviour or regulation, and those who are academic high achievers. In addition, there are students who do not present with high academic or social-emotional needs; they are not accelerated learners or low achievers; they might be considered average students. These less prescribed areas as stated above, have the potential to add stress to teachers' lives due to relational skills that are costly in terms of the sheer emotional toll.

In a time of educational constraint, teachers are expected to fulfill their teaching mandate as student numbers increase, financial and human resources support decrease, and classroom needs become more complex. Such demands can often lead to anxiety, frustration, emotional exhaustion, emotional labour, stress and burnout, which research indicates is associated with a lack of self-efficacy (Capone & Pertillo, 2018; Gastaldi et al., 2014; Pedota, 2015; Skinner & Beers, 2016).

In addition to all these stressors, at the time of preparing to conduct this research, the world was also facing a global pandemic which created new concerns. There were financial constraints, homeschooling had more than doubled (Rosen, 2020), and many teachers were expected to provide programming in a remote learning school, or a hybrid of in-class and remote teaching. More human resources to support teachers' mental health were desperately needed as more students displayed behaviours related to stress and anxiety (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2020; Sokal, Trudel & Babb, 2020).

There is ample research on teacher self-efficacy that relates to stress, job satisfaction, school goal structure, and student achievement (Capone and Pertillo, 2018; Gastaldi et al., 2014; Prino, & Puglia, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004), but there is a dearth of published research on teacher self-efficacy in relation to the social-emotional needs of students. A thorough literature search identified an article by Poulou (2017) and one by Zee & Koomen (2016) who collectively state that while there is research around student-teacher relationships and social-emotional needs of students, a deeper understanding of these terms and concepts should be explored. This is indicative of a gap in research in these two domains.

Purpose and Research Questions Supporting Problem Statement

The proposed study seeks to gain insight and a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students' diverse social-emotional needs. The specific research questions that will help to further explore the problem statement are:

1. What are teachers' understandings of self-efficacy and its relationship to the development of an "emotionally safe" classroom?
2. What are teachers' understandings of the diverse social-emotional needs of students and their impacts on classroom practice?
3. What are the perceived factors that promote or hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs?
4. What have been the perceived impacts of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy?

This research is relevant and timely since teacher self-efficacy and social-emotional needs of students are not widely researched, and understanding these areas can help to inform future training in teacher education, and guide stakeholders in supporting teachers. Teachers' personal beliefs about their self-efficacy are important, as their beliefs impact and guide their approach to teaching.

Definitions

For the purpose of this thesis, the following definitions, including my own, are provided for clarity:

- Self-efficacy/teacher self-efficacy
- Social-emotional needs

- Emotionally safe classrooms

Self-Efficacy/Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1994) as:

People's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (p. 2).

Bandura (2010) further explains that:

Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors may serve as guides and motivators; they are rooted in the core belief that one can make a difference by one's actions (p. 1534).

Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007) also define self-efficacy as “a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment” (p. 945). Caprara et al. (2006) define teacher self-efficacy as a teacher’s belief in their ability to successfully cope with tasks, obligations and challenges related to their professional role. Klassen, Tze, and Betts (2010), state that teacher self-efficacy is “the confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning” (p. 21)

Based on the definitions above and my own understanding of the term, I am defining self-efficacy as one’s own beliefs about their abilities to plan, implement, and fulfill or achieve a task in the most competent way possible. When an individual believes they have the skills, prior knowledge, or experience to attain their goals, they will likely work towards achieving those goals.

Social-Emotional Needs

Social-emotional needs are often confused by educators to mean social-emotional learning. Berry et al. (2015) state that “social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set, and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (p. 239). This description is also supported by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2014).

Social-emotional needs, according to Denham and Brown (2010), involve “a process of fostering positive attitudes in students toward themselves and school and reducing difficult and risky behaviors, ultimately leading to positive academic and behavioral outcomes” (p. 653).

Based on the definitions above and my own understanding of the term, I am defining social-emotional needs broadly as emotional, mental, and social wellness. Teachers who are responsive to their students' social-emotional needs can be flexible and nimble in their support. Based on my years of experience working as a teacher, student services teacher, and an instructional coach, I have observed teachers who listen with an open heart, have a growth mindset, are courageous, and create an environment that is emotionally and psychologically safe. When students have a supportive network of adults addressing their social-emotional needs, they feel protected, nurtured, and at ease. These supports provide students with agency, choice, and voice.

Emotionally Safe Classrooms

According to Perry (2020), safety is key to providing children with an opportunity to cultivate and embrace lifelong learning. A sense of safety comes when the need for consistency,

attentiveness, nurturing, and sensitivity to attention is met; and safety is created by predictability, which is constructed by consistency.

For students to feel emotionally safe in their classroom, it is essential that teachers manage the learning space, so students are comfortable, and there is no confusion about roles, boundaries, and hierarchy. Phillips (2014) states that to make the classroom space emotionally safe, students benefit from knowing the teacher who oversees the classroom, and they have a relationship with said teacher.

Based on my review of the literature and my personal experience, I am defining emotionally safe classrooms as spaces where teachers and students feel safe to express themselves non-judgmentally and unconditionally. Teachers and students are compassionate, courageous, and vulnerable towards each other. They are supportive of each others' mistakes, emotionally engaged, and celebrate learning. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms understand and emphasize social-emotional learning as foundational, and as important as academic learning. Learning environments have clear and consistent routines and procedures. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms model the behaviour they want to see in their students. Teacher-student relationships are cultivated and are strong, resulting in a sense of mutual trust. Teachers are the adults that students can rely on unconditionally, to value, nurture and protect them, and help them solve problems.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theories that will be used to guide this research study are the theory of self-efficacy and the theory of self-determination.

Theory of Self-Efficacy

The theory of self-efficacy, as outlined by Bandura (1977, 1986, 1994, 1997), Montcalm (1999), and Usher & Pajares (2008), has four sources:

1. Enactive mastery experience, or prior task-based achievement. This refers to the experiences we gain when we take on a new challenge and succeed. The best way to learn a skill or improve performance is by practice; we are teaching ourselves that we can acquire new skills. Enactive mastery is considered the most influential source of efficacy beliefs, since it is rooted in past performance accomplishments (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2007; Zimmeran, 2000). It also refers to mastery expectations that seek to answer questions such as: “Can I do it?” or “How well can I do it?” (Skaalvik, 1997, as cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). When individuals are faced with a similar situation that they have encountered in the past, they will rely on perceptions of past mastery to make judgements on present capabilities (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003).
2. Vicarious experience, or observation of peers and other role models. This is about having a role model to observe and emulate. When we have positive role models who display a healthy level of self-efficacy, we are likely to absorb some of those positive beliefs about ourselves. This source is important when people are uncertain of their own capabilities, or when they have little prior experience with the current or related task (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). According to Bandura (1997, as cited in Donohoo, O'Leary & Hattie, 2020), vicarious experiences are the second most influential source of self-efficacy. When a person sees someone else succeed, they convince themselves that if others can do it, they should be able to achieve at least some level of improvement in their abilities and performance. The impact of the modeled

- performance is dependent on the degree to which the observer connects with the modeled behaviour (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).
3. Verbal/social persuasion, or encouragement from others. This describes the positive impact that words can have on someone's self-efficacy. An example of this source would be telling a child (or adult) that they are capable and can face any challenge ahead of them, which can encourage and motivate them, as well as add to their growing belief in their own ability to succeed. This source of efficacy is most important when the efficacy information is considered reliable and reputable (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).
 4. Physiological and affective states, or physical/emotional conditions. This *addresses such issues as* fatigue, stress, worry, anxiety, joy, or pleasure. This state refers to the importance of context and overall health and well-being in the development and maintenance of self-efficacy (Positive Psychology, 2020).

Self-efficacy theory grew out of the research conducted by Albert Ackerman (2020) from Positive Psychology. He noted that Bandura remarked that there was something that played a major role in people's lives, however this phenomenon had not been systematically observed. This was the belief that people have their own ability to influence the events of their lives.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) is grounded in the 1985 work of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. The theory was further developed out of a theory of human motivation, suggesting that people tend to be driven by a need to grow and gain fulfillment (Cherry, 2019; Collie, 2020). According to Haakma, Janssen & Minnaert (2017), SDT "postulates that humans are innately predisposed towards mastering challenges and psychological growth" (p. 311). Spilt, Koomen,

and Thijs (2011) state that this theory has been applied in the fields of organizational psychology and educational psychology to study motivation and well-being.

There are two main assumptions underpinning this theory:

1. The need for growth drives behaviour. Gaining mastery over challenges and taking in new experiences are essential for developing a cohesive sense of self. The assumption is that people are seeking and actively pursuing growth.
2. Autonomous motivation is important. Self-determination theory centers on intrinsic motivation, also referred to by Jungert, Piroddi, and Thornberg (2016) as self-determined activity. This is different from extrinsic motivation (rewards), as it's fundamental focus is on internal sources of motivation, such as a need to gain knowledge or independence (Cherry, 2019; Wal, Beemt, Martens, & Brok, 2018).

Deci and Ryan (2000) and Spilt, Koomen, and Thijs (2011) posit that people have three innate psychological needs, which can be described as:

1. Competence. Feeling effective in environmental demands. When people feel they have the skills and ability to achieve their goals they will work towards and take the necessary steps to achieve them.
2. Connection or relatedness. Feeling connected with, and cared for, by significant others in the context at hand. People need to feel attached, connected, and in right relationship with others.
3. Autonomy. Feeling authentic, acting with volition, and having input (Duda & Appleton, 2016). People need to feel they have agency in their own behaviours and goals. Being able to take action directly will result in a significant shift in people's ability to feel self-determined (Cherry, 2019).

The above needs are essential for optimal functioning, constructive social development, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and teachers' emotional involvement with students in the classroom are driven by the needs of relatedness and connection (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011, p. 470).

According to the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2016), "Self-determination represents a broad framework for the study of human motivation and personality" (para.1). Teachers need to believe they have skills and to believe in themselves. When teachers can engage in specific interpersonal behaviours, they can make a positive shift in achieving their professional goals alongside their students.

Understanding self-efficacy and self-determination theories can guide teachers in developing a better sense of self-efficacy when responding to students' diverse needs. Self-efficacy and self-determination are the underpinnings of positive or negative outcomes for teachers, which is one of the foci of the main research question.

The theories of self-efficacy and self-determination are important to this research, as they will help to identify problems in teacher self-efficacy, teacher self-determination, and their relationship to teachers' responses to planning for students' diverse social-emotional needs. These theories will be foundational in constructing my individual interview questions and will be used to analyse data and provide recommendations.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to their students' social-emotional needs. This study will add to the research on teacher self-efficacy and contribute to the gap that exists in the literature in this field. While the study is to be conducted with kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers in the Louis Riel School Division,

it will be significant for classroom teachers in any school division, at any grade level, subject area, or specialization, including student support services, physical education, music, drama, vocational, industrial arts, and human ecology. Some teachers may resist the notion of building strong relationships with students and want to focus exclusively on their subject matter, without acknowledging that academic learning and social-emotional well-being are integral to student success.

The findings of this research will also be significant for school-based clinicians, such as psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, and occupational therapists who support teachers with student-specific planning. Clinicians are not often given the opportunity to establish deep relationships with students due to the high demands on their time and resources. The outcomes of this study can provide them with insight from the teachers' perspectives.

The study would also have significance for divisional school trustees and school administrators, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, and school-based principals and vice-principals who are responsible for creating positive learning spaces for teachers and students.

Other stakeholders who would benefit from the findings of this research are Manitoba Education, which develops curriculum, promotes, and provides professional learning opportunities for teachers, and the Manitoba Teachers' Society which creates protocols, interventions, and professional development for teachers. Other potential beneficiaries are teacher educators involved in pre-service teacher training and graduate studies, who should frequently examine and revise their andragogic practices, so they can be responsive to the needs of their students.

With respect to dissemination of the research, this can be done through such opportunities as offering professional development workshops, conference presentations, publications in

professional journals, and within professional learning teams, including staff meetings, professional learning networks, and network cafes. Such opportunities can advance a greater understanding of the importance of teacher agency. It is not about doing more work; it is about working differently.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter looked at the important work that classroom teachers are doing, the daily demands they are faced with, and their impact on teacher self-efficacy. The proposed research study seeks to further understand the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy with four research questions. Definitions were provided for clarity and consistency, as well as the theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy and self-determination. The significance of this study was explored, and the dissemination of the research was discussed. Chapter two will provide a literature review of teacher self-efficacy, students' social-emotional needs, teacher-student relationships, emotionally safe classrooms, and the global pandemic.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature pertaining to the stated research problem and related research questions. Major and minor themes from the literature are articulated, as well as some limitations within the topics of teacher self-efficacy (TSE), and teacher-student relationships (TSR).

A variety of search works were used to locate the articles for the literature review including: self-efficacy, teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationship, Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, efficacy beliefs, collective teacher efficacy (CTE), positive relationships, teacher behaviours, teacher-child interaction, student motivation, student achievement, social-emotional needs of students, emotionally safe classrooms, emotionally responsive strategies, global pandemic, COVID-19, and teacher self-efficacy. The databases from which the research articles were sourced were EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR and Google Scholar (for peer-reviewed open source). The articles date from 1977-2022.

Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE)

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about the capabilities to carry out an objective or goal successfully (Bandura, 1997). In an extensive review of the literature on educational research pertaining to teacher self-efficacy, consistent themes such as teaching behaviours, job satisfaction, burnout, and job stress were noted.

Teacher Behaviours (Teaching Persistence and Students' Motivation and Achievement)

Teachers' efficacy beliefs relate to their teaching behaviours in the classroom, such that they set goals, are persistent, and are invested in teaching (Jolivette & Benson, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, van Uden, Ritzen & Pieters, 2013; Zee & Koomen,

2016). Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy also tend to show tendencies toward higher levels of personal agency, planning and organization; enthusiasm for teaching, innovation, proactivity, and trying and applying new strategies. They are also open to new ideas, trying new things in the classroom, are eager to learn, are self-reflective, self-regulated, and attend professional development opportunities (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Klassen, Tze, & Betts, 2010; Ross, 1992; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Self-efficacious teachers tend to undertake difficult and challenging tasks and persevere with more endurance and drive, more so than non-self-efficacious teachers.

Greater efficacy allows teachers to be more effective in teaching, bounce back in the face of difficulties, be less critical of students' errors, work with students longer when challenges arise or when there may be struggles with academic tasks, and have higher collective efficacy (Klassen, Tze, & Betts, 2010; Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Ross, 1992; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers who have high efficacy can model the above-stated attributes for their students, which then motivates students to work harder, participate more, and not be fearful of making mistakes. With the combination of high teacher efficacy, high student engagement, and a positive atmosphere, an optimal learning environment is created.

Job Satisfaction

A factor that influences self-efficacy is job satisfaction. Locke (1969, as cited in Capone & Patrillo, 2018), defines job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 2). Teachers' sense of job satisfaction is strongly correlated with motivation, wellness, self-care, and a commitment to their careers (Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012). Teacher job satisfaction, according to Griffith (2004), as noted by Sun and Xia (2018), refers to "a teacher's affective relation to his or her teaching role" (p. 605). This pertains

to the outlook that teachers have on their actual job when compared to the job outcome (Sun & Xia, 2018).

According to Sun and Xia (2018, p. 88), there are several factors that influence job satisfaction; such factors are, but are not limited to, leadership, peer support, system structure, promotions, recognition of accomplishments, connection to colleagues and administrators, work conditions and distributed leadership. These factors are important, as the research points out that the school leadership team can have a profound effect on teacher job satisfaction. Lavy and Bocker (2017) posit that teachers' sense of meaning at work affects their relationships with their students, which then affects their job satisfaction.

Aldridge and Fraser (2016) hypothesized that school climate is also an indicator of job satisfaction. Components of job satisfaction were related to whether teachers were exposed to transformational leadership, positive student-teacher relationships, autonomy, and relationships with and/or pressures from parents.

A teacher may be satisfied with some aspects of their job such as working with students, other teachers, educational assistants, and volunteers. These components of the job lead to a high degree of autonomy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Alternatively, there are elements such as marking assignments and projects, progress reports and term or semester-end report cards, and preparing lessons, which lead to time constraints, heavy workloads, and working long hours that may be less satisfying.

Teacher job satisfaction is attained through daily classroom activities such as working with students (Dinham & Scott, 1997; Hargreaves, 2000; Nias, 1989), observing student progress and achievement, and working with education assistants, student support teachers, volunteers and administration, and the overall school culture and climate (Klassen & Chui, 2010). As a result,

teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy display more enthusiasm, eagerness, urgency for teaching, and zeal for the profession.

Burnout and Job Stress

As noted in the literature, there are correlations between teacher self-efficacy and what the World Health Organization has called, 'burnout syndrome' (Grant, 2020). Maslach and Jackson, as described by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007, p. 613), explain "burnout" as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout also pertains to feelings experienced by people whose jobs require constant exposure to emotionally fueled social situations (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Teachers with low self-efficacy tend to experience more challenges in teaching than their counterparts with higher self-efficacy. For this reason, they may experience lower levels of job satisfaction, and higher levels of job-related stress, including burnout, worry, and anxiety (Hagenauer, Hasher & Volet, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Sokal et al., 2021; Tze & Betts, 2010; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010). Teachers who consider themselves less competent when managing classroom behaviours and discipline report higher levels of burnout than teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy (Friedman & Farber, 1992).

Emotional exhaustion, a term often associated with burnout and stress, refers to feelings of emotionally overextended energy, and the depletion of one's own emotional resources (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Emotional exhaustion is recognized as the core element of burnout and long-term occupational stress (Grant, 2020; Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003). Depersonalization is described as the impaired or distorted perception of oneself, of others and of one's environment. It sometimes presents as a lack of empathy (Prinz, Hertrich, Hirschfelder & de Zwaan 2012). Schwarzer & Hallum (2008) further describe depersonalization as "a loss of idealism, and negative or inappropriate attitudes towards recipients. It refers to a negative,

callous, or excessively detached response to other people” (p.155). These two components are the main ingredients in teacher burnout and are negatively related to teacher self-efficacy (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Teacher stress is a growing problem in many Western countries (Gastaldi et al., 2014). Collie, Shapka and Perry (2012), declare that teachers’ work stress directly reflects the experience of unpleasant emotions because of the teaching workload. Teacher stress has been shown to be moderately related to teacher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, 2010, 2007).

The findings, from the literature review above, point to a lack of interventions in place to support teachers. Without those interventions, the financial cost to school divisions of caring for teachers can be astronomical. The emotional strain for teachers can take a toll on their physical and mental health, both professionally and personally, and can lead to greater teacher attrition.

Teacher attrition, as defined by Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017), is the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs (p. 154). Research shows that there are many teachers in the United States who leave the profession within the first five years, and a large representation of teachers leave the profession before the age of retirement (McDonald, 1999). According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), teachers’ motivation to leave the profession is positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, and negatively associated with job satisfaction.

Gaps in the Literature

Of the many studies I reviewed on teacher self-efficacy, there were several gaps. For example, the studies had limited sample sizes, there was very little research conducted on secondary teachers, and when there was such research, the studies were limited to Math and Science teachers. There was an absence of research in the Canadian context, as most studies were based on American, European, and Asian sample sets, and there was a lack of research

with teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience, as the studies were mostly with pre-service teachers and those with less than three years of teaching experience.

Notably absent was research with elementary school teachers who teach in a specialty area, for example, physical education, music, and drama. In addition, there was a lack of teacher self-efficacy research in non-curricular areas, and there was little research with respect to the social-emotional needs of students.

Students' Social-Emotional Needs

Students come to school with a variety of needs and conditions that are related to complex family structures, trauma, poverty, substance abuse, caregiving duties, obligations, responsibilities, mental health, bullying, grief, loss, and English as an Additional Language, to name a few. Many of these needs can affect overall student performance and highlight the pressures on children's development, as there are increased numbers of students who need psychological or psychiatric intervention for stress-induced symptoms, such as depression, hyperactivity, attention deficit, oppositional and conduct disorders, and substance abuse (Haynes, 2002; Nichols, Goforth, Sacra & Ahlers, 2018). Based on these studies, students today have many needs that are non-academic, and support needs to be in place to address them.

There is a plethora of studies that list the importance of addressing the social-emotional needs of students, which is a significant factor in student academic success (Cross, 2015; Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley & Weissberg, 2017; Haynes, 2002; Kern, 2014, Soland, 2019). Teachers, educational assistants, and administrators play vital roles in supporting students' social-emotional needs in school, because of the amount of time spent with students.

When schools prioritize the social-emotional needs of their students, the outcome can yield very positive results. Cross (2015) believes that teachers should do whatever it takes to

support student success, should not settle for underachievement from any student, and need to offer a free and appropriate education that reduces barriers for all students to reach their full potential. Kern (2014) suggests that to respond to students' social-emotional needs, in-service teacher training on behaviour management and positive support needs, on a consistent basis, can help teachers identify students who need support in this area. These supports can be in the form of mentoring by a senior teacher, internet research, instructional materials, professional reading, and regular feedback from administrators. If students' social-emotional needs are addressed early on in their schooling, this can have a significant positive impact on their well-being in the future.

The Teachers Aid (2020) podcast states that in the absence of teachers meeting the social-emotional needs of students, their peers will step in and support them. Teachers are encouraged to keep an eye out for online citizenship and create opportunities to connect with students via technology, as much as possible. It is worth considering the tension that exists between school employees, specifically school counsellors, who play a role of providing social-emotional support to students in the school setting, and school-based mental health professionals, such as school psychologists (Heath, 2017; Leschied, Saklofske & Flett, 2018; Nichols, Goforth, Sacra & Ahlers, 2018; Ross, Powell & Elias, 2002). Roles and responsibilities were noted as obstacles, due to duplication of services among clinical and student support teams.

Gaps in the Literature

There are several limitations to the reviewed studies. All had an American focus, which leads the reader to wonder about cultural or national context, given that schooling is different in a Canadian context. While one of the articles was authored by a mental health clinician (Haynes, 2002), there was a dearth of literature from an educator's point of view. One article articulates the rights of gifted and talented students (Cross, 2015), but there was limited information on the

social-emotional needs of students who have experienced trauma, and psychological or psychiatric needs. Exhaustive searches resulted in no specific definition of social-emotional needs.

Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR)

Students tend to thrive in an environment that is warm, welcoming, and nurturing—leading to both academic and social-emotional success. A positive teacher-student relationship is one of the most important factors in creating this responsive space, and one of the core reasons for staying in the teaching profession (Connor, 2008, as cited in Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998). Topics such as student engagement and achievement, attachment, teachers' well-being, and student emotions were prevalent in the literature.

Student Engagement and Achievement

Research states that there is a positive correlation between a positive and caring teacher-student relationship and student achievement (Baker, 1999; Fredricks et al., 2014 as cited in van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Trigg, & Premkumar, 2019; Hagenauer, Hascher & Volet, 2015; Muller 2001; Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Pigford, 2001). Students' perception of teacher care is an important dimension in a strong student-teacher relationship (Wentzel, 2002, as cited in Gasser, Grütter, Buholzer, & Wettstein, 2018), and the student-teacher relationship develops more profoundly as the student moves through elementary school (Hargreaves, 2000 Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011; Zee et al., 2013).

Positive interactions between teachers and students can help students to develop socially. This is not the only way to improve student academic achievement, although students who have a strong, supporting, and caring connection to their teachers will improve socially and academically more than those who are in conflict or are detached. Students care about their

relationships with their teachers and will respond positively to those who they believe care about them (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012).

Attachment

Attachment theory originated with John Bowlby in the 1930s, during his work with emotionally disturbed children. His work led to connections between early infant separations from the mother, and later maladjustment (McLeod, n.d.). Bowlby defines attachment as a “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). When students enter the classroom feeling insecurely attached, and commit aggressive and impulsive behaviours, teachers may misinterpret these behaviours as purposeful. Understanding attachment theory can help teachers develop a better sense of empathy when they respond to students’ needs and is the underpinning of positive or negative teacher-student relationships. As stated by Verschueren and Koomen (2012), “attachment theory has played a major role in guiding and inspiring teacher-child relationship research” (p. 205).

The literature on teacher-student relationships underscores the importance of attachment and connection between participants as foundational to healthy relationships (Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun & Sutton, 2009). Verschueren and Koomen (2012) noted that the teacher is deemed “the ad hoc figure with a safe haven and secure base function” (p. 205). Krstic (2015) states that “children will establish attachment relationships with an adult who cares for them, and the quality of attachment varies, depending on the quality of adult-child interaction” (p. 168). Teachers may function as temporary attachment figures and may be targets of attachment behaviour, however, children may not develop deep attachment bonds towards their teachers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Krstic, 2015; Schuengel, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012) because they tend to change teachers every school year. Students’ attachment to their classroom teachers can be less exclusive, as students must often share their teachers with other students

(Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). For example, in the senior years, students interact with many teachers throughout the day because many teachers teach subject-specific courses.

Understanding attachment and connection helps teachers to respond to their students' needs, nurture them and provide care, and guide future research in interventions which can improve teacher-student relationships (Schuengel, 2012; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Teacher-student relationships can serve as a regulating function with respect to children's social and emotional development (Greenberg, Speltz & Deklyen, 1993; Krstic, 2015; Murray & Greenberg, 2000), and can have a positive or negative impact on a student's school performance.

Teachers' Well-being and Students' Emotions

Teachers' positive and engaging emotions are an essential part of the teacher-student relationship. Teachers believe that showing more positive and pleasant emotions in the classroom setting makes them more effective (Sutton, 2004; various authors, as cited in Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun & Sutton, 2009). Teachers who display agreeable emotions are open to pursuing professional learning and professional reading, and this also makes them more apt to engage in meaningful planning and implementation of curriculum-related duties.

The quality of a teacher-student relationship is expected to contribute to teacher emotions and job satisfaction, and this is based on an understanding that secure attachments are fundamental to human functioning (Hagenauer, Hascher & Volet, 2015). It is important to note that a significant predictor of student engagement is the teacher's emotional well-being (Granziera & Collie, 2023; Hagenauer, Hasher & Volet, 2015; Harris et al., 2022).

There is an abundance of research that focuses on teachers' relationships with colleagues, although there is minimal research on teachers' relationships with their students. This is somewhat surprising, considering that teachers are engaged with students for almost 1200

hours each year. Teachers spend countless hours in their classrooms which could serve to strengthen the relationship between them and their students. According to Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) and Hargreaves (2000), the teacher-student relationship is the most important source of fulfilling the need for belonging, love, respect and closeness for teachers and students. Understanding this phenomenon could guide future research in terms of better understanding teachers' well-being.

Gaps in the Literature

The literature reviewed on teacher-student relationships noted several gaps. The study conducted by Verschueren and Koomen (2012) was limited to economically disadvantaged students, with little additional data. Fitzsimmons, Trigg, and Premkumar (2019) focused on tutors. Zee et al., (2013) focused on upper elementary teachers, although the findings could be extrapolated and/or adapted to K-6 teachers. The authors also noted limitations in the short-term duration of the studies. Future research could consider studies in a longitudinal format, as longer-term outcomes may provide more beneficial and in-depth results, versus superficial interpretations.

Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) note a limitation in their study, and an opportunity for future research when they suggested that other researchers could take a deeper look into understanding teachers' interpersonal experiences with students since "attachment theory has inspired valuable information about teacher-student relationships" (p. 471).

Additional and potential research could investigate the professional and personal identities of teachers, and how closely they are interrelated with their relationships with individual students. Studies by Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, and Sutton (2009) and Hagenauer, Hasher and Volet (2015), noted a dearth of research on teacher emotion. This is another potential area of research.

Emotionally Safe Classrooms

Students need to feel safe to learn academically, socially, and behaviourally. Students also need to feel respected and heard. For learning to occur, an emotionally safe classroom is essential in providing stability, predictability, innovation, and consistent routines. While teachers cannot always control external environments for children, they have more control of their classroom space.

Bruce Perry (n.d.), makes the case that teachers can create a positive classroom climate by being attuned to the children's needs while keeping challenges reasonable, and praise and encouragement strong. Children do well and take risks in their learning when they know they are being recognized for their efforts, and adults are encouraging, reassuring, and supportive.

A safe, supportive, and emotionally healthy environment benefits students, staff, and the school. Parrett and Budge (2012) posit that a learning environment which promotes creativity, inquiry and risk-taking is very powerful. Such a learning space reinforces and enhances leadership in school since it encourages dedicated educators to want to work under such supportive conditions.

Teachers can build strong, meaningful relationships with their students in an emotionally safe classroom (Lourens, 2004; Muehl, 2016; Neufeld, 2016; Stipek, 2006). This means getting to know students, their interests, strengths, out-of-school experiences, and cultural affiliation (Reese, Jensen & Ramirez, 2014). It also means organizing, establishing, and implementing a welcoming, warm, and positive environment, so students can flourish. When teachers form positive bonds with students, classrooms become supportive spaces in which students can engage in academically and socially productive ways (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, as cited in LaHayne, 2019). Phillips (2014) points out the importance of balancing an authentic, safe, open, and

supportive relationship, with the critical role of maintaining a strong sense of leadership in the classroom.

An emotionally safe classroom puts social-emotional learning (SEL) first. According to the National Centre for Safe Supportive Learning Environments (n.d.), SEL is the process where students and teachers acquire knowledge that supports their development toward managing emotions, feeling, and showing empathy, constructing positive relationships with others, and making responsible choices. SEL can also support skills in students that will help them develop personally and socially, as well as support their academic performance (Weissberg, 2016). When classroom teachers put social skills at the heart of teaching, a positive teaching and learning environment is evident. When a classroom environment is positively charged, teachers, students and supporting adults can develop successfully, and everyone puts in their best effort toward encouraging the energy to continue.

Teachers have many needs to be sensitive and responsive to within the classroom environment. One such need in creating an emotionally safe classroom is being trauma informed. The Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care (ITTIC) (2020) states that being trauma-informed recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma can play in someone's life. Jennings (2019) says the first step in helping students who have experienced trauma is to provide a safe and supportive space at school. Students who experience trauma face many obstacles to learning and have trouble forming relationships with teachers, poor self-regulation, negative thinking, hypervigilance, and executive function challenges (Miller, 2020). Teachers can be trauma-sensitive and supportive to students by working to understand what is causing the child's stress, and how to reduce it in a nonjudgmental, compassionate manner, without causing harm. Fowler (2015) offers strategies based on Psychological First Aid (PFA) that include connection and engagement, safety and comfort, stabilization, assessing

needs, practical assistance, social support, coping strategies, and linking with community resources.

The physical classroom space is important when creating an emotionally safe classroom. Dusenbury (2012) states that teachers can create this space by setting up the classroom so that it is safe and well-organized. The classroom space should be clean and arranged in a way that always enables the teacher to see and supervise students. Classroom resources and materials should be available and within reach. The furniture should be arranged to allow for ease of movement for teachers, support staff, and students.

Gaps in the Literature

Gaps were identified in the literature reviewed. Various iterations of the phrase “emotionally safe classroom” were used to search for relevant literature. This phrase was absent from peer-reviewed journal articles but was present in more general internet searches which resulted in, articles about emotionally supportive classrooms, social-emotional classrooms, respectful classroom environments, and social-emotional learning classrooms. There were several checklists, how-to’s, and things to consider. Theoretical concepts were offered with no practical applications. Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun and Sutton (2009) note that “educational research around emotions has been slow to emerge” (p. 705).

Global Pandemic

The World Health Organization declared a global health emergency in January 2020 (WHO, 2020), and brought it to the world’s attention (Tang, Chen, Lin, Feng, 2020). The instant onset of the coronavirus disease, COVID-19 (SARs-CoV-2), also brought about swift changes for teachers in March 2020. They were required to pivot from in-person learning to remote teaching and working from home in a matter of a few short days, to protect themselves and their learners.

Very limited resources and training were given to them to facilitate this process, which made this new virtual learning reality very challenging and as a result, their self-efficacy was tested. (Haverback, 2020).

Remote Learning

Over the course of the first three months of the pandemic, teachers demonstrated increased fatigue, exhaustion, and cynicism, but also decreased levels of efficacy in the way they managed their classrooms, and a decreased sense of accomplishment (Sokal et al.,2021; 2020). Teachers found that remote teaching posed many issues such as using technology exclusively to teach content, lack of face-to-face contact with students, and a need to balance the demands of work and home (Ferguson, 2020; Heim, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020).

Problematic factors were uncovered such as the lack of training and experience using technology, for both teachers and students. These factors posed a barrier for teachers being able to access their students, especially those most at risk. The lack of an electronic device for learning and accessibility to a stable internet connection, or any at all, were part of this uncertain reality for students (Abuhammad, n.d.; Stelitano, Doan, Woo, Diliberti, Kaufman & Henry, 2020). Many students were left to figure out technology on their own, including troubleshooting assignments, and organization of materials, as they may not have had a parent at home to aid and support. Under those conditions, remote teaching for teachers, and learning for students was problematic, stressful, and exhausting.

Return to In-person Learning

Since the virus can be transmitted from person to person by prolonged close contact and crowded indoor spaces, safety measures had to be put in place to keep people safe. Schools needed to meet the space criteria, therefore more space between students and teachers was

needed. All spaces in the school needed to be measured to ensure two meters of physical distancing, and furniture needed to be stored in alternate spaces. There was an assumption that teachers would take on the responsibility of keeping their students safe, to prevent the spread of the disease in schools, in addition to their teaching duties.

Given that teaching is a very social and interaction-based profession (Cal State LA, 2020) when the provincial requirements for restoring safe schools (Government of Manitoba, 2020), teaching became more isolating. As a preventative measure to avoid close contact and reduce COVID-19 cases in school, teachers were assigned to a specific cohort, a designated lunch and break space within that cohort, and caps on gathering size in the designated space. They did not have the same access to personnel support, fellowship, and social relationships as prior to the pandemic. Teachers were also working hard at keeping themselves and their students two meters apart, ensuring they and their students were masked for the duration of the school day. Cleaning and sanitizing as students moved from indoors to outdoors, and from space to space within their assigned cohort was also required. That took time and energy away from teaching the mandated curricular outcomes. Despite these additions to the already tiring list of expectations, teachers tried to work through their own struggles to find ways to adapt to the new demands and remain innovative, while staying responsive to the academic and social-emotional needs of their students. The endless demands on teachers were growing at an exponential rate.

Learning from Home

In August 2020, several school divisions offered a learning-from-home option to students who were immune compromised, living with someone who is immune compromised, or simply by a parent/guardian choosing to have their child learn at home (Government of Ontario, 2021; Louis Riel School Division, 2021; Online Learning Centre, 2021; Pembina Trails School Division, 2021; St. Isidore Learning Centre, 2021). These schools were staffed by teachers who were able to

provide synchronous and asynchronous lessons to students for an entire school day, for the duration of the school year. Few additional teachers were hired to staff these schools. Many teachers experienced a change in their assignment (Louis Riel School Division, 2021), requiring yet another pivot. Teachers' attitudes towards change, the intense job demands that teaching virtually requires, the constant shift in enrollment, and the lack of support, led to fatigue and burnout among teachers (Kendrick, 2021; Roy, 2020; Singer, 2020; Sokal et al., 2020).

Gaps in the Literature

Of the literature reviewed, studies were limited to a few countries worldwide, as research around the global pandemic and teacher self-efficacy is beginning to emerge due to the unforeseen duration of the worldwide crisis. The topic of the global pandemic is very important to teacher self efficacy, as this is the current context in which teachers are working and living and is no doubt having a huge impact on their self-efficacy, therefore it deserves attention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review is to help the reader understand aspects of teacher self-efficacy (TSE), teacher-student relationship (TSR), students' social-emotional needs, and emotionally safe classrooms, including the likely impact of the global pandemic. This is important since research has been abundant in each of these areas individually; however, very little research combining these topics has been done to date. More research is essential to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' perception of their self-efficacy when responding to the diverse social-emotional needs of their students. Chapter three will address the research design, research scope, data collection, credibility, ethical considerations, researcher worldview and positionality, data analysis procedures and recommendations, and dissemination of findings.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will discuss the research design and scope, data collection, issues related to credibility, and important ethical considerations. Also included in this chapter will be the researcher's worldview and autoethnographic experience, positionality, data analysis and recommendations, and dissemination of findings.

Research Design

The research design used in this study was qualitative, combining phenomenological and autoethnographic methodologies. The selected research methods were determined to be appropriate to this research study for several reasons. More specifically, phenomenology seeks to examine a phenomenon (teacher self-efficacy), which differs from person to person and from context to context. In addition, autoethnography allows the researcher, as a prior classroom, student services, and divisional teacher, to share personal experiences with self-efficacy and its association with building and sustaining strong relationships.

The objective of phenomenological research is to understand the experiences of others and to attempt to make sense of those experiences. Phenomenological research is a type of qualitative inquiry that draws upon the philosophical and humanitarian disciplines and allows the researcher to articulate the lived experience of individuals about a phenomenon as it is described by participants (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Van, Manen, 2017). Further, Smith (2013) posits that phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a first-person perspective.

Descriptive phenomenology, developed by psychologist Giorgi (2012), is a method grounded in the work of philosopher Husserl's scientific approach to developing phenomenology (Jackson, Vaughan & Brown, 2018). It is used in social science research to discover and define

the lived experience of individuals (Christensen, Welch & Barr, 2017). Interpretive phenomenology is about deeply exploring how individuals make sense of their personal and social world. It is concerned with an individual's personal perceptions of an object or event (Smith, 2015) and at its centre it is about the understanding and interpreting of individuals' experiences (Tuohy, 2013). For the purpose of this study, I relied on the interpretive phenomenology framework, as I closely examined the experiences and views of teachers and attempted to make sense of those experiences.

In the proposed study, the phenomenon in question is the perception of teachers' self-efficacy. Since teacher self-efficacy in the kindergarten to Grade 6 contexts, and its relation to teachers' abilities to program for their students with diverse social-emotional needs has not been closely examined in the research, I believed it warranted further investigation. Data collection on the phenomenon of self-efficacy involved conducting individual interviews with kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers in the Louis Riel School Division.

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that attempts to understand, describe (*graphy*), and analyse personal (*auto*) experiences to understand cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005, as cited in Ellis, Adam, & Bochner, 2011). It is a qualitative research method that uses data from self "and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context" (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 2). Wall (2008) described autoethnography as "an intriguing and valid qualitative research method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding" (p. 38). Autoethnography "connects the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). In my case as the researcher, I documented my lived experiences as they related to my four research questions. I attempted to make sense of my own experiences and used the information to help me analyse and organize my data.

Research Scope

I coordinated and conducted structured individual interviews with eight participants. The research included kindergarten to Grade 6 classroom teachers in the Louis Riel School Division (refer to the Appendix A for request letter to conduct research in the school division). I believe classroom teachers play a critical role in supporting students. While there are teacher specialists within the kindergarten to Grade 6 system, for example music and physical education, they were not invited to be part of the interviews, as the study focused on generalist teachers who have assigned homerooms and a specific group of students (usually numbering less than thirty). Participants in the study were expected to have more than three years of classroom teaching experience, and more than five years away from retirement. Based on personal experience working with teachers, and with the intention of being very responsive to the many daily demands of teaching, those who are new to the profession often have limited time and competing priorities, and teachers within five years of retirement, who are often asked to take on more demands (such as mentorship of new teachers, serving on committees, extra-curriculars, etc.) may not have sufficient time to participate in a research study.

Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, as the researcher, I believed that individual interviews and autoethnography were the most appropriate methodologies. I intended to understand how the experiences of the individual participants, my experiences as the researcher, and the depth of the combined experiences, contribute to understanding teacher self-efficacy. There may, of course, be other research methodologies that could be equally valid, including narrative research and case studies; however, using interviews and autoethnography, focusing on the individual's story, will help me to better understand teachers' impressions, and give agency to teachers' voice.

Recruitment of participants consisted of an email invitation to all divisional kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers to participate in the study (refer to Appendix B for an invitation to participate and Appendix C for the Participant Consent Form), sent via divisional school principals (refer to Appendix D for request to disseminate invitation). Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers were chosen since there is limited research on the self-efficacy of teachers in the elementary years. In addition, based on my personal experience working with teachers at these grade levels who teach all subject areas, versus junior high (Grade 7-8) teachers who may teach in one or two specialized areas, the cost of care, emotional labour, and stress is high. Interested participants contacted me via my academic email account provided by the University of Manitoba. I replied and attached the consent form. The first eight participants who met the selection criteria and completed the consent form, were selected to participate in the individual interviews.

Data collection involved soliciting feedback from the teacher participants via invitation (Stringer, 2014). This method of data collection allowed me to understand the lived experiences of the participants. The individual interviews were conducted via video conferencing, during an evening selected by the interviewee and me (refer to Appendix E for the Participant Interview Guide including the structured interview questions).

The data from the individual interviews was collected by taking handwritten notes and audio recordings. The audio recordings were then transcribed verbatim into a typewritten document for clarity, consistency, and familiarity. Each transcript was re-read and compared to the audio recordings for accuracy. All data was collected and held confidentially. The names of the interviewees were changed to pseudonyms. Names will not appear in any report or publication of the research unless as a pseudonym. Data was safely stored in a secure personal filing cabinet, and will be kept for five years, and only I will have access to this information.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, multiple sources were incorporated (Stringer, 2014). I will triangulate evidence (Statistics Solutions, 2020) by using the literature review from chapter two, feedback from individual participants, and my autoethnographic experiences.

Ethical Considerations

As the researcher, I will adhere to all research ethics requirements, including the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, the University of Manitoba, the Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, and Louis Riel School Division Research Ethics guidelines (refer to Appendices F, G, and H – TCPS Course on Research Ethics, Research and Ethics Compliance Protocol Approval – May 2021 and Research and Ethics Compliance Protocol Approval – April 2023). My adherence to ethical issues also included confidentiality; appropriate attention to the collection, storage, and disposal of data; respect for the anonymity of participants; and understanding of what would be considered misconduct and impropriety with respect to research ethics guidelines.

Participants were reminded that they could opt out of the study at any time before, during, and after the individual interviews. Should the participant feel stressed or become emotional or overwhelmed as they responded to the interview questions, I would provide them with the opportunity to take a break and gather themselves. If they wished to continue with the interview, we would proceed. If the interview continued to cause stress, we would stop the interview, and I would offer the opportunity to reschedule. I would also direct them to the Manitoba Teachers' Society counselling services or the Employee Assistance Program through the division's primary insurance provider. To protect the anonymity of participants' responses, each participant was

given a pseudonym prior to the start of the interview and no names were associated with individual responses.

As an employee of the Louis Riel School Division, I am aware of my position and its potential for conflict in relation to the participants. As a divisional teacher, I could be perceived as being in a position of power (Kvale, 2006). The participants for the individual interviews were teachers, as am I. As the interviewer, I was mindful of my perceived position of power and offered space for participants to answer the questions or decline to answer as they see necessary. I am conscious of possible perceived power dynamics during the research process, recruitment, and analysis of the data.

Researcher Worldview and Autoethnographic Experiences

I approached my research from a social constructivist worldview, which includes valuing the importance of human relationships: “Social constructivists believe individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). Further, “social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what is happening in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding” (F. Morin, personal communication, June 7, 2019).

Much of my academic and professional work since 1992 has encompassed social constructivism and building relationships. My academic studies include a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology, a Bachelor of Education with a focus on Middle Years, and a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma of Education with a focus in Counselling. My current position with the Louis Riel School Division takes a developmental approach when working with teachers. I have attended many professional development workshops focusing on attachment, relationships, developmental teaching, self-regulation, Collaborative Problem Solving (Greene & Ablon, 2006),

and trauma-informed care. I facilitate professional development workshops and presentations for teachers on the importance of human connection as being foundational to learning. My worldview is important to this research since my approach is qualitative and “[t]he goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8).

Positionality

Positionality is an important part of research: “Researchers acknowledge the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process” (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas & Caricativo 2017, p. 426). In other words, researchers need to be aware of their own positionalities, including biases, privileges, gender, “insider status” (intimate knowledge of the organization, having a sense of trust and the potential agency to influence the acquisition of data) or “outsider status” (outsider perceptions relative to positions of power).

As the researcher, I position myself as follows: I am a cisgender woman of colour, born in Canada to immigrant parents, who are both university graduates. I am married to a Canadian Mennonite, and we have two daughters who self-identify as mixed-race. I consider myself to have been raised in an upper-middle-class home and educated in Canada’s two official languages. I have two undergraduate degrees, and a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education, as well as several credentials related to my academic and professional work.

I am employed full-time as a divisional support teacher working with principals, vice principals, classroom teachers, student services teachers, and educational assistants. Due to my positionality, I may be more cognizant of, and make assumptions about, teachers’ roles in

developing and nurturing positive teacher-student relationships, especially with students of colour, other ethnic groups, and students with diverse social-emotional needs.

Throughout the data collection process, I kept a personal journal to record my thoughts, my personal feelings, reflections, and impressions as they emerge including the data collection and analysis phases of my work. I also worked with a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993, Kember et al., 1997). This is someone who I relied on to be supportive, caring, honest, and provided me with guidance and another point of view. With the use of a personal journal and a critical friend, I endeavoured to report the findings based solely on the data collected with less perceived bias.

Data Analysis Procedures and Recommendations

Participant feedback was transcribed by me. Responses to each question was thematically coded. Each theme was analysed based on the research questions, the literature review, the theoretical framework, and my autoethnographic experience. Recommendations were made based on emerging themes and personal experiences.

Dissemination of the Findings

My intent is to share my findings with the administrators of the Louis Riel School Division, as they may find it useful for supporting teachers in developing and enhancing self-efficacy, supporting student social-emotional needs, and creating emotionally safe classrooms. I also intend to share my findings with the individuals who participated in this research study.

The findings can also be shared with administrators from other school divisions as opportunities arise via divisional professional development sessions. The findings could also be disseminated in future presentations or publications, and at the University of Manitoba's Faculty

of Education's Graduate Students Symposium. The thesis will be made public on the University of Manitoba MSpace website.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design and scope, data collection, analysis and procedures that will be used to triangulate data. Topics related to credibility, ethics, and positionality were also discussed. Chapter four will address my autoethnography at various stages of my academic and professional journey.

Chapter Four: Autoethnography

This chapter addresses my autoethnographic experiences over more than two decades of my teaching career, including a short introduction as the researcher, over six periods of my professional life: classroom teaching experience; school-based student services teacher experience; interdivisional student services teacher experience focused on mental health; divisional itinerant teacher, a student services teacher in Louis Riel School Division's Learning from Home School, and divisional learning team teacher. My thematic lived experiences will be focused on three main areas: self-efficacy, creating emotionally safe classrooms, and teacher-student relationships.

Academic Path

I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and educated in French Immersion from kindergarten to Grade 12. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with majors in Psychology and English, and a minor in French from the University of Manitoba. Teaching was not something I ever intended to pursue.

My first teaching experience was when I travelled to Asia to teach English after completing my Bachelor of Arts degree. As a young person with limited travel experience on my own, I was hopeful that I would be able to make connections with others, experience new adventures, and do some additional travelling in the region. Within the first few days of my work as an early years English as an Additional Language instructor, I discovered my love for teaching. Teaching for me was powerful, alluring, and exhilarating. To be given the opportunity to work alongside students, engage them in their lessons, and entice them to keep working and growing, to be part of their successes and failures, and to plan for, and be part of their lives every day was something I knew I wanted for my future.

I returned to Winnipeg after a few short months and knew that teaching was going to be my career. To be considered for entry into an After-Degree Bachelor of Education program, I needed two teachable subjects, and therefore I needed to take additional courses in my minor area of French. Throughout that year of additional courses, I thought often of my time in Asia and hoped to feel that same sense of efficacy in my future as a teacher as I felt when I was there.

I completed the two-year After-Degree program at Brandon University, in Brandon, Manitoba, where I had supportive professors who took an interest in me and other students and made personal and professional connections with us by seeing us as more than Education students. They taught us how to teach the academic curriculum, while also highlighting the value and importance of the teacher-student relationships as key to creating a strong learning community. After two years, I felt qualified and equipped with the tools to have my very own classroom.

Classroom Teaching

After graduation, there were limited permanent teaching positions available in Winnipeg. I had little choice but to apply for teaching positions outside of the city or province. I applied for, was interviewed via telephone, and accepted a teaching position in a faith-based school in southern, rural Saskatchewan.

Personal Self-Efficacy

While leaving my family and friends was hard, I was tasked with setting up my first classroom without any support from administrators or other teachers. I had many questions, and a great deal of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear about how I would succeed in a new place where I knew no one. Who would I turn to when I needed help? Who would I ask when I did not know what to do when faced with the many questions any new teacher faces when they are starting

out? Who could I count on? Who would give me advice and mentorship that many new and experienced teachers rely on when faced with obstacles and challenges?

I spent a couple of years there, where I taught a Grade 7/8 split class. I was responsible for teaching all academic subjects to both grades at the same time, as well as physical education and health, all in French. I also taught a split class of Grade 5/6 natural sciences in French. Since I was not permitted to teach the faith-based classes (as I was not of the school's faith), I taught a health class to a split 3/4 class, while my students were attending the faith classes.

In a five-day school cycle, I had five 30-minute prep blocks. I believed that I had the skills to teach the academic curriculum and meet all my students' social-emotional needs, so I did not think to question my workload as I had no other context to judge if it was sufficient or too much. I struggled to balance my workload and meet the needs of students, their parents, the staff, and the community. I spent a lot of time at work, trying to make lessons engaging, interactive, and meaningful, all while preparing students for the next grade level. It was hard work, but I was invested in making this the best experience for my students. With the benefit of over 24 years of hindsight, I can now see that my workload and level of responsibility were unreasonable for any teacher, let alone a new one.

I moved back to Winnipeg a couple of years later where I accepted a full-time term position in the former St. Boniface School Division's français partiel program. I taught Middle Years English Language Arts, and one slot of Middle Years social studies in French. This was one of two schools in Winnipeg offering such a program. The program was meant primarily for francophone students to learn French, Social Studies, Music, and Physical Education in French; Math, Science, and English Language Arts were taught in English. The format of the program was completely new to me, as my schooling was in a French Immersion program, and I had recently come from teaching in a French Immersion setting. Unsure that I could honour this program as a non-francophone, I

made the decision to trust my previous successful experiences in teaching and use that energy to drive me forward.

I made wonderful connections with my colleagues, administrators, and educational assistants. The staff was warm, kind, encouraging, and very supportive. Many of them had years of teaching experience, so they served as great mentors to me. Had it not been for them, I doubt I would have been as successful in that school as I was. I was offered a full-time permanent position the following year, in the newly created Louis Riel School Division.

I taught Grade 6 in the same school and shared teaching responsibilities with another teacher. It was a great year of learning, teamwork, and planning. I had many challenges, some easier to overcome than others. I had many doubts over that year about my abilities as a teacher; however, with support from my family, some colleagues, and my divisional mentor, I was able to overcome them in time.

That same year, I was accepted into a Master of Education program at the University of Manitoba, in Educational Administration and Foundations, specifically Educational Administration. I was excited to start the program, as I wanted to further my academic studies as well as explore future job opportunities. My personal self-efficacy was high, and I was in the right space to pursue new learning. Unfortunately, after three classes into my first course, I felt that Educational Administration was not the professional path for me, and I decided to end my time in this program. The following spring, I applied the University of Manitoba to continue my academic studies in the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma of Education (PBDE) program.

The following school year, I team-taught Grade 7 with another teacher. We chose to combine our class of 18 students each into one class of 36 students. Teaching 36 students at the same time posed many challenges related to academics, including the amount of marking involved. My students that year were the same students I taught the previous year, so in terms of

teacher-student relationships, I felt comfortable with the relationships we had already established and fortunate to have a student teacher for the whole school year.

It was an amazing year, full of trial and error, balancing school, and work life. Our teaching team trusted and supported each other throughout the year. We also received tremendous support from our administrators, student support teachers, colleagues, and educational assistants. My personal self-efficacy grew from my previous five years as a classroom teacher, and I felt prepared to handle what came next in my career.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom

As a new teacher, I did not know that I should be thinking of creating an emotionally safe classroom, nor would I be able to articulate it if I were to see it. Personally, I would describe an emotionally safe classroom as a feeling of comfort and calm for students and staff. I knew what safety felt like for me as a teacher at an intuitive level. I wanted my students to feel comfortable sharing space with me and their classmates, but I did not think I had the necessary skills to create such a space. I worked to create consistency in service delivery, predictable routines and procedures, and stability. From my academic studies in Psychology, I knew the importance of being present when students needed attention socially, emotionally, behaviourally, and academically, and I worked as hard at meeting those emotional needs as I did on their academics.

As a new teacher, I searched for curricula that addressed creating emotionally safe learning spaces, but there were very few resources available. I tried different ideas and strategies to create an emotionally safe classroom for my students, mostly from intuition and my good and bad learning experiences. I encouraged feedback from my students, as I felt they were good judges of whether they felt safe, secure, and free to take risks within our classroom space.

I wanted to know about my students' interests inside and outside of the classroom. Many of them played sports, studied music, and had a variety of other interests outside of school and I wanted them to share their experiences with me and their classmates so they could have a better understanding of one another. These actions helped to create a safe, positive, supportive, and encouraging community of learners.

Teacher-Student Relationships

I reflected on my own K-12 school experience and have very few memories of compassionate and caring teachers. In my schooling, the teacher-student relationships, if there were any, existed only within the school walls, and only as it related to the academic curriculum. I wanted much more for my students.

I worked diligently every day and took every opportunity I could to connect with my students. I wanted to know who they were as individuals, and what their interests were. To me, each student brought their gifts, stories, competencies, and areas of growth, and I wanted to support them in as many ways as I could.

Some things I did to emphasize my relationship with my students were to:

- Celebrate each student's birthday in my homeroom class with their very own birthday cake, accompanied by a signed card from each student
- Provide an end-of-term celebration
- Provide monthly lunches purchased and prepared with my funds
- Schedule one-on-one time with each student at least once per month
- Attend school sporting events

- Provide a year-end class barbeque
- Encourage parent volunteer opportunities in my homeroom
- Accompany students to camps and on out-of-province field trips
- Communicate regularly with parents through class newsletters
- Connect with parents via phone calls or in-person meetings

I had supportive colleagues and for the most part, supportive administrators who allowed me to create long-lasting and meaningful relationships with my students, their families, and the community.

School-based Student Services Teacher

In the next period of my career at the Louis Riel School Division, I worked for several years as an elementary (K-8) school-based student services teacher.

Personal Self-Efficacy

I finished my Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education while on maternity leave. In an effort to create emotionally safe learning spaces and enact my interest in teacher-student relationships, I chose counselling as my area of focus.

I applied for a divisional transfer as I had completed my PBDE and was hoping for a move into student services. I received a call from the school division office asking if I would take a position as guidance counsellor in the same school where I was previously teaching. I eagerly accepted. I felt prepared to work as a school counsellor, supporting students schoolwide who were dealing with social-emotional and behavioural issues. I was the only guidance counsellor in the school, so I did not have the support of a colleague if I had questions, doubts, or concerns. I

also knew that I would need to be responsive to all students' and teachers' needs and would be expected to have answers to most, if not all, questions. Since I was new to the role, I had not yet built a network of contacts within or outside of the division, so the feeling of uncertainty was very real.

I was fortunate to have a colleague who was new to the role of a resource teacher. They had many years of classroom experience and had completed their first year as a resource teacher while I was on maternity leave. We leaned on each other, even though our roles differed greatly. They were the ideal mentor: compassionate, supportive, kind, patient, honest, encouraging, authentic, and trustworthy. They continue to be one of my most cherished friends.

I had many new duties and responsibilities including scheduling educational assistants to provide classroom support; supervising individual students; supervising at recess and lunch; writing funding applications for support for students who presented with emotional behaviour disorder (EBD); writing funding applications for students who were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); writing funding applications for students who could not be in the classroom because of overwhelming stress, behavioural issues, or as per teacher's request; planning and programming for individual students' social-emotional needs; and, supporting or co-teaching for social-emotional learning programs.

I enjoyed my years as a school counsellor and had the opportunity to do new things, not all of which were successful. I had a supportive group of colleagues I could count on daily, and we did our best to support the students within the school.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom

I was considered a non-classroom teacher, and for the first time in my career, I did not have a group of students to welcome on the first day. What would an emotionally safe classroom

look like for me in a non-classroom teacher's role? As there was no manual to follow, I had to make it up as I went along. I had my own office space where I intended to host groups of students for a variety of reasons. I worked at creating a warm and welcoming space where students could come for a break, come to talk, or come for group sessions.

I furnished my office with colourful rugs and bean bag chairs, a variety of sensory materials, and tools that students and staff could use for self-regulation, calming, refocusing, and impulse control. Chairs and a table were set up for more formal meetings, and a water and coffee station were set up on a corner counter. The lighting could be turned on or off as needed, and there was a large window that let in a lot of natural light. Plants hung from the ceiling by the window, as well as many on shelves. These things made me feel calm, happy, rejuvenated, and I hoped they would do the same for students and staff.

Group dynamics was also something I felt I needed consider while working within my space. I solicited input from some students and staff to develop a set of developmentally appropriate expectations, that we could all follow, so we all felt safe, secure, and trusted. Some of the expectations included: being kind to others; taking turns; and supporting friends with patience and kindness. Feedback from students and staff was excellent once the expectations were implemented. They appreciated that everyone within the group knew what to expect from each other and that it was an equitable space.

Teacher-Student Relationships

As a guidance counsellor, I did not have a group of students assigned to me. This meant that I had to work on teacher-student relationships with all students in the school. To create deep and meaningful relationships with students, I had to cultivate and nurture relationships with their classroom teachers as well. I was visible in the hallways to greet staff and students as they entered the building. I was available as much as possible when teachers wanted to meet, plan,

or share progress or concerns about students. I supported teachers with co-teaching of social-emotional programming. I helped teachers with students who needed an alternate space for a break or to complete coursework, and I provided support to teachers with programming for educational assistants.

My relationships with classroom teachers were then bridged to extend to students. Students saw the positive relationship between their teacher and me, which gave them the confidence to trust me, in and out of their classrooms. I hosted a variety of friendship and socialization student groups in my office. Students had the option to participate or decline group sessions. Feedback from teachers and students was that students enjoyed the group, as they liked being with me, and other classmates, friends, or students in a small and predictable environment.

My relationships with other non-teaching/learning groups often extended beyond the classroom and the school. I hosted meetings with community visitors, outside agencies, divisional teachers, clinicians, and parents. Those meetings were essential in student planning, programming, and engagement. I learned a lot from the feedback from students and staff about my office space, my connection to others and my language, and used that information when meeting with adults. It served me well, in that once relationships were established, most meetings were pleasant and highly productive.

Inter-Divisional Student Services Teacher

After a few years of school-based student services experience, I was hired into the inter-divisional student services teaching position. The position was based out of a mental health institute, in partnership with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) and the Louis Riel School Division where I was still employed.

Personal Self-Efficacy

I returned to work after my second maternity leave. While I was away on leave, many staff changes occurred, and I was informed that the position that I previously had before the maternity leave was given to another staff member. I did not feel that the alternate position I was offered was manageable for me, as it meant working in two roles, each at twenty-five percent within my previous school, and half-time in another school. I declined the offer and was declared surplus.

I applied to several school-based positive behaviour support teaching positions in the division, as well as a teaching position titled Interdivisional Student Services Teacher, based out of St. Boniface Hospital. I interviewed for the positions and was offered all of them. I chose the Interdivisional Student Services position, as I felt that my combined academic credentials and work experience would offer me new learning opportunities working beside medical experts in mental health that would provide further support to teachers and students. This also allowed me to work in clinics that supported students who were diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and other comorbid conditions. I would have first-hand experience in the diagnosis and treatment of these disorders and could provide the necessary educational component for implementing individualized student educational plans.

This job was unlike any other I had in the past. There was little or no significant contact with students or members of the education team. My main role was to organize and facilitate one-hour systems meetings between school, home, and clinical teams to discuss and plan for student success. The meetings occurred in the student's home school. As this position was interdivisional, this meant that I would be attending meetings across metro Winnipeg. It also extended to a two-hour radius outside of the city.

My experience facilitating and participating in systems meetings was advantageous in my new role as facilitator. My other roles and responsibilities included: attending student meetings

with the on-site psychiatrist and mental health clinicians, administering a variety of academic assessments, delivering professional development workshops in schools and at conferences, and supporting mental health clinicians with student-specific educational planning.

There was a small team working in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program. They had all been with the program for many years, and I hoped they would offer some guidance, support, and modelling as I had previously experienced with other positions that I was new to. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

I spent many hours alone, in an office that was a converted storage closet with no ventilation and poor lighting. I watched videos, and read literature on mental health disorders, diagnoses, and treatments. I researched as much information as I could so that I was able to acquire enough knowledge to support the mental health areas I was working in.

I sought direction and leadership from a supervisor. Things started well. I was shown how to facilitate one multi-disciplinary systems meeting and one professional development workshop that was part of another clinic. Conversations were easy, kind, and at times, quite humorous. I felt this was a good career choice for me and could see myself staying in the role for several years. By the end of the first few months, things changed dramatically.

I was told by a supervisor that going forward, I had to work through any new learning on my own, and as a professional, it was my responsibility to figure things out. I was told not to ask for assistance in any capacity, and that as the only other full-time educator, I was to appear skilled, competent, and proficient to all members of the multidisciplinary team, so as not to cause anyone any embarrassment. Interactions with the supervisor grew worse over time and continued over the next several years.

My stress, anxiety, and loneliness rose each day when I left for work. I contemplated leaving the position many times but stayed because I felt I would be letting others down, including myself. I was very well supported by my family, and over the next few months, I managed to get up enough courage to reach out to my union for advice. They were extremely supportive and provided me with tools, strategies, and collective agreement information that would best help any further discomfort in my tumultuous relationship with the supervisor.

Upon reflection, I discovered that the team that I was a part of was not a well- functioning one. The dynamics of the group were “toxic”; no one worked together, shared materials or knowledge, and there appeared to be a great deal of mistrust, dishonesty, and competitiveness within the group. I believe this was due to a lack of trust from management. Since this malfunctioning dynamic was not beneficial or productive to my work-life balance, and to save my mental health, I decided to seek out a support network.

I reached out to several members of another team with whom I had built a professional working relationship. Each of them was helpful and supportive, sharing their time and knowledge, and teaching me about their roles. I was able to reciprocate by sharing with my knowledge as a previous classroom and student services teacher. Those connections and relationships helped me get through what was one of the most challenging times in my career. After several years of working in this role with no sign of things improving, I requested a divisional transfer.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom

One of the main components of my role as an inter-divisional student services teacher was to support students connected to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program at St. Boniface Hospital. I was to facilitate systems meetings, which totalled several hundred over several years. In my years of working in this position, I worked alongside several mental health clinicians to co-create and deliver sessions for groups of students. The student groups ran for

eight weeks and were tailored specifically to diagnosis and support strategies for individual students. Staff meeting space was used for group sessions.

I felt it was my job to transition the space from an adult meeting space to a student-centred space for learning. The space offered warm and inviting lighting, comfortable seating, food, and drinks. Working with students in groups in this space was as close as I would get to a real classroom.

Teacher-Student Relationships

In this role, I did not have substantive relationships with students, as I was not their main contact in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program. I was often invited to attend therapy sessions with students by their mental health clinician, as it related to students' school experiences. Depending on the type of support needed at the school, I could be invited by the student(s) to meet with their school team to connect around their needs, mentally, socially, emotionally, and behaviourally.

There were students whom I provided professional support to over a three-year period as a "back-to-school" group that I co-led with a colleague. We met the group every week for two-and-a-half hours over an eight-week period. After the group was over, we supported them in their home school, with strategies to help them cope with their anxieties and stressors as they related to entering and staying at school. The students were very successful in entering, staying at school, and completing their academic and social-emotional assignments. It was great to be so connected to a small group of students. While the work was rewarding in its own way and I gained a lot of experience in the inter-divisional role, I missed direct teacher-student relationships. That led me to seek other such opportunities.

Divisional Positive Behaviour/Autism Support Team Teacher

I applied for and started a new position as a divisional itinerant teacher, still within the Louis Riel School Division.

Personal Self-Efficacy

In the new role of divisional itinerant teacher, I drew on my prior experiences of teaching and learning to support teachers' and students' mental health. The focus of this position was positive behaviour support. I worked with students who had behavioural needs, creating individual plans to support their needs, and working with the student services(s), classroom teacher(s) and educational assistant(s) to implement individualized educational plans.

In the first few months of the new position, I met many new people, ranging from school administrators to senior divisional leaders, directors, and coordinators. I had previous experience working closely with school and divisional leaders in the past, so I felt capable of fulfilling the expectations of my job. It was pleasant to have professional relationships with colleagues, teachers, and educational assistants once again, some of whom I had met in my previous roles. Their energy, enthusiasm for learning, and support for students were all goals we had in common.

Things moved at a rapid pace, as the need to support students with behavioural needs was constant. I was mentored by my colleagues and had many opportunities to see how the job was done. I observed a variety of students and conducted assessments that were required to create developmentally appropriate individual learning plans as needed. Many tasks were ones I had done as a school-based student services teacher; therefore, it was advantageous to have those experiences to draw upon. After two short months, I was ready to be on my own, taking requests, attending school meetings, and working with teachers, administrators, and staff to support and plan for student success.

The position evolved over the next several years. Our team grew from four teachers and four educational assistants to eight teachers with eight educational assistants. Job demands changed with the needs of the division and provincial response to students with special needs. The direction of the team shifted from student-specific to class-wide support, to school-wide support. Every team member had a unique set of skills and divisional leaders did their best to match the team members' skills to the school's request, the students' needs, and the amount of work and time required. In such a position, I expected a change in any given year, which then required flexibility and open-mindedness to be successful.

I was very connected to my teaching team. We supported, relied on, and took care of each other. As the position was demanding with tight timelines and high expectations of performance, we grew closer and stronger. Our connection made it safe to say what we needed to, unpack, debrief, and vent about arduous situations without fear of judgement and scrutiny, challenge each other's thoughts and ideas, and laugh when times were tough, and circumstances were muddled and confusing. These strong and courageous people are still part of my professional and personal network.

The position of divisional teacher came with new challenges and an unseen set of expectations—that of being an expert and possessing profound knowledge in areas such as behaviour challenges, autism, and planning for individual student needs, to name a few. I still had much to learn. Admittedly, I was experiencing a bit of imposter syndrome, where I was questioning my capabilities, even when I knew better. I struggled with thoughts of being a fraud at various times in my career. I worked through my fears by choosing to be always open and honest, vulnerable with staff, letting them know I did not know everything, that I was not “the expert,” and that with our collective efforts, we would create the best plan for students. I am currently in this role and my self-efficacy is tested every day. I rely on my more than twenty years of experience to guide me through my doubts and insecurities.

As this thesis was being written, a global pandemic was occurring. Teachers' roles, responsibilities, and expectations were rapidly changing, and there were many uncertainties and unknowns. My role, as I knew it, was suddenly changed in the space of one week in response to provincial health orders and the needs of the school division to accommodate. My sense of self-efficacy was constantly in question as I felt unprepared for some of the changes.

As the student services team navigated those unprecedented times, things felt strange, challenging, awkward, and demanding. The new school year was starting, and I was placed in one school to do my best to implement health and safety policies and minimize travel between schools. I was supporting teaching and learning and served as a support/mentor to the school-based student services team. Learning looked and felt very different in the classroom, school, and community. More than ever, teachers' sense of self-efficacy was being tested daily.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom

In my position as a divisional support teacher, I worked alongside classroom teachers, modelling, and co-teaching regulation strategies. I was able to support them in creating their own emotionally safe classrooms. To facilitate this, I relied on my previous skills and experiences as a classroom teacher and as a school-based student services teacher.

As a divisional itinerant support teacher, I was very fortunate to have had many conversations with teachers about safety and trust in their classroom, and how their practice could be refined. These turned into brainstorming sessions that we inevitably ended up working through. I am still amazed by my teaching colleagues' agile, innovative, and progressive ideas. They are willing to do much for their students so that they (students) feel a sense of belonging, connection, and community.

Strategies and ideas that I shared from my teaching practices for creating an emotionally safe classroom consisted of: moving classroom furniture; creating space for easy movement for adults and students; redesigning the classroom for quiet spaces, reading corners, and work areas; adding or improving the use of visuals; implementing a sensory-rich diet to hand or mouth tools, and seating options for any student in need; safe spaces for students who needed a break, or to regulate; and, individual response plans for students with diverse social-emotional needs and whole-class movement breaks. We also explored and implemented infusing culturally responsive teaching and Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum.

With the implementation of these strategies, the classroom teachers I worked alongside created spaces that were safe for students and staff to be vulnerable, courageous, and autonomous. The classrooms' culture became trauma-informed and stress-sensitive.

Teacher-Student Relationships

I worked with teachers to build their capacity to create strong teacher-student relationships by mentoring and modelling. I provided ideas for positive behaviour support. Ultimately, the classroom teacher chose which strategy(ies) they wanted to implement, and we worked collaboratively to integrate and achieve the goals.

Over the years, I have come to know that for me to model positive and endearing teacher-student relationships for teachers, it is fundamental that I establish a trusting and supportive relationship with the teacher I am working with. Respect, trust, and understanding are some of the most important underpinnings of strong relationships. If the classroom teacher and I do not hold each other in high regard, we will be challenged to work together to create a connection that we can model for our students and the supporting adults in the classroom. Neufeld & Maté (2004), and Neufeld (n.d.) write about the six ways of attaching. The first way of attaching is through the senses—this means “the child needs to sense the person he is attached, whether through smell,

sight, sound, or touch” (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p. 21). The second is sameness “the child seeks to be like those she feels closest to” (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p. 21). The third is belonging and loyalty, “to be close to someone is to consider that person as one’s own (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p. 22). The fourth is significance, “we feel we matter to someone” (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p. 22). The fifth is feeling, “warm feelings, loving feelings, affectionate feelings. Emotion is always involved in attachment, but in a preschooler who can feel deeply and vulnerably, the pursuit of *emotional intimacy* becomes intense” (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p.23). The final way of attaching is being known, “to feel close to someone is to be known by them” (Neufeld & Maté, 2004, p.23). I hold this information close to my heart as I work with teachers and coach them. The more I can show my connectedness and loyalty to teachers, the deeper the connection develops between them and their students.

Learning from Home School

In response to the global pandemic and the needs of the Louis Riel School Division community, the division created a Learning from Home School to support students who were immunocompromised or who were living with family members who were immunocompromised. In the space of a week, my role shifted dramatically, and I was reassigned as a student services teacher in the Learning from Home School.

Personal Self-Efficacy

The world was hit by a global pandemic in January 2020. By the end of March 2020, Manitoba’s response was to force school closures for in-person learning for the rest of the school year to keep the population safe. This meant that teachers were required to work from home to support students to stay engaged in learning until June 2020. No one knew at that time what the new school year would bring.

The following school year started like no other I had experienced before. I found out thirty-six hours before the academic year started, that I was to report to a kindergarten to Grade 8 school that I previously supported. I was unclear about my role; however, I knew the administration, teachers, and most of the support staff, so I hoped we could figure things out together.

I helped the school staff with a variety of school needs, such as the implementation of new routines and procedures related to public health orders for masks in schools for Grades 4-8; helping students to keep two metres from each other; supporting teachers with in-class routines and procedures; being present outdoors at recess to support staff and students; making phone calls to families about lunch arrangements; and additional duties as assigned. I was at that school for three weeks until I received a call asking me to teach a Grade 1/2 combined class in the newly founded Learning from Home School.

I had no previous experience teaching Early Years, nor did I know anything about the Learning from Home School, other than that some of my teammates were assigned to support the school. I spent the weekend worrying about what I was going to do, how I could do what was being asked of me, and how my skills could be best suited to support the school in other ways. The following school day, I declined the classroom teaching request, and I was offered a reassignment as a K-8 student services teacher in the Learning from Home School, which I accepted.

I arrived at the divisional office a day later and was immediately put to work. It was a bustling and somewhat chaotic place, full of activity, with teachers busy conducting online classes using Microsoft Teams. The two large conference rooms were being used as virtual classrooms. It was noisy but filled with energy and smiles from the teachers. There were about twenty teachers, with class sizes ranging from 20-30 students. There were many more students than I

had anticipated. I knew I had the skills to do student services work in a classroom, but not in an online environment. There was great urgency and not a lot of time to figure things out. I needed to respond to the needs of teachers and students and get student information from their home schools to get a sense of their programming. My head was spinning at the end of the first day. I was hopeful that things would soon slow down, but it only got busier.

There were ten to twelve new student registrations each day, which meant calling home schools to get information, as there was no academic information provided with the registration. This posed many challenges as it was hard to create balanced classes based on needs, as we had no prior knowledge of the incoming students. The team worked together to get whatever information we could, get programming in place, and stay on top of parent communication. Everything was happening at an astounding velocity.

Within a few weeks, more teachers were being reassigned, and a few teachers were hired to support the daily influx of students. Despite my education, training, and experience, this was proving to be very hard, as no day was the same as the other. There was no playbook to follow; roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined, and I was pulled in many directions. McCormack and Cotter (2013), in their book, *Managing Burnout in the Workplace: A Guide for Information Professionals*, articulate this lack of clarity as role-conflict or role-ambiguity. I had no role models to offer support, and many times, I felt like I was drowning. As the Learning from Home School was growing, so came the need for staff to spread out in the building to keep everyone at least two metres apart. I was moved to another room, just outside of the teaching space. The room was small, and not set up as a space conducive to housing staff who needed to meet with other students and staff online, make phone calls, do paperwork, and collaborate with teachers in person. Task completion was difficult as the acoustics in the room made it very hard to concentrate. I found myself taking home an inordinate amount of work every day to have a quiet space to complete paperwork and respond to emails.

As in any school, staff may need to be away for a variety of reasons, such as illness, medical appointments, or short- or long-term medical leave. This school was no exception, but there were no substitute teachers available to call on. This resulted in me being asked on several occasions to cover a class for a day or days at a time, as a fill-in substitute teacher. This meant that while I was covering for a classroom teacher, my student services work was not getting done. I suspect my brick-and-mortar colleagues were in the same situation as me.

I had to juggle things very carefully so that I could stay on top of my work as much as possible. As much as I tried, there were times when things went undone. It caused me a lot of stress, as I do not like to let others down, not get things done in a timely manner, or have students and staff not get what they need from me. I had to come to terms with that, despite my best efforts.

With the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the spring of 2021, the City of Winnipeg went into remote learning once again. Teachers were allowed to work from home as much as possible. I chose to work from home, and that worked for me. I had a workspace set up in my home where I had access to reliable internet, and I was sufficiently competent using technology and programs. It was quiet so I could make phone call and conduct meetings online without interruption. Most days I worked from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm, and I felt somewhat accomplished each day.

The year was extremely busy and exhausting yet rewarding. I believe that with the combined effort from leadership, teachers, and staff, we provided a robust program for students. The program was rigorous, yet responsive to the needs of students. At the end of it all, I believe that the Learning from Home School was the best option for the LRSD community.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Classroom

Supporting teaching and learning in the Learning from Home School was an experience like no other. I had to get to know the teachers, students, and support staff quickly to provide programming that met students' academic and social-emotional needs.

The Learning from Home School's enrolment was just over nine hundred. Students came from the forty schools, across the division. It made sense that it would take teachers time to get to know their students, their likes, and dislikes, and establish routines and procedures, to create an emotionally safe space for students. This seemed to come very naturally to most of the teachers, as they were seasoned classroom teachers, teachers who were reassigned, or were current classroom teachers in brick-and-mortar schools or re-assigned to this school for the year for medical reasons. My job was to support those teachers in creating a safe, predictable, and inclusive online classroom environment, and I felt up to the challenge.

I was assigned to certain classroom teachers as their student services teacher, and we had scheduled meetings once per six-day school cycle. We also met in person or virtually as necessary to plan for students. Collectively, we assessed the needs of students and determined how best to support them to feel emotionally safe online. We had to consider several factors such as race, gender, family dynamics, students' living arrangements, student support at home, and the availability and frequency of online clinical support.

The teachers and I worked to create online spaces where students felt part of a community, teachers emphasized social-emotional learning as important as academic learning, where students could take risks and speak out, and where celebrations of learning occurred.

In response to the needs, I worked closely with teachers to co-teach Mindfulness classes titled *Thoughtful Tuesdays*, *Thoughtful Thursdays*, and *Wellness Wednesdays*. Other strategies

that were created in our Learning from Home School to support emotionally safe spaces for students were lunch clubs, where students could join online during lunch to socialize, attend art classes, music jam sessions, after-school Minecraft club, after-school fitness classes, online cooking class, and a virtual choir. The entire staff contributed their passions and talents to create these clubs, to which students of all ages and developmental skills were invited to join. The response from students and their families regarding the clubs was extremely positive.

Teacher-Student Relationships

I spent most of my days as a student services teacher in the Learning from Home School online with adults, ranging from teachers, administrators, parents, divisional clinicians and supervisors, divisional community support members, outside agencies such as Child and Family Services (CFS), and Child and Adolescent Mental Health. This left very little time to work with students. Since time was very limited, I thought the best way for me to begin to establish a teacher-student relationship was to attend classes with teachers and do social-emotional focused co-teaching. Choosing this path allowed me to work with classroom teachers to model positive interactions between colleagues, reinforce the routines and procedures taught to the class by their teacher, and for the students to learn to work with other adults in their school.

I worked with a few classes weekly, co-teaching about regulation, stress reduction, mental health, and mindfulness. It appeared to be a very easy topic for most students, and they seemed to enjoy the activities and lessons. They participated by typing in the chat with words or with an animation, unmuting their microphone when appropriate, and raising their computer hand. As the weeks went by, students appeared to be more comfortable having me in their online classroom, and I received messages from them asking for more support, letting me know they wanted to talk to me privately, or that they really enjoyed the lessons and wanted to meet more often.

From these whole-class lessons, I began to work with several students over the school year, either in small groups or individually. Most of my support was conversations with students virtually by video or chat. The most frequent comments I received from students were that they felt safe to connect with me, shared private thoughts about their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes towards a variety of topics, and that they liked having one-to-one time with someone new. This was good feedback for me as I tried my best to be as available as I could for students, knowing that a barrier to my support was that our meetings had to be scheduled ahead of time, and there was limited ability to meet spontaneously. This form of teacher-student relationship was new to all of us, and fortunately we all worked together and made it work most of the time.

Divisional Learning Team Teacher

This section will look different than the others, as my experience during this time was incomparable to the previous sections.

I returned to school in September 2021 to my previous role as a Divisional Learning Team Teacher, which meant that I had the opportunity to work with members of my divisional team to support school staff with teaching and learning, based on requests from school administrators. It was supposed to be our first normal year after the pandemic but that seemed strange since schooling was not like it used to be. The new normal meant we had to show proof of vaccination to enter schools, wear masks, distance ourselves two meters from others, and sanitize frequently. What was similar to previous years was that we could meet in person as a team and move from school to school as requests from schools permitted. As this was a familiar, yet unfamiliar school start, inevitably this meant more change, uncertainty, and lack of predictability.

The school year started with team learning. While I have always loved learning new things and engaging with my colleagues, I started feeling very exhausted during the school day, very

emotional and teary, anxious, apprehensive, and had trouble concentrating. I attributed it to a change of work assignment last school year and trying to meet the demands of balancing school and work. I thought with a bit more rest at night, I'd be fine in a week or two.

Over the next two to three weeks, I had a very hard time sleeping, which then resulted in a lack of focus at work and home, and overall uneasiness. I was experiencing daily headaches and neck spasms. I had a feeling of dread heading into work every day. These behaviours were completely new to me. I went to work, struggled to stay organized and was triggered by the smallest things. My neck hurt every day, my fingers were blue and numb, and no treatments seemed to help. My system felt like it was in overdrive—in a constant state of fight or flight. All the new behaviours were exacerbated by the demands of work, and school and I could not keep up, especially since I was getting little sleep. I had other health issues and mixed with all that I was going through emotionally and physically, I ended up calling in sick to work one day. These feelings and physical symptoms went on for two more weeks and I finally called my medical office in a state of urgency. I was diagnosed with burnout after a medical assessment and a battery of tests to rule out something physical.

Because of my previous position as a student services teacher or divisional support teacher, I was often asked to provide support to teachers dealing with job-related stress so they could not get to the point of burnout, yet I had clearly missed every indicator that I was heading down the same path. I had to process what burnout meant to and for me, even when it came to something as simple as finding the appropriate words for an out-of-office email notification. It provoked a great deal of anxiety and shame for me as to how my colleagues would judge me, since I felt my identity was tied to my professional life.

I called several counselling offices and centers to get help, including the Manitoba Teachers Society, but no one was taking new clients, or the waitlist was months or years long.

My sadness, worry, shame, disappointment, and fatigue was constant. I tried an online service provided by the Government of Manitoba for people over 16 dealing with anxiety during COVID-19, even though it did not quite suit my symptoms. I eventually found an unrelated team of health practitioners to help me address the physical and emotional symptoms I was dealing with.

Some therapies proved to be very beneficial, while some were harmful as I suffered an injury from one practitioner. Nothing seemed to be working at the rate I wanted it to, which led me to more frustration, stress, and exhaustion. When I was younger, I loved to journal as a way of self-expression, so I decided to give it a try now. I bought a beautiful, lined journal and coloured pens, and started writing. It did not take long to write page after page. This was a space where I could express myself without judgment. I tried to unpack how I could not see the signs of burnout, moral injury or self blame as defined by Barnes et al., 2019, as my physical symptoms and emotional state indicated it clearly. I spent the previous two years researching teacher self-efficacy, and making connections to its impact on teacher well-being and I missed all the signs of my stress and burnout. After several weeks of combined therapy, exercise, and journaling, I started making sense of what I was feeling. After the five-week mark, my medical team determined that I was not yet physically or emotionally ready to return to work. There were many ups and downs over the next few weeks, but I continued to “do the work” as my counsellor and my medical team said I should.

The winter break was a welcome reprieve from the endless daytime hours of being alone with my thoughts. I was in slightly better spirits, the pace of my day was busy, and not too overwhelming, with opportunities to take breaks when I needed them. Over the coming weeks, I felt more optimistic, and I had more energy every day. I met with my medical team at the end of winter break, and we decided I was ready for a gradual return to work. I returned to work half-time for six weeks.

I gradually returned to full-time work in mid-February 2022, with full support from my medical and leadership team. The next few months allowed me to practice the strategies that I learned while staying true to the work I was doing to support my colleagues. The school year ended on a positive note. I was supporting teaching and learning in a few schools. I had opportunities to network with colleagues and teammates and do planning for the following year's professional learning. I had a lot to celebrate and be grateful for, at home and school.

Upon reflection on my healing journey from job stress and burnout, I learned a great deal about the importance of boundaries, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-care, self-disclosure, the power of journaling, mindfulness, eating healthy foods, practicing self-compassion and gratitude, and daily exercise. When my self-efficacy was high, I felt I could accomplish my goals, envision the bigger picture, I felt successful and was able to respond to teachers' and students' needs. As my self-efficacy waned, my physical and mental health was negatively impacted, leaving me feeling weak and defenseless. I learned a lot about my capabilities and my limitations. I am working hard at my recovery every day, both physically and mentally, and hope one day to be in better health than prior to my leave. I hope that sharing my story, will allow others to have compassion and empathy towards each other, as we never really know what someone is going through. I came across this quote by Carol S. Dweck from her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Dweck, 2016), "exceptional people convert life's setbacks into future successes." It resonates with me as this reflects this part of my professional and personal life.

Conclusion

As I reflect on my career as an educator for the past 24 years, I have had the honour and the privilege to serve and support the academic and social-emotional needs of the next generation of teachers and students. I have had a variety of roles and responsibilities and have taken on those positions with eagerness, enthusiasm, and curiosity. I have given my energy to teachers,

students, and staff in providing a compassionate and empathetic space for laughter, tears, and joy. Teaching is not an easy job, and I have experienced the highs and lows. I now understand what it is like to be vulnerable, to feel shame when you feel you are not enough, and to emerge with enough energy and courage to come out to the other side with humility. My goal in all interactions with school personnel and students is to show integrity, to be present and authentic. I am committed to being hospitable, altruistic, and taking time to get to know the individuals I am supporting, while building and strengthening relationships.

Chapter five will address the findings from the structured interview with teacher participants including the emerging themes from the interviews.

Chapter Five: Findings from Structured Interviews

To conduct my research, I tried to recruit eight to ten interested participants who fit the criteria of being classroom teachers from the Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) with more than three years of classroom teaching experience, and more than five years away from retirement. Before I could contact teachers in LRSD, I had to submit my application to the Research Ethics Board 2 (REB2) for approval. Within a month of submitting my application for research, I was approved by REB2 on May 6, 2021. Once approved by the University of Manitoba Ethics Board, I submitted the required Request for Research forms to the Louis Riel School Division Superintendent of Schools (refer to Appendix A).

Permission to invite Louis Riel School Division teachers to participate in a structured interview was granted by the Louis Riel School Division designate on May 20, 2021. I sent an email to school principals on May 20, 2021. Attached to the email was the letter of invitation to participate in a structured individual interview on teacher self-efficacy with kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers (refer to Appendix B). I received email responses from teachers from May 20 to June 5, 2021. Eight participants were selected based on eligibility criteria, returned informed consent, and on a first-come basis.

Structured Individual Interviews

Eight interviews were conducted and recorded using Microsoft Teams. Interviews took place at times and dates that were mutually agreed between me and the participants. Interview times ranged from thirty-five to forty-five minutes, with dates ranging from May 23 to June 3, 2021. Once the interviews were completed, they were uploaded into Microsoft Stream to create a transcript. Transcripts were uploaded into an online program to be converted into Microsoft Word documents. Once the Microsoft Word documents were obtained from the online program, the

video recordings and transcripts were permanently deleted from cloud storage. The Microsoft Word documents were re-read and compared to the audio recordings for accuracy.

Despite my position as a divisional support teacher and the possibility of participants not feeling they could be completely open and forthcoming as a possible limitation to this study, the information collected was valuable as part of the feedback and analysis. The sample size was relatively small; however, there was evidence of data saturation within the eight interviews given that terms as self-efficacy, social-emotional needs of students, lack of time, anxiety in students, the global pandemic, and self-care were repeated by participants.

Profile of Interview Participants

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked for their proper names and assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity. Seven out of eight gender-neutral pseudonyms were chosen by me to further protect the participants' identities. One pseudonym was chosen by the interview participant. Pseudonym names were Jordan, Brooklyn, Stevie, Alex, Parker, Kennedy, Taylor, and James.

The following is a brief introduction and profile of each interview participant, to provide a deeper understanding of each interviewee. Participants were not asked to reveal their current school placement; however, they were representatives of eight different schools. Overall, teaching experience ranged from seven to thirty-one years; years of service in LRSD ranged from one to twenty years; and all but one participant had credentials beyond a Bachelor of Education (see summary chart below). To start the interviews, for respondents to feel at ease with me during the interview, and to get a sense of their perceptions of teaching, each respondent was quoted directly when asked about their first year of teaching in the Louis Riel School Division.

Summary of participants' profile

Name	Credentials beyond a B.A. / B. Ed.	Years of teaching experience	Years teaching K-6	Years teaching in LRSD
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	28	28	20
Brooklyn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education (PBDE) Currently in M. Ed Program 	11	11	11
Stevie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently in M. Ed Program 	7	7	7
Alex	Two specialized area certificates	31	31	20
Parker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 PBDE (two different areas of specialization) Recommended for acceptance in M. Ed 	7	7	1
Kennedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PBDE M. Ed. 	7	7	7
Taylor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PBDE 	20	20	20
James	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M.Ed. 	13	13	13

Jordan

Jordan has been a classroom teacher for twenty-eight years, teaching the same grade level for the entire time. They have been a teacher with the Louis Riel School division for twenty years, with the other eight years at two other schools. Jordan had some experience teaching other grades from kindergarten to Grade 6 during their teaching practicum and as a substitute teacher. When Jordan was asked about their first year of teaching in the Louis Riel School Division (LRSD), they stated that:

It was different, as I didn't have experience teaching (current grade) at that point. I was not sure what to expect since I had done my teaching and my student teaching in (another grade), and I had never spent time any time in (current grade), so I really wasn't sure what to expect at that point and they were very little, and I wasn't used to it. I fell into it substituting.

It was apparent that Jordan loves teaching and learning, and works hard to support their students, trying a variety of strategies to meet the needs of their students.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn has been teaching for eleven years and has been teaching their current grade for several years in the same school, however, due to COVID restrictions, they were relocated to another school for the year. They said they love to learn and completed a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education several years ago. At the time of the interview, they were enrolled in a Master of Education program with an anticipated completion date of October 2021. They have experience teaching many different levels from kindergarten to Grade 12; however, they prefer to teach kindergarten to Grade 6 (Early and Middle Years).

Brooklyn said that they were a dedicated teacher and wanted only the best for their students. When asked about their first year of teaching in LRSD, the response was “living my best life, so excited, bursting out of my skin to have a classroom all to myself. I was over the moon and wanted to soak up every minute.”

Stevie

Stevie enrolled in a Master of Education program in May 2020. They returned to the Louis Riel School Division seven years ago and have been teaching kindergarten to Grade 6. When Stevie started teaching in LRSD, they said it was “highly stressful, and a big shift for me both professionally and personally.” Stevie goes further by saying they had been home for eight years and spent most of their year “trying to make up for a couple of days that I missed at the beginning of the year” since they were hired in late September of that school year. Overall, Stevie finds teaching very rewarding and says that they have great relationships with their students, all while balancing home and work life.

Alex

Alex has been a teacher for thirty-one years and has been with the Louis Riel School Division since its inception. Alex loves learning, therefore pursued further education and training in two specialized areas from a university in eastern Canada and is currently working on an additional certification from another University in northern Canada. Alex has a variety of teaching experiences ranging from Kindergarten to Adult Education. Those experiences gave them opportunities to work in single to multigrade classrooms. They found their first year in LRSD to be "...challenging since I had not taught lower levels." Alex has been teaching their current grade and at their current school for several years. Alex defines themselves as a "mama bear" and will fight to get support for their students.

Parker

Parker has been teaching for seven years, and the 2020-2021 school year was their first with the Louis Riel School Division. They hold two Post Baccalaureate Diplomas in Education with two different specializations. During their seven years of teaching, Parker has been able to teach several grades. Their most recent experience was in high school, where their courses were language specific at a school in Northern Manitoba.

Parker has appreciated their year of teaching and learning with the Louis Riel School Division, although added that "this year, definitely is different than anticipated, especially with COVID and the stuff we've had to do duplex teaching, yes, running between classes and it's hugely different than I've done before." Parker loves "building community and connections with students, especially during closing circle" and "values the power of collaboration with my colleagues." Parker has been recommended for acceptance into a Master of Education program for September 2021.

Kennedy

Kennedy has been teaching at their current school, grade, and with the Louis Riel School Division for seven years. They have a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in Education and a Master of Education. They are currently on leave from teaching. During their practicum, they had experience teaching high school where they also experienced a very supportive staff, full of warm energy and hugs, qualities that they appreciate even now. Kennedy was raised in a small town where they had experiences working with and supporting students with special needs.

When Kennedy moved to Winnipeg, they felt very emotionally prepared to support their students with diverse social-emotional needs. Kennedy says about their first year of teaching in LRSD that, "I was 23 years old and completely overwhelmed by the number of kids than there were desks. I did my student teaching in a high school, and I remember the staff being very kind, warm, and welcoming and a lot of hugs."

Taylor

Taylor said they have a Pre-master's in education and a Post Baccalaureate in Education from several years ago. Taylor has been teaching for twenty years in the Louis Riel School Division teaching grades from kindergarten to Grade 6 for the duration. They recalled their first year in LRSD as "similar, since I had done my student teaching in LRSD, so because of that, I didn't feel much of a difference, not a big change for me." Taylor is dedicated to teacher-student relationships and their wish would be when their students reach Grade 12, they come back to visit to let them (Taylor) know they made a difference in their lives. Taylor has been teaching in their current school for several years and appreciates their leadership and community support.

James

James has been teaching for thirteen years and has had a variety of experiences ranging from single grade to multigrade classrooms, to specialized programs at the high school level. They are currently teaching in an upper elementary grade, half-time in the afternoons, and are responsible for teaching three subjects. In addition to a Bachelor of Education, they hold an additional bachelor's degree with honours and a Master of Education. James describes their first year in LRSD as

very similar to what I expected. I had a lovely class, was very eager and the kids were great, no IEPs [sic], no adaptations, no modifications, and no kids with funding [sic]. All the kids worked really hard. I had absolutely no behaviours. My first class was a dream class.

James loves to collaborate with colleagues, works to support the social-emotional needs of their students, and believes that self-care is foundational to personal success.

Emerging Themes

During the eight interviews, participants shared their responses to the questions, and some of their own unique stories, anecdotes, and experiences. They spoke about their understanding of self-efficacy and its connection to the development of an emotionally safe classroom. They reminisced about stories, successes, and struggles they faced with students who have diverse social-emotional needs, and how those needs impact their classroom practice. They also shared their understanding of the benefits and challenges they face when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs and spoke of barriers that promote or hinder their ability to rely on self-efficacy when responding to their students.

As the participants spoke, several themes emerged from their responses which closely aligned with the literature review from chapter two. Each answer was coded as it connected to

the research questions, and I attempted to make sense of the participant's phenomenological experiences without prejudice or assumptions. Participants' responses varied slightly, and their unique and individual knowledge could be categorized and summed up under the following six themes:

- Theme one: Job stress, burnout, and self-care
- Theme two: Challenges of meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of students.
- Theme three: Importance of teacher-student relationships
- Theme four: Value of creating emotionally safe classrooms.
- Theme five: Political exigencies of schooling during a global pandemic
- Theme six: Sociocultural factors impacting teaching and learning.

These themes encapsulate each participant's understanding of their self-efficacy in relation to their role as teachers, how self-efficacy impacts job stress and burnout, their beliefs about having self-efficacy in relation to supporting their students with diverse social-emotional needs, teacher-student relationships, and having leadership and collegial supports.

Defining Self-Efficacy

Overall, participants understood and could articulate their understanding of the term self-efficacy and could generally describe its definition and context in relation to Albert Bandura's (1994) definition, which is "people's beliefs about their capability to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave" (p. 2).

"I am capable."-James

"I feel confident in what I am doing."-Jordan

To provide clarity and consistency, I defined the term self-efficacy for three participants:

- people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives.
- people's beliefs that they can produce desired effects by their actions and undertake activities or persevere in the face of difficulties.
- the core belief that one can make a difference by one's actions; and
- people's beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment.

When Jordan was asked about their understanding of the term self-efficacy and what it meant to them personally with respect to teaching, they stated, "a feeling that you are accomplishing something that you are able to do." Jordan believes that to have self-efficacy in teaching is to have the confidence that one is doing all one can do to make a difference in the lives of students with various needs.

Brooklyn knew the term, laughed slightly, and asked if they could Google it, then confidently articulated the response, "What are one's abilities to be in a particular area [sic]." When they were asked to expand further on their wording of abilities, they stated: "skills or strengths that are beneficial in one way or another." Brooklyn continued with a further explanation regarding teachers' roles and having the ability to connect with students, communicate with parents, plan effective lessons, manage classroom situations well, and work through the behaviours of students.

James knew the term self-efficacy and stated that it came from Albert Bandura. They also referred to the term "collective efficacy" to make sense of self-efficacy. James referred to collective efficacy as, "the thought or idea or belief that a group of people come together as a collective to make a difference." They built on their definition of collective efficacy to say that their understanding of self-efficacy meant that:

there are connections between self-concept, self-esteem, and a belief in yourself to accomplish things you set out to do. If I have high self-efficacy, that means I have a high self-concept and high self-esteem. If I set a goal for myself, or work at accomplishing something, I can do that. That I am capable.

Taylor and Stevie also knew of the term self-efficacy and added more about it being about efficiency. When they were asked to go a little deeper with their explanation, interpretation and understanding of self-efficacy, Taylor said, “being able to accomplish as much work as possible and quality work. Being proud of what I can accomplish at the same time.” Taylor wanted to be able to look back and say that they tried new things, worked hard to do the best that they could do and were able to reach as many students as they could. Stevie expanded on their experience from a course they are taking where one of the students asked the question, “When do I know that I have done my job?” That sentence lingered with them, and they said they ask that question of themselves often. They question if what they are doing is correct or what others expect of them, especially when it comes to meeting their students’ needs.

Alex had different thoughts regarding self-efficacy. To them, self-efficacy meant “you need to defend what you believe in, to fight for yourself and your students, especially for students with special needs.” Alex stated that this is very important to them as they have children with needs at home and it is always about fighting for their rights and needs to be met, even if it means going against a higher power.

Kennedy and Parker felt that self-efficacy reflected one’s own abilities, and to run their teaching practice in a way that is flexible and creative, and efficiently manages their classroom. They felt that self-efficacy was an important aspect of teaching that needed some attention and ongoing conversation.

Theme One: Job stress, Burnout, and Self-Care

“Self-care is foundational to personal success.”-James

Teaching is very demanding and job stress can sometimes lead to burnout. Participants shared their stories of trying to manage job stress through self-care so that they do not face burnout.

Job Stress and Burnout

Kennedy was clear that no matter how much they tried, and how much they gave, they are not always able to provide everything to every student. This realization has taken many years to uncover. After a year with a very challenging class, they discovered they were burning out and no matter what they did, they could not meet their students’ social-emotional needs 100% of the time. To give that much energy at school was too much, and they were not able to give more once they got home to family and for themselves. They needed to find balance. There are only so many hours in a day, and they felt that they were able to give their best at school and still have enough of themselves in reserves for home and self-care.

Taylor said their self-efficacy is challenged when responding to their students’ social-emotional needs if they are not themselves feeling grounded. If they are having a bad day, their physical and emotional condition is impacted by their stress, anxiety, and worry, and they are not able to consistently model calmness for their students. They went on to say that it’s not only negative feelings that challenge their self-efficacy but also positive and joyful states. There are times when Taylor is in the “yellow zone, filled with excitement and happy thoughts.” This too can be a challenge to self-efficacy, specifically when modelling strategies for calming our minds and bodies for students.

Community of Connection

Jordan needs to have a supportive community around them. They say that their self-care is having people they can rely on to support them and give advice. They expanded further by saying that finding these people can be a challenge, and instrumental to supporting mental health and well-being, and to being your cheerleader when times are tough.

Self-Care

Participants said that self-care was instrumental in managing job stress and supporting themselves to better respond to their students' social-emotional needs. Brooklyn, Taylor, Alex, Stevie, and James said that trying to find the time and self-help resources is very challenging. According to James, teachers know what support(s) they need; however, based on many years of experience, allowing themselves the opportunity and permission to take the time they need to care for themselves poses a significantly arduous task.

Brooklyn seems to have self-care figured out as they like to spend time with their dog, just sitting in the backyard listening to birds and using mindfulness apps on their electronic device. Brooklyn mentioned their struggle for self-care was to make time for it Monday to Friday, as time is essential. They recognized that self-care is critical to their success, and at times have difficulty finding balance, allowing themselves permission to indulge in this indispensable support.

James was very clear that self-care was foundational to their success, both personally and professionally. They share the advice to “take care of yourself, turn off your devices at the end of the day, step back, do things that bring joy to your heart, fill your need to feel balanced.”

During the school year, and especially during city-wide lockdowns and school closures, several participants found it difficult to carve out self-care time, without the fear of being judged by peers and leaders and taking time for themselves away from family and other commitments.

Participants also shared their preferred self-care choices, ranging from time with friends and family, watching television, getting outdoors in nature, regular exercise, meditation, taking time to make healthy meals and retail and online shopping.

Despite the challenges, teacher participants felt that they would continue to persevere in the eye of adversity as the health and well-being of their students are paramount.

Theme Two: Challenges of Meeting the Diverse Social-emotional Needs of Students

Of the diverse social-emotional needs of students that can occur in a single classroom such as mental health, children in care, parental issues, behaviour challenges, autism, need for belonging and connection, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, the participants unanimously stated that the most prevalent social-emotional need they encountered this year in their classroom was anxiety. Participants believed that their self-efficacy played a major factor in their ability to plan with their students' needs in mind. The higher their self-efficacy, the better they felt prepared to respond to their students' needs.

“There is a lot of anxiety.”-Jordan

“We have a high rate of anxiety at our school.” -Stevie

“I have a student [this year] with very high-level anxiety.” -Alex.

“I have another student who has very, very severe anxiety.” -Brooklyn

“I have seen a lot of anxiety in the past.” -Jordan

“The first social-emotional need that comes to mind is anxiety.” Taylor

Anxiety

Observable behaviours in the classroom include students who were not able to do their work; who worried what others would think of them; who had a subject-specific fear (math was mentioned by two participants); who had a fear of not being accepted by others; who had somatic complaints such as stomach aches, headaches, and general malaise; who ran away from class or school; who were hitting, lashing out and being defiant; who had difficulty separating from parent or caregiver; who did not speak when at school (selectively mute), or who had rapid mood changes.

Belonging

Three of the eight participants noted that students' need for belonging is prevalent in their classroom. Students wanted to fit in, be connected to a particular student group, and make and keep friends. James noted that "I have students who have a deep sense of isolation, of disconnect, and I wonder how it affects kids' self-concept." Two participants mentioned that teaching online posed a bigger challenge for students to connect with others as most of their interactions were by invitation only, and there were fewer opportunities for children to socialize spontaneously. Due to remote learning, students were experiencing a prolonged sense of isolation and disconnection from adults and peers.

Additional Needs

A few participants noted that they have additional social-emotional needs in their classroom such as students who live with trauma, the loss of a parent or sibling, students with multiple developmental needs, and students with comorbid diagnoses. Participants said these contextual factors affect many students and they believe that their regular experiences with such

factors gave them the ability to anticipate their students' needs and work to plan their social-emotional lessons accordingly.

Theme Three: Importance of Teacher-student Relationships

“You gotta [sic] just love the kids because that is what they need.”-Jordan

Participants discussed teacher-student relationships as instrumental in their ability to create an emotionally safe classroom, which they believed was directly linked to their self-efficacy. Jordan, James, Taylor, and Brooklyn said that teachers who prioritize teacher-student relationships create a warm, flourishing, and connected classroom environment.

James believes in teaching to the heart before teaching to the brain, and Stevie believes in teaching soft skills, such as, teamwork, collaboration, and social-emotional intelligence including “positive mental health strategies.” These teachers need to know their students are in a good place emotionally and feel that social-emotional teaching is essential to student success. Stevie said, “I feel like I do a reasonable job building relationships and getting to know students in a school setting. You know, gauge where they are at, more of that informal dialogue with students.” Jordan further stated that building strong relationships with students is so important, and “if kids don’t believe you like them, they are not going to learn from you, you have to make sure they feel that from you.” Taylor opined that teacher-student relationships needs to be a core value and needs to be integrated as much as possible into daily interactions. They place value on the Louis Riel School Division’s document created in the spring of 2020 that focused on the grounds for a good start to the school year, as opposed to jumping into academics. One of the main messages was encouraging teachers to take time to connect with students, assess their needs, and focus initially on building relationships over academics as needed to create emotionally safe classrooms.

Remote teaching at the start of the pandemic in March 2020 brought new challenges when trying to stay connected while apart. Jordan, Stevie, Parker, Brooklyn, and Taylor believed that it was essential to keep connected to their students. Jordan stated that they would “touch base by phone and email and the kids would be sending me videos and I was sending them videos, so we still have that connection.” Brooklyn did an Act-of-Kindness project and other fun projects to focus on connection to get through “this scary, confusing, ambiguous and ominous time.”

They continued to do online lessons that focused on teamwork and relationships. These strategies and innovative structures made for a more routine and predictable online classroom space which provided a sense of security and safety for their students. During remote teaching, Stevie spent a lot of time with their students to support their mental health and continue the teacher-student connection. Their informal chats centred on wellness, rather than academics, as Stevie was mindful that students needed to connect with them and their peers over academic content during this unprecedented time.

Theme Four: Value of Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms

“Teachers are managing the atmosphere so that everyone feels safe.”-Parker

At the beginning of the discussion of this theme, seven of the eight participants asked me to define an “emotionally safe classroom,” as it was a term that is not widely used in the literature or represented in educational documents. Participants may have recognized elements of the term, or seen or heard it referenced in another term or language, however, for the purpose of the research questions, I defined it as articulated in chapter one as:

spaces where teachers and students feel safe to express themselves non-judgmentally and unconditionally. Teachers and students are compassionate, courageous, and vulnerable towards each other. They are supportive of each others’ mistakes, emotionally

engaged, and celebrate learning. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms understand and emphasize social-emotional learning as foundational, and as important as academic learning. Learning environments have clear and consistent routines and procedures. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms model the behaviour they want to see in their students. Teacher-student relationships are cultivated and are strong, resulting in a sense of mutual trust. Teachers are the adults that students can rely on unconditionally, to value, nurture and protect them, and help them solve problems.

James chose to define the term in their own words, using phrases such as “learning community where there is a high degree of psychological safety; students feel valued and seen.” They continue by adding that “students feel comfortable being their authentic, genuine self.” James also added that “you are never not modelling,” as teachers who have high self-efficacy work to create an emotionally safe classroom by showing and modelling for students their vulnerability, their response to making mistakes, and the importance of being grounded and balanced.

Once the term was defined, participants felt that their self-efficacy played a role in the development of an emotionally safe classroom. A comprehensive response from participants was that teacher self-efficacy was foundational to building an emotionally safe classroom. Parker’s perspective is that teachers who have a strong sense of self-efficacy will model it for their students. They said that teachers will be “projecting and disseminating out their feelings and managing the atmosphere and the environment so that everyone can feel safe.”

Brooklyn believed that teacher self-efficacy is the basis for an emotionally safe classroom as it is the teachers’ belief in their abilities to be able to “connect with students and relate to them as people, and to figure out what their needs are and then to respond to those needs in the most

effective way.” Teachers believe that academics are important; however, developing emotionally safe spaces comes first and is an important part of their job.

Alex said teacher self-efficacy was important in developing an emotionally safe space. If teachers did not believe in their abilities to accomplish the goals they set for themselves, they would not be able to “fight for the support that they want to have for their students.” Alex believed that support from Clinical Services like Psychology, Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy is important, as it opens the door to additional student support in the future.

Jordan and Taylor both agreed that teacher self-efficacy is important in creating an emotionally safe classroom and gave credit to the Louis Riel School Division for creating a support document for the first six weeks of school. They further explained that the document was created to support teachers as they entered the 2020-2021 school year. It was a response to challenges teachers faced in teaching online from March to June 2020. Taylor felt the document was instrumental in allowing and supporting teachers to focus on the “grounds for a good start to the year.” It was about taking the time to connect with students at the beginning of the school year, rather than jumping right into academics.

Taylor suggested that an emotionally safe space must be something that teachers believe in. It needs to be a core value and integrated as much as possible, while Jordan said, “you have to believe you can offer this space for kids,” and believed it was vital to establish this safe space for students to learn, take risks, and make mistakes.

While all participants said that creating an emotionally safe space was critical in building positive relationships with students, they all agreed that lack of time significantly impacted teacher self-efficacy. They expressed that they lacked sufficient time to respond to students' diverse social-emotional needs, as each student's need is different, and a one-strategy-fits-all does not work in every instance when building teacher-student relationships. It takes time to build

connections with students, especially ones with needs that are not considered developmentally neurotypical. Participants stated that it takes time to get to know their students, their likes, and dislikes, and understand their personalities, and their ways of learning, both academic and social-emotional, to ensure students' outcomes are successful. Brooklyn said:

I am always thinking about the social-emotional needs of my classroom, and how they impact my academic outcome. Academics are secondary because social-emotional needs are guiding us in different ways. Social-emotional needs guide the day, more than anything else.

Increased planning time is emotionally and mentally draining on teachers, as it often comes at a cost to their personal and family time. There are many other demands in the teaching profession such as extracurriculars and writing report cards three times per year. Teachers often feel like they are doing their half-best, due to feeling tired of dealing with the day-to-day social-emotional needs and playing many support roles for students. Participants believed that putting this extra time into their program delivery is necessary; they believe that if the social-emotional needs of students are not met, then teaching academics is not possible. Taylor adds, “connections are really important, it's what's at the core of my teaching. We have so many things to teach and not enough time to spend on relationships.”

When dealing with the social-emotional needs of students, participants said that it takes time away from teaching academics, as they feel the need to respond with urgency. Alex stated: “If you don't deal with it the right way, students may not feel safe, and how do you focus on academics?” They believe that moments like these are teachable to all students, and that is why they take the time, even if it means time away from other academic content.

Planning and preparing teaching materials to support students' diverse needs takes time. Jordan spends hours preparing additional material, finding the tools and resources they need to

prepare items such as visual schedules that are “engaging and bright” for their students. Jordan believes that you need “to find the carrot” and wants to find materials and resources to meet the individual needs of their students; themed items such as cartoon characters, science themes such as the solar system and robots, and letters and numbers that are child centred. Creating such resources comes at a cost of personal time and in many instances, a personal financial cost, as teachers spend additional time sourcing printable or PDF documents that are at a minimal cost or free.

Teachers who care about the diverse social-emotional needs of their students recognize that it may require additional learning opportunities in terms of professional development. Stevie would like to have the opportunity for self-directed learning such as seminars and workshops that are “directly connected to the needs of my classroom in that particular year.” They find it challenging when the professional development is general to the school rather than classroom-specific, as needs vary. Teachers must learn to create spaces that are inclusive of all races, genders, religions, and beliefs. Participants said when their time is divided with other competing priorities, it compromises their ability to feel self-efficacious.

While most participants said that lack of time was a hindering factor in their self-efficacy when supporting students’ diverse social-emotional needs, Taylor said the contrary—that the social-emotional needs in their classroom had no impact on their teaching time at all in comparison to previous years. They expanded by stating “if a student misses class, my biggest concern is how to get them caught up. I wouldn't say it's very stressful.” With smaller class sizes, they felt they were able to meet all students’ needs, and had positive teacher-student relationships, happy students, and positive parent feedback. Jordan states, “my classroom is always in flux in order to meet the needs of my students.”

In addition to creating emotionally safe classrooms for students, participants said this also applied to creating spaces where teachers, support staff, and visitors feel safe as well. They work diligently to create a community of belonging for all. Participants believed building a community of belonging meant they endeavoured to include as many strategies as possible in classroom routines. Alex, Brooklyn, James, and Jordan felt that what works for one could benefit the whole class and was critical to building an inclusive practice. Jordan said, “I started using a visual schedule for the purpose of supporting one student, and it worked for the whole class. I built it into my routine for everyone.” Teachers want to try as many tools as possible and strategies that they can.” Jordan referred to an iceberg when describing some of the observable behaviours in their classroom as “what you are seeing isn’t all there is.” Incorporating new learning and strategies into daily practice meant that students and teachers could reach their full potential.

While remote teaching at the start of March 2020 could have posed barriers for some participants, that was not the case for Brooklyn, Alex, and Taylor. They said that their in-person relationships transferred naturally to online. Brooklyn “tried to keep the connections going and showed kids I’m still here and I’m still your teacher and we are gonna [sic] see each other again.” Alex was staying in touch with their students while still being able to provide curriculum, with a focus on connection. Taylor states that

I am on top of things. I know exactly what to teach and to meet my students. We talk about their feelings at the beginning of each session, and of course, it’s always the same ones that answer, and I am guessing those are the ones that need to talk. I am doing what I’ve always been supposed to do.

This new way of reaching students (online) provided teachers with the opportunity to be creative and innovative.

Theme Five: Political Exigencies of Schooling During a Global Pandemic

The onset of a global pandemic in early 2020 required urgent and necessary responses by the province, schools, and the larger community. As a result, March 2020 brought new challenges for teachers, as they had to go from in-person to online teaching overnight. In Brooklyn's words, they said this was "the most challenging year of my career." As the province mandated school closures in March 2020, the participants said online learning posed many challenges for their students, both social-emotionally and academically. Jordan and Stevie struggled with a consistent internet connection, as many people were using the bandwidth and video. Parker also added that they had to adapt resources from in-person to online by using items that students may have at home, such as clay, pencils, and paper. Assignments, evaluations, and assessments had to be completely redone so that they could be completed and submitted virtually.

A few participants said that some parents were very challenging during online classes. This was very different from when they were teaching in brick-and-mortar schools. While teachers were teaching online, parents had a full view of the online classroom. This provided parents with the opportunity to make demands of teachers, interrupt the lesson, and make calls to the teachers to express concerns about a variety of topics regarding academic content. Many of those classes would occur while the teacher was teaching a lesson to the class. Participants said that these incidents left them doubting their abilities as teachers, as they were now at the mercy of several external factors such as provincial cellular towers, technological issues, software updates, and parental pressures.

At the time of the individual interviews in May and June 2021, in addition to the unprecedented global pandemic (WHO, 2020), Manitoba educators were encountering additional

uncertainty with Bill 64 which proposed the elimination of democratically elected school boards (Manitoba Teachers' Society, n.d.). Four of the eight participants said that politically, this was the most challenging year of their teaching career. The impending Bill 64 could have had grave effects on teachers and students as early as July 2022. Teachers did not feel supported when the Minister of Education said that the education system was broken and needed to be redone. Brooklyn said, "my letters to MLAs went unanswered and it feels like a slap in the face." Stevie also felt that the provincial mandates and the announcement of Bill 64 negatively impacted their ability to feel self-efficacious. Jordan and Brooklyn felt that the Government of Manitoba was not supporting teachers getting priority vaccinations for COVID-19, and teachers were told to go to the United States to get their vaccine. With the overpopulation of students and staff in residential community schools, and the need for students and teachers to move to other buildings in the division without consultation, posed another challenge and affected teacher self-efficacy. Overall feelings of sadness, loss, defeat, not feeling heard and dissolution were notable in the responses.

With respect to leadership and collegial support, five participants felt very supported and believed that the division had their back and protected them. Taylor said, "I feel very blessed to be a part of the Louis Riel School Division." They continued by saying that the superintendent was available to speak to the entire staff and students, and that is something that they value since their children in another school division do not get the same visibility from their superintendent. Alex commented that the superintendent:

has surprised me in so many ways. I feel he understands us because first of all, he's a former teacher himself. He has an emotional connection to teachers, and I feel supported. I feel he is there if you need something.

James commented that the Louis Riel School Division Senior Leadership team "listens to teachers, values families, and ensures that they are all doing their best. Their employees are not

just numbers, they see them as people. So, I believe that the division is supporting my self-efficacy.” Other participants also felt very supported by divisional leaders, as they believe that the division supports them with resources and professional development opportunities to support their teaching and learning.

Brooklyn, Jordan, and Kennedy said they did not feel supported by their current school administrator, especially this year, as many administrators had to make some very difficult decisions that had an impact on teacher self-efficacy, student achievement, and outcomes. They felt they did not have a voice in decisions that were being made about them, their classrooms, their students, and their support team. In addition, one participant noted their current administrator had not taught primary school, which therefore posed barriers to understanding the needs of young children. Brooklyn stated that “as teachers, we were not given any options at all.” Overall feelings of uncertainty and a lack of understanding of teachers’ needs were prevalent.

Taylor, James, Alex, and Stevie felt very supported by their current administrator. Comments such as, “I feel that my administrator is happy with the work that I do,” “I feel my administrator has my back,” and “they give me the support that I need” were made when participants spoke specifically about their current school leader. They felt that they were being recognized for their daily efforts and the time it takes to plan good lessons for student success. They could lean on their administrator for help, support, resources, a shoulder to cry on, and someone to be a critical friend. Their leaders provided them with consistency, agency, and autonomy. Alex added “this has been a hard year for everybody, and he (referring to the superintendent) understands that. I feel very supported.”

Jordan and Kennedy believe that for teachers to feel safe and connected to their students, they must feel connected to their adult school staff. Kennedy values and appreciates the power of collegial connections. They credit their student services teachers as instrumental in their

success, as they said that these staff members would “hug you, they would cry with you and give you praise” whenever they reached out for help. Jordan has many colleagues they rely on to support them with many things such as advice, resources, and tips and tricks to help students. Having this support network supported Jordan’s self-efficacy.

With respect to accessing resources, all participants said they rely on divisional supports, such as clinical services and divisional teachers to help them create a classroom of inclusion and belonging. Clinical staff such as occupational therapists, psychologists, and social workers meet to support the needs of classroom students on a once-per-six-day cycle rotation. Several participants consult with clinicians regularly to create a space where students can be successful and get the tools they need to support their learning. Tools include many occupational therapy and strategies to support students’ sensory needs such as fidgets, chewing gum and seating options. As classroom needs are always in flux and never static, moment by moment, and all day long, incorporating these tools allow students to meet their movement and regulation needs to help them be successful members of a class community, feel accomplished, and feel a sense of belonging.

Jordan and Taylor credit the work of the Centre for Responsive Schools, whose book, *The First Six Weeks of School*, serves as a guide for teachers to set students up for a year of success and productivity. Jordan said “It’s about creating a culture [for our classroom] and talking about boundaries. It is about establishing a safe place and you have to establish that from the beginning.” The book has been a useful resource for teachers wanting to create caring and compassionate classroom communities.

Theme Six: Sociocultural Factors of Teaching and Learning

This sixth theme, sociocultural factors of teaching and learning, does not compare to the others as it includes findings that were not explicitly and extensively articulated by the interview participants. As stated in Question 3.3 of my interview guide, I am in a Master of Education program in educational foundations, specifically in a discipline focused on the sociocultural and political context of schooling.

I asked interview participants to look beyond themselves as classroom teachers and their classroom space, and state some of the systems that could affect their self-efficacy. This question was answered in all eight interviews; however, sociocultural factors of the education system were not discussed specifically, as the reported findings were primarily focused on the political factors participants were facing at the time. Such sociocultural factors include race, gender, class, socioeconomic status (SES), power dynamics, and school culture and climate. According to Regeluth, 1995 (as cited in Iman & Maidala, 2018), “Socio-cultural theorists argue that individuals cannot be considered in isolation from their social and historical context so therefore it is necessary to look at the society and the development occurring at a given time” (p. 153).

The absence of discussion about sociocultural issues could be due to several local and global reasons at the time of the interviews. There was a tremendous amount of stress on teachers as Manitoba’s response to COVID-19 in schools was to have only the children of critical services workers attend in person, and classroom teachers were once again balancing teaching online and in person. The looming uncertainty of Bill 64, which was discussed in Theme 5, was at the forefront of interview participants’ minds.

Another reason may have been a lack of time during the individual interviews as we may have discussed other questions at greater length and touched on this question momentarily when

political factors (macro level) were discussed. I can speculate that I may not have articulated the interview question clearly, participants may not have understood, and did not ask for clarity. It is also possible that the participants may not have felt comfortable answering the question due to perceived institutional repercussions. As per the research study's title, interview participants may have only been thinking about and discussing their perceptions or experiences of self-efficacy versus their perceptions or experiences of self-efficacy as part of the broader educational system. Participants may have also felt that we, as teachers, are all part of a public school system that is imposed by the government and may not have felt they have any power or voice to make significant changes. Theme 6 will be explored further in the following chapter.

At the end of the interviews, participants were asked to consider and comment on any factors not covered through the interview guide that might impact their self-efficacy, or if they felt they had more to say or share. Overall, participants appreciated being selected to participate in the structured individual interview, to share their thoughts, and to be heard. Brooklyn, Alex, Taylor, James, and Jordan emphasized that this research topic is an important one to discuss, as it spotlights this element of teaching, and how powerful teacher self-efficacy is to the success of student achievement.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the data collected from interviews with eight participants into six different themes: job stress, burnout, and self-care; challenges of meeting the diverse social and emotional needs of students; the importance of teacher-student relationships; the value of creating emotionally safe classrooms; political exigencies of schooling; and sociocultural factors of education.

The purpose of the interviews was to take a deeper look into teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs. The theoretical framework that underpins the research questions is Albert Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Chapter six will provide a discussion and triangulated analysis of the data from the literature review, participant interviews and my autoethnography.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Data Analysis

In this chapter, I will summarize data gathered from interviews with participants whose demographics pertained to the research questions and with my autoethnography, as per each research question, as outlined in chapter one. A discussion of the findings will be provided using the six themes from chapter five, synthesized with the phenomenon of self-efficacy, the theoretical framework of self-determination to make sense of the data critically, my definition of an emotionally safe classroom, and from a comprehensive review of the literature as outlined in chapter two. To conclude, I offer a response to the four research questions.

The four research questions were:

1. What are teachers' understandings of self-efficacy and its relationship to the development of an "emotionally safe" classroom?
2. What are teachers' understandings of the diverse social-emotional needs of students and their impacts on classroom practice?
3. What are the perceived factors that promote or hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs?
4. What have been the perceived impacts of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy?

Summary of the Findings

1. **What are teachers' understandings of self-efficacy and its relationship to the development of an "emotionally safe" classroom?**

Understanding and Defining Self-Efficacy

Interview participants understood the term self-efficacy like Alberta Bandura's definition, which is the belief in our own abilities to meet the challenges ahead and complete a task successfully (Akhtar, 2008, Bandura, 1993), with one participant articulating it precisely.

James believed they had the capability to accomplish their goals and related the term to collective efficacy. Jordan believed it was "about having confidence in what you're doing professionally," and "that you're doing all you can to make a difference in the lives of students with a variety of needs." Brooklyn said it was "one's own abilities to be in a particular area." Taylor, Stevie, Kennedy, and Parker confirmed that self-efficacy was about belief in their abilities and the courage to try new things. Alex had other thoughts about how to define self-efficacy, and they said it meant you needed to "defend what you believe in, to fight for yourself and your students, especially for students with special needs."

After speaking to the eight participants regarding teacher self-efficacy, it is apparent that after unpacking the definition and making an explicit connection to self-efficacy and their role as a teacher, they understood the concept of self-efficacy as it related to their roles as teachers. They believed that self-efficacy was a pivotal aspect of their classroom experience now and in the future.

From my autoethnographic experiences, I can affirm that I understand teacher self-efficacy to be one's own beliefs about their ability to accomplish a task or demand. When people believe they have the skills, can grasp the concepts, understandings, and have the awareness to complete duties, they will strive to work towards attaining it. I understand how important teacher self-efficacy is to the teaching profession and how instrumental it is to teacher success.

Along my journey as an educator, I have experienced much uncertainty in my self-efficacy, questioned, and doubted myself, and struggled with imposter syndrome. Early in my career as a classroom teacher, I did not have previous experiences to draw on, nor did I have a role model to support and guide me. Much of my learning as a teacher, I did on my own and as a result, I made a fair number of mistakes. Regardless of the challenges and obstacles I faced along the way, I did my best to persevere and push through to reach my goals. My students were always top of mind, and supporting their social-emotional needs and meeting the academic demands of teaching were goals I tried to meet every day.

As my career turned to working to supporting students as a guidance counsellor, new experiences at work were inevitable. My self-efficacy was challenged, however, with the support of in-house colleagues and divisional supports, I felt I was able to help students, work with teachers to meet the social-emotional demands of their students and connect with parents, and other duties as assigned. As I was able to reach my goals, my motivation increased. I was able to give more of myself to my work. Later in my career, as my work shifted from student focus to teacher focus, I worked to support classroom teachers with their daily practice, I relied much on my previous experiences as a classroom teacher, and other experiences I had along the way, prior experiences I had working with other teachers, educational assistants, divisional colleagues, and advice I acquired from my various team members.

I hope to leave my teaching colleagues with a listening and empathetic ear, be seen as a mentor or instructional coach, and someone they can rely on to get advice and consult when needed. I valued those qualities in my colleagues along the way.

Emotionally Safe Classrooms

Seven of the eight interview participants asked for a definition of “emotionally safe classroom” as it was not a term that is widely used in educational documents and literature. For

this research study, I defined an emotionally safe classroom as: spaces where teachers and students feel safe to express themselves non-judgmentally and unconditionally. Teachers and students are compassionate, courageous, and vulnerable towards each other. They are supportive of each others' mistakes, emotionally engaged, and celebrate learning. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms understand and emphasize social-emotional learning as foundational, and as important as academic learning. Learning environments have clear and consistent routines and procedures. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms model the behaviour they want to see in their students. Teacher-student relationships are cultivated and are strong, resulting in a sense of mutual trust. Teachers are the adults that students can rely on unconditionally, to value, nurture and protect them, and help them solve problems.

James, in their own words, said an emotionally safe classroom is a "learning community where there is a high degree of psychological safety," "students feel valued and seen," and "students feel comfortable being their authentic, genuine self." They elaborated further by adding, "you are never not modelling." Teachers who have high self-efficacy work to create an emotionally safe classroom by modelling vulnerability for their students, teachers' responses to mistakes and failures, and the significance and importance of being grounded and balanced for their students.

2. What are teachers' understandings of the diverse social-emotional needs of students and their impacts on classroom practice?

Social-Emotional Needs of Students

The interview participants collectively held that the most prevalent social-emotional need in their classroom was anxiety. Participants noted observable behaviours such as work avoidance, worrying about how others perceived them, somatic complaints such as stomach and headaches, aggressive behaviours such as hitting, kicking, and yelling at teachers, other staff or

students, separation from parents or caregivers, and rapid movement of emotional states and regulation.

Students who live with risk and trauma for a variety of reasons, students with developmental needs, and students with comorbid diagnoses were additional risk factors noted by participants. Teachers were able to anticipate the needs of their students, based on their prior experiences, which corresponds with self-efficacy, as it is one of the four sources. Several of the participants noted that teaching online during remote learning presented hurdles in terms of meeting the social-emotional needs of their students. James proclaimed that students were feeling a larger sense of isolation and disconnection as learning through a screen did not allow for students to interact freely and spontaneously.

My experiences in meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of students varied depending on the teaching position I had at the time. As a classroom teacher, I had students with a diagnosis of attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, depression, anxiety, and students who had terminally ill caregivers, to name a few. If there were diagnoses that I was unaware of, I would do professional learning, and reading to understand how to support my students. I sought out colleagues who had experience with teaching students with a variety of social-emotional needs.

When possible, I observed their interactions with their students with needs to see how they would proactively respond, so that I could do the same. As a divisional support teacher, I was in the position to help classroom teachers to reach their students with diverse social-emotional needs with professional learning I had done as part of my role, as well as previous experiences I had. I also had support from other colleagues who could shed light on other diagnoses or behaviours that I may not know about.

Over the years, I gained more experience as my teaching role allowed me opportunities to work in many schools, I was able to gain deeper insights into individual students who needed

behaviour and social-emotional support. This allowed me to share experiences with other teachers and support staff while reinforcing my learning and building my professional repertoire.

Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships

Interview participants believed that teachers who systematically prioritize belonging in the classroom, said that the teacher-student relationship is important in creating an emotionally safe classroom, and is correlated to teacher self-efficacy.

Jordan, James, Taylor, and Brooklyn said that creating a warm and welcoming classroom space is their priority. Jordan said that strong relationships with their students are very important, and firmly believes that “If kids don’t believe you like them, they are not going to learn from you, you have to make sure they feel that from you.” Taylor understood the value of teacher-student relationships and integrated them into daily interactions. Even while learning from home, Jordan, Stevie, Parker, Brooklyn, and Taylor put great importance on the connection over academics to maintain the emotionally safe classroom they created while attending in-person school. Such examples included Jordan sending videos of themselves with personal messages to their students and Brooklyn implementing an “acts of kindness” project to support students during this “ambiguous and ominous time.”

What I heard from the interview participants was that remote teaching was a very challenging time for many teachers and students. There was no playbook or manual to follow on how to teach during a pandemic. While teachers had the provincial requirements to teach academics and complete report cards, these educators also highly regarded connection, relationship, and wellness in addition to reading and writing. As the individual interviews took place during the pandemic, teachers were in flux between in-person and online teaching, there may have been additional barriers that teachers encountered, however these barriers were not clearly articulated in the data.

My experiences with teacher-student relationships were very similar to the interview participants, as I strove to understand what worked for my students. I learned about their interests and hobbies and tried to connect with them as best as I could each day. I wanted to be sure students knew how important they were to me, and I instinctively knew that I needed to work at listening to their hearts before I could teach their minds. As much as academics were very important in my classroom, and I had report cards to write three times per year, it was important to cultivate a deep sense of connection with my students. For students who were hard to connect with, or hard to make attachments with, I endeavored to find something we had in common to start conversations and connections. This took time, effort, energy, patience, and perseverance, and I gave all my energy to in my early years as a teacher.

As a guidance counsellor, I did not have the same depth of teacher-student relationships as a classroom teacher; however, I endeavoured to emulate the teacher-student relationship that was cultivated in the student's class, so I could be as consistent as possible for students. As a divisional support teacher, and when I worked individually with students who struggled with behaviour, I strove to create an inclusive and safe space for students to regulate and calm themselves while supporting their school team with positive behaviour support strategies.

There were times in my career when working with supporting adults and others to shift thinking about students' lack of skill versus lack of will, that I have encountered challenging words and actions in return. Understanding child development and working to understand stress behaviours in students takes time, effort, and patience. In spite of this, I know that the work that I do with staff is important in supporting kids' and adult wellness.

3. What are the perceived factors that promote or hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs?

Job Stress, Burnout, and Self-Care

Interview participants shared their experiences with job stress and burnout, and how the need to prioritize self-care was essential for their personal wellness. Kennedy found that times were challenging after a year with a very difficult class and felt that they were burning out, regardless of how much they tried. Trying to find time for self-care and balance, while attempting to give enough of themselves at school and home was very difficult. Taylor felt that they were not able to meet the demands of teaching and the diverse social-emotional needs of their students if they were not grounded. Their state of regulation directly influenced their students, both positively and negatively.

Finding time for self-care posed significant challenges for interview participants during city-wide lockdowns and school closures for fear of being judged by others as selfish. James articulated that self-care was the foundation of their success. Their advice was to “take care of yourself, turn off your devices at the end of the day, step back, do things that bring joy to your heart, fill your need to feel balanced.” Jordan needed a supportive community around them, to support and guide them. They expressed the value of this support, however, finding the right people was very laborious.

My personal experience with job stress, burnout, and lack of self-care occurred in the later part of my career. I found myself in a very difficult time in my professional and personal life, not comprehending how I got there and how long it would last. Even though I felt I had all the right things in place, I missed all the signs of empathy fatigue and burnout. It was challenging to balance all the demands of work and school, and I did not take the necessary time to rest and recharge. Taking time away from my work duties to care for myself was something that I felt I could not fathom for fear of judgment by others.

In the end, after I could not deny my symptoms any longer, I fell victim to burnout. I was my worst critic during this time. After several weeks at home and months of self-reflection, journaling, mindfulness, and family support, I learned the importance of recognizing when I am feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and anxious, to take time to breathe, take a walk or a break, or ask for help. I have since shifted my thinking about burnout. It is not shameful or embarrassing; it can happen to anyone, at any time, despite knowing and doing all the right things.

4. What have been the perceived impacts of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy?

Online Teaching

Interview participants' responses support the notion that teachers had limited time and means, such as stable internet connection, adaptable in-person resources, and access to school supplies for students, to shift from in-person to online learning. Interview participants also felt they were consistently being watched, judged, and under the microscope as teachers, since parents had full access to their child's online classroom. This tension caused a lot of challenges for teachers, which in turn left them feeling skeptical about their abilities as professionals.

Political Factors

In addition to the global pandemic, Manitoba teachers faced the threat of Bill 64, which would enact legislation that would "be used to achieve some of the government recommendations included in the K-12 Education Review" (Manitoba Teachers' Society, n.d). Four of the eight participants said that, politically, this was the most challenging year of their careers. Teachers were not being prioritized for vaccines and felt their voices were not being heard or considered when a system change was to occur. Brooklyn and Stevie felt their self-efficacy was negatively impacted.

Divisional and School-Based Leadership

With respect to divisional leadership and support during the pandemic, five participants felt supported. Taylor, James, and Alex equally expressed that the superintendent was available to speak to and understood what teachers faced, and had an emotional connection to teaching, as he was once a teacher.

Participants felt that other divisional leaders were supportive in terms of having divisional staff create resources and professional learning opportunities available for all teaching staff to enhance teaching and learning. When it came to school-based leadership, Brooklyn, Jordan, and Kennedy did not feel supported during this disorderly time, as they felt their administrator did not consider their needs and skills when making decisions, which had a direct effect on their self-efficacy. Brooklyn stated, “as teachers, we were not given any options at all.” Overall, these participants felt teachers’ needs during the global pandemic were dismissed.

Uncertainty at Work in Response to a Pandemic

My autoethnographic experience during this time echoed the interview participants as I was also faced with uncertainty during the pandemic. I started the 2021-2022 school year in a brick-and-mortar school, and with minimal notice was reassigned as a student services teacher in the division’s Learning from Home School. This role was not new to me, as I had held a student services position in years past; however, this time I was in an online environment which meant I was working with students who were at home due to illness, or immunocompromised, or living with others in the same condition.

I worked diligently to support the students, their parents, teaching colleagues and administrators in my new school, and many days felt I was not giving enough. No one had done this job before, and there were no structures, procedures, or guidelines in place, which are all

supports teachers are used to in their classrooms and support roles. Leaders were asked to do more, navigate the demands of the community, and ensure the mandates of the province were followed, which left them challenged to support their school community. With such a lack of human resources, procedures and protocols, my self-efficacy was compromised, and it was onerous to find a balance and to give enough of my time to meet the many facets of the job.

Discussion of the Findings

The discussion of the findings uses the phenomenological experiences of the interview participants and my autoethnography by contrasting this information with the relevant literature on teacher self-efficacy (TSE), students' social-emotional needs, teacher-student relationship (TSR), emotionally safe classrooms, and the global pandemic as noted in chapter two.

The data will be critically conceptualized using the theories of self-efficacy and self-determination to respond to the four research questions. The discussion will be organized under the six themes that emerged from the data as outlined in chapter five, including an introduction to conceptualize and define Self-Efficacy.

Conceptualizing and Defining Self-Efficacy

In the review of literature on self-efficacy, a psychological term was developed by Albert Bandura, which is the belief in our own abilities to meet the challenges ahead and complete a task successfully (Akhtar, 2008, Bandura, 1993). Unless individuals believe they have the skills to achieve a task, they have little reason to initiate or persevere during difficult times (Bandura 2010). There are four sources of self-efficacy: 1) Mastery, the experience we get when we take on unfamiliar challenges and prevail; 2) Vicarious experiences, having a role model to mirror and follow; 3) Verbal persuasion, the impact that someone influential in your life has on you, to overcome challenging things; and 4) Emotional and physiological states, the importance of health

and wellness on the development and maintenance of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012; Courtney & Ackerman, 2022).

As noted in chapter two, many articles have been written about self-efficacy and nursing (Bulfone et al, 2021; Cheng et al., 2021; Dogu et al, 2022;), social work (Arriaza, 2015; Pedrazza et al., 2013; Pöder & Merkuljeva, 2021), and pre-service teacher education (Kang et al., 2018; Scarparolo & Subban, 2021; Velthuis et al., 2014), and very limited studies exist involving in-service teachers.

From the perspectives of the participants, and my autoethnographic experience, we all had a global understanding of the term self-efficacy as a psychological term, but most participants did not have a clear understanding of its relatedness to them as teachers or to the teaching profession. I believe that teachers' understanding of their self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in their ability to create an emotionally safe classroom and meet the diverse social-emotional needs of their students.

From the findings, only James knew the term and could say it came from Albert Bandura, and referred to their understanding of collective efficacy, as cited in Hattie (2017). Taylor, Stevie, Kennedy, and Parker confirmed that self-efficacy was about belief in their abilities and the courage to try new things. Alex had other thoughts about how to define self-efficacy, and they said it meant "you needed to defend what you believe in, to fight for yourself and your students, especially for students with special needs."

The remaining two participants were somewhat familiar with the term and asked for a definition and some clarification. Once the definition was offered, as per Bandura (1994), most participants understood that self-efficacy was something they felt intuitively, although not academically, and not connected to their classroom practices. They did, however, know that believing in their abilities to accomplish a teaching task was foundational to student success.

Henson (2012) discusses that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more organized, willing to try new strategies, are resilient when faced with adversity and have a positive impact on student achievement, student efficacy, and motivation. The data received from the participants implies that more explanation of the term was needed to unpack a deeper understanding of the theory, its four sources, and its correlation to their role as teachers.

My autoethnographic experience supports the interview participants, as I could define self-efficacy, and knew it was about one's own beliefs relative to accomplishing a task or demand, however, I was not able to theorize this from my practice and did not understand the importance of self-efficacy as a teacher. As self-efficacy is foundational to this research study, I suggest that self-efficacy is an important facet of teaching that needs more attention and ongoing conversation.

Advocating for Students

Participants said that they frequently advocate for their students, consult with their support teams, liaise with clinical teams and senior leadership, and work to create an emotionally safe classroom. Concerning the theoretical framework of self-determination, people have three innate psychological needs: 1) Competence, when people feel they have the skills and ability to achieve their goals, they will work towards and take the necessary steps to achieve them; 2) Connection or relatedness, people need to feel attached, connected, and in the right relationship with others; and 3) Autonomy, people need to feel they have agency in their behaviours and goals (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011).

Participants demonstrated their sense of competence and autonomy by asking for support for themselves and their students and by demonstrating a sense of self-directedness (the phenomenon of self-efficacy). Some examples of this included spending time with students discussing student safety concerns (Alex), connecting with students who are crying (Jordan), and creating bonds with students (Stevie). Of the two participants who understood the term self-

efficacy, they spoke at length about their students feeling heard and having a high degree of psychological safety, resulting in students being able to take academic risks (James).

Based on my teaching experiences and my academic studies in psychology, students who feel psychologically safe often take risks to raise their hand if they are unsure, read aloud in class, and express concerns about an academic task if they are hungry, tired, or feel unsafe at home or in the community. These are examples of teachers moving the theory of self-efficacy into practice (praxis). As teachers believe they have the ability to accomplish their desired outcome, students feel that they can take risks in their learning, and students making significant academic and social-emotional gains.

As I learned more about self-efficacy and self-determination, I came to realize that the spaces I tried to create for my students were my efforts to make them feel psychologically safe and different from my own schooling experience. I felt it imperative to be consistent with my routines and procedures in order to create predictability and structure. I wanted my students to feel a sense of belonging and connection, so they would feel a sense of inclusion and affinity. I also wanted my students to have a different school experience than I had as a student.

As I reflect on my years as a student, and all the learning I have done as a professional over the years, I attribute some of my discomfort in my classroom experiences to my otherness. Powell & Menendian (2018) defines othering as “a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.” Brons (2015) defines othering as “the construction and identification of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual, unequal opposition by attributing relative inferiority and/or radical alienness to the other/out-group.” These statements are important and resonate with me as I identify as a non-Catholic, cisgender woman of colour. I was educated in a school system that supported the hiring of predominantly French Catholic,

white teachers. I felt on the outside of most classroom activities and experiences, and felt I was treated differently. I want to believe that my teachers attempted to make their classroom a safe space, but there were many times this did not feel safe for me. Due to my interpretation and experiences of my own otherness, it would be important for me to acknowledge that while one space can be considered safe for most students, it may feel unsafe for others.

As a new teacher, I had the chance to create a safe space for students, unlike the ones I had experienced. My self-efficacy was high as a new teacher, and I had a lot of energy and zeal to support my students and create a safe space. These findings align with the literature as stated by scholars including Klassen, Tze, and Betts (2010); Klassen et al., (2011); Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012); Ross (1992); Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007); Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004); Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Zee and Koomen, (2016) who suggest that teachers with greater efficacy are more effective in teaching, advocate for their students, are less critical of student errors, are more compassionate towards students who are enduring difficult circumstance, seek additional resources to ensure student success, and support students who struggle academically or socially-emotionally.

Discussion of Emerging Themes

Six themes emerged from the interviews: 1) job stress, burnout, and self-care; 2) challenges of meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of students; 3) importance of teacher-student relationships; 4) value of creating emotionally safe classrooms; 5) political exigencies of schooling during a global pandemic; and 6) sociocultural factors impacting teaching and learning.

Theme One: Job Stress, Burnout, and Self-Care

- Theme one is connected to the third research question and its related questions from the interview guide (Appendix E: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4):

- 3.1: In what ways is your self-efficacy challenged when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs?
- 3.2: Based on your responses to the previous question, how do you assess your level of preparedness to respond to your students social-emotional needs? Give examples of your preparedness or lack of preparedness.
- 3.3: As I am currently in a Master of Education program in educational foundations, I am also looking at social and political contexts. In thinking beyond yourself as a classroom teacher, and your classroom space, what are some of the systems that could affect your self-efficacy?
- 3.4: What kinds of supports do you think would help you better respond to your students' social-emotional needs?

The first section discusses the perceived factors that hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to students' social-emotional needs and what promotes teacher self-efficacy.

Job Stress:

The literature suggests a significant correlation between teacher self-efficacy and burnout syndrome (Demerouti et al., 2001). Teachers with low self-efficacy experience challenges in teaching such as lower levels of job satisfaction, and higher levels of job-related stress, including burnout, worry, and anxiety (Hagenauer, Hasher & Volet, 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kavanagh & Bower, 1985; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Sokal et al., 2021; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010; Weißenfels et al., 2021; various authors as cited in Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Kennedy said that no matter how hard they tried, they felt they were not able to meet the demands of their students, which then led them to feel very stressed and overwhelmed. They

lived under daily stress with a very challenging class, and had many proactive strategies in place; however, notwithstanding their best efforts with a very demanding group of students, it proved to be very exhausting. They felt that no matter their numerous attempts at helping to support their students, they were failing as a teacher.

Research on self-efficacy suggests that emotional and physiological states affect self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2010, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2014). Taylor confirmed that their self-efficacy has been challenged when responding to their students' social-emotional needs if they are not feeling stable with a sense of wellness. Feelings of stress, angst, tension, and worry were significant negative markers in their ability to feel calm, leading to an unsettling classroom environment for their students. In addition, and opposite to their earlier statement, Taylor expressed feelings of abundant joy and happiness affected their self-efficacy, as they were more excitable and energetic. This was unsettling for their students, as Taylor worked to model proactive calming and regulating approaches for their students because they believed that their state of regulation dramatically affected their students' environmental and emotional needs.

Collie, Shapka and Perry, 2012 and Gastaldi et al., 2014 state that teacher stress is a growing problem in many Western countries. Friedman and Farber (1992) added that teachers who see themselves as less competent have lower levels of self-efficacy. My experience with job stress aligns with the literature and the interview participants as I lived with daily stress and emotional exhaustion when working as an inter-divisional student services teacher, and it affected my self-efficacy. The theory of self-efficacy states that to have self-efficacy, one must experience mastery and have a positive role model. I did not have this, as the demands of my job were ones that I had not experienced before, nor did I have a role model to mirror or follow.

Opposite to what was earlier stated by Friedman and Farber (1992), I felt I was competent (theory of self-determination) in the areas of the job I had training in; however, my circumstances were extremely challenging, which led me to contemplate leaving the position many times over my years working in mental health. This aligns with Duprez et al., (2015); Skaalvik and Skaalvik, (2017, 2011), and Wyatt and O'Neill, (2021), as teachers' motivation to leave the profession is positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and is negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

Teaching is very demanding. Demands include, and are not limited to increased parental expectations, work/life balance, time management (Sokal et al., 2020), and the fundamental importance of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace (Corsino & Fuller, 2021; Fuentes et al., 2020; Hilton et al., 2021; Ismailov & Chiu, 2022). The needs of students are fluid, shifting and their profiles are individual. Some students' needs include academic, sensory, intellectual, mental health, social and behavioural (Blazar & Archer, 2020; Ho & Lim, 2020 Ontario Teachers' Federation, n.d.). For teachers to feel competent and skilled at their profession, they need the support of others and to feel they have the core competencies necessary to achieve their professional aspirations.

Burnout

My lived experience with burnout occurred later in my career. This impacted my self-efficacy, as I believed I was doing all the right things to be successful as a teacher and have a balanced family life. I experienced emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, two elements of burnout that align with the literature on burnout (Grant, 2020; Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). Was there something I was missing? Could I have done more to help myself? How did I not see the signs? Despite my efforts to stay attuned to my needs, I was unable to avoid burnout.

The literature on burnout (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020; Hagenauer, Hasher & Volet, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Sokal et al., 2021; Tze & Betts, 2010; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette & Benson, 2010; various authors as cited in Zee & Koomen, 2016) aligns with my experience of burnout, as I was experiencing challenges at work with staying organized, finishing tasks due to overwhelming demands and the flow of incoming students. I felt less competent every day, and had an overall sense of feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and fatigued. At that point in my teaching career, which I would now say was the lowest, I felt job dissatisfaction. Going to work was hard and I felt I was not enough. I know my self-efficacy was at its lowest. With my years of experience and the variety of roles I had played, I was sure I had self-efficacy, mastery in many areas, and someone to mentor and for model me, especially when times were tough. I felt I had no place to turn, especially since the workload was coming at me at a staggering pace.

While I had people around to help, they were as busy as I was, and my thoughts about asking for help were that I might be perceived as incompetent, weak, and not able to handle the duties of my assignment. The literature and my experience suggest that there is a lack of support and interventions in place to support teachers. While teachers are being asked to do more, the demands of the job become so great, which in turn makes it unrealistic for teachers to continue at this pace. Lack of job satisfaction, low teacher self-efficacy, and poor physical and mental health are inevitable, in addition to more significant teacher attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

None of the interview participants said they experienced burnout, as defined in the literature. The interview guide did not lend itself to discussing burnout specifically, however, job stress and challenging classes were stated by several participants. Interview participants may not have disclosed their thoughts and feelings about burnout or may have been experiencing signs of the occupational phenomenon of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; World Health Organization, n.d.), and may not have been aware of the signs and symptoms as I was. Perhaps interview participants wanted to keep their personal perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, or experiences about

burnout to themselves, as the perceived stigma of those who have experienced burnout is that they might be deemed less competent than those who have not experienced it (May et al., 2020). It also led me to wonder how many other teachers would experience burnout in the coming months, years, or decades because of low teacher self-efficacy or other debilitating factors.

Self-Care

Participants in the study believed that self-care was foundational to their success as a teacher. James clearly articulated that “you should take care of yourself, turn off your devices at the end of the day, step back, do things that bring joy to your heart, fill your need to feel balanced.” Brooklyn also believed self-care was important; they said they liked spending time with their dog, listening to birds in the backyard, and using mindfulness apps. Time is a significant risk factor in self-care, and Brooklyn prioritized moments to take care of themselves. They found this time indispensable in their ability to support themselves, their students, and the school community. Jordan said their self-care is about support from others such as friends, and colleagues. They stated that finding the right people who align with your beliefs and attitudes can be challenging. Despite its challenges, Jordan believed that it is very important in supporting their positive mental health and wellness. This aligns with several other participants who say that finding the right self-help resources are a huge challenge, and despite that, very important to pursue. James further stated that allowing themselves the opportunity and permission to take the time they needed to care for themselves is important while also being a laborious task.

Collie, Shapka and Perry (2012) shared that teachers’ sense of job satisfaction is strongly correlated with motivation, wellness, self-care, and a commitment to their career. Locke (1969) defines job satisfaction as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (p. 316). These attributes are also significant factors for high teacher self-efficacy (Abun et al., 2022). The inference is that

teachers have all or some of the sources of self-efficacy such as mastery, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological state, as per the theory of self-efficacy.

While the interview participants and my experience were reasonably associated with the literature, we did experience challenging times but managed to persevere by focusing on self-care. As the interviews took place during city-wide lockdowns and school closures, participants noted that it was challenging to find time for self-care given their perceptions of feeling judged. I felt the same. Nevertheless, they found solace in self-care, including time with friends and family, watching television, getting outdoors in nature, regular exercise, meditation, taking time to make healthy meals and participate in retail and online shopping. In thinking about job stress and burnout, it appeared that it was more prevalent as this research was taking place during a very unpredictable and unprecedented time.

Theme Two: Challenges of Meeting the Diverse Social-Emotional Needs of Students

Theme two is connected to the second research question and its related questions from the interview guide (Appendix E: 2.1 and 2.2).

- 2.1: Take a few moments and think about the social-emotional needs of your students. Do not consider academic needs such as curricular needs and guidelines. What would you consider to be some of the social-emotional needs your students? Please share one or two examples but do not use real student names.
- 2.2: Based on your responses to the previous question-
 - a. in what way do you think students with those social-emotional needs impact your classroom practice?
 - b. what do you consider to be some implications for you as a teacher?

Sub-themes discussed in this theme are students' anxiety and students' need for belonging.

The literature suggests teachers are dealing with various social-emotional needs of their students daily. These social-emotional needs include complex family structures, trauma, poverty, substance abuse, caregiving duties, obligations, and responsibilities, mental health, bullying, grief, loss, long-term effects of developmental and intergenerational trauma, complex family dynamics, mental health, and substance abuse. These needs affect student engagement and success. These diverse needs also highlight the need for psychological and psychiatric intervention, as these needs can lead to depression, anxiety, and oppositional behaviours (Haynes, 2002; Nichols, Goforth, Sacra & Ahlers, 2018), which classroom teachers, along with supporting adults (student services teachers and administrators), are responsible for in terms of navigating the clinical and mental health support system.

Anxiety

Jordan, Stevie, Alex, Brooklyn Jordan, and Taylor echoed the literature when they said they are dealing with many social-emotional needs in their class, which varies from year to year. At the time of the interviews, participants said that the most prevalent social-emotional need in their classrooms was anxiety. They observed many behaviours in their students such as somatic complaints of stomach aches, headaches, and general malaise; students who ran away from class or school; who were hitting, lashing out, and being defiant; students who had difficulty separating from parents or caregivers; students who did not speak when at school (selectively mute), or who had rapid mood changes. These behaviours pose significant challenges for teachers, and as stated earlier in the literature (Haynes, 2002; Nichols, Goforth, Sacra & Ahlers, 2018), the need for psychological and psychiatric intervention for the student is often needed. Such resources may not be readily and easily accessible by teachers in a timely way. Teachers

are responsible for advocating for these supports as they are the ones who spend the most time with students and who document anecdotal data to give to clinical and medical teams.

Belonging

Three participants said that they were dealing with, and attempting to support students' needs for belonging in their classrooms. They expressed that they observed through students' play, and interactions with peers, that students wanted to fit in, be connected to their class community, have a friend, or belong to a larger group of friends. James noted that some of their students appeared to have "a deep sense of isolation and disconnect," and they speculated that it could have an impact on how students see themselves and their "self-concept." Some students experienced isolation, loneliness, and a longing for a sense of connection prior to the pandemic and learning from home.

Two participants said that teaching online due to COVID-19 exacerbated the problems and posed significant barriers to students' sense of connection to community. This is supported in the literature by Leal Filho et al., 2021 and Walsh, 2021, who state that social isolation can contribute to anxiety and depression, and teens and young adults have been the hardest hit in this domain by the pandemic. There was a lack of spontaneous play, and interactions between students were limited, or at times non-existent, as physical distancing was mandated as per health orders. This meant that students who were already isolated were even more disconnected and had minimal opportunities to make new in-person connections.

While a sense of belonging for students is important, it was outside of the scope of my research which focused on teacher self-efficacy; however, the notion of student belonging resonates with me, as it leads me to think deeply about adults' sense of belonging within their school community, and how it impacts their classroom practice. If teachers do not feel connected to their teaching colleagues or administrator(s), how does that affect their sense of belonging? In

turn, teachers might find it difficult to model community building and connection if they are not in the right relationship with colleagues and supervisors.

Theme Three: Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships

Theme three is connected to the first research question and its related questions from the interview guide (Appendix E: 1.1 and 1.2).

- 1.1: What is your understanding of the term self-efficacy? What does it mean in relation to you as a teacher?
- 1.2: After hearing the definitions, how do you think self-efficacy might play a role in the development of an emotionally safe classroom?
- I will provide definition of emotionally safe classroom.

Sub-themes discussed under this theme are teacher-student relationships, connection, and remote learning.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The literature shows that there is a positive link between teacher well-being and teacher-student relationship and student achievement (Baker, 1999; Fathi, Greenier, & Derakhshan, 2021; Fitzsimmons, Trigg, & Premkumar, 2019; Fredricks et al., 2014, as cited in van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2013; Hagenauer, Hascher & Volet, 2015; Muller 2001; Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Pigford, 2001). Research also affirms that a positive teacher-student relationship is one of the most important factors in creating a responsive space, and one of the main reasons teachers stay in the profession (Connor, 2008, as cited in Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998). According to Aldrup et al. (2018), a positive teacher-student relationship features overall mutual respect, trust, warmth, and low levels of disagreement. Hattie (2012) elaborates with additional factors such as empathy, encouragement, and authenticity as all being essential for a successful

teacher-student relationship. These factors create conditions that can allow students to connect with adults who believe have their best interests at heart.

It is important to note that Spilt et al. (2011), posit that the teacher-student relationship and teacher outcomes have not been widely researched. This is surprising since a positive teacher-student relationship is foundational to students' academic and social-emotional success (Buffet, 2019; García-Moya, 2020; Li et al., 2022; Waterford.org, 2021). Failure to co-create a positive teacher-student relationship is directly linked to teacher stress and burnout (Laugaa et al., 2008; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Mazloomi Mahmoodabad et al., 2014).

This is confirmed by the participants, specifically Jordan, James, Taylor, and Brooklyn; they discussed the teacher-student relationship as instrumental in creating a warm and welcoming environment in their classroom where students and teachers thrive and feel connected to each other. Additionally, Taylor suggested that a strong teacher-student relationship linked to their feelings of self-efficacy, teacher wellness and student achievement, and that the teacher-student relationship needs to be the core value guiding their work and needs to be integrated as much as possible into daily interactions.

These observations align with my experience that teacher-student relationships are vital for students' wellness, and the ability to connect with others, and are paramount in teachers' sense of success. My experiences support what Taylor said in terms of integrating teacher-student relationships daily, as I worked diligently to cultivate and create strong bonds with my students when I was a classroom teacher. Some things I did were celebrating each student's birthday with a cake and card; personally, paying for and preparing monthly hot lunches for the whole class; attending out-of-school sporting events; having individual monthly meetings with each student; developing and writing a weekly newsletter to communicate with families; and encouraging parent volunteers in the classroom, including on field trips. I felt I was able to do these generous acts for

my students, as I was determined to work to reach their hearts. I could make my own decisions about how to reach my students, and relatedness was my goal. This aligns with the theory of self-determination as I was able to demonstrate competency, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2016).

As a school-based student services teacher, my role was different from the students I worked with as a teacher since I was supporting classroom teachers, rather than directly supporting students. Our teacher-student relationship was created by me bridging their connection to their classroom teacher and me. I supported and helped students be their best by creating a warm and welcoming learning space and facilitating friendship and socialization groups. This proved to be successful in building connections with students who I did not directly teach. As stated in an earlier section of this chapter, not all students feel safe and connected to their classroom teacher, even though teachers believe they are trying their best. As a future research topic, it would be interesting to explore students' perceptions of their sense of safety in their classroom compared to teachers' beliefs of their ability to create an emotionally safe learning environment.

Connection

Research affirms that a positive teacher-student relationship is one of the most important factors in creating a responsive space, and one of the main reasons teachers stay with the profession (Connor, 2008, as cited in Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998). Mojavezi & Tamiz (2012) state that students who connect with adults believe they (adults) care about them (students) and have their best interests at heart. This was emphasized by Jordan who said that building strong relationships with their students is very important. They go deeper with their statement, "If kids don't believe you like them, they are not going to learn from you, you have to make sure they feel that from you." James and Stevie say they teach and model soft skills, as

well as positive mental health strategies like collaboration and teamwork. Stevie said “I feel like I do a reasonable job building relationships and getting to know students in a school setting. You know, gauge where they are at, more of that informal dialogue with students.”

I can also support the data from James and Stevie, as well as the literature, as I believe that a positive teacher-student relationship is indispensable. I learned the importance of a positive teacher-student relationship early on in my academic path and it was demonstrated in the action by my professors in my teacher education program who taught me that a strong teacher-student relationship was the key to creating a strong learning community, and I worked to create that bond with my students each day. When I was in a role that did not allow this depth of relationship, I sought out other job opportunities. I worked with colleagues to create positive working relationships with their students, where students could thrive and flourish. I believe in this very much, as a positive teacher-student relationship was not my experience in kindergarten to Grade 12. I wanted more for my students, and when I was not serving students directly in a classroom, I wanted to support my colleagues to build long-lasting connections with their students.

Remote Learning

At the start of the global pandemic in March 2020, students and staff were mandated to learn and teach from home to keep themselves and others safe (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022). Taylor recounted the limited resources available to teachers to prepare for online teaching, and the many challenges that it posed, which affected their self-efficacy because of a lack of prior experience with such a demand.

Sokal et al., (2021, 2020) noted a decreased sense of efficacy in classroom management and a decreased sense of accomplishment. Research further reports that teachers found teaching remotely exhausting and stressful due to many factors such as access to materials to support online teaching and stable internet connections (Ferguson, 2020; Heim, 2020; Sahito et al., 2022).

In response to the pandemic, and to support teachers and students, Louis Riel School Division's divisional teaching team created a document to support teachers with this precipitous task. Taylor gave credit to the division for producing this document, as it highlighted the need to address community, focus on teacher-student relationships, and belonging, and reassure students that they would still be connected to their teacher and classmates (emotionally safe classroom) before jumping into academics. The document permitted Jordan, Stevie, Parker, Brooklyn, and Taylor to feel a sense of mastery.

Despite how challenging that time was for many, they felt they were allowed to choose how they met the needs of their students, and they felt autonomous and successful in doing so. Several participants mentioned they spent quality time with their students as a whole group, and individually focused on mental health, wellness, and connection, to help ease students' stress and worry during what Brooklyn says was a "scary and confusing, ambiguous and ominous time."

Theme Four: Value of Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms

Theme four is connected to the first research question and its related questions from the interview guide (Appendix E: 1.1 and 1.2).

- 1.1: What is your understanding of the term self-efficacy? What does it mean in relation to you as a teacher?
- 1.2: After hearing the definitions, how do you think self-efficacy might play a role in the development of an emotionally safe classroom?

Sub-themes discussed under this theme are emotionally safe classrooms, classroom needs, and impacts on classroom practice.

Emotionally Safe Classrooms

The phrase emotionally safe classroom was not apparent in the related literature. Several topics were searched, such as emotionally supportive classrooms, social-emotional classrooms, respectful classroom environments, and social-emotional learning classrooms. As a result, associated literature was reviewed under these searches, and I developed my definition, which was shared with interview participants and explored in my autoethnography. I define emotionally safe classrooms as spaces where teachers and students feel safe to express themselves non-judgmentally and unconditionally. Teachers and students are compassionate, courageous, and vulnerable towards each other. They are supportive of each others' mistakes, emotionally engaged, and celebrate learning. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms understand and emphasize social-emotional learning as foundational, and as important as academic learning. Learning environments have clear and consistent routines and procedures. Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms model the behaviour they want to see in their students. Teacher-student relationships are cultivated and are strong, resulting in a sense of mutual trust. Teachers are the adults that students can rely on unconditionally, to value, nurture and protect them, and help them solve problems.

James added to my definition, stating that emotionally safe classrooms have a high degree of psychological safety, where students are safe to be their "authentic, genuine selves."

Bruce Perry (n.d.) aligns with my definition and James' statement when he makes the case that teachers can create a positive classroom space by being sensitive to their students' needs. Children do well and take risks in their learning when they know they are being recognized for their efforts, and adults are encouraging, reassuring, and supportive. These experiences are also reinforced in the literature by Parret and Budge (2012) who state that a learning environment which showcases creativity, inquiry and risk-taking, is important, and this space reinforces school leadership and encourages educators to want and continue to work under these collaborative and productive work environments.

Classroom Needs

The interview participants understood there are many social-emotional needs in their classroom, and these needs are not static. While teachers attempt to meet diverse needs, different situations may occur on any given day, and teachers are in constant motion to meet them. They often prioritize social-emotional needs over academics. These experiences align with the literature from Brennan (2015); National Centre for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (n.d); and Shriver and Weissberg (2020), as social-emotional learning (SEL) is addressed first in an emotionally safe classroom.

This mirrors my experiences that a positive teacher-student relationship is one of the most important factors in creating emotionally safe spaces for students. In my support roles with teachers, I was able to help them construct learning spaces with teacher-student relationships at the forefront. From my experiences, teachers prioritize social-emotional learning as part of their curriculum and endeavour to meet their students where they are emotionally. They work to be highly attuned to their students' needs and co-regulate when times are stressful so their students may internalize strategies to self-regulate.

Impact on Classroom Practice

The social-emotional needs of students do impact teacher practices, as the needs are fluid and ever-changing. Teachers rely on their self-efficacy, specifically on prior experiences, to plan, implement and support the transformative needs of their students.

After a thorough review of the literature, it is curious why the term 'emotionally safe classrooms' is not explicitly defined. There are various iterations of similar terms such as Safe and Caring Schools (Manitoba Education, n.d), Emotional Safety in the Classroom (Quiros et al., 1970), Belonging and Emotional Safety (Casel Schoolguide, n.d.) and Emotionally Safe School

Environment (Chafouleas, 2020) to name a few. Their definitions are similar; however, after years of working with teachers, students, and administrators, I developed my term and definition which is experience-and practice-based. I believe my definition, which may appear to be long, offers a more nuanced understanding of emotionally safe classrooms, as it captures additional language that is missing from others.

Interview participants knew aspects of the term and appeared to easily support the notion in their own words. They were able to infer its meaning due to years of teaching experience and navigating the education system to pinpoint the essentials in creating a safe space for their students. It is their tacit understanding that the underpinning of a successful classroom environment is an emotionally and psychologically safe space.

Theme Five: Political Exigencies of Schooling During a Global Pandemic

Theme five is connected to the fourth research question and its related questions from the interview guide (Appendix E: 4.1 and 4.2).

- 4.1: How did your teaching change or stay the same? In what ways? Tell me about your experiences?
- 4.2: Now that you've lived through this for a pandemic for a year, how efficacious are you feeling now?

Sub-themes discussed under this theme are provincial demands on teachers due to COVID-19, and a return to in-person learning.

Provincial demands on Teachers Due to COVID-19

The World Health Organization announced a global health emergency in January 2020 (WHO, 2020), and brought the COVID-19 pandemic to the world's attention (Tang, Chen, Lin, &

Feng, 2020). Classroom teachers in Manitoba had to move from in-person to online teaching without much notice, which involved asynchronous and synchronous lesson delivery. Interview participants recalled their personal accounts from March 2020 when teachers, support staff, administrator, and students were sent home for three weeks due to a provincial mandate (Froese & Gowriluk, 2020). Accordingly, teachers were expected to provide lessons and assignments for students to complete while at home with little to no preparation or online teaching skills.,

As learning-from-home continued beyond the government-imposed timeline, participants were faced with many challenges such as inconsistent internet connection, adapting in-person resources for online learning, creating online resources, and accessing supplies such as paper, pencils, and art materials. This correlates with Sahita et al., (2022,) who affirm that resources and support were limited, which posed significant challenges and stress for teachers. Due to the lack of mastery, and in most cases no experience with online teaching, teachers had no people with experience in this delivery mode to show them the way through this unprecedented time. Teachers reported higher levels of stress and a lower sense of efficacy (Sokal, Eblie, Tudel & Babb, 2021, 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). This is confirmed by Brooklyn, as they said it was “the most challenging year of my career,” as there were so many decisions made without consulting teachers, ever-changing mandates directed at teachers regarding teaching and learning, and requirements to ensure physical distancing, cleaning, and sanitizing.

My experiences echo that of the literature and the participants as it was also a very challenging time for me. The Louis Riel School Division created the Learning from Home School to support students and families who needed an alternate learning space to protect themselves and their families from the virus, so I was reassigned as part of that student services team. It was a very surreal time globally and personally; my self-efficacy was low, and I had many professional challenges throughout the year.

I can affirm that even while I was conducting research on self-efficacy and burnout, learning about the signs of these, and making attempts to take action to prevent myself from facing similar experiences, I missed many of the signs that I was in fact living through the same. With hindsight, I think about the short and long-term consequences on teacher well-being, stress, burnout, and anxiety when the pandemic ended. As teachers are still dealing with unpredictability, lack of autonomy, lack of time for self-care and personal wellness, and increased job stress, strategies could be put in place to lighten the risk of teacher burnout and lower job satisfaction.

Return to In-Person Learning

Once schools went back to in-person learning, teachers were faced with navigating a new set of challenges such as mask mandates, physical distancing, additional cleaning measures and staying home when sick (Hargreaves, 2021; Restoring Safe Schools, n.d.; Robinson et al., 2022; Study.com, n.d.). With these extra demands on teachers' time to ensure ancillary safety measures were adhered to, more time was taken away from social-emotional and academic teaching and learning.

Interview participants reported similar experiences as many of them were told they were being relocated from their original building to another building in the division. Some teachers were moved from a classroom to a shared gymnasium, where they were expected to teach in a large open space without walls. Participants articulated that these changes and relocations affected their self-efficacy, and they reported feelings of sadness, loss, defeat, and not feeling heard.

From my autoethnography, I also experienced challenges because of the pandemic and the return to in-person learning. I was reassigned to a new position with little time to establish myself in the role, and the fast and unfamiliar influx of demands grew exponentially. While the school division created an online school for the safety of the community, it was difficult for me to manage and navigate the requirements and respond with any degree of urgency. My self-efficacy

and self-determination were tested many times, as the autonomy I had in the past, was no longer available.

The interview participants and my autoethnographic experiences align with Sokal et al. (2020) who assert that teachers' "stress exceeded their capacity, and likewise demonstrated progression towards the pathway to burnout" (p. 7). These findings and literature are important as they demonstrate the continued need for research on the ongoing impact of teacher self-efficacy and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme Six: Sociocultural Factors Impacting Teaching and Learning

This final theme is connected to the third research question (Appendix E: 3.3)

- 3.3: As I am currently in a Master of Education program in educational foundations, I am also looking at social and political contexts. In thinking beyond yourself as a classroom teacher, and your classroom space, what are some of the systems that could affect your self-efficacy?

Sub-themes discussed under this theme during the interviews and autoethnography are benefits and challenges of inclusive education and sociocultural and systemic factors affecting self-efficacy.

Benefits and Challenges of Inclusive Education

Teachers are a product of their structural environment, which includes cultural, societal, and organizational structures (Liddicoat et al., 2017). These structures can be inclusive, and exclusive. The philosophy of inclusive education, according to Winter (2020), refers to the education of all students, regardless of their abilities, in regular classrooms that support and adjust materials to achieve success and inclusion of all learners, and is supported by inclusive educational policies and legislation. Carter et al., (2011); Feldman et al., (2015); Fisher and Frey

(2001); Fryxell and Kennedy (1995); Kwon, Elicker, and Kontos, 2011 (as cited by Wordpress.com n.d.), state that in inclusive classrooms and schools, students are presented with important roles and responsibilities, while purposefully connecting with peers. Exclusive educational settings, according to Smith (n.d.), can include a lack of training for teachers and supporting adults, school buildings that do not support students with disabilities, limited resources for students, stigma and discrimination.

While inclusion is very important for teaching and learning, offering many opportunities for students to feel accepted and supported, teaching staff need ongoing training and resources for successful implementation (Friend & Bursuck, n.d.), and a whole school approach (Daly et al., 2019; Subban et al., 2022). According to Herzig Johnson (2023), teachers' varying feelings about their self-efficacy impact their implementation of inclusive practices.

Sociocultural and Systemic Factors Impacting Teacher Self-Efficacy

There are many sociocultural factors impacting teachers today. These factors include gender, equity, race, socioeconomic status (SES), language, religion, personal values and attitudes, beliefs, social organizations, family structures, institutional power, culture, and climate (Galvão et al., 2019; Hoque, 2023; Sakar, 2021). Understanding and acknowledging these factors are essential for teachers to provide a quality education that is fair, equitable, and rigorous, all while remaining inclusive and supportive of the whole child.

At the time that the individual interviews took place between May 23 and June 3, 2021, participants were facing several factors impacting all teachers in Manitoba: provincial health mandates for COVID-19 (discussed earlier) and the threat of Bill 64 (Manitoba Teachers' Society, n.d) which was intended to replace several critical legislative acts relating to schooling in Manitoba. The single piece of legislation had serious implications for how schools would be governed and who had decision-making authority. It would, essentially, eliminate all elected

school boards and replace them with government-appointed Provincial Education Authorities, Provincial Advisory Councils, and School Community Councils. Most teachers and their union, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, were vehemently against this change, seeing elected officials being replaced with appointees who might not have any background in education.

Given the uncertainty and changing health and education demands of the pandemic, and the serious implications of Bill 64, all participants were hyper-focused on those two issues, as they would directly change how schools function at every level. While I believe that teachers were dealing with a variety of sociocultural factors that influence their daily interactions with students (informal conversations with colleagues) as outlined above, the interview participants did not explicitly address them, as their focus was more on how they were coping with the clear and present health and educational impact of the pandemic on their lives and the lives of their students.

My autoethnography did not specifically dive deep into sociocultural factors, as I was not so much focused on these factors in my daily interactions with teachers and students, since the lens through which I was viewing my work was my self-efficacy. Looking at the wider scope of the educational system critically was secondary to my work as a teacher, recognizing that I work within systems that may make decisions for me that I might not always agree with. I now recognize that I wrote about issues such as a lack of resources, accessibility to academic and social-emotional supports for students, lack of time to get work done with increasing demands, however I may not have had the sophisticated vocabulary as I was writing to articulate these factors as systemic barriers. It is only now, as I become more aware of systemic issues and have more understanding of the language and concepts, that I can name them. I also acknowledge that I am part of a public school system, one that can support or hinder me professionally, academically, and personally, so, I cautioned myself about saying things that might hinder my career.

The lack of specific, detailed, and articulated systemic barrier data from participants and me is worth acknowledging, as teachers are part of an educational system that consists of many layers and factors that affect their working conditions, and the teaching and learning process. Some possible factors that might pose a challenge to teachers when it comes to discussing the educational system are listed, however, the list is not exhaustive. Collinson and Fedoruk (2001) and Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest a lack of time. Teachers have numerous daily responsibilities, programming, planning, grading, coaching, and advising their students, and there is little time left to look deeply at the system in which they work. Ever-changing workloads could affect teachers' abilities to examine the school system critically. Asking more of teachers could negatively affect their self-efficacy and could potentially have potential negative side effects (Capone & Pertillo, 2018; Gastaldi et al., 2014; Grant, 2020; Jennett, Harris & Mesibov, 2003; Pedota, 2015; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skinner & Beers, 2016). Another factor could be accessibility to professional learning opportunities that allow teachers to engage in professional dialogue about the education system, policies, and procedures. If teachers are not invited to participate or do not have professional opportunities to discuss the larger political system in which they work, it may be challenging for them to engage in meaningful discussions and look beyond themselves as teachers. Professional development topics could include taking a closer look at their education system through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) (Better Lesson, 2021), anti-racism training (ART) (CBIE, 2023), culturally responsive teaching (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or social justice (NEA, n.d.). Prawat (1992), Mavuru and Ramnarain (2018), and Tatto (1998) share that teachers' personal beliefs and attitudes can promote or hinder their ability to look at the education system deeply. Depending on one's positionality, this could highly influence their ability to look at the system with a critical lens.

Another factor that could constrict teachers' ability to look closely at the educational system is divisional or school leadership. Day and Sammons (2016) state that "one way in which

school leaders can support such efforts is by considering their entire school as a system with interconnected parts and by establishing their organisations as professional learning communities” (p. 33). School leaders are pivotal in creating a culture and climate where educational systems can be discussed critically. If leadership is not open to educational system reflection, teachers are not able to discuss their thoughts and pedagogical practice or pose questions. Teachers are deeply socialized in the education system, implementing curriculum, and fulfilling their daily professional duties. Due to the above-mentioned factors, as well as many others, it may be challenging for them to step back and look at the system critically. It is also important to acknowledge that the interview participants did discuss some of these issues at the surface level, even though the language of systems was not widely used by the interview participants or me. To make any meaningful changes to the system will take more than just me or a small group of teachers. It takes numbers of people, some with more political awareness and power than I have, to make long lasting changes at systems levels.

At the end of the individual interviews, participants were asked if they wanted to comment further on any of the discussion questions. No further comments were discussed including system-wide, sociocultural factors.

Responding to Research Questions

From the data collected from eight individual interviews and my autoethnography, synthesized with the literature on the topics pertaining to teacher self-efficacy, students’ diverse social-emotional needs, teacher-student relationship, emotionally safe classrooms, and the global pandemic, and mobilized with the theories of self-efficacy and self-determination, the following four research questions have been addressed:

1. What are teachers' understandings of self-efficacy and its relationship to the development of an "emotionally safe" classroom?

Teachers understand the term self-efficacy, but not its direct connection to their profession. Once the term was defined, discussed, and unpacked in conjunction with the teaching role, teachers made the connection to their self-efficacy and its impact on creating an emotionally safe classroom. Having high self-efficacy was imperative in their ability to create an emotionally safe space for students. When their self-efficacy was high, they were able to reach their goals of creating an emotionally safe classroom for their students. When teachers' self-efficacy was low, it posed a challenge in creating an emotionally safe space for themselves and their students. In attempts to create an emotionally safe space for all students, it is important to note that all spaces may not always feel safe for all students. If creating emotionally safe spaces is the goal for teachers, a way of continually striving to achieve this could involve engaging teachers in regular self-evaluation and student feedback via anonymous surveys, as a form of check-in, in an attempt to create the conditions for safety and security for all.

2. What are teachers' understandings of the diverse social-emotional needs of students and their impacts on classroom practice?

Teachers face many challenges and successes in meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of students in their classrooms daily, and the needs are in constant motion. These needs range from anxiety, trauma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, abandonment, the burden of intergenerational trauma, abuse, neglect, and poverty. Unfortunately, this list is not exhaustive, and more needs are presenting themselves in classrooms today.

Teachers feel they have a basic understanding of the social-emotional needs of students due to their post-secondary education, and some teachers are seeking additional knowledge and learning by attending professional learning, or postgraduate education. Teachers told me that

they feel unprepared to support their students at a deeper level. They are aware that divisional and clinical supports are available, as well as community and outside agencies. These supports are not always easily accessible due to long wait lists and limited clinicians, which can pose barriers for teachers, students, families, and community members.

From the results of this study, teachers are dealing with anxiety, a need for belonging, and feelings of isolation due to the global pandemic and online learning. Owing to the increasing social-emotional needs of students' post-pandemic, limited time, and minimal resources, teachers are spending much of their school day supporting their students' regulation and problem-solving. Human resources are becoming scarcer as the demands to support student behaviour become more prevalent.

3. What are the perceived factors that promote or hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs?

Many educational factors influence teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching. Some factors include social, political, and economic reasons, and they can have positive and/or negative outcomes, which can affect teacher self-efficacy. From the findings of this study, teachers identified some of the positive social factors that promote their ability to rely on their self-efficacy so that they may respond to their students' social-emotional needs. Such social factors are support from teaching colleagues and school administrators, acknowledgment and encouragement from divisional teachers and the senior divisional leadership team, and positive relationships with their students. Education is a social construct (Dudley-Marling, 2012; Leaton Gray, 2017) and these social factors demonstrate the need for cultivating and maintaining identity, community, collaboration, and agency for teachers, so they can confidently support their students, and improve the quality of education for all. While there could be additional positive factors, specifically political and economic, they were not visibly noted in this research project.

Teachers noted several political and economic factors that negatively influence their self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs. Teachers noted that time and resources were significant political and economic factors. Since there are insufficient funds to hire additional staff to support the ever-changing needs of students, the demands on teachers today are innumerable, and there is not enough time to address everything in a school day. This impacts their self-efficacy as their to-do list gets longer, and as a result, they are not able to reach the end on any given day. Lack of supplies, standard operating procedures (SOP), and human resources are limited, finite, and this poses barriers to teacher success.

This research was being conducted during the 2020 global pandemic and the proposed education reform in Manitoba. The provincial government negatively impacted teachers at a political level. Teacher data reveal that too many decisions were being made without consultation, such as Bill 64, which “propose[d] the elimination of democratically elected school boards” (FAQ Bill 64, n.d.); letters to Members of Manitoba’s Legislative Assembly (MLA) went unanswered, teachers were not prioritized for vaccinations, and teachers and students were forced to relocate to other buildings to provide physical distance of two metres between students. These political factors affected their self-efficacy, as teachers’ choice and voice were not given due consideration, and teacher agency—the capacity to make their own decisions for themselves and their students—was seemingly an afterthought.

School leadership has been an asset and a detriment to teachers. Teachers articulated that their school administrator(s) can help them up when they are down and in need of extra support, or can cause undue stress, as their leadership style may not align with their staff’s prior leadership experience or professional needs.

Teachers offered several protective factors to attempt to overcome professional obstacles, mitigate the challenges of meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of their students, and

improve their self-efficacy and self-determination. Such factors were adaptable coping strategies, problem-solving skills, engaging with peers and family members, self-care, mindfulness, and meditation.

4. What have been the perceived impacts of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy?

Over the past three years, teachers have had an arduous time shifting from in-person learning to online learning in March 2020, back to in-person learning in September 2020, with a multitude of provincial mandates for safety, cleaning, sanitizing, and physical distancing. Teachers went back to online learning for a short time in January 2021, to in-person learning under the pandemic response system (MacLean, 2020), and in-person learning (MacLean, 2020). These shifts had a multitude of negative impacts on teachers, ranging from teachers' sense of a lack of school and community connection, loneliness, empathy fatigue, and emotional labour, to burnout. The unpredictable days were long and exhausting, and teachers' sense of self-efficacy and self-determination were low. Teachers' ability to choose how they would do their jobs, and how they would work with students was sometimes ignored or usurped. These left teachers feeling stressed, overwhelmed, disappointed, and defeated.

A few positive impacts were noted in the interview data, such as support from senior leadership, specifically the superintendent, as teachers felt they were being heard; he could relate to their experiences as teachers since he was a former teacher, and he had their best interest at heart. Several internal factors some teachers noted were a profound sense of connection with their school administrators and teaching colleagues due to imposed cohorts. Teachers felt a deeper sense of class community with their students, due to smaller class sizes. They also felt more confident to navigate and access clinical support for students since they had smaller class sizes, more time with individual students, and fewer students acting out.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the data from the interview participants and my autoethnography, as per the four research questions. It also discussed the findings under the six themes as outlined in chapter five, with the integration of the theoretical framework of self-efficacy and self-determination, my definition of emotionally safe classrooms, and the literature as outlined in chapter two. The chapter concludes with responses to the research questions, as per the data collected from eight individual interviews, and my autoethnography, integrated with the literature on teacher self-efficacy and other relevant topics. In chapter seven, I will offer recommendations based on the responses to the research questions, as well as limitations of this study, implications for practice, further research, and my personal reflections on my learning journey.

Chapter 7: Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study is to add to the research on teacher self-efficacy, and to inform classroom teachers at any grade level or subject area, school administrators, divisional leadership, school boards and education government and policymakers about the importance of teacher self-efficacy. In this chapter, I will provide four (4) recommendations for classroom teachers (micro level); school administrators, senior leadership, and school boards (meso level); and Manitoba education stakeholders and post-secondary institutions (macro level), based on the analysis in the previous chapter. I will note the limitations of my research, identify implications for practice, for future research, offer a personal reflection as a researcher, and provide concluding remarks.

This qualitative research study set out to gain insight and a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students' diverse social-emotional needs. Eight teachers with kindergarten to Grade 6 teaching experience in the Louis Riel School Division were interviewed via video conferencing. My autoethnographic experiences as a classroom teacher, student services teacher, inter-divisional student services teacher, and divisional support teacher were also documented and served to support the data collected by the interview participants. I did a thorough literature review of various topics in chapter two which was used to analyse and triangulate data.

Contextual Overview

The study set out to answer four research questions related to self-efficacy, the diverse social-emotional needs of students, factors that promote or hinder teacher self-efficacy, and the perceived impact of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy. The study found that most of the interview participants were familiar with the term and

its components in a psychological sense but could not connect the sociological aspects to their roles as teachers.

Six themes emerged from the data: 1) job stress, burnout, and self-care; 2) challenges of meeting the diverse social and emotional needs of students; 3) the importance of teacher-student relationships; 4) the value of creating emotionally safe classrooms; 5) political exigencies of schooling, and 6) sociocultural factors of education. In the analysis in chapter six, the four research questions were answered as per the data collected from eight individual interviews, and my autoethnography, integrated with the literature on teacher self-efficacy and other relevant topics.

Recommendations

The following four recommendations are given for consideration to classroom teachers (micro level), school administrators, senior leadership, and school boards (meso level), and Manitoba education stakeholders and post-secondary institutions (macro level) in an effort to improve and enhance teacher self-efficacy.

1. Recommendation for Classroom Teachers (Micro Level)

Teaching is a very demanding profession with ever-changing pressures. Job stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion are real and need further attention and ongoing conversations at all levels of education. The literature suggests a lack of intervention to support teachers' well-being, which can lead to teacher attrition. Self-care is essential in teachers caring for themselves so that they can care for their students. To address this, teachers could plan for and use their discretionary days and other acquired extracurricular days to attend to personal, professional, or academic business. Such days have been bargained for as part of each school division's collective agreement. If teaching staff do not use these days, they may be seen as non-essential

and could be renegotiated and lost. As additional support to teachers, they may also access HumanaCare through the Manitoba Teachers' Society, which encourages individual work-life balance for personal well-being (MTS, HumanaCare, 2022). The use of discretionary days and HumanaCare should be strongly encouraged by school administrators, senior leadership, school boards and educational stakeholders to support teachers and to acknowledge the need for personal well-being and social-emotional support.

2. Recommendation for School Administrators, Senior Leadership, and School Boards (Meso Level)

Given the importance of teacher self-efficacy, its connection to teacher well-being, student success and the creation of emotionally safe classrooms, divisional, school-based, and individual professional learning opportunities could include understanding the impact of teacher self-efficacy as mentioned earlier as one of the learning goals and initiatives. I propose that more effort is needed to incorporate this concept into pedagogical reflections by educators, school and divisional leadership, school boards, and educational stakeholders at the provincial level, as the interview participants from this research study were not cognisant of or using self-efficacy as part of their educational lexicon. Learning opportunities could be included in the divisional strategic plan, with sessions being delivered over multiple years. Relational opportunities could include sessions on defining and understanding teacher self-efficacy, job stress, burnout, empathy fatigue, the importance of self-care, and other related topics. Sessions could include teacher wellness and self-care, which could be delivered by outside agencies or community businesses, with opportunities for teachers to explore hands-on options for self-care and wellness in one or more of the school year's professional learning days. Integrating the use of professional language of self-efficacy and emotionally safe classrooms could also be considered as a focus of professional learning.

3. Recommendation for School Administrators, Senior Leadership, and School Boards (Meso Level)

Teachers have expressed a lack of knowledge and accessibility to mental health and social-emotional support for their students considering the growing demands of students who have various needs for connection, support, and regulation. It would be beneficial for school divisions to create a reference guide for classroom teachers, student services teachers and administrators, which could include resources, protocols, and flowcharts with respect to who can be contacted when, for what, and how to access internal and external support. Internal supports could include accessibility to divisional support teams, clinical support teams, assistant superintendents, and the superintendent.

External supports could include community agencies and supports, after-school clubs, mental health intake contact information, and a list of doctors, walk-in clinics, urgent care, or emergency care services for children and youth. This guide would need to be updated consistently, to facilitate support quickly for students, and to reduce the strain on school teams, caregivers, and the community. The guide could be shared annually with school-based and divisional administrators for distribution to classroom, student services, and divisional teachers. School clinicians could also share this guide with school-based teams and families, and provide support with any questions about the guide, as needed.

4. Recommendation for Manitoba Education Stakeholders and Post-Secondary Institutions (Macro Level)

The global pandemic has been very distressing for teachers, and the effects are still ongoing. Recent, albeit limited, studies are emerging in examining the impact of the pandemic on

teacher stress and burnout (Dabrowski, 2020; Robinson et al., 2022; Vargas Rubilar & Oros, 2021), their classroom practice, and students' progress. Louis Riel School Division collects data using Thought Exchange, a survey platform (ThoughtExchange, 2023) that invites responses to multiple topics ranging from ethno-cultural representation in the workplace, staff and student sense of belonging, student, staff, and community voice on divisional strategic plans, enrolment and diversity, and student achievement (Michalik, n.d). To improve the school communities' and educational stakeholders' data literacy skills, it would benefit divisional leaders to share action plans that resulted from surveys and questionnaires about the above-mentioned items, to further improve communication and inform provincial educational leaders about teachers' needs and the support they require. Longitudinal research on the impact of the global pandemic on teacher well-being and self-efficacy would also be worthwhile for educational stakeholders to understand the emotional toll it has taken and could continue to take on the education system as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

Educational research always has limitations and “researchers have an obligation to the academic community to present complete and honest limitations of a presented study” (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019, p. 261). The limitation of this study was the small sample size (eight kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers) which cannot provide a broad sense of teacher self-efficacy across multiple teacher roles. A study such as this can easily be conducted on other educational groups to examine self-efficacy, such as with higher-grade teachers, student services teachers, school clinicians, physical education and music specialists, and administrators, and the findings could be compared with and contrasted with this research study.

This research design was qualitative in nature, specifically individual interviews and autoethnography. Other forms of qualitative data gathering and analysis such as participants' narratives, focus groups, or diary accounts from teacher participants regarding their experiences

with self-efficacy in planning and programming for students' diverse social-emotional needs could be utilized. As this study was limited to a qualitative data collection, a mixed methods approach to research design could be integrated by adding a quantitative data set such as the use of a Likert scale on teachers' self-efficacy (Bandura, n.d.), which could provide additional analysis, or collect data from a broader sample of participants.

Another limitation of this study could be the reliability of the answers provided by the research participants and the researcher's autoethnography. Each participant's response was accepted on trust and validity. I wrote my autoethnography with truth and reliability, noting my blind spots (Ellie Group, 2023) and personal biases (Galdas, 2017). It is important to note that while all participants in the study, including the researcher, work for the same school division, there might be some information that was withheld due to participant personal protection and job security, despite my guarantee of their protection of anonymity in the signed informed consent. An example of this might be a participant who may not want to disclose too many details about themselves or a third party for fear of possible professional repercussion, as there was a limit on the amount of anonymity I could provide.

At the time of the individual interviews, my position within my school division was as a divisional support teacher. I hold no position of power over the interview participants; however, there may have been a perception that I do, based on my job title as divisional teacher versus that of a classroom teacher. I was told over the years that there is a perception that divisional teachers are ranked above classroom teachers, even though the collective agreement does not make this distinction (LRTA, n.d.). I am aware that the perception exists, so it is important to acknowledge this, and I hope it did not hinder the participants' responses. To remove the perceived position of power during my interviews, I attempted to create a warm and welcoming space, and I also took time to build another level of professional connection, relationship, and trust with my interview participants before we got started (although these are part of my everyday

work). Throughout the interview, I gave space for participants to elaborate and speak as freely as needed.

It is beyond the scope of this research study to delve deeply into sociocultural factors that affect teaching and learning such as race, gender, sexual identity, and ability. While there is limited data in this research study regarding the education system, this may lead readers to believe teachers were perhaps socialized into a system that prevents them from looking at the system critically. Despite these limitations, there is still value to this research study.

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice could include training and professional development in the areas of teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, creating emotionally safe spaces, and supporting students with diverse social-emotional needs. Provincial funding for these areas would be beneficial in supporting teachers and students.

Self-efficacy and social-emotional needs of students are not widely researched, however, understanding these areas can help to inform future teacher training, and guide stakeholders in supporting teachers. Teachers' personal beliefs about their self-efficacy are important, as their beliefs impact and guide their approaches to teaching.

Implications for Further Research

Based on the limitations of this research project, gaps in the literature as described in chapters one and two, in order to further add to the research on teacher self-efficacy, additional inquiry and analysis could be done as follows:

- Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) note a limitation in their study and an opportunity for future research could take a deeper look into understanding teachers' interpersonal experiences

with students, since “attachment theory has inspired valuable information about teacher-student relationships” (p. 471). They state further that potential research could “investigate the professional and personal identities of teachers, and how closely they are interrelated by their relationships with individual students” (p. 473).

- In the research studies by Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun and Sutton (2009) and Hagenauer, Hasher and Volet (2015), they equally noted a dearth of research about teacher emotion, and this could be an area of further research.
- In two studies, Poulou (2016) and Zee and Koomen, (2016), they state that research exists in student-teacher relationships and social-emotional needs of students. A deeper understanding of these terms and concepts should be further explored. While there is research conducted on teacher self-efficacy and the correlation between job stress, job satisfaction, school goal structure, and student achievement (Capone and Pertillo, 2018; Gastaldi et al., 2014; Puglia, 2014; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004), there is an absence of research on teacher self-efficacy and responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs.
- It is worth noting that Albert Bandura’s (1997, 1986, 1994, 1997, 2010, 2012) theory of self-efficacy is the same body of work cited more than 468,816 times (Research.com. 2023). There is very little new research in this area that counters or adds to his theory. This would be an area to further explore.
- The World Health Organization indicated in May 2023 that the global pandemic, as an emergency, has ended, because overall outbreaks had decreased, as have fewer deaths, because of increased immunity (Canada, 2023). It would be important to consider the short-term and long-term impact of the pandemic on teacher self-efficacy. Future research could look at the perceived benefits and challenges to students, school staff, communities,

and the education system post-pandemic in order to learn how to prepare for and manage risk for other such eventualities.

- It would be worth pursuing additional research on system-level, sociocultural factors of education and their impact and association with teacher self-efficacy.

A Personal Reflection on the Research Process

For my personal reflection on the research process, I am using the framework from the Business Research Methodology (2013) titled Personal Reflection Sample.

Experiences with advisor and committee members

I am expressing thanks to my advisor for the hours spent reading and commenting on my work. I had the chance to meet as much as needed. This equated to once or twice per term. I received feedback within days and was always offered a phone or video call to discuss comments. The feedback and verbal communication were helpful. I learned how to read my work with a critical eye and interpret data outside of my personal lens.

Working with my other two committee members was an excellent learning experience; they provided positive feedback while keeping me accountable and pushing me to think critically and analytically about my research.

Extent to which my research questions have been addressed

Responding to my four research questions was the goal of this research study. After countless hours of researching pertinent literature on self-efficacy and related topics, writing my autoethnography, interviewing, collating, coding, summarizing, and analyzing data, and providing recommendations, I was able to address my questions. I believe my research questions were important to ask, as they are questions, I have asked myself over many years in my teaching

career. While I felt intuitively that I knew the answers, based on the voice of teachers, my observations, and the various checklists I have used, the pertinent literature and data I collected affirmed my intuition and practice.

Interpersonal skills relevant to the research

My interpersonal skills were tested in ways that I was not accustomed to. My workday is often spent in in-person meetings, typically with student services teachers, and, at times, administrators. This study taught me to listen actively while interviewing participants through a video platform and to show empathy and compassion in this forum. I was able to offer help to participants when they needed additional support during the interview or should they need it afterwards. While I was working with my advisors, I was able to accept critical feedback and use suggestions to better inform my work.

Relevance of the research study to future professional learning

I believe that this study provides insights and a deeper understanding of teacher self-efficacy and its importance in teaching and learning. This topic is very important and personal to me, and I hope that the notion of teacher self-efficacy and teachers' ability to plan and program for students with diverse social-emotional needs is an area that future professional learning will focus on.

Gains on a personal level

Writing the first three chapters which included an introduction, literature review and methodology, and presenting my ideas and proposed study in a proposal defence to my advisor and two committee members, was an entirely new process. Additionally, conducting eight individual interviews, documenting the findings, writing my autoethnography, and completing the

analysis, recommendations and concluding statements was also new to me, and sometimes a steep learning curve.

I am very proud of the final product which has taught me much about my perseverance to keep going despite the challenges of balancing home, work, and school. I relied on a lot of positive self-talk, which was useful when I wanted to stop, or felt I was missing out on family time. I learned that I need to reach out to others when I need help or feel overwhelmed or defeated. I also learned to celebrate small successes as much as big ones.

When I wrote a few pages or sections, I learned to take a break, walk away, and enjoy some time for clarity, so that I had the strength and energy to keep going. If I could do things differently, I would take more time between courses and the thesis writing and research process. While I enjoyed this journey, I felt many times that it was too much to balance full-time work, a busy family, and part-time graduate work.

Conclusion

As I reflect on the entire process, from the time I started my coursework in the fall of 2018, until now, it has been equally good and stressful. I learned what I am capable of, and what I need to step away from. I could not have predicted a global pandemic in the middle of my studies, and despite the trials and tribulations, there is little I would change about how I accomplished the goals I set out to achieve, except to take a bit more time. This has been a very exciting, gruelling, and rewarding process that will always be a part of me.

Summary

Teaching is very demanding, and expectations are dynamic. Teachers are required to teach to the academic curriculum, and program and assess to write report cards. As schools'

front-line responders, classroom teachers are also faced with the evolving social-emotional needs of their students. These needs range and vary from year to year. All the expectations and demands can take an emotional toll on teachers, which research says can be associated with low self-efficacy (Capone & Pertillo, 2018; Gastaldi et al., 2014; Pedota, 2015; Skinner & Beers, 2016).

The theoretical framework of self-efficacy conceptualized by Albert Bandura (1977, 1986, 1994, 1997, 2010, 2012), Deci and Ryan's (2000) conceptualization of self-determination, and interpretive phenomenology (Smith, 2015; Tuohy, 2013) were all used to gain a deeper understanding of the proposed research study, and to explore teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs. Eight individual interviews were completed, and I also wrote my autoethnography. The findings of this study will add to the research on teacher self-efficacy and add to the gap that exists in the literature in the areas of self-efficacy. This study will draw attention to the importance of teacher self-efficacy and its connection to teacher well-being, student success, and emotionally safe classrooms. This study will also highlight the impact that low teacher self-efficacy can have on teachers, students, administrators, and community, and how it can lead to job stress and burnout, and the challenges to meet the diverse needs of students in today's classrooms. This research will also add to the literature on the importance of teacher-student relationships and add to the limited literature on emotionally safe classrooms and the impact of schooling.

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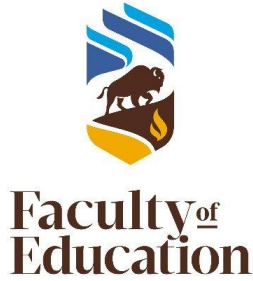
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Appendix A: Letter to Louis Riel School Division requesting permission to conduct research

April 24, 2021

Dear Superintendent of Schools (or designate),

My name is Sharmila Sukhan; I am a master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Canada. I am conducting a research study which focuses on teachers' perception of their self-efficacy when responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs in the Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education program, under the direction of Dr. Nathalie Piquemal (Academic Advisor), Dr. David Mandzuk and Dr. Wayne Serebrin (thesis committee members).

I am writing to ask your permission to invite Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers to participate in a structured individual interview which is part of my fieldwork requirement. More specifically, the study participants will be expected to have more than three years of classroom teaching experience, and more than five years away from retirement. I am also seeking your permission to disseminate my invitation letter via divisional principals' email.

I am interested in their classroom practices, experiences as a teacher, but the focus will not be on the academic content they teach. There will be one person per interview, and the estimated time commitment will be forty-five to sixty minutes.

The findings from this research will provide the foundation for my final master's thesis and will be reported in my thesis. There are no direct benefits, costs, or compensation to them for taking part in this study. However, I hope the information I get from this study may lead to a greater understanding of the challenges teachers face in responding to their students' diverse social-emotional needs, and in so doing, it may become a useful resource for enhancing classroom practice. This research project involves no foreseeable risks or discomforts to them beyond those that might ordinarily be encountered in daily life.

Some of the teachers may know me in my role in the Louis Riel School Division as a student services teacher in the Learning from Home School/L'Ecole Apprendre-chez-soi. This research does not have any relationship to my role as a teacher in the school division, and will, in no way, affect their professional work in the division.

The interview will take place during a time that is mutually agreed upon between the interviewee and me, the Principal Researcher, and will be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. The first ten teachers to respond and complete the informed consent will be selected for an interview. I will keep a waitlist if for some reason a teacher has confirmed attendance cannot attend, and I can invite someone else.

Respectfully,
Sharmila Sukhan, M. Ed Candidate
Cross-Cultural, Sociological, and Philosophical Foundations in Education
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

NB. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you may contact me at umsukhas@myumanitoba.ca, my academic advisor at nathalie.piquemal@umanitoba.ca

Appendix B: Invitation to participate in a structured individual interviews

April 24, 2021

Dear teaching colleague,

My name is Sharmila Sukhan; I am a master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Canada. I am conducting a research study which focuses on teachers' perception of their self-efficacy when responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs in the Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education program, under the direction of Dr. Nathalie Piquemal (Academic Advisor), Dr. David Mandzuk and Dr. Wayne Serebrin (thesis committee members). I am inviting you to participate in a structured individual interview which is part of my fieldwork requirement. You were asked because you are a Kindergarten to Six teacher in the Louis Riel School Division. More specifically, the study participants will be expected to have more than three years of classroom teaching experience, and more than five years away from retirement.

I am interested in your classroom practices, experiences as a teacher, but the focus will not be on the academic content that you teach. There will be one person per interview, and the estimated time commitment will be forty-five to sixty minutes.

The findings from this research will provide the foundation for my final master's thesis and will be reported in my thesis. There are no direct benefits, costs, or compensation to you for taking part in this study. However, I hope the information I get from this study may lead to a greater

understanding of the challenges teachers face in responding to their students' diverse social-emotional needs, and in so doing, it may become a useful resource for enhancing classroom practice. This research project involves no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you beyond those that might ordinarily be encountered in daily life.

However, you may find talking about self-efficacy to be upsetting or emotional. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you find too upsetting. Should you need any additional help or support I will refer you to Manitoba teachers' Society counselling services or Employee Assistance Program through your primary insurance provider or help you to find other counseling help.

Some of you may know me in my role in the Louis Riel School Division as a student services teacher in the Learning from Home School/L'Ecole Apprendre-chez-soi. This research does not have any relationship to my role as a teacher in the school division, and will, in no way, affect your professional work in the division.

If you are interested in participating in an individual interview, and meet the above mentioned criteria, please feel free to contact me at umsukhas@myumanitoba.ca at your earliest convenience. The interview will take place during a time that is mutually agreed upon between the interviewee and me, the Principal Researcher, and will be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. The first ten teachers to respond and complete the informed consent will be selected for an interview. I will keep a waitlist if for some reason a teacher has confirmed attendance cannot attend, and I can invite someone else. I think you'll find the interview quite interesting and look forward to your participation.

Respectfully,
Sharmila Sukhan, M. Ed Candidate
Cross-Cultural, Sociological, and Philosophical Foundations in Education
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

NB. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you may contact me at umsukhas@myumanitoba.ca, my academic advisor at nathalie.piquemal@umanitoba.ca



**Faculty of
Education**

Appendix C: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Individual Interview

Title of Study: Exploring teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs

Principal Investigator: Sharmila Sukhan, M.Ed. Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba umsukhas@myumanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, Cross-Cultural, Sociological, and Philosophical Foundations in Education nathalie.piquemal@umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of this Study

Teaching is a very demanding profession, with an ever-evolving set of expectations, demands, personal and contextual factors. All of these demands take a toll on teachers. Additional demands that are less prescribed are meeting the diverse social-emotional needs of their students. Such demands can often lead teachers to experience anxiety, frustration, emotional exhaustion and labour, stress, and burnout, which research indicates is associated with a lack of self-efficacy.

This research study is being conducted to study teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs.

Understanding these concepts can help to inform future training in teacher education and guide stakeholders in supporting teachers. Teachers' personal beliefs about their self-efficacy is important as their beliefs impact and guide their approach to teaching.

Study Procedures

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher in the Louis Riel School Division, teaching students who are in the range of kindergarten to Grade 6. Participants in the study will be expected to have more than three years of classroom teaching experience, and more than five years away from retirement. A total of eight to ten participants will be individually interviewed.

- The method of data collection for this study will be individual interviews.
- Participation in the study will be during a time that is mutually determined between the Principal Researcher and you. The estimated time commitment will be between forty-five and sixty minutes.
- The Principal Investigator will be conducting the interview.

- You will be asked some questions relating to your experience with your classroom practices in social-emotional learning, and your perceptions of your self-efficacy. These questions will help me to better understand your perceptions of your self-efficacy.
- The session will be audio recorded using Microsoft Teams, and will then be transcribed by the Principal Researcher to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide.
- The audio recordings will be removed from the server and stored on a USB stick and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet before and after being transcribed. USB stick and the transcriptions will be destroyed within five years (July 2026) after the completion of this evaluation.
- The aggregate results will be provided to the participants two months following analysis.

Benefits

Being a participant in an individual interview may not help you directly, but information may help other people who are studying teacher self-efficacy in the future.

Potential Risk

This research project involves no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you beyond those that might ordinarily be encountered in daily life. However, you may find talking about self-efficacy to be upsetting or emotional. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you find too upsetting. Should you need any additional help or support I will refer you to Manitoba teachers' Society counselling services or Employee Assistance Program through your primary insurance provider or help you to find other counseling help.

Should you need any additional help or support I will refer you to Manitoba teachers' Society counselling services or Employee Assistance Program through your primary insurance provider or help you to find other counseling help.

Should there be any suspicion of child abuse or abuse of people in care, it is everyone's legal obligation to report it. This also applies if the information is acquired during our interview. I will provide you with the necessary phone number to contact Child and Family Services, **1-866-345-9241, if you think a child is being harmed or neglected, and support you** in accessing the Louis Riel School Division's policy, JLF-Reporting Concerns about Child Abuse.

Confidentiality

I will do everything possible to keep your personal information confidential. You will be given a pseudonym prior to the start of the interview, in order to protect your anonymity and to code the data you have provided. Your name will not be used at all in the study records. A list of names and addresses of participants will be kept in a secure file so I can send you a summary of the results of the study. If the results of this study are presented in a meeting, or published, nobody will be able to tell that you were in the study. Please note that although you will not be identified as the speaker, your words may be used to highlight a specific point. The collection and access to personal information will be in compliance with provincial and federal privacy legislations.

Audio recordings of the individual interviews will be typed and used to prepare a report. The audio recordings and typed notes will be kept for five years (July 2026) in a secure locked file cabinet and office. Only the Principal researcher will have access to them and know your name.

Some people or groups may need to check the study records to make sure all the information is correct. All these people have a professional responsibility to protect your privacy. These people or groups are:

- The Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba which is responsible for the protection of people in research and has reviewed this study for ethical acceptability.
- Quality assurance staff of the University of Manitoba and the Louis Riel School Division who ensure the study is being conducted properly.

All records will be kept in a locked secure area and only those persons identified will have access to these records. If any of your research records need to be copied to any of the above, your name and all identifying information will be removed. No information revealing any personal information such as your name, address or telephone number will leave the Louis Riel School Division or the University of Manitoba.

Costs

There is no cost to you to attend the individual interview.

Payment for participation

You will receive no payment or reimbursement for any expenses related to taking part in this study.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal from the Study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or you may withdraw from the study at any time. Should there be any data collected from you, it will be destroyed immediately with no consequences, and will not be used in the final report. By July 2021, once the data has been analysed, themed and coded, it will be very challenging for you to withdraw your data, as it will now be part of the larger data set.

As you are an employee of the Louis Riel School Division, your participation or discontinuance in the study will not constitute an element of your job performance or evaluation nor will it be part of your personnel record at any of these Institutions.

Feedback/Dissemination

I anticipate being in the position to provide a brief summary of the results of the study to interview participants by mail or email, as per participants choice, by August 2021.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Officer at humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature: _____ Date: _____

I give consent to be audio-recorded for the purpose of data collection for the above stated study.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Letter sent to Principals requesting dissemination of recruitment letter

April 24, 2021

Dear Principals in Louis Riel School Division,

My name is Sharmila Sukhan; I am a master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Canada. I am conducting a research study which focuses on teachers' perception of their self-efficacy when responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs in the Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education program, under the direction of Dr. Nathalie Piquemal (Academic Advisor), Dr. David Mandzuk and Dr. Wayne Serebrin (Thesis committee members).

I am writing to ask your permission to disseminate the attached letter of invitation to all kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers to participate in a structured individual interview which is part of my fieldwork requirement.

Respectfully,
Sharmila Sukhan, M. Ed Candidate
Cross-Cultural, Sociological, and Philosophical Foundations in Education
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

NB. This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you may contact me at umsukhas@myumanitoba.ca or my academic advisor, Nathalie Piquemal at nathalie.piquemal@umanitoba.ca

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Introduction	<p>How are you this this evening?</p> <p>I would like to start by thanking you for agreeing to participate in this interview. If at any time you would like to withdraw from the interview, or have your comments deleted from the research study, please let me know.</p> <p>May I record this session? This will include audio and any video.</p> <p>Prior to the interview, you were sent a consent form. I have your signed form in front of me.</p> <p>Our time together will be approximately 45 minutes.</p> <p>Do you have any questions before we start?</p>
	<p>As stated in the letter of invitation, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs.</p>
Note	<p>The Interviewer may use phrases such as “Tell me more,” “Could you give me an example?” “Could you explain that?” or other prompts to get more details when needed (Interview Protocol, n.d).</p>
Opening Question	<p>Tell me your:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name (Interviewer will provide interviewee with a pseudonym for the purpose of privacy and confidentiality, and data coding). Interviewer will notify interviewee of this. • any academic credentials that you have beyond a Bachelor of Education degree? • how long have you been teaching? • how long you have been teaching K-6? • how long you have been a teacher in the Louis Riel School Division?
Transition question	Think back to the first week you started teaching in the Louis Riel School Division. What were your impressions of being in the classroom, and were they similar or different from what you had anticipated?
Key Questions	
<p>Question 1.</p> <p>What are teachers' understandings of self-efficacy and its relationship to the development of an "emotionally safe" classroom?</p>	<p>1.1 What is your understanding of the term self-efficacy? What does it mean in relation to you as a teacher?</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u> Beliefs, ability, mastery, previous experience, encouragement from others, physical or emotional conditions, competence, connection or relatedness, autonomy, growth mindset</p> <p>I will provide definitions of self-efficacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. • people's beliefs that they can produce desired effects by their actions and undertake activities or persevere in the face of difficulties. • the core belief that one can make a difference by one's actions • people's beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment <p>1.2 After hearing the definitions, how do you think self-efficacy might play a role in the development of an emotionally safe classroom?</p> <p>I will provide definition of emotionally safe classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>as spaces where teachers and students feel safe to express themselves non-judgmentally and unconditionally.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teachers and students are compassionate, courageous, and vulnerable towards each other.</i> • <i>They are supportive of each others' mistakes, emotionally engaged, and celebrate learning.</i> • <i>Teachers in emotionally safe classrooms understand and emphasize social-emotional learning as foundation, and as important as academic learning.</i> • <i>Learning environments have clear and consistent routines and procedures.</i> • <i>Teachers model the behaviour they want to see in their students.</i> • <i>Teacher-student relationships are cultivated and are strong, resulting in a sense of trust being established.</i> • <i>Teachers are the adults that students can rely on unconditionally, to value, nurture and protect them, and solve problems.</i> <p>*Interviewer can ask participant to expand on answer if necessary</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <p>Yes- safe, predictable, routines, procedures, modeling of expected behaviour, developmentally appropriate practices, relationship, classroom space—warm and inviting, student voice, agency, choice, compassion, empathy,</p> <p>NO: stress, overwhelmed, not all my colleagues are doing this..., I feel alone, I don't know what to do, I haven't thought about....</p>
<p>Question 2:</p> <p>What are teachers' understandings of the diverse social-emotional needs of students and their impacts on classroom practice?</p>	<p>2.1 Take a few moments and think about the social-emotional needs of your students. Do not consider academic needs such as curricular needs and guidelines. What would you consider to be some of the social-emotional needs your students? Please share one or two examples but do not use real student names</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <p>Newcomers, refugees, English as an additional language (EAL), mental health issues (general or separation anxiety), children in care, parental issues (substance abuse or mental health) poverty, trauma, behavioural issues, conditions such as autism spectrum, self-regulation, sensory seeking, need for belonging-connection, support with demands of cognitive processing due to brain chemistry composition (such as ADHD, FASD).</p> <p>2.2 Based on your responses to the previous question-</p>

	<p>a. in what way do you think students with those social-emotional needs impact your classroom practice?</p> <p>b. what do you consider to be some implications for you as a teacher?</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u> takes away from other students; takes away from programming and planning (academics), providing directions and supports to educational assistants; “my time,” recess and lunch, prep time, redirecting students from time off task, plan differently</p>
<p>Question 3:</p> <p>What are the perceived factors that promote or hinder teachers' abilities to rely on self-efficacy as they respond to their students' social-emotional needs?</p>	<p>3.1 In what ways is your self-efficacy challenged when responding to students with diverse social-emotional needs?</p> <p>*Interviewer: Limit responses to 2 or 3 suggestions; if time permits, ask for additional</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u> time, funding, not enough support-admin, student support teacher, educational assistant, divisional support (teacher, clinical), do not want to appear I need help, “I don’t want to”</p> <p>3.2 Based on your responses to the previous question, how do you assess your level of preparedness to respond to your students social-emotional needs? Give examples of your preparedness or lack of preparedness ...</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Prepared:</i> Prior experiences, support from a colleague; support from a divisional teacher/clinician; consistent and structured routines; positive relationships with students. ● <i>Not prepared:</i> New experience; negative feedback from supervisor; lack or absence of academic preparation; lack of confidence; lack of time to prepare (academic curriculum to teach) <p>3.3 As I am currently in a Master of Education program in educational foundations, I am also looking at social and political contexts. In thinking beyond yourself as a classroom teacher, and your classroom space, what are some of the systems that could affect your self-efficacy?</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u> colleagues, administration, school culture, divisional leadership, parent community, financial resources, provincial mandates</p> <p>3.4 What kinds of supports do you think would help you better respond to your students' social-emotional needs?</p> <p>Prompts:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who-colleagues, administrators, educational assistants, clinicians, divisional teachers, therapists, family members etc. ● Where-divisional library for resources, internet, books and articles ● What-self-care, mindfulness, compassion training, meditation, exercise, sick day
<p>Question 4:</p> <p>What have been the perceived impacts of the global pandemic on teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy?</p>	<p>Thinking back to March 2020, when schools were closed, and you had to move to remote teaching before spring break...</p> <p>4.1 How did your teaching change or stay the same? In what ways? Tell me about your experiences? How well prepared were you?</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prepared: knowledge of the curriculum ● Not prepared: technology (TEAMS, Onedrive, Onenote, flipgrid), schedule, workload, management of time, responding to students via computer, accessibility to tech, internet , supplies (staff and students), how to deliver in person learning to learning from home, balance home and school <p>4.2 Now that you've lived through this for a pandemic for a year, how efficacious are you feeling now?</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <p>Yes-able to respond to the academic and social-emotional needs of students due to smaller class size, routines and procedures are in place</p> <p>No-physical distancing, tech issues, masks, classroom space, noise, parents in the "classrooms," report cards that do not reflect the pandemic and student/teacher expectations, not enough time, cleaning protocols, sanitizing time, kids who struggle, student truancy, emotional toll, stress, mental health, managing one day at a time</p>
<p>Summing up question (two-part)</p>	<p>In thinking about your feelings about your self-efficacy as a teacher, what recommendations would you offer to other teachers or administrators? what kinds of supports would you need? Be as specific as possible.</p>
<p>Ending question</p>	<p>Is there anything else that you would like to add that I did not ask, or you did not get an opportunity to say?</p>

Final Statement	*Thank you for your time and effort.
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Appendix F: TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE)



Appendix G: Research Ethics and Compliance Protocol

Approval – May 2021



University
of Manitoba

Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

To: Sharmila Sukhan (Advisor: Nathalie Piquemal)
Principal Investigator

From: Andrea Szwajcer, Chair
Research Ethics Board 2 (REB 2)

Re: Protocol # R2-2021:036 (HS24803)
Exploring teachers' perception about their self-efficacy when
responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs

Effective: May 6, 2021 Expiry: May 6, 2022

Research Ethics Board 2 (REB 2) has reviewed and approved the above research.

REB 2 is constituted and operates in accordance with the current [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2018\)](#).

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in this application only.
- ii. Any changes to this research must be approved by the Human Ethics Office (HEO) before implementation.
- iii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately.
- iv. This approval is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request Form must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.
- v. A Study Closure Form must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete prior to the above expiry date, or if the research is terminated.
- vi. The University of Manitoba (UM) may request to audit your research documentation to confirm compliance with this approved protocol, and with the UM [Ethics of Research Involving Humans](#) policies and procedures.

Funded Protocols: Email a copy of this Protocol Approval, with the corresponding UM Project Number, to ResearchGrants@umanitoba.ca

Appendix H: Research Ethics and Compliance Renewal

Approval – April 2023



University
of Manitoba

Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dalke Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humaethics@umanitoba.ca

RENEWAL APPROVAL

Effective: April 17, 2023

New Expiry: May 7, 2024

Principal Investigator: Sharmila Sukhan
Advisor: Nathalie Piquemal
Protocol Number: HS24803 (R2-2021:036)
Protocol Title: *Exploring teachers perception about their self-efficacy when responding to their students with diverse social-emotional needs*

Andrea L. Szwajcer, Chair, REB2

Research Ethics Board 2 has reviewed and renewed the above research. The Human Ethics Office is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans- TCPS 2 (2022)*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Any changes to this research must be approved by the Human Ethics Office before implementation.
- ii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately through an REB Event.
- iii. This renewal is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.
- iv. A Protocol Closure must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete or if the research is terminated.