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IMPROVING SELF-EFFICACY OF TEAMS SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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IMPROVING SELF-EFFICACY OF TEAMS SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATORS
AND TEACHERS THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

2022

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

IMPROVING FFECTIVENESS OF TEAMS SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATORS AND
TEACHERS THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The purpose of this study was to enhance the capacity of high school team staff members to support high school-level administrators and teachers providing services to students with disabilities in Jefferson County Public Schools. This task was accomplished by increasing their Individual Education Program (IEP) knowledge and skill acquisition through the implementation of a Community of Practice (CoP) as an intervention. Increasing staffs knowledge and skill in properly implementing a student's IEP, may make them more efficacious in supporting high school level administrators and teachers.

The study used a mixed-methods action research design to collect and analyze data to inform the development and implementation of an intervention plan. The plan focused on increasing team members sense of self-efficacy through participation in a community of practice. Data was be collected prior to and after the intervention to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

After reviewing the results of the study, It is the opinion of the researcher that proper implementation of the CoP may make staff more efficacious in supporting high school-level administrators and teachers providing services to students with disabilities.

Boyd Gudgel
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Date 11/30/2022
_____

IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS OF TEAMS SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATORS
AND TEACHERS, THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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DEDICATION

Every day I realize that I would not have been able to overcome all the obstacles that I have encountered during my life, without the support of my family. My wife Jennifer has consistently stood by my side and provided me with encouragement and support needed to work my way through any situation. The unconditional love given by my children Alex, Nick and Emily Grace has always provided me with the strength to continually move forward in a positive manner and always strive to set a good example for them. My parents and sister have shaped me into the man I am today and for that I will always be grateful. My mother and father-in-law inspired me to become an educator and provided me with guidance and support throughout my career. Uncle Bill consistently provided me with sound pedagogical strategies and guidance on how to serve students. Last but not least, I would like to thank my sweet dog Lucy Belle for being patient while I was in Saturday morning classes and writing my chapters. Without my family I would have never pursued a Doctor of Education degree, and definitely would not have finished.

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CHAPTER 1: DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

School districts across the nation are required to provide all students with disabilities between ages 3 and 21 with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). For a list of acronyms and terms please Appendix 1. The IDEA emerged from a unique coalition of advocacy groups for children with disabilities that pursued litigation in federal courts and advocated for federal and state legislation during the 1950s and 1960s (Yell, 2019). Since this formative era, compliance with IDEA and providing a FAPE to students with disabilities have been closely monitored by advocacy groups and state and federal-level education agencies. Like other districts in the nation, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) have a compelling interest in providing effective support and guidance to its schools to deliver services to students with disabilities. A measure of their success is receiving a satisfactory annual performance rating (APR) from the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) Division of IDEA Monitoring and Results (DIMR).

Compliance with IDEA continues to be a challenging task for all districts across the nation and JCPS. An important part of the strategy used by JCPS to enhance support for school-level administrators and teachers, was to reorganize its Department of Exceptional Child Education (ECE) in 2020. Consequently, staff with a wide array of specialized knowledge and skills were brought together in one department. However, school-level administrator and teacher requests for support often spanned several areas of staff expertise. During this period, staff expressed a need for developing a broad understanding of IDEA rules, regulations, and policies as well as learning effective

intervention strategies. ECE staff began to informally learn from one another in order to respond more effectively to continuous requests for support and guidance. Their professional interest and disposition towards working collaboratively were evident. As the Assistant Director of ECE, I subsequently reviewed a substantive body of literature on problem solving and communities of practice (CoP) that suggested it may be an appropriate process for increasing the perceived self-efficacy of team members. For example, Donohoo et al., (2018) noted that when a group of individuals believes they can overcome challenges and achieve desired goals, they become more highly effective as a team. In addition, Wenger et al., (2002) noted that individuals and teams might deepen their knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness through continued interaction with colleagues. The ECE Department's circumstances present a unique opportunity to develop a CoP to enhance staffs sense of self-efficacy in supporting school-level administrators and teachers.

This mixed methods action research study (MMAR; Ivankova, 2015) focuses on implementing an ECE Department CoP designed to enhance the sense of self-efficacy by increasing staff IEP knowledge and skill acquisition, in supporting school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities. Their being more knowledgeable and skillful in their methods of support would make them more efficacious in their work, and subsequently enhance their sense of self-efficacy. Specific topics to be included in CoP activities were identified using open ended questions in a questionnaire. Evaluation of the impact of the CoP includes administration of a researcher developed pre- and post-implementation questionnaire to assess what they know prior to and after the implementation of the CoP.

In this chapter, I describe the context of the study, stakeholders, study participants, my role as the Assistant Director of the JCPS Department of ECE, a review of relevant literature, a description of the problem of practice, and the design of this MMAR study. It should also be noted that reviews of literature that informed the development of the CoP and the MMAR study design may also inform possible future actions to address the identified problem of practice are also included. In Chapter 2, I present a detailed description of the Reconnaissance Phase. Data from this phase were used to inform the planning and implementation of the CoP to enhance ECE High School Zone team members' sense of self-efficacy to support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities. Included in the details of the plan are the roles of ECE study participants and the guiding questions of the study. Additionally, in Chapter 2, I present the methods, procedures, quality assurance, ethical considerations, and a timeline utilized in the study. In Chapter 3, I present the results of the data collected and determine if the intervention was effective.

Study Context

Study Setting

The time frame in which the action portion of this study took place was December 2021 to April 2022. This time period was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that also adversely affected the lives of millions of people around globe. This study was conducted in the JCPS system located in Louisville, Kentucky. I am employed as a central office Assistant Director of the Exceptional Child Education (ECE) department. The school system is now the largest school system in Kentucky and the 29th largest in the United States (https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/). Eighty-one percent of all

children in the Louisville-Jefferson County Area attend JCPS schools, serving over 98,000 students in 169 schools with support from 6,738 teachers. Eighty-five percent of the teachers hold a master's degree, and approximately seven percent of the teachers earned National Board Certification. Sixty-two percent of JCPS students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and over 12 percent of JCPS students are classified as ECE students. In turn, JCPS has the largest population of students with disabilities in the Commonwealth. To provide a FAPE and meet its IDEA goals, JCPS embraces a set of principles reflected throughout its educational programs.

An important part of the study context is understanding how JCPS values its educational mission, particularly with regard to serving children with disabilities. Importantly, JCPS is committed to providing all students with disabilities a FAPE. The district thus embraces a set of principles and conveys a vison of preparing all students to reach their full potential, act as responsible citizens in a diverse nation, and participate in a global economy. To accomplish its mission, JCPS acknowledges the need to engage and challenge each learner by providing effective teaching and meaningful experiences through a caring and supportive environment that also attempts to remove social influences that may impede their success (https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/).

The commitment to student learning is likewise reflected in JCPS' commitment to working with staff to accomplish common educational goals. JCPS thus endeavors to support and empower district-level staff to assist school-level administrators and teachers. The goal is to create instructionally effective, safe, and welcoming learning environments for students. District administration views diversity as a strength, recognizes that differences among people are assets rather than deficits that must be

overcome. In this regard, JCPS understands that children learn differently and expects that their personalized learning approaches are implemented with fidelity. In sum, the district's educational values are not only reflected in its dispositions towards student learning and how it views its role in supporting its administrative and instructional staff **(**https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/).

Understanding the organizational context through which the JCPS system delivers support services to school-level administrators and teachers to ensure students with disabilities receive a FAPE is an important dimension of the study. As may be typical in school districts across the nation and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, JCPS employs a cadre of certified professional staff who provide a wide range of support services to school-level administrators and teachers. However, JCPS recently reorganized the ECE Department to enhance the interface and collaboration among district-level support services staff, school-level administrators, and teachers. The ECE Department is divided into five zones, including three at the elementary school level, one middle school level, and one high school level. Each zone employs one assistant director, one specialist, two supervisors, resource teachers, behavior coaches, behavior liaisons, behavior analysts, and four school psychologists. With the exception of behavior liaisons every ECE department member must be certified in special education or certified in their specific area. The behavior liaisons are classified employees and generally have experience working in classrooms as a teacher's aide. Both the assistant director and the specialist must hold a Director of Special Education Certification (DoSE). To align with the schools served, the ECE department is divided into three school-level teams (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). The purpose of this division is to provide

differentiated support by level in order to ensure a FAPE is provided to all students with disabilities, as mandated by IDEA.

For example, the ECE department teams are often called on by school-level administrators and teachers to provide guidance and support related to determining appropriate accommodations and modifications to a student's Individual Education Program (IEP). An IEP is a document developed by the school in partnership with the family and/or student to outline the educational goals and the services to be provided to the student by the school. In the new JCPS ECE department organizational configuration, professional staff across specialty areas were combined into teams. All members are now expected to advise and support school-level administrators and teachers on preparing and implementing IEPs. Determining the appropriate modifications and accommodations necessary to provide students with a FAPE is challenging, which has prompted school staff members to reach out for district-level assistance. Providing effective support to schools requesting this assistance has also proven challenging for ECE Department team members. During the nascent stages of developing the MMAR study, professional staff identified developing and implementing a student's IEP as one topic in which collaborative learning may prove mutually beneficial. Gaining the knowledge and skills necessary in providing support to develop and implement an effective IEP and focused support services was viewed by the researcher as a way to enhance staffs sense of efficacy. However, during the early stages of the study, ECE high school zone staff identified other topics considered important to enhance their learning and the sense of efficacy.

Study Setting Background

Initial setting design. This study was originally to involve school-level administrators and teachers in JCPS. The plan was to invite JCPS administrators and teachers to participate in the study. The invitation would have been in the form of an email to JCPS High School administrators and teachers to participate in an in person CoP. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the JCPS Institutional Research Board (IRB) restricted all research occurring in schools and the setting for this study moved to the JCPS central office. These restrictions also led to the narrowing of the participants eligible to participate in this study to only include central office staff.

Present setting design. In lieu of the intervention occurring inside JCPS high schools, a central office intervention was designed. The Diagnosis Phase of this study occurred in the JCPS central office building. Participants for this study were ECE High School Zone staff that I supervised as the Assistant Director of the ECE department. A meeting room inside the central office building was reserved during the Acting Phase (intervention) to convene the CoP, interact and observe the study participants, provide resources such as text books, policy and procedures manuals, and links that may provide information on providing services to students with disabilities.

Stakeholders

The federal IDEA (2004) required all public school districts to provide students with disabilities between ages 3 and 21 with a FAPE. The JCPS system has designated the Department of ECE as a key player in supporting students with disabilities. Consequently, the notion of stakeholders who may benefit from the study ranged broadly from ECE staff who participated in the study to school-level administrators and teachers

who may benefit from improved support services and students and parents served by JCPS.

Researcher's Role

As the Assistant Director-ECE for the High School Zone, I am considered a leader in the district and responsible for my team's effectiveness in providing the appropriate level of support to high schools within JCPS. The ECE Department's Chief has charged my team with developing and implementing ECE programs and services within our zone to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and maintain compliance with IDEA requirements. We strive to maintain effective communication among JCPS school-level administrators, teachers, KDE personnel, and the broader community on matters relating to IDEA and other assigned programs.

As the researcher, my role in this study was to collect and analyze data to develop and implement appropriate interventions to address the identified problem of practice. These interventions were directed towards increasing the knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness of district-level team members when supporting schools that provide services to students with disabilities. I facilitated this work by providing my team members with scheduled meetings. I also provided guidance to my team regarding compliance with IDEA, developing and implementing professional development opportunities and communication plans for district-level team members. For example, in response to several requests from teachers for assistance, I facilitated staff development focused on conducting a Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA) and writing effective Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP). The ECE Department staff and I engage in

brainstorming sessions to create professional development opportunities for school-level administrators and teachers.

Requests from school-level administrators and teachers, informal conversations with district-level staff members, and the compression planning process provided me with data needed to conduct a literature review focused on self-efficacy and technology and resources needed to conduct their work. For example, JCPS staff have been working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. I facilitated the issuance of new computers to several staff members so they would be able to continue their work at home.

Diagnosis Phase: Problem of Practice

During my two-year tenure as a member of the ECE leadership team, I found that the majority of the ECE department district-level staff members did not believe they had the knowledge and skill to support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities. A solution to the problem would benefit the JCPS ECE department, as well as me serving as the Assistant Director of the ECE department and the JCPS administrators and teachers that serve students with disabilities. In this section the overall study design is discussed along with a description of the stakeholders that may benefit from participating in this study.

Overall Study Design

The methodology I utilized to conduct this study is the MMAR design (Figure 1.1). Several steps in the action research process are treated as individual phases due to having clearly defined boundaries with starting and stopping points in the research process. It should be noted that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on JCPS. The district restrictions on conducting research in school

settings prevented the implementation of my initial study design. However, proposal

modifications that shifted the implementation from the school-level to the district-level

were presented to my dissertation chair and JCPS leadership. The modified study was

deemed viable and has been approved by JCPS.
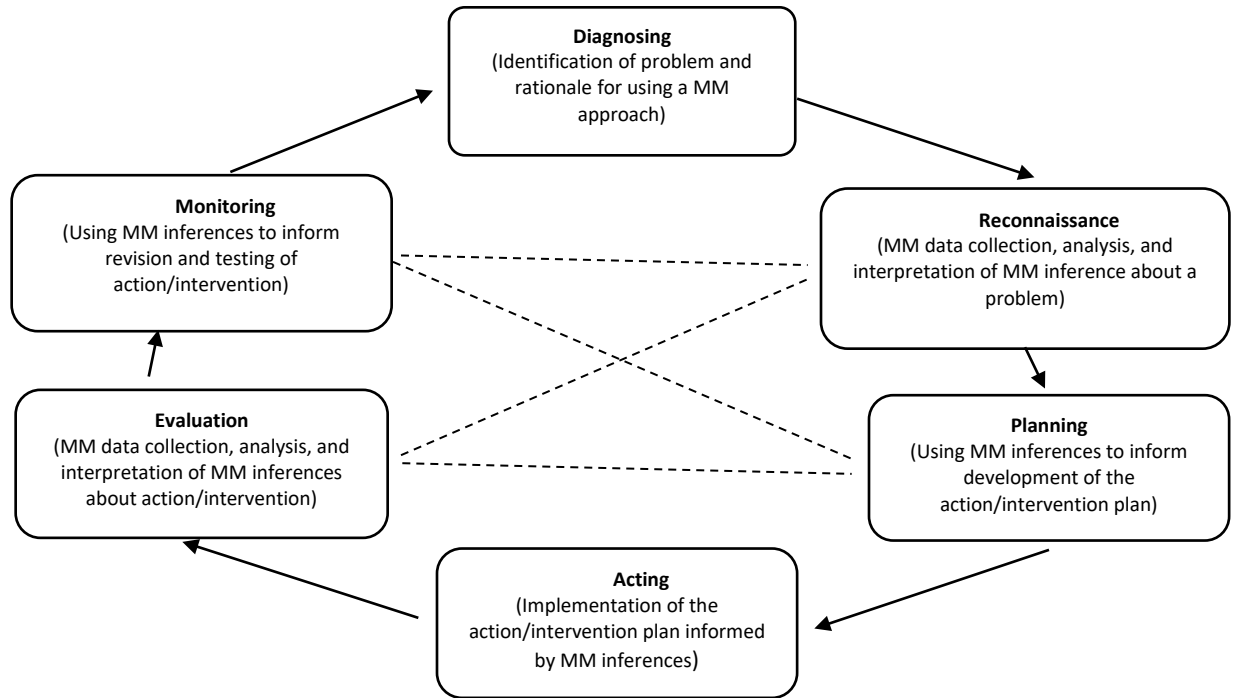
Figure 1.1.

General Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) Study Design

Diagnosis Phase of Action Research

      Mixed methods action research is a process that occurs in six phases, diagnosing,

reconnaissance, planning, acting, evaluation, and monitoring (Ivankova, 2015). A more

detailed description of these phases will occur below.. The phases are iterative in nature

and the first phase is the Diagnosing Phase. During this phase, the action researcher

identifies a problem within an organization (Ivankova, 2015). Generally, the researcher is

identifying a problem in their organization. The diagnosis phase utilizes a collaborative

process that involves feedback or input from the stakeholders of the organization. It is the duty of the researcher to confirm that the problem may be solved and addressed within the confines of the researcher's job duties or scope of influence (Ivankova, 2015).

Reconnaissance Phase of Action Research

The second phase is the Reconnaissance Phase. During the Reconnaissance Phase of this study a concurrent quantitative and qualitative design was used. The purpose of the reconnaissance phase was to assess the problem identified during the Diagnosis Phase. During this "fact finding" stage the researcher identified the areas for improvement or change and collected information from different sources to inform the development of the action/intervention, in order to address the problem (Ivankova, 2015). These sources included informal discussions, feedback from members of the organization, a review of literature relevant to the identified problem, and meeting observations.

Planning and Acting Phase of Action Research

The third phase is the Planning Phase, during this phase this data gathered from the Reconnaissance Phase was used by the researcher to develop an action/intervention plan that addressed the problem identified during the Diagnosis Phase (Ivankova, 2015). The design of the intervention was influenced by the data gathered, the structure of the organization and the positional authority of the researcher. The Acting Phase is the fourth phase of the study and where the intervention that was developed during the Planning Phase was implemented. The results of the Acting Phase were used in the Evaluation Phase to assist in determining if the research question was answered.

Evaluation and Monitoring Phases of Action Research

The Evaluaiton Phase is the fifth phase of the study. The purpose of the

Evaluation Phase was to collect and analyze the data produced during the Acting Phase.

For the Evaluation Phase a multi strand design was used that included two phases. A

detailed description of this design is included in Chapter 3. The findings from the

Evaluation Phase were presented to the study participants, regarding the effectiveness of

the intervention. Inferences developed during the Evaluation phase were used to inform

the Monitoring Phase. The sixth and final phase is the Monitoring Phase. During the

Monitoring Phase any needed revisions to the action/intervention were made. Revisions

are based upon the inferences developed during the Evaluation Phase (Ivankova, 2015).

District Data: Leadership Team and Compression Planning

Members of the JCPS ECE Leadership Team make a concerted effort to provide

effective support to school-level administrators and teachers seeking guidance on

developing an appropriate IEP. They accomplish this through providing training sessions,

in-person and virtual conferences, and open office hours. To align with the vision and

mission of JCPS concerning improving services provided to students with disabilities, the

ECE leadership team conducted a compression planning exercise (see Appendix B) to

determine how to serve all ECE students in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Compression Planning is an exercise that helps a group develop a plan of action

quickly. All the members of a group are involved in order to build ownership of the

developed plan. Facilitators start by clarifying the purpose and the problem to be

addressed and then start the process of converting several ideas into a focused action

plan. The exercises took place during the fall of 2019 from October 11 to December 3.

All members of the ECE department were invited to participate in the exercise. A JCPS meeting room was reserved for the exercise, and we were able to accommodate all of the participants. The overall purpose of the compression planning was to create an organizational structure with a primary focus of doing what is right for the child. Several questions were presented by facilitators to the ECE department members to start discussions and gather ideas from staff. The first session's focus was to identify three things the department could do to improve outcomes for students with disabilities without adding staff or increasing the budget. The top ideas were identified by staff members, written down on large sheets of paper, and taped on the walls. Staff placed a dot by the idea they believed would be appropriate areas of focus for the ECE department. The dots were counted to identify the top ideas generated by staff (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1.

Top Ideas Recommended at Compression Planning

Recommendation	Top Ideas Generated	# of Dots
1	Build capacity of ECE district-level staff	4
2	Develop ownership of students in school buildings	10
3	Focus on building capacity of school staff	4

The top three ideas generated during the first session centered on building capacity in both district-level and school-level staffs. Building capacity in school-level administrators was identified during a brainstorming session as a viable method for developing student ownership in school buildings. However, due to the rigid restrictions put in place by JCPS on conducting research inside JCPS schools, I could not pursue that idea. Building capacity in ECE staff appeared to be the most viable option due it being a common thread running through all the top ideas generated in the first session. In summary, I chose building capacity in district-level ECE staff as the focus of this study.

After reviewing the compression planning results, the need for increasing the capacity to support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities was evident. An important issue identified through the compression planning exercise related to achieving this goal included sharing knowledge in the ECE department and across all departments in JCPS to provide consistency. As a member of the ECE leadership team, I support the notion that staff should actively contribute to identifying areas of mutual need and that sharing knowledge will build ECE Department staff capacity. This was particularly important given the JCPS reorganization of ECE and emerged during subsequent informal discussions with staff members and through compression planning activities. Sharing knowledge and building capacity have been affirmed during the past two years by observing how the ECE department has operated over time. For example, before the recent reorganization of the ECE department, most of the work occurred in areas of specialization (e.g., all placement decisions were made by the placement specialist, and all IEP programming suggestions were made by the programming specialist). As a result, experts were assigned to narrowly defined areas of work. These circumstances precluded team members from developing knowledge and skills in other areas of special education.

Literature Review

Notions of leadership, professional learning communities, communities of practice and self-efficacy are central to understanding and guiding this action research study. These ideas support the notion that participating in communities of practice may increase the team member's perception of self-efficacy in terms of their professional knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness. Searches for relevant literature were conducted

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through Proquest Education Database and EBSCOHOST. The following search terms were used: collective efficacy, self-efficacy, professional learning communities, and community of practice. JCPS information were collected from the website (https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/).

Leadership

Over the past several decades, scholars have defined leadership in many different ways. For example, Rost (1991) observed that management was often regarded as leadership during the industrial era. Rost also suggested that this idea of leadership is ill-suited to today's complex, post-industrial organizations. The new school of leadership recognizes the changing nature of society and how work is accomplished in organizations. His post-modern perspective on leadership emphasized four essential elements of leadership that included: 1) relationships based on influence; 2) co-developed by leaders and followers; 3) making real changes; and 4) serving mutual purposes. These elements and the seminal work of Burns (1978) influenced the emergence of team leadership as a central theme during the education reform movement beginning in the early 1990s. Both Rost's (1991) and Burn's (1978) notions of effective leadership emphasized the use of relational approaches to address complex issues emerging in 21st-century educational settings (Browne-Ferrigno & Björk, 2018). For example, Browne-Ferrigno and Björk, (2018) noted that:

> The confluence of national education reform mandates, heightened interest in school culture, and postindustrial leadership perspectives contributed to creating complex organizational contexts. These circumstances heightened the importance of cooperation and teamwork in accomplishing large-scale

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systems change that is continuous and human centered rather than

reactionary, episodic, and short term. (p. 340)

The relational leadership perspective is decidedly different from the hierarchical

and bureaucratic management approaches, which focus on accomplishing tasks through a

manager's direct action. Conversely, the relational approach suggested that leadership is

"an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that

reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 102). In this regard, leadership is not vested

in an individual but instead involves a process in which a number of people are engaged

and serve as change agents to achieve specific shared goals. His perspective is supported

by Robinson et al., (2008), who observed that "leaders in schools where students

performed above expected levels were more likely to be involved with their staff" (p.

667). The notion of leader involvement with staff is also supported and extended by

Fullan (2014). He asserted that school administrators may increase their knowledge and

leadership skills by abandoning the traditional hierarchical approach and leading "the

schools teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching, while learning

alongside them about what works and what doesn't" (p. 55). Working with teams to learn

what works and what does not is crucial for leaders to accomplish substantive, long-term

change.

Self and Collective Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in her or his ability to successfully

accomplish tasks or be successful in specific situations (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994)

stated that "self-efficacy beliefs influence how well people motivate themselves and

persevere in the face of difficulties through the goals they set for themselves, their

outcome expectations, and causal attributions for their successes and failures" (p. 13).

Bandura (1997) subsequently defined collective efficacy as "a groups shared belief in its

conjoint ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given

levels of attainment" (p. 477). Developing collective efficacy in a team may enhance a

team's ability to produce intended results. For example, in schools, when educators

believe they can influence student outcomes, students achieve at a significantly higher

level. This perspective is supported by Hattie (2016), who placed collective efficacy at

the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement. Consequently, developing

higher levels of perceived collective efficacy among school district ECE teams may

enhance teachers' capacity to appropriately serve children and improve outcomes for

students with disabilities. Because teams are composed of individuals, it is important to

understand both individual and collective self-efficacy.

It is important to note that perceived individual self-efficacy is different from self-

esteem, which "usually is considered to be a trait reflecting an individual's characteristic

affective evaluation of self (e.g., feelings of self-worth or self-liking). By contrast . . .

[perceived] efficacy is a judgment about task capability that is not inherently evaluative"

(Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 185). Self-efficacy stems from Rotter's (1966) social learning

theory. Who examined how perceived reward or reinforcement influences an individual's

behavior. The concept of self-efficacy was expanded by Bandura (1977), who described

the relationship between an individual's perceived self-efficacy, behavior, and the

resulting outcome caused by the individual's behavior. He also distinguished the

difference between efficacy expectations and response-outcomes. These differences are

crucial to understanding how an individual's perceived self-efficacy can impact the

outcome. Bandura (1997) defined outcome expectancy "as a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes," and an efficacy expectation is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193). Furthermore, a robust body of literature supports the notion of self-efficacy and enabled scholars to pursue a promising line of inquiry on collective efficacy in organizations.

Bandura (1977) stated that efficacy is based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Figure 1.2).
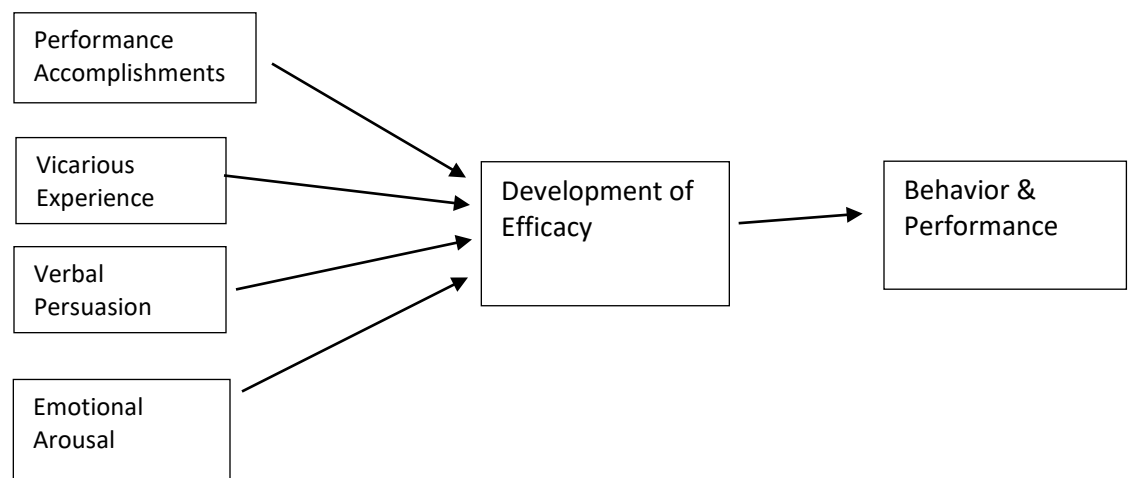
Figure 1.2.

Contributing Sources of Efficacy adapted from Bandura (1977)

Performance accomplishments involve experiences in which an individual participates to develop mastery in the desired skill. Repeated personal successes are considered the most influential in developing self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977), "After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced" (p. 195). Vicarious experiences

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pertain to seeing others model activities without failure. These experiences are not considered influential as performance accomplishments but build confidence by establishing that it can be done. Verbal persuasion is a prevalent source of self-efficacy, but it is considered less effective than personal accomplishment.

Bandura (1977) asserted that the development of efficacy "operates in much the same way at the collective level as they do at the individual level" (p. 478). He identified four contributing sources of developing efficacy: 1) performance accomplishments; 2) vicarious experiences; 3) verbal persuasion; and 4) emotional arousal. All four contribute to the development of collective efficacy. Marks et al., (2001) supported this perspective by positing that the emergence of collective efficacy is the product of team experiences. Gibson (1999) also supported this perspective by positing that collective efficacy can be enhanced through exchanges in information and observed behaviors within a team.

Leaders can help build collective efficacy by setting expectations of formal, frequent, and productive collaboration and by creating safe learning environment in which collaboration may take place (Donohoo et al., (2018). Setting expectations and creating a safe learning environment is only part of what leaders must do to build collective efficacy. Leaders must encourage engagement in team experiences. Marks et al., (2001) noted that collective efficacy is a product of team experiences. An example of a team experience would be engaging in conversations about the team's collective impact on desired outcomes. Donohoo et al. (2018) posited that evidence of impact is the primary source of building collective efficacy. In this regard, evidence of collective impact reinforces collective behaviors and provides motivation.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are the process JCPS currently uses to build capacity in staff members. A PLC is a process where educators work together in cycles of inquiry and action (Dufour et al., 2010). Research findings suggest that PLCs may inform this action research study as it is focused on building capacity in schools by increasing the sense of self-efficacy among school-level administrators and teachers. Having greater levels of expertise may help support students with disabilities. An essential part of the PLC process is to collect data and provide feedback to the participants. A leader must provide frequent and timely feedback and an agreed-upon proficiency standard established by the collaborative team (Dufour et al., 2010). Thus, PLCs may be an effective and efficient method to utilize in this study.

Communities of Practice

Another process used to increase team member's knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness is a CoP, a process that also may be ideal for improving the effectiveness of teams. Wenger et al., (2002) defined communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, or set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). Communities of practice are considered a key element in improving a group's performance. They improve a group's performance by sharing information on new ideas and best practices and providing members with a place to grow effectively and create and share knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 2001). With regard to Rost's (1991) post-industrial model of leadership, a CoP may help to inform efforts at increasing ECE Department team members' knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness.

Rost (1991) emphasized that four essential elements must be present for leadership to exist or occur: 1) a relationship based on influence; 2) leaders and followers that develop that relationship; 3) all involved participants intending to make real changes; and 4) group members have mutual purposes. Both Rost (1991) and Wenger et al. (2002) stated that for individuals to be effective, achieve real change, or solve problems, they must come together with a shared concern and purpose to deepen knowledge and develop relationships.

Furthermore, Wenger et al. (2002) described CoP with three fundamental structural components: domain, community, and practice. The domain is an identity defined by a shared interest among a group of individuals. The community builds relationships that helps participants learn from each other through activities and discussions. The group develops resources (e.g., experiences, stories, tools) to share, test, and refine ways to address problems identified by the group. Since communities of practice do not have defined boundaries or a specific size, it may help to understand what a community of practice looks like by providing examples (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2.

Examples of Community Activities adapted from Wenger et al. (2002)

Activity	CoP Member Comment
Problem solving	Can we work on this design and brainstorm some ideas?
Requests for information	Can I get access to the drive?
Visits	Can we come see your after-school program?
Mapping knowledge	Who know what we are missing?
Growing confidence	Before I do it, I will run it through my community.

Mixed Methods Action Research Study Plan

A problem of practice was identified based on an analysis of informal discussions, meetings, and collaborative efforts in compression planning by members of the ECE teams during the diagnosis phase of the MMAR. The purpose of this MMAR study was to implement a CoP to increase the self-efficacy of district-level team members in the ECE department who support high school-level administrators and teachers in JCPS high schools. In this study, CoP are defined by Wenger et al. (2002) as "groups of people who share a concern, or set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p.4). The overarching question guiding this action research study was: Did participating in an ECE CoP increase the sense of self-efficacy as it relates to the ability to effectively support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities?

The purpose of the Reconnaissance Phase was to determine if ECE Department team members current sense of self efficacy score as it relates to their ability to effectively support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities. In addition, efforts were made to identify specific areas in which staff may benefit from learning collaboratively and concerns staff may have regarding providing support to JCPS administrators and teachers. The quantitative strand provided an overall score regarding the participants sense of self-efficacy (e.g. handle the demands of the job, handle paperwork, and cope with stress). Quantitative data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase provided a pre-intervention baseline. The qualitative strand provided a list of topics of interest the participants desired to learn more about and concerns that they have developed through performing their duties (e.g. how to write and

implement an effective IEP, student behavior). The integration of the data produced

meta-inferences that were used to inform the development of the CoP.

The purpose of the evaluation phase of the study was to assess the effectiveness of

the CoP on the participants sense of self-efficacy. To accomplish this, I used a multi-

strand design. The same questionnaire used during the Reconnaissance Phase was used

during the Evaluation Phase. Using the same questionnaire to collect quantitative and

qualitative data are referred to a within-strategy (Ivankova, 2015). The results were

compared to assess if there were any change in self-efficacy scores, topics of interest and

concerns. The rationale for applying mixed methods in this study was to gain more

insight into how to enhance the self-efficacy of the ECE team through the

implementation of a CoP may contribute to a more effective problem solution (Ivankova,

2015). The MMAR framework is illustrated in Figure 1.3

Diagnosing
- Review existing literature on leadership, CoPs collective-efficacy, self-efficacy, and PLC's
- Conceptualizing MMAR study

Monitoring
- Make appropriate revisions to the intervention based on the analysis of the mixed methods results
- Share results with stakeholders

Reconnaissance
- Conduct an environmental scan
- Collect and analyze quantitative questionnaire data
- Collect and analyze qualitative questionnaire data

Evaluation
Collect and analyze post-intervention quantitative and qualitative data to determine the impact of the intervention

Planning
- Present findings from the Reconnaissance Phase questionnaire to the key stakeholders
- Begin process of developing an intervention to increase teams effectiveness

Acting
- Implement intervention by building communities of practice with team.

Figure 1.3.

Guiding Mixed Methods Action Research Framework

Summary

Over the past several years, JCPS as other districts across the nation have found it challenging to remain in compliance with provisions of the IDEA. Consequently, JCPS has a compelling interest to enhance the effectiveness of its Department of ECE that provides support and guidance to school-level administrators and teachers who directly serve special education students. The notion of relational leadership appeared to be a

helpful perspective that informed efforts to solve intractable problems facing the

organization and increase the self-efficacy of ECE teams. This was accomplished by

supporting their efforts at working collaboratively at identifying the knowledge, skills

and expertise needed to enhance individual and group effectiveness.

Chapter 1 provided a description of the context in which this MMAR took place,

identification of the problem of practice, a review of relevant literature and an overview

of the MMAR study plan. Chapter 2 presents a description of the reconnaissance phase as

well as the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter 3 includes the

outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN PLAN

This chapter includes a brief overview of the research setting, organizational context, organizational collaborators involved in the study, and my role as a participant-leader. In addition, I present the MMAR research design and plan, the Reconnaissance Phase, an overview of subsequent phases, and the CoP intervention. This discussion includes descriptions of the roles of the participants, questions that guide the study, research methods, data collection, analysis and evaluation procedures, quality assurances, ethical considerations, and the timeline of the study. The CoP intervention is based on the data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase that identified the most important need of the ECE Department high school team, which was building a CoP and sharing knowledge and expertise in areas identified by ECE team members. Knowledge and expertise sharing activities are designed to increase the perceived sense of self-efficacy of ECE high school team members who support school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities.

Research Setting and Organizational Context

The JCPS system is a large urban school district located in Louisville, Kentucky. A majority of children living in the city attend a JCPS. Additionally, the majority of the JCPS teachers hold a master's degree, and the majority of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Twelve percent of JCPS students are classified as ECE students. Despite the allocation of substantial resources by the JCPS system and increased ECE Department efforts to support schools serving students with disabilities, schools continue to struggle with developing and implementing appropriate IEPs for

students with disabilities. I serve as the Director of the High School Zone, the focal unit of this MMAR study.

To improve support to schools, the JCPS system in 2020 restructured the ECE Department and charged it with responsibility for examining its methods and practices as well as soliciting feedback from staff during compression planning sessions. During these sessions, staff reported feeling overwhelmed by requests for support and frustrated by having to react rather than engage in strategic planning.

It is evident that ECE Department team members view themselves as first responders and continue to demonstrate their commitment to improving services to school-level administrators and teachers who request support. It is also evident that they have engaged in the nascent stages of shared learning and collaboration and participated in two successive compression planning exercises to identify and solve problems of practice. In this regard, the ECE staff serving in the High School Zone are viewed as participants, collaborators, and stakeholders in this MMAR study. They are all actively engaged in identifying and solving the problem of practice and benefited from its resolution. In turn, as the Director of the ECE High School Zone, should be viewed as a participant-leader and a participant-researcher. In enacting both of these roles, I believe that ECE staff members' participation in the CoP increased their knowledge and expertise and enhanced their perceived sense of self-efficacy in delivering more effective support to school-level administrators and teachers who provide services to students with disabilities. In the long-term, improving educational services to students and significantly reducing JCPS's IDEA compliance issues, and thus reducing feelings of being overwhelmed.

It is important to note that compliance with IDEA and concerns with receiving a satisfactory rating form KDE was an existing condition of work and not the focus of the CoP. Rather, this study focused on building a CoP that was centered around expanding the participants professional knowledge around their topics of interest and developing their skills so they may address their concerns appropriately. Thus, enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. For example, becoming more informed about JCPS/KDE/IDEA regulations, policies, and procedures through mutual learning that will enhance their effectiveness in working with schools.

Stakeholders who were potentially impacted by this study include all ECE Department team members who support school-level administrators and teachers in JCPS. This study was designed to facilitate collaborative work within a CoP among principal stakeholders (i.e., ECE staffs serving in the high school zone) to: a) collect and analyze data related to building a CoP within the ECE Department; b) present research-based findings to stakeholders and build a community of practice in the ECE Department; c) plan and implement a CoP to increase the sense of self-efficacy of team members; and d) evaluate the effect of implementing the CoP as an intervention by measuring an increase in team member's perceived self-efficacy. Increasing their knowledge and expertise may contribute to enhanced support to school-level administrators and teachers in schools. Scheduled meetings with the ECE CoP stakeholders were conducted to provide input and gather feedback from the team throughout the reconnaissance, intervention, and evaluation phases of the study.

Research Methods and Procedures

The MMAR framework advanced by Ivankova (2015) was used to guide this study. It consisted of six sequential phases: diagnosing, reconnaissance, planning, acting, evaluation, and monitoring. The purpose of the Diagnosis Phase was to identify the problem of practice and the rationale for using a mixed method approach. The Diagnosis Phase identified a problem of practice that established a foundation for the study. Three recommendations emerged from the ECE Department's compression planning exercise included: 1) building capacity of ECE district staff; 2) developing ownership of students in school buildings; and 3) focusing on building capacity of school-level staffs. The MMAR study focused on the first recommendation: building the capacity of ECE district staff. This was accomplished by nurturing a CoP from its present, nascent stages of development to actively sharing knowledge and expertise in several areas identified by ECE staffs. During the reconnaissance phase, data were collected using a mixed method approach. Conclusions were formed and used in the planning phase to develop the action implemented during the acting phase of the study. During the Evaluation Phase, data were collected using the multi-strand design, analyzed, and conclusions were formed about the effectiveness of the action/intervention plan. The inferences generated during the Evaluation Phase were used during the monitoring phase to decide if any revisions the action/intervention plan were needed (Ivankova, 2015).

Reconnaissance Phase Research Questions

The purpose of the Reconnaissance Phase is fact finding and viewed as a way to gather data and evaluate results (Lewin, 1948b). More recently, Ivankova (2015) discussed it as a way to prepare a rational basis for the third step or Planning Phase of the

MMAR study. During the Reconnaissance Phase, I analyzed and interpreted questionnaire response data from the ECE Department team who completed the anonymous questionnaire. The goals of the questionnaire included assessing the team member's perceived sense of self-efficacy in terms of their effectiveness to support schools requesting support, identifying topics team members believe would increase their knowledge and expertise and concerns they may have. The data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase were used to assist in planning and implementation of the MMAR study intervention which occurred during January and February 2022.

Research Design

The data collected during the compression planning exercise were analyzed and provided the information needed to establish what the goals of the questionnaire should be and also provided a basis for the content of the quantitative and qualitative questionnaire questions in the Reconnaissance Phase. The Reconnaissance Phase of this MMAR study utilized a concurrent quantitative and qualitative design to produce data (Ivankova, 2015). The overarching question that guided the reconnaissance phase determined whether implementing an ECE Department CoP enhanced staff sense of self-efficacy by increasing their knowledge, expertise, and effectiveness in supporting teachers and school-level administrators who serve students with disabilities. In a concurrent quantitative and qualitative design, the researcher gave equal weight to both strands. Although strand addressed a different aspect of the overarching research question, they were complimentary. This was accomplished by separately analyzing quantitative and qualitative data and combining or integrating findings as illustrated in Figure 2.1.
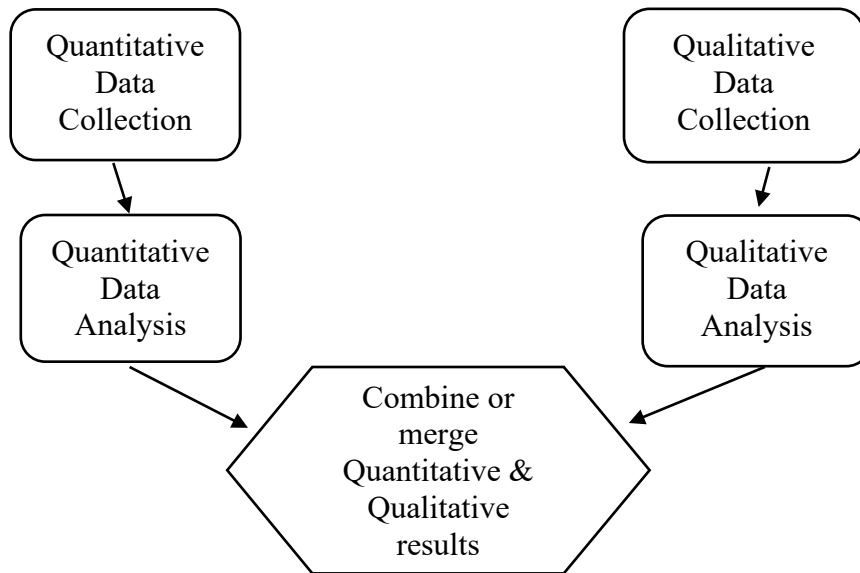
Figure 2.1. Concurrent Quantitative + Qualitative MMAR Reconnaissance Design

Quantitative Strand

The quantitative data collected via the questionnaire (Appendix B) were used as a pre-test to assess personal and team self-efficacy and to inform the CoP activities. The quantitative strand utilized the ECE High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire to answer the following research questions: *What are the ECE team members current sense of self-efficacy?* This question provided baseline data on self-efficacy scores to be compared with the self-efficacy scores collected during the evaluation phase. This data also served as the basis for understanding if team members believe they are adequately prepared to carry out their job duties, supported in their work, and familiar with the resources available to schools experiencing IDEA compliance issues.

Sample. High School Zone ECE team members were asked to participate in the reconnaissance phase of this study. The team consisted of nine members who were JCPS employees, all were certified educators except one individual who served as the behavior

liaison. The ECE team's primary purpose is to support schools (i.e., school-level administrators and teachers) in their efforts to provide students with disabilities a FAPE. Their professional areas of expertise are varied and under the JCPS re-organization, they are expected to provide a wide range of support services that include holding professional development opportunities for teachers and school-level administrators and providing in-person support for teachers.

Instrument. The questionnaire was modeled after Tschannen-Moran's (nd) Principal and Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. The wording and focus of the questions (Table 2.1) were based on the ECE context and key issues that emerged from the compression planning process and administered using Qualtrics. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to ECE high school zone team member's perception of self-efficacy as it relates to their ability to respond effectively to requests for support from school-level administrators and teachers. Participants responded to these questions using a scale ranging from 1 to 9 (1 = none; 9 = a great deal). The chief of the ECE Department contributed to the development and the content of the questionnaire to increase face validity.

Data collection procedures. The questionnaire was distributed to the ECE high school team through an anonymous electronic link, all nine members of the team responded. The questionnaire responses from Qualtrics were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The data were stored in my password protected laptop computer.

Data analysis and findings. Questionnaire data were summarized using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics is an effective means of presenting general information about the ECE community (i.e., sample), which may help develop an action

or intervention during the reconnaissance and subsequent planning and acting phases of

an MMAR study (Ivankova, 2015). All identifying information was removed prior to

analysis to maintain confidentiality.

Table 2.1.

Participant questions regarding the team member's sense of self-efficacy

Questions
In your current role as ECE High School zone team member, to what extent can you…
Handle the demands of the job?
Promote change inside schools you support?
Promote a positive image of the ECE Department inside the schools you support?
Establish routines to keep your day running smoothly?
Handle the paperwork required of the job?
Gauge school staffs' comprehension of what you explain to them?
Improve the understanding of school staffs' understanding of the purpose of regulations?

.

Qualitative Strand

The qualitative data-collection instrument consists of four open response

questions included in the questionnaire (Questions 9-12 in Appendix B). The qualitative

strand was administered in the same manner as the quantitative questionnaire, by utilizing

the ECE High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire to answer the following research

question: *What are the ECE team members concerns and topics of interest to discuss*

during the intervention? This question provided baseline data on the topics of interest the

participating team members desired to learn more about and what concerns they had

regarding supporting school-level administrators and teachers, that was compared to the data collected during the evaluation phase.

    Data analysis and findings. The questionnaire response rate and narrative comments to the open-response questions were analyzed and organized by specific characteristic of the answers and entered into the excel spread sheet. A synthesis of the data provided a basis for conducting a thorough analysis of the problem as well as identify specific concerns and topics of interest that the team members may have.

<div align="center">Reconnaissance Phase Findings</div>

    Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the Reconnaissance Phase of this study by utilizing open- and closed-ended questionnaires. Responses to the questionnaire administered during the Reconnaissance Phase provided me with the data needed to develop a CoP focused on increasing district-level, high-school team member's level of self-efficacy in responding to requests for support from schools. Quantitative and qualitative data in the Reconnaissance Phase were collected over a two-week period, separately analyzed; results for both sets of data were then merged for comparison.

Quantitative Results

    Quantitative data were collected using the High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire (Appendix C) the overall scores stored in Qualtrics were analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., means and percentages). In order to maintain confidentiality, the questionnaire was anonymous. Data collected from this questionnaire were used to establish a pre-intervention measure for comparison in later stages of the study. This questionnaire was developed by modifying the instruments developed by Tschannen-Moran to assess self-efficacy (Appendix D). Modification of the questionnaire was

necessary because Tschannen-Moran self-efficacy questions were focused on the school principal and individual items specifically targeting school administrators. After a careful review of the self-efficacy assessment questionnaire, it was determined that minor modifications were necessary in order to make the questionnaire more suitable to be administered to district-level team members. It was also determined by the researcher that minor modifications made to the questions in the questionnaires would not diminish the ability of the questions to determine the self-efficacy of the participants. The modifications would only eliminate the specificity of the language and make the questions more applicable for district-level high school ECE team members. A side-by-side comparison of the questionnaires developed by Tschannen-Moran and the High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire completed by the participants was done to ensure the integrity of the questions were maintained (Appendix E).

      Team member efficacy. The ECE High School Zone team members completed the questionnaire and rated their opinions for each of the 10 High School Zone Self-efficacy questions using a scale ranging from 1 (none) to 9 (a great deal). The nine questions included in the questionnaire were designed to gauge efficacy in the areas of instruction and management. This deliberate emphasis stems from the previously identified need to build capacity in staffs. In order to build capacity the ECE team members need to be proficient in their instructional abilities. The ECE team members also need to be proficient in their ability to effectively manage their daily duties in order to efficiently and effectively support schools requesting support for students with disabilities. This emphasis was achieved by purposefully choosing questions that focused on gauging efficacy in instruction and management.

Data from the questionnaire indicated that the team members' initial perception was that they were efficacious in their ability to support schools (Overall M = 6.62; Table 2.2). The mean scores for all the questions during the Reconnaissance Phase ranged from 6.11 to 7. Mean scores were the highest in the area of management (M=6.67), with instruction very close at (M = 6.59).

According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), when self-efficacy beliefs are high, respondents believe themselves to be competent and capable of influencing the learning of others, regardless of other factors. However, if efficacy beliefs are low, the converse is true: They believe influencing the learning of others is out of their scope of control. The mean score of the High School Zone Team members self-efficacy rating in the Reconnaissance Phase was very close to the "quite a bit" category. Thus, they believed they are capable of responding in an efficient and effective way to schools

Table 2.2.

Participant responses to High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Question	Mean (SD)	Range	% Quite a Bit or A Great Deal
Do you agree to participate in this study?	1	1	NA
Promote change inside the schools you support?	6.89 (1.52)	5 – 9	66.66 %
Handle the demands of the job?	6.33 (1.33)	5 – 9	55.56%
Establish routines to keep your day running smoothly?	6.33 (.94)	5 - 7	66.67%
Handle the paperwork of the job?	7 (.94)	5 – 9	88.89%
Gauge schools staffs comprehension of what you explain to them?	6.11 (.99)	5 – 7	55.56%
Cope with the stress of the job?	7 (.94)	5 – 9	88.89%
Improve the understanding of schools staffs understanding of the purpose of the regulations?	6.44 (1.42)	5 – 9	55.56%
Respond to difficult questions from your schools?	6.67 (1.63)	3 – 9	77.78%
Provide and alternate explanation or example when schools staffs are confused?	6.78 (1.13)	5 – 9	77.78%
Overall Mean	**6.62**	**4.77 - 8.55**	**70.37%**

requesting support. It is relevant to note that even though the overall mean score was high

for the group, indicating efficacy. The lowest percentage of scores that were in the "quite

a bit" or "a great deal" came from the questions centered around the schools and schools staffs (Table 3.1). This may indicate that some team members do not believe they are efficacious enough to influence the learning of school staff.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase were collected using open-ended questions that were on the same questionnaire as the closed-end questions within-strategy. Participating team members provided information on special education topics they would like to learn more about and concerns they may have, regarding the ECE department and responding to schools requesting support.

Open-ended questionnaire. The ECE High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire was used to collect information on the needs and concerns of the participating team members. While conducting the analysis of the questionnaire, common themes emerged from the data; the participants expressed an interest in learning more about writing effective IEPs, ECE procedures, and trauma-informed care (Appendix E). The concerns expressed by the participants were behavior issues and relationship with schools. I believe it is noteworthy to state that the top demand that required most of the participants' time was responding to requests for behavior support.

Writing effective IEPs. High School Zone members' responses on the questionnaire indicated a desire to learn more about writing effective IEPs. This response indicates that they believe this knowledge would be beneficial to them when responding to requests for support in this area. This topic of interest correlates with concerns about supporting schools. IEP training is a mandatory training that is part of the ECE department procedures and is conducted every year. Maintaining compliance with all of

the regulations listed in the IDEA can be a challenging task. There are several components of an IEP and timelines that must be followed in order to stay in compliance with IDEA. One participant specifically requested information on when new plans needed to be developed. Historically, many requests for support from schools involve complex questions, regarding IEP compliance. For example, when a student is removed from the educational setting for more than 10 days, that is considered a change of placement and an admission and release committee (ARC) meeting must be held within ten days of the removal; if this meeting is not held, the problem could be considered a compliance issue. However, there could be reasons that the meeting could be delayed, and the district-level ECE staff member must know how to mitigate such situations, in order to maintain compliancy.

      Compliance with ECE procedures. The majority of the ECE procedures are derived from the Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KARs). These regulations are lengthy, complex, and written in a manner that tends to confuse a great many educators. This is partly due to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of what the regulation states. For example, the language used regarding placement decisions implies that the district shall ensure a continuum of alternative placements. This statement prompts many schools to request the student be removed from their school. What they not understanding is that the school itself is supposed to provide the continuum of alternative placements—prior to consideration of the student going to another school. This lack of understanding by school administrators is echoed in a participant's response: "schools want students sent to special schools, which is a process that takes a long time,"

Learning more about ECE procedures was identified frequently during the Reconnaissance Phase as a topic of interest by the participants. This topic is also addressed in the sections on writing effective IEPs and relationships with schools. This may reflect the importance of personnel understanding procedures: lack of understanding about required the procedures may be a significant cause of many of the requests for support.

Trauma-informed care. This topic was identified by team members, as stated in the behavior section, as a means to assist schools in mitigating negative behaviors exhibited by special education students. Many requests from schools come with a sense of urgency due to a genuine concern for students' state of mind. Many students referred for professional therapeutic services are not receiving them on a regular basis, for many reasons. One participant requested knowledge about providing trauma-informed care and referred to it as a "best practice" for behavior support. Another participant referred to it as "necessary" for building capacity in schools when responding to a requests for support, in order for a team member to assist school staffs in reducing negative behaviors exhibited by ECE students. This reduction in removals from the educational setting would also assist in keeping the school and the district in compliance with procedures and KARs.

Relationships with schools. High school zone team members expressed a concern regarding their relationship with the schools they support. One of the participants conveyed that the schools believe that district-level staff would solicit information from them with the purpose of identifying schools that were not in compliance. Further, many stating there was a perceived "gotcha" mentality instead of "help me understand so I can help" mentality. This concerns correlate with understanding district procedures. The

district has a monthly list of duties or tasks the school staff members are to complete. The purpose of this list is not an attempt to catch them in any wrong doing. Rather, list is intended to provide the staffs with monthly reminders to complete the tasks that keep their students IEPs in compliance.

Behavior issues. Dealing with behavior issues was expressed as concern and major consumer of staff's time. Schools across the state and nation have found it challenging to mitigate special education students exhibiting negative behaviors. This challenge has been evidenced by several corrective actions plans (CAPs) that the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has levied on school districts over the past several years. The CAPs have historically been for excessive removals of ECE students over ten days, which correlates with a lack of understanding of procedures by staff members. Regulations state that before a student is removed for an excess of ten days, an ARC meeting must be held. Historically, these ARC meeting have not been held until after removals occurred, due to staff not understanding the proper procedures—thus, resulting in a compliancy issue. One participant commented that school personnel state "there seems to be a lot of red tape" and "schools do not feel supported by the ECE Department." These statements reflect a lack of understanding about ECE procedures, which in turn strains relationship with the schools.

Reconnaissance Data Integration and Meta Inferences

A merged method procedure was used to analyze data collected during the study's Reconnaissance Phase. The purpose of the merged method is to provide more credibility to the overall study conclusion and achieve valid meta-inferences to inform the action (Ivanova, 2015). By merging both the quantitative and qualitative strands, a rigorous

cohesive set of conclusions can be made about the topic and used to inform the action and

planning phases (James et al., 2008). In turn, both qualitative and quantitative data

collected from ECE participants were used to inform how future iterations of the study

may be conducted. A summary of the data collection plan is presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3.

Participant responses regarding role, knowledge, and concerns

Instrument	Sample	Data	Time Period
Self-efficacy Questionnaire (pre-intervention)	ECE HS zone team members	Perceived level self-efficacy (quantitative)	December 2021
Open-response Questionnaire (pre-intervention)	ECE HS zone team members	Topics of interest and Concerns (qualitative)	December 2021
Self-efficacy Questionnaire (post-intervention)	ECE HS zone team members	Perceived increase in self-efficacy (quantitative)	January 2022
Open-response Questionnaire (post-intervention)	ECE HS zone team members	Topics of interest and concerns (qualitative)	January 2022

Reliability and Validity

The reliability of the data is addressed in that the data collected was reported

independently by each participant of the ECE department. Furthermore, all participants in

the study received the same questionnaire s during the reconnaissance and evaluation

phases of the study.

Planning Phase

During the Planning Phase, data gathered from the Reconnaissance Phase were

used in the development of an action plan. According to Ivankova (2015), an action plan

may take the form of developing an intervention to address the problem. Data gathered

during the Reconnaissance Phase were used in developing a CoP (intervention) with the purpose of increasing the ECE team member's efficacy in supporting schools requests for support. I collaborated with the team in order to develop a schedule that accommodated the team's work schedule and the districts requirements. For example, per district rules the research had to take place after work hours and provide a safe environment that met COVID-19 protocols at the time, the decision was made to conduct a Zoom call to brief the team on the study and next steps. During the CoP held after the team meeting, the areas of concern and topics of interest identified by the ECE team members, during the Reconnaissance Phase were addressed. The ECE team members concerns and identified topics of discussion enabled the team members to share knowledge and expertise, contributing to the development of their self-efficacy

Acting Phase

After the intervention was developed during the Planning Phase, the CoP was implemented from December 2021 through February 2022. The CoP focused on increasing self-efficacy of the ECE team members by providing them an opportunity to share knowledge and expertise about different topics pertaining to providing services to students with disabilities. The content of the knowledge shared consisted of the areas of concern and topics of interest the ECE staff identified during the Reconnaissance Phase. The method used to conduct the CoP was through Zoom. This was selected because JCPS policy prohibits any research being conducted during the work and day and more than two people meeting at once during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected concurrently using the multi-strand approach and used for triangulation purposes in the Evaluation Phase.

Evaluation Phase

During this phase, a multi-strand design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The data were again independently analyzed, and the results for both sets of data were merged for comparison. Data previously collected during the Reconnaissance Phase were also used for triangulation purposes. Ivankkova (2015) recommended that multiple sources be used in order to draw more accurate conclusions. Creswell (2009), who supports the use of multiple sources of data for triangulation purposes, asserted that comparing quantitative and qualitative data increases the validity of the qualitative data and the credibility of the results.

Monitoring Phase

During the monitoring phase the new set of inferences generated during the action/intervention evaluation were used to decide if revisions of the action/intervention are needed (Ivankova, 2015). Ivankova (2015) stated that the researcher may decide to continue with the action/intervention and subsequently conduct another evaluation of the outcomes of the intervention. This may lead to further refinement of the action/intervention plan.

<div align="center">

Researcher Role and Experience

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My role as the ECE Assistant Director of the High School Zone primarily involves providing support to high schools within JCPS. My team and I have the responsibility for the coordination of ECE programs and services which focus on compliance, as well as the quality of programs for students. We provide leadership regarding staying in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.

My assigned duties include observing and supporting teachers and school-level administrators who serve students with disabilities. I have supported school-level staff through facilitating professional development activities focused on building capacity in administrators and teachers by implementing proactive evidenced based strategies and interventions at the local and district level. Additionally, I have employed evidenced-based proactive strategies and interventions in my own classrooms and schools, and modeled those strategies and interventions for staff members and subsequently evaluated the efficacy of those strategies and interventions. My role in this study was to build a CoP to enhance the sense of self-efficacy through increasing their knowledge, expertise and effectiveness in supporting and school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities. I achieved this by providing my team with a scheduled time to meet, administering the questionnaire, conducting observations, and collecting data.

Ethical Considerations

Professional integrity was maintained along with respect for all local, state, and federal laws. All research was conducted with respect for and awareness of gender differences and with respect for all groups in society regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or culture. To demonstrate transparency, a meeting was scheduled with all prospective participants to explain the purpose of the study, the role of the participants, research questions, and review data collection methods that were used. Concerns raised by prospective participants were addressed on an individual basis to ensure anonymity.

I completed my CITI Training certification and received University of Kentucky IRB approval. This training and approval assisted in ensuring that during the research process any and all ethical concerns were addressed appropriately. The research process

did not result in unwarranted material gain or loss for any participant. Reporting and dissemination of all findings was conducted in a responsible manner. Participation in this research was voluntary and the decision to take part in the research was based on informed consent. If any prospective participants choose not to participate in the study, it did not negatively impact the individual in any way. Data were treated with appropriate confidentiality and anonymity. Ensuring ethical behavior and maintaining professional integrity was an integral part of UK IRB review and JCPS review.

Quality Assurance

During this study, I consistently communicated with my dissertation chairs to ensure that ethical practices and procedures were followed. I utilized my dissertation committee during the data review and analysis to ensure data were collected and analyzed appropriately. After the results of the research were reviewed by my dissertation committee, the results were shared with the stakeholders involved in the study. Data collected during the study were kept in secure files on my password protected computer.

Summary

Due to the findings of the Reconnaissance Phase, I decided that the CoP was going to be held in person after the team meeting. Additionally, norms would be established to ensure a safe environment would be established for the participants to share knowledge, resources, stories and frustrations with other team members. This chapter outlined the research design plan and provided detailed information about the Reconnaissance Phase. Chapter 3 will present a brief review of the Reconnaissance phase and detailed information about the Planning, Acting, Evaluation and Monitoring Phases of this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this mixed methods action research (MMAR) study was to explore the effectiveness of a community of practice (CoP) designed to increase the self-efficacy of district-level high school team members in the Exceptional Child Education (ECE) Department who support high school-level administrators and teachers in Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) high schools. During the course of this study a six-phase MMAR design was utilized to assess the efficacy of district-level high school team members in assisting schools with their requests for support. These phases included: diagnosing, reconnaissance, planning, acting, evaluation, and monitoring (Ivankova, 2015). Data were collected during this action research study to answer the following overarching question: Did participation in a community of practice increase high school team member's sense of self-efficacy as it relates to their ability to effectively support high school-level administrators and teachers who serve students with disabilities?

This chapter briefly reviews the results from the Reconnaissance Phase (Appendix B). Followed by a summary of the intervention used during the study, as well as the procedures used to implement the intervention that focused on increasing district-level team member efficacy for supporting teachers and principals in JCPS schools. Data collected during the Acting Phase were reported and then used in the Evaluation Phase to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. Finally, recommendations for future development and expansion of the intervention are presented.

Reconnaissance Phase Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative data collected during the Reconnaissance phase informed the development of the community of practice (CoP) to increase the high school zone team member's level of self-efficacy. The inferences developed through analysis of the data, accompanied with information from the literature, supported the development of the CoP. Data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase were analyzed to determine a baseline level for comparison in the Evaluation Phase of the study

Planning Phase

During this phase, data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase were used to gauge the perceived efficacy of the team members in the areas of instruction and management and to identify areas of need and concern. Even though the data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase indicated that the team members felt efficacious in their overall ability to support schools, there appeared to be a significant percentage that scored themselves in the "quite a bit" (33%) to "a great deal category" (56%), regarding their ability to promote change in schools, handle the demands of the job, gauge school staffs comprehension, and improve school staff understanding. Thus, I determined that including these in the topics of discussion in the CoP was appropriate. The rationale behind this is that some team members scored high on these questions as evidenced by the data. This indicates that some team members believe they are very efficacious in these areas. Thus, this provides them with the ability to share their knowledge and expertise in these areas during the CoP may raise the efficacy of the other team members.

Acting Phase

The Acting Phase of this study took place between January and February 2022. The purpose of the implemented intervention was to increase the self-efficacy of district-level high school team members in the ECE department who support high school-level administrators and teachers. The CoP was developed and implemented during the spring semester. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. The original plan was for the CoP to take place each week during January and February. However only four meetings occurred due to ECE staff being pulled to cover for classroom teachers.

Participants

All nine members of the ECE High School Team were invited to participate anonymously in the study. They were all sent via electronic mail a link that allowed them to complete the questionnaire anonymously and provide data during the Reconnaissance Phase. All nine members of the team were able to participate in the Acting Phase. After the CoP was implemented, a link was again sent via electronic mail to all participants; they given two weeks to respond. Nine responses were received. It is appropriate to note that one of the ECE high-school team members assumed a different position inside JCPS after the Acting Phase. However, that individual still participated in the Evaluation Phase.

Organization of the Intervention

The CoP was organized in steps. Step 1 was to inform the participants that if they were to realize any benefit from participating in the CoP, they would need to be actively engaged with the other participants. Step 2 consisted of the participants participating in the CoP, after the team meeting. During this time the participants engaged in

conversations about topics of interest, concerns and shared resources they believed to be relevant to the CoP. The last step was to conclude the CoP.

Community of Practice

After of the team meeting, the CoP would take place. I would briefly remind them of the norms for the meeting. I would also prompt them to please interact with each other and they are in a safe space and this was their time and for their benefit. Lastly, I encouraged them to interact and share resources with one another outside of the CoP. Prior to starting each Cop after the team meeting, the following norms were stated to the participants by the researcher:

- conduct yourself in a professional manner;

- refrain from being negative;

- be respectful of your colleagues;

- please be engaged, limit phone and computer activity; and

- please bring/share any resources you believe may be useful.

During all four of the CoP meetings, the topics of interest and concerns were discussed by the participants. During these meetings the researcher brought several resources that were shared with the participants. The participants also brought resourcs and shared resources during the CoP. These resources included the following topics: how to write IEP's; trauma-informed care; how to address students exhibiting negative behaviors; and special education law and JCPS procedures.

In order for the CoP to be implemented properly as an intervention, some instruction had to be provided to the participants. All of the participants have been involved in professional learning communities but had not participated in a CoP. During

a Zoom call after work hours, I gave a detailed explanation of what a CoP was, how it differed from a PLC, what function the CoP was going to serve, and how they would be able to benefit.

The initial topics of interest and concerns were also shared with the participants during this Zoom call. There was a consensus among the participants that these topics of interest and concerns were appropriate, and they appeared to look forward to learning more about the identified topics and addressing the identified concerns. After this consensus, I stated that my professional library in my office contained books on all the topics of interest and that the team was welcome to borrow them if they would like. One of the participants also stated that she had several websites that she would share with the group, which would provide information on the identified topics.

Community of practice format. The CoP meetings were conducted during the participants' work day. During the course of a normal work day, they received requests for support that were directly related to the topics of interests and concerns identified by the group. They were reminded that a CoP is a group of people who share a concern, set of problems, or passion about a topic and collectively want to broaden their knowledge by interacting regularly (Wenger et al., 2002). The high school ECE team is a group of people that met the requirements for becoming a CoP. Furthermore, even though the team primarily works in schools, they are provided a space at the central office to collaborate with one another. This collaboration time is provided for the purpose of interacting and broadening their knowledge as stated by Wenger et al., (2002). In addition, there are scheduled ECE High School Team meetings that occur weekly. These meetings provide time for the team to collaborate with each other after weekly agenda items are addressed.

During this collaboration time, I observed the team members implementing the CoP through their engaging in discussion and sharing their knowledge and expertise on the identified topics and concerns. My role during this timewas to establish norms to provide a safe space for participants to share knowledge, resources, stories, and express frustrations and to ensure that all discussions were carried out in a professional manner and without conflict. Also, during this time I placed books on the topics of interest in the CoP meeting space and reminded the participants of their availability to the team for reference.

Observations. During the time allotted for collaboration, I observed ECE high school team members' interactions. I wanted to observe if the identified topics of interest and concerns were being addressed in the conversations among the CoP members. During the months of January and February 2022, we had four team meetings (Appendix H), which were normally scheduled to occur once a week. However, due to school staff shortages related to COVID, many members of the ECE high school team had to become substitute teachers in the high schools we support. For example, I had to substitute as a gym teacher for a day at one of our high schools. This consistent requirement that we serve as substitute teachers in schools, resulted in the cancellation of several of our weekly meetings and suspend the scheduling of any meetings until the requests for district-level staff to serve as substitutes decreased.

During the observations, I noted that the participants adhered to the norms established, shared knowledge and resources on the topics of interest, and addressed the concerns identified as well. The most frequent topic of interest addressed was writing effective IEPs, more specifically how the team could assist teachers in their abilities to

write effective IEPs. One participant provided a suggestion during the first meeting, regarding modifying the IEP training sessions. The focus of her suggestions were centered around making IEP training sessions more engaging and provide an opportunity for district staff to assess learning and provide immediate feedback to the teachers. This suggestion was widely supported by the rest of the participants. A comment was also made that we must shift away from the "sit and get" style of trainings. She went on to elaborate further that we consistently ask our schools to provide students with more engaging instruction to increase engagement and enhance learning. She then went on to express that the ECE Department should follow our own guidance, and provide more engaging trainings. This too was widely accepted by the other participants. This topic of writing effective IEP's was discussed in all four meetings and much of the discussion centered around how to write an effective IEP to address negative behaviors. These discussions were directly related to their most frequent concern addressed, which was how to reduce the requests for behavior support. Again, the discussion addressed ways to train the teachers about effective strategies to mitigate negative behaviors exhibited in their classrooms. One of the participants made the comment that many of the teachers in her schools were new, lacked experience and needed assistance in acquiring the "right tools" in her "tool box" to successfully address the behaviors that were occurring in their classrooms. This was agreed upon by the participants and this sparked participants to share resources that they have used in the past to "coach up" new teachers. Responding to schools request for support with student exhibiting negative behavior was a concern that was also discussed in all four meetings.

Another topic of interest that was discussed in the first meeting and throughout the CoP was trauma-informed care. This topic appeared to be a topic that the group desired to be explore deeply. A reason why the participants desire to explore this topic deeply, may be many of the students that exhibit negative behaviors have experienced trauma, some at a very young age. This traumatic experience has impacted these students an a very negative way. After the initial meeting, all subsequent meetings focused on writing effective IEPs and addressing requests for support with behavior. It is noteworthy to mention that compliance issues and regulations appeared to be mentioned more in the last two meetings than in the previous two meetings.

When participants shared the challenges they were facing while performing their duties, their fellow participants would acknowledge that they were experiencing the same challenges. These commonalities appeared to establish a bond among the team members. The appearance of bond establishing could be interpreted as self-efficacy development as described by Bandura (1994) when he stated that self-efficacy beliefs influence how well people persevere in the face of difficulties.

Concluding the CoP

Upon concluding the CoP the participants were thanked by the researcher. The participants expressed gratitude for being given the opportunity to freely collaborate with their team members in a safe environment. One participant expressed that she had been reluctant to ask questions in team meetings, due to she did not believe it would be received well by the group. Another participant expressed that the discussions cleared up many questions that she had been harboring and reluctant to ask. The overall sentiment

was that the Cop was a positive experience and something they enjoyed participating in. One participant expressed that she now looks forward to team meetings.

Evaluation Phase

For the Evaluation Phase, a multi strand design was used that included two phases (Figure 3.1). The Evaluation Phase occurred during March of 2022. In order to evaluate the intervention, the same questionnaire administered in the reconnaissance phase will be used in the Evaluation Phase. Responses to questions in the follow-up (i.e., post-test) questionnaire will be analyzed and organized using the same analysis methods as employed in first iteration of the questionnaire. Synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative data may provide a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of the intervention.
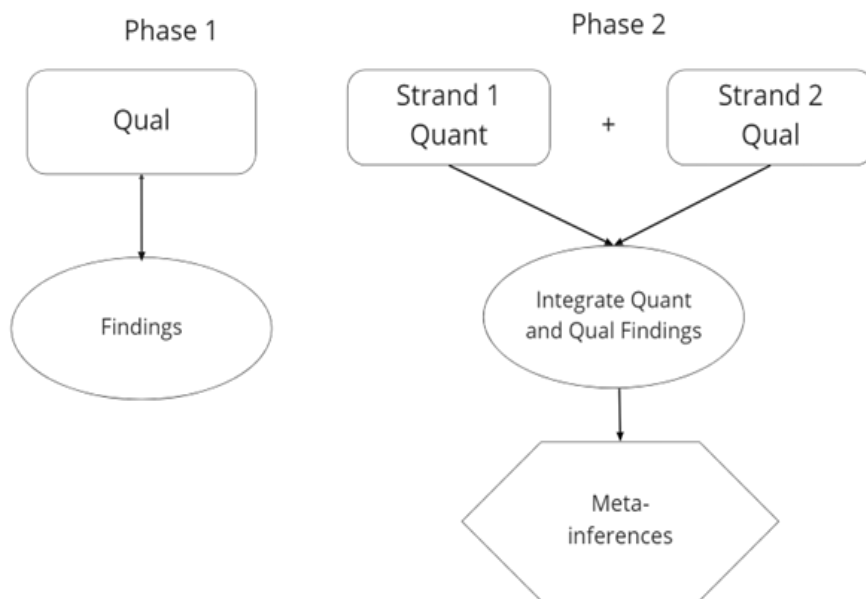
Figure 3.1. Multistrand MMAR Study Design

Phase Design and Research Questions

The following quantitative and qualitative research questions guided the Evaluation Phase of this study. The research questions developed for the Evaluation Phase of this study assisted the researcher in assessing the effectiveness of the CoP in improving the perceived self-efficacy of the participants.

Sample. High School Zone ECE team members were asked to participate in the reconnaissance phase of this study. The team currently consists of nine members who were JCPS employees, and all were certified educators except one individual who serves as the behavior liaison. This sample was used in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Evaluation Phase.

Phase 1

The overall goal of Phase 1 was to determine if the intervention was well received by the participants. The research question that guided this phase was: *Was the CoP perceived as a positive experience by the ECE team members*?

Instrument

The researcher served as the instrument for this phase as a participant observer in the CoP. Field notes were taken during each of the CoP sessions by the researcher based on observations of participants and comments made during the session. Notes taken were written down on a note pad by the researcher. The notes consisted of comments made by the participants during discussions on the topics of interest and concerns identified during the Reconnaissance Phase by the participants. The notes taken during the CoP sessions were analyzed and organized by specific characteristic of the answers and entered into the excel spread sheet. A synthesis of the data provided a basis

for determining if the CoP was well received by the participants and considered a positive experience.

Phase 2

The overall goal of Phase 2 was to assess if the CoP was effective in improving the self-efficacy scores of the participants and if their topics of interest and concerns were appropriately addressed. The quantitative research question that guided this phase was: *Have the self-efficacy scores changed after participating in the CoP?* The qualitative research question that guided this phase was: *Were the topics of interest and concerns of the participants adequately addressed in the CoP?*

Instrument

A within-strategy data collection process was used via questionnaire that included both closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. The questionnaire is the same questionnaire used in the Reconnaissance Phase and is modeled after Tschannen-Moran's (nd) Principal and Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. The wording and focus of the questionnaire questions were based on the ECE context and key issues that emerged from the compression planning process and administered using Qualtrics. The questionnaire consists of questions related to ECE high school zone team member's perception of self-efficacy as it relates to their ability to respond effectively to requests for support from school-level administrators and teachers. Participants may respond to these questions using a scale ranging from 1 to 9 (1 = none at all; 9 = a great deal). The Chief of the ECE Department contributed to the development and the content of the questionnaire to increase face validity.

Data collection and findings. The questionnaire was distributed to the ECE high school team through an anonymous electronic link, all nine members of the team responded. The questionnaire responses from Qualtrics were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The data were stored in my password protected laptop computer. During the entirety of the study, I participated in the study and interacted with the participants. The questionnaire responses were analyzed and organized by specific characteristic of the answers and entered into the excel spread sheet. A synthesis of the data provided a basis for answering the Evaluation Phase quantitative and qualitative research questions. The study's results indicated that the CoP did increase the self-efficacy of the participants.

Quantitative Results

Post-intervention data were collected to assess the effectiveness of the CoP in increasing the level of self-efficacy of district-level team members for responding to requests for support from schools. Data from the follow-up questionnaire were gathered in the same manner as the initial questionnaire and compared with the previously analyzed data collected during the Reconnaissance Phase.

ECE team member efficacy. The level of self-efficacy of participating ECE district-level team members in the Reconnaissance Phase was fairly high (M = 6.62). When the findings of the post-intervention results during the Evaluation Phase were compared to the pre-intervention results collected during the Reconnaissance Phase, an increase of 0.75 (6.62 to 7.37) in the ECE high school team member's sense of self-efficacy was present. This increase in scores is an initial indicator that the CoP was effective in raising the self-efficacy scores of the participants. The mean scores for all the

questions during the Evaluation Phase ranged from 7.0 to 7.67, which was slightly

smaller than in the initial questionnaire. There was a decrease of 0.22 (0.89 to 0.67)

indicating a slight decrease in the dispersion of the data. Mean scores remained the

highest in the area of management (M=7.61), with instruction coming in almost a half

point lower (M = 7.165). Data for the follow up questionnaire are represented in Table

3.1.

The results were disaggregated by question, and a comparison of pre- and post-

intervention data indicated an increase in self-efficacy on all questions. Increases on

Questions 2, 3, 5, and 7 were revealed. Table 3.2. displays a comparison of pre-and post-

intervention self-efficacy scores and the differences.

Pre- and post-intervention scores of each question were compared to explore if

there was an overall increase in the ECE team's perception of their self-efficacy.

Bandura's (1994) reference to self-efficacy being an individual's belief in her or his

ability to successfully accomplish tasks provided insight. The questions deliberately

focused on measuring the ECE team members' a) belief in their ability to manage the

demands of their positions, b) ability to instruct teachers and administrators in different

areas of special education, c) gauge their comprehension, and d) provide them with

alternate examples when necessary. Table 3.3. displays the focus area of each question.

Table 3.1.

Participant responses to follow up High School Zone Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Question	Mean (SD)	Range	% Quite a Bit or A Great Deal
Do you agree to participate in this study?	1	1	NA
Promote change inside the schools you support?	7.00 (1.33)	5 – 9	77.78 %
Handle the demands of the job?	7.67 (.94)	7 - 9	100%
Establish routines to keep your day running smoothly?	7.67 (1.33)	5 - 9	88.89%
Handle the paperwork of the job?	7.44 (.83)	7 - 9	100%
Gauge staffs comprehension of explanation?	7.22 (1.13)	5 – 9	88.89%
Cope with the stress of the job?	7.67 (.94)	7 - 9	100%
Improve the understanding of schools staffs?	7.44 (1.57)	5 – 9	77.77%
Respond to difficult questions from your schools?	7.00 (1.50)	3 – 9	66.66%
Provide and alternate explanation to staff?	7.22 (1.75)	3 – 9	88.89%
Overall Mean	**7.37 (1.67)**	**5.22 -9**	**87.65%**

Table 3.2.

ECE team members pre- and post– intervention self-efficacy scores

Question	Pre-Intervention Mean score	Post-Intervention Mean score	Difference
1	6.89	7.00	0.11
2	6.33	7.67	1.34
3	6.33	7.67	1.34
4	7.00	7.44	0.44
5	6.11	7.22	1.11
6	7.00	7.67	0.67
7	6.44	7.44	1.00
8	6.67	7.00	0.33
9	6.78	7.22	0.44
Total	6.62	7.37	0.75

In both areas of management and instruction, all the scores increased. The area of management showed the greatest increases with the area of instruction showing promising increases as well. This overall increase of 0.75, shifting the average score from 6.62 to 7.37, moved the responses from close to "quite bit" to moving toward "a great deal." Thus, it appears participating in the CoP was effective in was effective in improving the self-efficacy scores of the participants.

Table 3.3.

Focus area of questionnaire questions

Question	Focus Area	Difference
1	Instruction	.11
2	Management	1.34
3	Management	1.34
4	Management	.44
5	Instruction	1.11
6	Management	.67
7	Instruction	1.00
8	Instruction	.33
9	Instruction	.44

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data collected during the Evaluation Phase were collected in the same manner as the Reconnaissance Phase by using open-ended questions that were on the same questionnaire as the closed-end questions. Observations of the participants' during the CoP were used to assess if the CoP was perceived as a positive experience by the ECE team members, and if the CoP was effective in addressing the topics of interest and concerns of the participants. When completing the open-ended questions, participants again provided information on special education topics they would like to learn more about and concerns they still have regarding the ECE department and responding to schools requesting support. The responses were then compared to the responses collected

during the Reconnaissance Phase. The purpose of the comparison was to gauge if the participants' concerns remained the same after the intervention or were they adequately addressed through participation in the CoP. If the topic did not appear in the post-intervention questionnaire, it could be interpreted that the participants received an adequate amount information on the particular topic of interest or concern. Furthermore, the topics of interest and concerns listed on the post-intervention questionnaire provide data that would infer that through open discussion among peers, new topics of interest and concerns were identified. The research questions that guided the qualitative strand in both the Evaluation Phase and Reconnaissance Phase were the same, within-strategy. A detailed description of the qualitative results occus below. However, it is unclear if their topics of interest and concerns were appropriately addressed. The pre- and post-intervention topics of interest and concerns are listed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4.

ECE team members pre- and post– intervention topics of interest and concerns

Pre- Intervention Topics of Interest and Concerns	Post- Intervention Topics of Interest and Concerns
How to write effective IEP's	Special Education Law
Understanding ECE Procedures	Understanding ECE Procedures
T rauma-informed Care	Trauma-informed Care
Responding to Behavior Requests	Responding to Behavior Requests
Relationships with Schools	Relationships with Schools

Topics of interest. The topics of interest changed slightly after the intervention. An interest in special education law replaced the initial interest in how to write effective

IEPs. During the CoP, a robust discussion took place among the participants regarding resources, such as books and websites, which provided tips and examples about how to write effective IEPs. This sharing of knowledge and resources seemed to provide the participants with the information they required on this topic. However, following this discussion, a participants returned gain to issues regarding compliance. Based on my observation, it was here that the interest in special education law appeared. Also, it appeared that the actual interest in writing effective IEPs was actually an interest in writing compliant IEPs, which is what shifted the topic of interest from writing effective IEPs to special education law.

The discussions regarding trauma-informed care and ECE procedures were robust, but with every answer, there was another question. Several participants reported that they were not very familiar with trauma-informed care. Once they became familiar with what it was, there seemed to be many questions about how to implement such care and who would be best equipped to do that. One participant stated that trauma-informed care is "preventative" not "reactive."

After the participants explained some of the ECE procedures in question, several other questions emerged. For example, a participant asked how to determine the appropriate location for a student with autism. The answers provided by participants with that expertise sparked more questions, such as how do we determine if the current school location is appropriate or if the student needs to go to another school? The overall response to all the questions regarding ECE procedures funneled down to the reality that decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis. However, these types of responses did not seem to satisfy all of the participants involved in the discussion.

Concerns. The concerns that were listed in the pre-intervention questionnaire were the same concerns listed in the post-intervention questionnaire. Although the concerns at first seem to be separate, listening to the participants speak on the topics, it became evident they are closely related. The discussion held by the participants revealed that responding to schools that request support for students exhibiting negative behaviors is very time consuming and strains the relationship they have with the schools. The reason the requests strain relationships is that school staff consistently ask for a student to be placed at another school by not following all established protocols and procedures, due to "safety concerns.. Although this was stated by one participant during the CoP, it was supported by the other participants.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data, Meta Inferences

Quantitative and qualitative data consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions were gathered during the Reconnaissance and Evaluation Phases via administration of questionnaires. The data were analyzed independently and then compared to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. The results of the merged data were used to answer the overall research question and to develop conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the intervention.

Self-efficacy. Quantitative data collected from the closed-end questions on the questionnaires were merged with the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions on the questionnaires. The results were used to determine if the CoP intervention increased the participants' sense of self-efficacy, the belief of an individual that he has the ability to successfully accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1994). For this study,

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the target population were the district-level team members in the ECE department who support high school-level administrators and teachers.

A comparison of the quantitative data both before and after the intervention showed an increase of (0.75) in the overall efficacy score (Table 3.3). The opinions of the participants were measured on a scale from 1-9, where 1 means "none at all" and 9 means "a great deal." The quantitative result during the Reconnaissance Phase was 6.62, which was very close to 7 ("quite a bit"). This could be interpreted that before the intervention, many team members believed themselves efficacious in their ability to respond to requests for support from schools. During both the Reconnaissance Phase and Evaluation Phase, all nine team members responded to the questionnaires. Thus, the high response rate throughout the study could have influenced the scores established during the Reconnaissance Phase and continued on through the Evaluation Phase (Table 3.3). However, the increase in the post-intervention scores is likely to be attributed to the participants engaging in robust discussions during the CoP meetings. For example, after participating in the CoP discussions, the participants may believe they are now very efficacious in their ability to respond to requests for support form schools. This realization of acquired expertise, as evidenced by the increase in post-intervention scores, coupled with the development of a system for acquiring knowledge and expertise is likely to have influenced the increase in self-efficacy scores of the participants.

Topics of interest and concerns. There was only a slight change in the list of topics of interest and concerns on the post-questionnaire responses. All concerns and topics of interest listed during the Reconnaissance Phase appeared again in the Evaluation Phase except for "how to write effective IEPs." Additionally, only one new topic of

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interest appeared of the list of needed training: "special education law." Even though all open-ended response questions were consistently answered by all respondents, during the study, there appeared to be little change within participants' pre- and post-responses. It is unclear as to why the topics of interest and areas of concern did not show much change. It could have been due to meetings being canceled, and study participants desire further discussion on the topic. See Appendix F for themes that were used as codes and frequencies of response.

Monitoring Phase

The Monitoring Phase is the sixth phase of the MMAR design. During the Monitoring Phase, data collected during the Evaluation Phase were analyzed, and conclusions were formed about the effectiveness of the action/intervention plan. From these conclusions, decisions were made concerning needed revisions. The findings from the Evaluation Phase were shared with the ECE High School Team during this phase. After reviewing the findings together, we developed recommendations for future post-study revisions to the CoP. The suggestions include: a) expand the CoP to include other members of the ECE department; b) increase the time allotted for the in-person ECE team meeting; and c) rotate facilitators for each CoP.

The rationale behind expanding the CoP to include other members of the ECE Department was to expand the knowledge base of the CoP. The ECE Department consists of five zones, grouped by level (i.e., three elementary zones, one middle school zone, and one high school zone). Each zone varies in experience and expertise; however, all study participants believed that by combining all the zones into one group, the knowledge and

expertise level would greatly increase along with the ability of the CoP to enhance the self-efficacy of its members.

The rationale for expanding the time frame of the in-person ECE team meeting is to invite guests to present information on topics of shared interest. For example, a mental health practitioner could present information about trauma-informed care. A member of the district legal team could come speak to the group about special education laws and procedures.

The rationale for rotating facilitators was two fold: give everyone an opportunity to be a leader and do not overburden any one team member with the responsibility of continually facilitating the CoP. Several members of the ECE Department have extensive experience with as a leader. Several team members transitioned from the classroom to their district-level position and have never been part of a leadership team. Facilitating a CoP could give them an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. An example of this would be monitoring discussions and ensuring that all participants maintained their professionalism to assure the discussion or presentation stayed focused on the topics of interest and concerns identified by the group as needed for continuing professional development.

Study Limitations

Study limitations are constraints that can hinder the researcher's ability to generalize data for other contexts (Joyner et al., 2013). Several limitations impacted this study, particularly the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in JCPS. The district administrators placed ridged restrictions on conducting research in school settings. These restrictions limited who could serve as study participants: Only staff that I supervised and

interacted with professionally on a regular basis were allowed to participate. This limitation in turn created a relatively small group of people that I could recruit to participate in my study. The restrictions also limited the opportunity for collaboration with other groups inside the ECE Department and JCPS, such as school psychologist, mental health practitioners, school administrators and teachers. These limitation greatly hindered the ability of the participants to gather knowledge and expertise from other groups, which in turn could have enhanced the CoP and further influenced their level of self-efficacy. The schools teacher shortages within the district also limited the number of meetings we could have because ECE staff members were required to serve as substitutes in schools. It is not known how cancellation of meetings impacted the data collected post-intervention.

Implications and Reflections

Providing support to schools is the primary purpose of a district-level employee. Due to many influences (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, teacher shortages, ever-changing regulations, limited staff), completing this dissertation become increasingly more difficult. In response to all of these challenges, the goal of this action research study was to explore how the development and implementation of an CoP influenced ECE staffs self-efficacy or ability to persevere in the face of difficulties in supporting schools that request support. In this section, I describe potential implications that these study findings have for organizational leadership and educational policy. A reflection on my role as a participant-leader, participant-researcher, and lessons I learned about organizational leadership and action research are also included.

Implications for Organizational Leadership

The findings from this study were very promising. Based upon my observations of the participants during the intervention and after the intervention, coupled with results of the evaluation data, I believe that a CoP may be a viable option for influencing ECE staffs self-efficacy in supporting schools that request support. The CoP provided an opportunity for staff to interact with one another in a positive manner, share knowledge, strategies, experiences and develop relationships with their peers. I believe that future implementation of a CoP in the ECE Department will further strengthen staff relationships and increase staff members' ability to efficiently and effectively support schools that request support. This notion is supported by Browne-Ferrigno and Björk, (2018) who noted the importance of cooperation and teamwork that is continuous and human centered rather than episodic and short term when attempting to accomplish large-scale change. In this regard, the continued implementation of a CoP during work hours to assist in motivating staff to persevere in the face of difficulties may be warranted.

A CoP may also be an effective way to assist in the onboarding process of new ECE staff members. This notion is supported by Lave and Wenger, (2001) who asserted that a group's performance can be improved by sharing new ideas and best practices and by providing new members with a place to grow effectively and to create and share knowledge. Our organization is continually hiring new staff members due to retirements and staff seeking other opportunities and positions inside JCPS. These new staff members are expected to carry out their job duties immediately. Being a member of an established CoP would give this new staff member an avenue to acquire knowledge and expertise to carry out their job duties.

Prior to this study, team meetings were simply a structured time and place for members to assemble and receive departmental updates and information on district initiatives. Time was not allotted for staff members to interact with one another on a professional level and increase their knowledge and expertise. Thus, I believe establishing an ECE Department CoP would be a viable option for influencing ECE staffs to interact professionally, share knowledge, and increase their level of self-efficacy in supporting schools that request support.

Researcher Reflection

Bringing this MMAR study to the implementation stage was a long and challenging journey. Since I started the study, I have changed work positions and physical locations twice—in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. These changes and challenges forced me to alter and revise my study several times. However, even though it has been a long and challenging journey, I believe I have grown as a leader and gained a wealth of knowledge on how self-efficacy develops. Over the past few years, I also acquired expertise on how to lead, conduct research, and conduct an MMAR study.

During my role as participant-leader, I provided information to the participants on how to develop and implement a CoP. As previously stated, my staff only had expertise participating in a PLC. The task of developing a CoP was accomplished quickly and without issue due to the participants being accustomed to receiving information from me on a regular basis. While conducting this study, I also acquired a wealth of knowledge about my staff. Due to the nature of our diverse work responsibilities, we typically do not spend a lot of time together. During my time observing them interacting with one

another, I was able to obtain a better understanding of the challenges they face on a daily basis and how I can assist them and become a better leader.

As a participant-researcher, I did not have to overcome any obstacles that an outsider may encounter. My team appeared to be willing to participate, even after it was emphasized many times that participation was voluntary. The participants were always positive and maintained their professionalism throughout the study. I in turn acted in a professional manor and treated all participants with respect. My actions are supported by the writings of Rost (1991) in which he posits that his post-modern perspective on leadership that emphasized four essential elements of leadership: 1) relationships based on influence; 2) collaborative action by leaders and followers; 3) production of real changes; and 4) serving mutual purposes. Even though some study participants engaged in discussions more often than others, none appeared to be reluctant to make statements or ask questions during the CoP meetings. I would have preferred that several of the team meetings had not been canceled in order to gather more data. However, even though I had limited time to make observations, I was able to see the benefits of providing the allotted time for the team to interact with one another professionally during the CoP.

Conclusion

The purpose of this MMAR study was to implement a CoP as an intervention to increase the knowledge and skill level of district-level team members in the ECE department who support high school-level administrators and teachers in JCPS high schools. Increasing staffs' knowledge and skill on how to properly implement a student's IEP may make them more efficacious in their ability to support teachers and administrators requesting support.

Based on the findings that emerged from this action research study showed promise that participating in a CoP may be an effective means of increasing self-efficacy in team members. According to by Donohoo et al., (2018), efficacy can be built by providing a safe learning environment for frequent and productive collaborations. The findings also show that the participants did perceive the CoP as a postivie experience. It was unclear on if the participants topics of interest and concerns were adequately addressed. Lastly, the findings provided suggestions on how to improve future iterations of the work (e.g., expanding the CoP to include other members of the ECE department). Marks et al., (2001) reported that efficacy is a product of team experiences. Their observations support that the findings of this action research study could serve as a starting point for further investigation by other institutions and other departments inside JCPS interested in increasing the self-efficacy of team members through a CoP.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

List of Acronyms and Terms

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible children ages 3-21.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
Special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge and are provided in conformity with an Individualized Education Program.

Individual Education Program (IEP)
The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with federal law. The IEP guides a special education student's learning. It is created for children between the ages of 3 and 21. It describes the amount of time that the child will spend receiving special education services, any related services the child will receive, and academic/behavioral expectations.

Annual performance rating (APR)
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to develop a state performance plan/annual performance report (SPP/APR) that evaluates the state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA and describes how the state will improve its implementation.

Compression Planning (CP)
In short, Compression Planning (CP) is a visual planning process that captures ideas on note cards, post it notes etc. to be posted on storyboards, to quickly identify ideas that can be organized into a plan or project that will address a goal or an objective.

APPENDIX B

ECE Compression Planning Exercise:

Creating an Organizational Structure that Best Serves All ECE Students in the Most

Effective and Efficient Way Possible

Session Dates
October 11, 2019
9:00 – 11:00 AM

December 3, 2019
8:00 – 11:00 AM

Table of Contents

Compression Planning Design/Agenda

BACKGROUND

- This a new day for ECE creating an opportunity to do things differently.
- We are here to use our resources effectively and efficiently for the best interests of students.
- Our focus is always on the best interest of all students.
- We work together for the good of our students.
- Our work is about more than CAP compliance.
- Our organizational structure should be equitable and fit the needs and requirements of our department's work.
- Current organizational charts also included on board.

OVERALL PURPOSE

To create an organizational structure focused primarily on doing what's right for the child and not one focused JUST on checking boxes off for CAP.

PURPOSE(S) OF THIS SESSION

1. What roles should do what specific tasks and responsibilities?
2. What are our big buckets of work?
3. What are they really doing day-to-day?
4. Do our current job descriptions fit our needs, priorities and requirements?
5. How do we align our organizational structure, jobs and roles with our priorities and needs?

6. How to best communicate with each other to be better?

NON-PURPOSE(S) OF SESSION

- To discuss how ECE used to work or how we used to do things.
- To discuss situational things at the school level.
- To discuss budget or need for more money.
- To discuss district reorganization or decisions.
- To discuss why things won't work.

HEADERS/QUESTIONS

1. Which tasks and activities currently take priority in ECE on a day-to-day basis?
2. What does our current allocation of time tell us about our CURRENT priorities?
3. Where do we have gaps in services to students?
4. How to keep focused on doing what is best for students without more money and more staff?

Clarifying Questions

- Recurring theme student interests; how do we define it? What does success look like? RESPONSE: Parent concerns, complaints, and CAP take a lot of time. However, doing our work means being in the classroom working on teaching and learning with kids. If we get to that point, the other issues will be addressed.
- Churning ideas 8-10 words minimum. Complete idea so anyone can read and understand.
- Focusing on students in the next 6 months without more staff or more money.

Top Ideas Generated Session 1

What are the three things we can do staying focused on what's best for students in the next 6 months without more staff or more money?

1. Build capacity of ECE district staff so "all" district staff are highly qualified in "all" special education areas. (4 Dots)
   - Sharing across departments in ECE & other district departments. (2 Dots)
   - Share/communicate knowledge in ECE Department to provide consistency (2 Dots)
2. Develop ownership of students in school buildings. (10 Dots)
   - Work on building capacity with school based administration/leadership to "own" their students and provide for their needs.
   - Students at each school belong to every staff member at THAT school.

- All students are OURS! We are JCPS!
- All students are general education students 1st, Tier 1; effective instruction for all kids will prevent significant problems later.

3. Focus on building the capacity of school staff to lessen dependence on ECE staff. Hold schools accountable. (Four Dots)
   - Develop an accountability system for implementation of recommendations. (6 Dots)
   - Enable and empower teachers to carry out their roles and responsibilities as a case manager. (3 Dots)
   - Increase expectations of schools / teachers instead of doing their jobs – coach, build capacity, and monitor implementations. (2 Dots)

What are the top 3-5 gaps in student services we should focus on in the next 6 months?
1. Gap between training provided and implementation of training concepts in schools and classrooms (ECE Implementation Coaches – overwhelmed). (10 Dots)
   - Lack of consistent ECE implementation across classes, schools, and districtwide. (9 Dots)
   - We spend time w/schools who don't "get it" versus putting structures/ systems.
   - Lack of evidence based practices at the school level. (5 Dots)
     - Lack of implementation
     - Lack of accountability
2. Time spent in classes/schools without certified staff vs. building more capacity of certified staff. (3 Dots)
   - Gap between the need for programing, behavior and academic supports for schools and the availability of district personnel. (2 Dots)
   - Lack of explicit instruction in evidence – based practices in the classroom across the district.
   - School staff lack the skill and will to adequately meet the academic/behavioral needs of students. As a result, ECE staff are stretched thin and cannot meet needs effectively.
   - Building capacity and accountability at the school level. (3 Dots)
3. There is not a continuum (district and system plan) of services in each building, which leads to administrators wanting students out of their buildings. (2 Dots)
4. Gap in focus on keeping students in a classroom and providing consistency for SS in the LRE.
5. Student assignment negatively impacts school transportation. There is not equitable access to programs for all students (legal issue).

What should be the top 3 – 5 priorities for our time?

1. Spend our time responding/reacting to a lack of understanding of serving students with disabilities, knowledge of the law and evidence-based practices. (16 Dots)
   - Scattered trying to appropriately balance compliance and implement-action (putting out fires, not able to build capacity / culture). (1 Dot)
   - Putting out fires responding to unpredicted issues on a daily basis…teachers, parents, administration [Daily] (5 Dots)
   - We spend the vast majority of our time "reacting". (1 Dot)
   - Immediate decisions vs. data driven, informed decisions = inconsistent messages. (3 Dots)
   - No time to plan and prepare. Reacting vs. proactively making a change (based on outside influences)
2. Lack of cross training within the current departmental structure (district level -too many "specialists"). (7 Dots)
3. IDEA Compliance - working to ensure we comply with all laws for identification, implementation and monitoring for student success. 60-day timelines/indicator compliance- daily
4. CAP - provide guidance, modeling, training regarding issues of compliance and implementation related to CAP on a daily basis.

Remainder of Ideas Generated During Session

Which tasks and activities currently take priority in ECE on a day-to-day basis?

Leadership IDEA / Behavior
- Monitor IDEA compliance by conducting monthly record reviews, visiting classrooms, and participations in admissions and release committee meetings.
- Staffing with schools from an electronic database requests to (coordinate services) about student behaviors that schools feel they can't handle by themselves.
- (Coordinating services) providing intervention strategies, feedback on next steps reviewing data, modeling best practices to coach ECE teachers.
- Fielding daily emails and phone calls to respond to school administrators and (school staff) in regards to student behavior needs (students with challenging behaviors)
- Field phone calls from parents, KDE, and community advocates about perceived violations of IDEA safety concerns, access to LRE. Weekly
- Educate schools that a student with behaviors that is in their building can be supported and successful in their building.
- Coaching schools to change mindset and belief systems that students need to stay in the classroom and school and not be removed.

School Psychologist
- Consulting with school staff and parents on section 504 accommodation plans/eligibility and gathering data to support student. Daily/Hourly

- Student assessment for special education identification, including administering test, classroom observations, collecting and analyzing data, writing student assessment reports for IDEA compliance. Daily
- Consulting with teachers to problem-solve student's academic and /or behavior weaknesses through multi-tiered system of supports; creating interventions or modifying current interventions to improve student performance. Daily
- Attending ARC meetings to plan special education evaluations, review assessment reports, and guide ARC on eligibility decision making. Daily
- Student transfer reviews – it involves gathering out of district data and analyzing it and consulting with teacher and ARC chairperson to determine KY eligibility and IEP needs for students. Daily

Program Team
- Reacting (phone call, email, visit – one or multiple steps) to principal and parent phone calls (per person) 5 to 20 a day within 24 hours.
- Participating in ARC meeting to support ARC chairs, teachers, parent, students, represent the district. 1 -2 daily unpredicted
- Responding to support request for behavior (autism, MSD, OHI, DD) 5 – 20 per day from principal, post sup, teachers, parents, counselor, implementation coaches.
- Responding to emails for assistance and information 30 – 50 per day within 24 hours. District, schools, parents.
- Drafting IEP's for school staff, completing paperwork for school staff, creating visual supports. 5 – 10 daily.

ECE Implementation
- Supervise Corrective Action Plan activities of the supervisors ECE implementation analyze data; report data in a meaningful way.
- Consult, coach, guide, advise supervise ECE Imp. On student/school specific cases.
- Coaching: conduct on site visits; receive phone calls & emails to support/answer questions of school-based implementation coaches.
- Record Review: Conduct up to 30 record reviews per month per implementation coach.
- CAP: receive guidance; provide information, and coach/monitor schools and coaches with correction of documentation and processes related to CAP issues.
- School Assignment: Receive requests from schools for more restrictive classroom options for ARC communities to consider.
- Case Manage/Staff Allocation: Track case manager numbers and submit staffing changes to finance and HR (when teacher is over load)

- Special Needs Transportation: Communicate requests to transportation for special needs bus availability to school assignments needed.
- Respond timely (24 hours) to emails and phone calls of parents and school staff regarding various ECE procedures.

Single Role Groups
Leadership:
Daily –
- Too many meetings and not enough "work" time to pull it altogether: Putting systems in place
- Providing info/answering questions to staff (district/school) about the basics of their jobs (what they should know coming out of college)
- C.O. Leadership

Daily –
- Facilitate communication between the role groups in a school setting. Ex. Implementation coach to principal, asst. principal to counselor
- Liaison 504

Daily –
- Talk to parent about their child's school concerns. 10 or more phone calls.
- Leadership, 504, Parent Liaison

Daily –
- Paperwork & IC rights and completing paperwork on IC correctly – b/w staff at schools.
  Compliance of procedures
  And documentation – state forms- 504

Daily –
- Liaison b/w district personnel, school staff, and parents.
  Passing info b/w psychologists – parents and health services.

What does our current allocation of time tell us about our CURRENT priorities?

Addressing individual student needs to improve outcomes i.e. program supports, behavior interventions, and school assignment. (1 Dot)
- Spend our time modeling, coaching and developing materials to use with a student to remain in the classroom/school while others (administrators) work to get them out of the school.
- Get ahead of schools/personnel exploiting the programs/systems. To get kids out of school.
- We focus on/respond to adult requests vs. focusing on children/classroom (making adults happy).

- Structural challenges impact students with IEPSs. (Organization – student; assignment; space)
- Customer service is a priority for the department based on response time (24 hours) to parents, parents, principals, school staff, etc.
- Our current priorities are ensuring that students immediate needs are being met with in their current environments. (phone calls, emails daily)
- "Groundhog Day" every day. We are constantly retraining staff (school based) (lots of reasons).
- No "non-negotiable" special ed. 101 across the district. What is the Foundation for ECE for everyone in the district? (1 Dot)

Where do we have gaps in services to students?

Gap between the level of school based expertise and the needs of students.
Approximately 10% of schools have this expertise.
- Adult need vs. student -> all behavior no instruction
- HR - Lack of qualified candidates – ECE teachers, instructional assistants
- Ability to implement programs. JCTS restricts: paperwork, trainings, ARC meeting, overall what teachers can provide to our students.
- Gap between IEP and BIP activities and actual implementation of said activities.
- Transition from setting to setting; School to school, hospital to school, jail to school, HH to school. Loss of services, loss of education, compliance becomes an issue.

ECE is viewed as the only way a student can get help.
- Zones/levels/schools; no continuity, 150 schools = 150 different ways of doing business
- Lack of being able to program creatively for individual students w/unique needs – schools are not receptive (2 Dots)
- Lack time on district and school ECE staff to sustain programs & training in schools.
- We are not proactively implementing positive behavior strategies (with fidelity) which leads to removals from classrooms/school (suspension)
- Supporting teachers that may be influenced by JCTA view or contract.

How to keep focused on doing what is best for students without more money and more staff?

Stop enabling school staff by allowing them to develop and grow.
- All levels of JCPS leadership acknowledge and understand the ECE leadership decisions are based upon regulations, data, and not emotions. (2 Dots)
- Cross departmental work to ensure efficiency – schools can't shop for the desired answer. (1 Dot)

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Debrief

What went well?

Working together in different groups.

Equal voice

Norms were established and the day was structured.

Lessons Learned

We are all in the same boat.

Hints of influences outside of ECE we must acknowledge to implement ideas.

What would we change for our next session?

Time for a break.

Invite ECE Implementation coach, resource teacher, clerk or secretary.

Invite School – based staff, parent (?)

New Background Session 2
- Survey Summary Results – hard copies on tables.
- Key ideas from Session 1 will be on every table
- Acknowledge that change is stressful.
- Big picture – adjustments on job descriptions to get to more consistent job categories aligned with needs and priorities, not job descriptions that are based on individuals
- The change is going to happen regardless, and this is your opportunity to be a part of the change
- Restructuring could involve:
- ➢ adding new roles,
- ➢ merging two or more existing roles,
- ➢ losing roles that are surplus to priorities, or
- ➢ combination of these things.

HEADERS/QUESTIONS
1. What are the inherent downsides to our current organizational structure?
2. What core systems or processes do we need in place to become less reactive   and more efficient?
3. Which role groups/positions are best suited for which core systems/processes/practices?
4. What are we missing in terms in role groups/role groups?

Key Ideas Generated

What are the inherent downsides to our current organizational structure?

Group responded to this question in order to identify Priority Core Systems/Processes/Practices.

- With the current structure, the teams (e.g. Psychologists, program team and implementation) operate in silos. There is not consistent communication between groups to ensure efficient support to schools.
- Lack of meaningful cross departmental communication and teamwork at the district level.
- Implementation coaches are evaluated by their school administration – this causes them to be asked to do things ECE related that may not be based upon student data.
- Communication structure is inconsistent, Inconsistences in people who are giving answers. All have different rulebook they're following.
- School staff have difficulty knowing who to go to for support.
- Structure of Leadership in ECE – effective communication in a timely manner.
- Silos – Assessment, programs, compliance, behavior, ICS – too departmentalized
- Conflicting interests - the interest between needs of ECE students vs. principals and Assistant Superintendent. Trying to "protect" his or her school.
- Communication when working between role groups (supervisors, psych., GLEC, etc.) and schools to programs for students.
- "Don't step in my territory" attitude. (school and district)
- We may be overspecialized for specific groups or roles. "you have to talk to XX for that question."
- C.O. & School based inconsistent understanding of roles & responsibilities across district. People think, "X does that" when "Y really does that."
- Areas of ECE (district level) do not collaborate with each other.
- School needs -> available resources @ district. Our current structure reinforces 911 reactionaries. Schools depend on central office for support versus relying internally at the school level.
- Individuals new to roles appear to lack professional knowledge (don't know regs.)
- Using reactionary strategies to address systematic issues. Example: schools do not have ownership of their students due to placement of particular programs and collection or resources "special schools, special classes."
- Rigid -> individuals work in narrowly defined roles -> lack of collaboration (informal only).
- There has been a breakdown of the continuity of services to students because of Zone assignments.

- School psychologists being school based has decreased opportunities for collaboration with programs and implementation.
- Do to staff turnover/change: depth of knowledge lacking; understanding roles & responsibilities.

APPENDIX C

ECE High School Zone Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
adapted from Tschannen-Moran's (n.d) Principal Efficacy Questionnaire
https://wmpeople.wm.edu/asset/index/mxtsch/pse

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of issues or circumstances that create challenges for ECE High School Zone team members in accomplishing their work.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side. The scale of responses ranges from "None at all" (1) to "A Great Deal" (9), with "Some Degree" (5) representing the mid-point between these low and high extremes. You may choose any of the nine possible responses, since each represents a degree on the continuum.

Your answers are confidential.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

"In your current role as ECE High School Zone team member, to what extent can you…"

(1) None at All (3) Very Little (5) Some Degree (7) Quite a Bit (5) A Great Deal

1. Do you consent to participate in this study	Yes/No
2. Handle the time demands of the job?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. Promote change inside the schools you support?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. Establish routines to keep your day running smoothly?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Handle the paperwork required of the job?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. Gauge schools staffs' comprehension of what you explain to them?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
7. Cope with the stress of the job?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. Improve the understanding of school staffs' understanding of the purpose of regulations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
9. Respond to difficult questions from your schools?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. Provide an alternative explanation or example when school staffs' are confused?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. What are your top 1-3 concerns regarding the image of the ECE department inside the schools you support?

1.

2.

3.

10. What are the top 1-3 demands that take up most of your time?

1.

2.

3.

11. What are the top 1-3 concerns you have when responding to a school requesting support?

1.

2.

3.

12. What are the top 1-3 special education topics you would like to learn more about?

1.

2.

3.

Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy (TSES) Questionaire

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for teachers. Your answers are confidential.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) *None at all* to (9) *A great deal* as each represents a degree on the continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
None at all		Very Little		Some Degree		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?
9. How much can you do to help your student's value learning?
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?

Principal Sense of Self-Efficacy Questionaire

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for teachers. Your answers are confidential.

Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) *None at all* to (9) *A great deal* as each represents a degree on the continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
None at all		Very Little		Some Degree		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

1. To what extent can you facilitate learning in your school?
2. To what extent can you generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school?
3. To what extent can you handle the time demands of the job?
4. To what extent can you ou do to manage change in your school?
5. To what extent can you promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population?
6. To what extent can you creae a positive learning environment for your school?
7. To what extent can you raise student achievement on standardized tests?
8. To what extent can you promote a positive image of your school with the media?
9. To what extent can you motivate teachers?
10. To what extent can you promote the prevailing values of the community in your school?
11. To what extent can you maintain control of your daily schedule?
12. To what extent can you shape the pperational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school?
13. To what extent can you handle the effective discipline of students?
14. To what extent can you promote acceptable behavior among students?
15. To what extent can you handle the paperworkm of the job?
16. To what extent can you promote ethical behavior among school personnell?
17. To what extent can you cope with the sress of the job?
18. To what extent can you prioritize among competing demands of the job?

In your current role as ECE High School Zone team member, to what extent can you…"

1. Handle the time demands of the job?	3P. Handle the demands of the job?
2. Promote change inside the schools you support?	4P Manage change inside your school?
3. Promote a positive image of the ECE Department inside the schools you support?	8P. Promote a positive image of your school?
4. Establish routines to keep your day running smoothly?	8T Establish routines to keep activities running smoothly
5. Handle the paperwork required of the job?	15P Handle the paperwork of the job?
6. Gauge schools staffs' comprehension of what you explain to them?	10T Gauge student comprehension of what you have taught
7. Cope with the stress of the job?	17P cope with the stress of the job?
8. Improve the understanding of school staffs' understanding of the purpose of regulations?	14T Improve the understanding of a student who is failing.
9. Respond to difficult questions from your schools?	7T Respond to difficult questions from your students?
10. Provide an alternative explanation or example when school staffs' are confused?	20T Provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

APPENDIX F

Code	Frequency used	Definition	Example
Trauma-informed Care	2	A framework for working with students that integrates knowledge about trauma and its impact on students. Rossen & Bateman, (2020)	Providing positive reinforcement and establish a relationship
Writing effective IEP's	2	An effective IEP is one that discusses the student's strengths and needs, the parents' concerns and the assessment data,	Include a statement of strength, give the parent an opportunity to express their concerns, and include the results of the initial and most recent evaluation
Relationship with schools	5	The relationship between the ECE Department and the individual High schools	The relationship between the ECE Dept. and the schools is perceived to be negative
Understanding Procedures	8	The procedures that are put in place to maintain compliance with federal, state and local regulations	Schools do not understand the importance of meeting timelines, regarding IEPs.
Behavior Issues	5	Issues associated with negative behaviors exhibited by Special Ed students.	Responding to behavior issues consistently takes up an abundance of time

APPENDIX G

Code	Frequency used	Definition	Example
Trauma-informed Care	3	A framework for working with students that integrates knowledge about trauma and its impact on students. Rossen & Bateman, (2020)	Providing positive reinforcement and establish a relationship
Specia Education Law	5	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is legislation that ensures students eith disabiites are provided a free and appropriate education.	If a student has been formally diagnosed with a disability, the local education agency (LEA) must provide educational services to the student free of charge from of the ages of 3-21
Relationship with schools	3	The relationship between the ECE Department and the individual High schools	The relationship between the ECE Dept. and the schools is perceived to be negative
Understanding Procedures	5	The procedures that are put in place to maintain compliance with federal, state and local regulations	Schools do not understand the importance of meeting timelines, regarding IEPs.
Behavior Issues	9	Issues associated with negative behaviors exhibited by Special Ed students.	Responding to behavior issues consistently takes up an abundance of time

APPENDIX H

Exceptional Child Education Department
High School Team Meeting
Date 1/18/2022
1:00 pm

Those invited to the meeting: Those present at the meeting:
Zoom link:

Agenda Item	Responsible	Notes
Team building: Collaborations and Recognitions	All members	
Current Issues in Zone		

Community of Practice	Boyd	Questions?
		 Topics of interest:
		     How to write and an effective IEP
		     Compliance with ECE procedures
		     Trauma Infomed Care
		
		 Concerns:
		     Relations ships with schools
		     Behavior issues in schools

Preparation:
- **Be on time and ready to engage in all discussion**
- **Active listening**
- **Be positive and proactive**
- **Remain open and consider the possibilities**
- **Maintain confidentiality**

Exceptional Child Education Department

High School Team Meeting
Date 2/8/2022
1:00 pm

Those invited to the meeting:
Those present at the meeting:
Zoom link:

Agenda Item	Responsible	Notes
Team building: Collaborations and Recognitions	All members	
Current Issues in Zone		

Community of Practice	Boyd	Questions?
		Topics of interest:
		    How to write and an effective IEP
		    Compliance with ECE procedures
		    Trauma Infomed Care
		
		Concerns:
		    Relations ships with schools
		    Behavior issues in schools

Other		

Preparation:
- **Be on time and ready to engage in all discussion**
- **Active listening**
- **Be positive and proactive**
- **Remain open and consider the possibilities**
- **Maintain confidentiality**

Exceptional Child Education Department
High School Team Meeting

Date 2/15/2022
1:00 pm

Those invited to the meeting:
Those present at the meeting: Zoom link:

Agenda Item	Responsible	Notes
Team building: Collaborations and Recognitions	All members	Happy Valentine's Day week!!! Great health reports!
Current Issues in Zone		
Community of Practice	Boyd	Questions? *Topics of interest:* How to write and an effective IEP Compliance with ECE procedures Trauma Infomed Care *Concerns:* Relations ships with schools Behavior issues in schools
Other		

Preparation:
- **Be on time and ready to engage in all discussion**
- **Active listening**
- **Be positive and proactive**
- **Remain open and consider the possibilities**
- **Maintain confidentiality**

Exceptional Child Education Department
High School Team Meeting
Date 2/22/2022
1:00 pm

Those invited to the meetingThose present at the meeting:
Zoom link:

Agenda Item	Responsible	Notes
Team building: Collaborations and Recognitions	All members	
Current Issues in Zone		
Community of Practice	Boyd	Questions? *Topics of interest:* How to write and an effective IEP Compliance with ECE procedures Trauma Infomed Care *Concerns:* Relations ships with schools Behavior issues in schools Thank you!
Other		

APPENDIX I

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

IRB Number: 67263

TO: Boyd Gudgel, III
     Educational Leadership Studies
     PI phone #: 5022629555

     PI email: boyd.gudgel@jefferson.kyschools.us

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
       Nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval for Exemption Certification

DATE: 12/20/2021

On 12/20/2021, it was determined that your project entitled "*IMPROVING SELF-EFFICACY OF TEAMS SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS THROUGH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE*" meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" available in the online Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

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VITA

Boyd Gudgel

Work Experience
Assistant Director, ECE 7/2020- Present
Manager ECE-Behavior, JCPS 8/2018-7/2020
Assistant Principal, Ballard High School, 2010-2018
Assistant Principal, Kennedy Metro Middle, 2008-2010
Lead Teacher, Ballard High School 2006-2008
Teacher, Ballard High School 2003-2006
Teacher, Rice Audubon School, 2000-2003

Education
University of Louisville, **Specialist in Education Degree, August 2011**
University of Louisville, **Master of Education, May 2003**
Barry University**, Bachelor of Arts, Business Management, May 1989**

District Level Leadership Experience
Assistant Director, ECE, JCPS 7/2020-Present
Manager ECE-Behavior, JCPS 8/2018-7/2020

School Building Level Leadership Experience
Assistant Principal, Ballard High School 2010-17
Custodian Evaluator and Supervisor, Ballard High School 2010- 17
Building Manager, Ballard High School 2010-17
Fine Arts Center Manager, Ballard High School 2010-17
Safety Committee Facilitator, Ballard High School 2006-07
Curriculum Committee Member, Ballard High School 2005-07
ECE Meeting Coordinator, Ballard High School 2005-06