

# Creating a Collaborative Culture for Continuous Learning

Dr. Deborah L. Wartham

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- Overview
  - PLC
  - FNO Principles
- Mission - Belief System
- Culture
- Collaborative Planning

2

Professional

Learning

Community

3

The defining characteristics of schools as communities are the special ways they bond together and share their values and ideas.

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1. Supportive and shared leadership
2. Shared mission, vision, values and goals (behaviors guide decisions about teaching and learning)
3. Collective learning and application
4. Supportive conditions (caring relationships- students, teachers and administrators, respect, trust, communication systems, and time to articulate)
5. Shared personal practice (visitation, feedback, repertoire)

Huffman and Hipp

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- Mission → • Why?
- Vision → • What?
- Values → • How?
- Goals → • Which?

FNO DVD 1 The Mission is our Purpose

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Community

Staff create an environment that fosters:

- mutual cooperation;
- emotional support; and
- personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone.

1. What do we want to do?
2. How will we know if we are succeeding?
3. What will we do to ensure success? (p.73)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The mission of this school district is to ensure that each student is prepared to succeed in life. This is accomplished in an environment of trust and respect that fosters positive attitudes toward self, others, work, and responsible citizenship. We are dedicated to maximizing potential and developing lifelong learners who will be contributing members in a global society.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ The mission of our school is to create and maintain an environment that ensures that every student gets into a prestigious college. We commit to a system of support to assure this outcome.

- (p.74)
1. Assemble a task force
  2. Collect the views of each stakeholder group
  3. Small-group work
  4. A "snowball" method

1. Display the mission statement
  - Web site
  - Press releases
  - Letterhead
2. Cite mission statement as a guide during meetings
3. Teacher leaders use during meetings
4. Frequently evaluate the school's policies
5. Inform new staff
6. Respond to failure to act in accordance

**Big Idea #1: Ensuring That Students Learn**

- What do we want students to learn?
- How will we know when each has learned?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty?

**Big Idea #2: Culture of Collaboration Determined**  
staff members will find a way to collaborate.

Rick DuFour 13

**Big Idea #3: A Focus on Results**

- Staff confront data on student achievement and work together to improve results rather than make excuses.

FNO 2 Video Tying Your Mission to a Moral Purpose

Rick DuFour 14

- Intense professional development
- Honoring time
- Focus – Data Driven
- Monitoring
- Observation and Conferencing

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- **Rally the staff** to create a culture of learning and high expectations
- **Inspect** what you expect.
- **Collaborate**
- **Benchmark Best Practices**
- **Hold meaningful Faculty Meetings**
- **Clarify beliefs – FIRST**
- Provide **feedback**
- Be **relentless** about **data**
- **Feed** the staff emotionally and professionally
- **Celebrate** successes and cultivate leadership qualities

FNO 2 Setting High Expectations HANDOUT - CHECKLIST 16

- Serves as the visionary leader of teachers.
- Spends 50% of the day in classrooms observing, conferencing and providing feedback.
- Establishes a **culture of learning** in the school.
- **Asks:** "Are the students learning the intended outcomes?"
- **Asks:** "How can I give teachers the time and support needed to improve upon learning?"

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- Routinely talks about teaching and learning.
- Learns continuously in order to lead the school.
- Figures out what to do for a teacher.
- Develops and uses data from a variety of sources.
- Provides intense job-embedded professional development.
- Provides collaborative opportunities.

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## Principals as Instructional Leaders

Article  
Phi Delta Kappan  
Elaine Fink and  
Lauren B. Resnick

Checklist

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## How We Turned the Ship Around

### List the Strategies

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## High Performing Schools Achieve GREATNESS

- Belief System
- Intense professional development
- Honoring time
- Data Driven
- Monitoring
- Observation and Conferencing

Video Clip Believe

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## ACHIEVEMENT



Achievement

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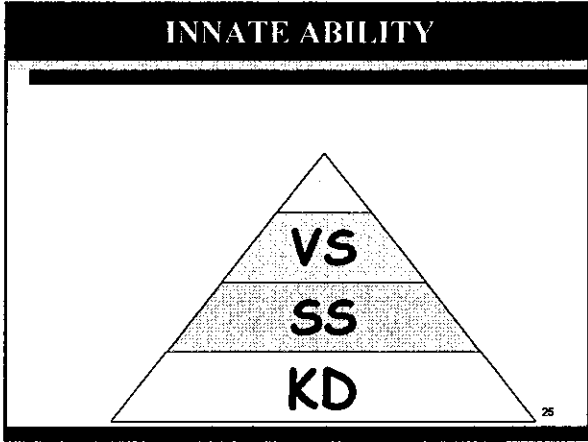
## Innate Art

Innate Art → Achievement

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- There is little that students or their teachers can do to improve qualities that are fixed at birth.

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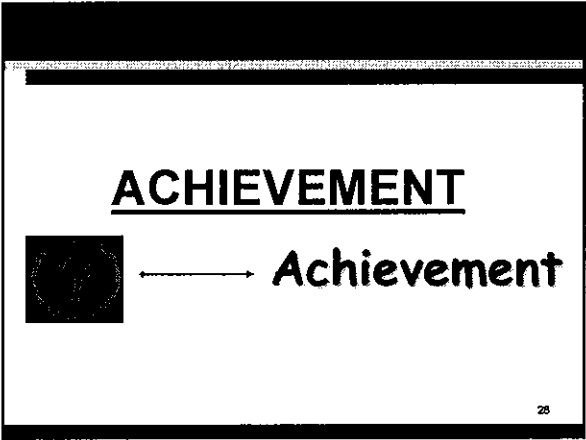


**The Bell-Shaped Curve**  
**“some just won’t make it”**

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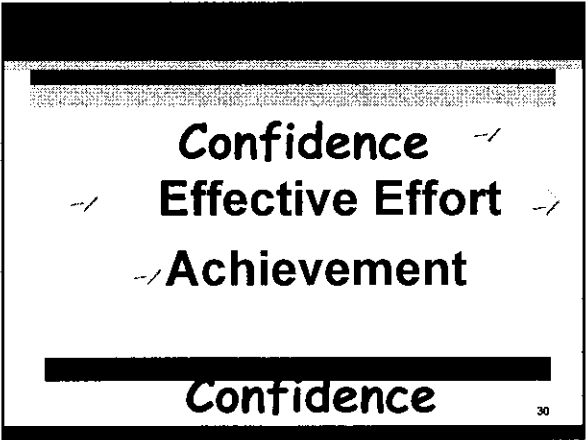
**Do We Accept the Bell-Shaped Curve in Other Professions?**

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**Efficacy is the capacity to mobilize available resources to solve problems and promote achievement.**

The Efficacy Institute



## Educators Who Possess a Sense of Efficacy...

- believe that it is their responsibility to see that others learn
- examine their own performance when others experience failure

Dembo and Gibson  
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### High Efficacy

- Believe all students are teachable
- Effort-based learning
- Intrinsic interests

### Low Efficacy

- Give up quickly
- Engaging but not effective tasks
- Coercive, negative sanctions

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## How Efficacious are YOU?

Teacher Efficacy Scale  
1-14

Low Efficacy

15-30  
High Efficacy

Principal Efficacy Scale  
1-14

Low Efficacy

15-30  
High Efficacy

HANDOUT

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## ACHIEVEMENT THRIVES...

in an atmosphere of positive promise and emotional encouragement

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- What do we expect them to learn?
- How do we know that they learned?
- What do we do when they don't learn?

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Mission → Vision → Practice

Innate Art → Sort & Select

Efficacious → Connection  
Learning  
Community

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Structural innovation cannot be understood, and should not be undertaken, without considering school culture.

Fred Newmann et al. (1996),  
*Authentic Achievement*, p. 14

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How does the  
**“visit to the garden”**  
relate to school culture  
and student  
achievement?

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• **Weed 1:**  
We are not  
responsible for  
student learning

• **Weed 2:**  
We prefer to work by  
ourselves

• **Weed 3:**  
We must protect our  
territory.

• **Weed 4:**  
We focus on activity  
rather than results

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### Culture in a Professional Learning Community

If you want to **change and improve** the **climate** and **outcomes** of schooling both for students and teachers, there are features of the school **culture** that have to be **changed**, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated.

Seymore Sarason (1996)  
*Revisiting the Culture of the School*, p. 340

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### Culture and Structure

**Culture:** long term beliefs, expectations, and habits

**Structure:** day-to-day policies and procedures

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### Principals of Learning Communities...

1. Lead schools in a way that  
focuses on student and adult  
learning

**Shared Mission, Vision, Values, & Goals**

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## Principals of Learning Communities...

2. Set high expectations for academic and social development of all students and adults

**Continuous Improvement**

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## Principals of Learning Communities...

3. Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools

**Results Orientation**

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## Principals of Learning Communities...

4. Provide time for staff to work, plan and think together.

**Collaborative Teams**

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## Collaborative Teaming Focused on Teaching and Learning

FNO Collaboration

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Collaborative Planning involves a partnership of people working and learning together as they do the following:

- Plan curriculum, units, or lessons, including classroom-based assessments
- Examine student work.
- Examine teacher work.
- Develop SIP using student data.

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**You cannot have students as continuous learners and effective collaborators, without teachers having the same characteristics.**

-Michael Fullan, 1993

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**Separated by their classrooms and packed teaching schedules, teachers rarely work or talk together about teaching practices.**

-Linda Darling-Hammond, 1995

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- Collaboration reduces isolation
- Contributes to institutional trust
- Collaboration deepens relationships with colleagues
- Contributes to long-term sustainable *results*

(source: Richardson 2001)

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1. Connecting teacher learning to student learning has a positive effect on student achievement.
2. Teachers work together during the school day to examine their practice, consult with colleagues, and develop their skills.

BABE

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- **Individualistic Culture**  
(Why do I have to collaborate?)
- **Balkanization**  
(Cliques)
- **Contrived Collegiality**  
(Surface)

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- Creative Scheduling
- Using para-professionals
- Parent volunteers
- Schoolwide activities
- Theme and team-teaching
- Purchased planning time

National Educational Service

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- | Traditional                      | Community                           |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Time for teams is an "add-on" | 1. Integrated team time             |
| 2. The team is an end in itself  | 2. Clearly articulated end          |
| 3. Little structure              | 3. Structure supports collaboration |
| 4. Little focus on goals         | 4. Specific goals                   |

National Educational Service

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- Committed staff
- Strong leaders
- Culture of trust
- Staff has authority
- Managed meetings
- Plan for team time
- Teams have a clear purpose
- Teachers acquire and share learning

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## Relevance, Feedback and Transfer

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- **Market your mission, vision, commitment, and goals.**
- **Cultivate the culture by articulation.**
- **Don't give up.**
- **Deal with issues.**

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- **Collaborate with colleagues.**
- **Are students of teaching, consumers of research.**
- **Function as leaders.**

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- **Facilitative Leadership (Agendas, materials, etc.)**
- **Minutes**
- **Time Keeper**

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- **Establish the objectives**
- **Confirm the logistics**
- **Determine the attendees**
- **Assign the roles**
- **Build the action section of the agenda**

© Kumba Taylor 1991

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- Socratic Seminars\*
- Action Research
- Lunch and Learn
- Newsletters\*
- Mail Call\*
- Whole-Faculty Study Groups
- Departmental Meetings
- Electronic Communication

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- Build on existing expertise
- Pool resources
- Provide moral support
- Create a culture of trust
- Confront problems and celebrate successes
- Deal with complex and unanticipated problems
- Become empowered and assertive

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- Schools establish a shared mission, vision, values and goals
- Meetings are driven by the school's mission
- Collaborative Teams support students and teachers
- Schools create a culture that is based on improvement and *results*

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**Achievement Gap**

**Engaging  
the  
Professional Learning Community  
to  
Make it Work**

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- Schools that gather, analyze and use information about their school communities make better decisions
- Data assists schools in deciding what to change and how to institutionalize systemic change
- Schools that use data better understand the needs of their primary customers—the students

(source: Bernardi 2004)

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**better students?**

- Take three minutes to write your answer to this question.
- Be prepared to report out.

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- A commitment to on going systematic professional development
- Skill and time are critical
- A collaborative model

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**Get the right people on the bus, get the wrong people off the bus, get the right people in the right seats and the bus will drive itself**

Jim Collins

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- **Run for governor**
- **Practice active visibility**
- **Be seen where students don't expect you to be seen**
- **Cafeteria**
- **Bathrooms**

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- Meet with students everyday
  - Five per day
  - Notes-letters
- Meet with staff everyday

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**"The wealth of a school and the community can be measured in its capacity to educate ALL its children!"**

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**Roland Barth, 1991**

*God didn't create self-contained classrooms, fifty-minute periods, and subjects taught in isolation. We did-because we find working alone safer than and preferable to working together.*

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Creating a Collaborative Culture

for  
Continuous Learning

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## Evidence of Instructional Leadership Checklist

*“Creating a culture hospitable to human learning”*

Criteria	Evident	Not Evident	In Progress
1. Understands the instructional programs that the school system has adopted well enough to actively guide teachers.			
2. Provides support in solving problems of instructional practices.			
3. Spends 50% of the day in classrooms analyzing instruction with teachers.			
4. Devotes attention to learning, curriculum, and professional development.			
5. Takes a leadership role in shaping a focused culture of instruction within the school.			
6. Routinely talks about teaching and learning.			
7. Learns continuously in order to lead the school.			
8. Maintains a strong sense of accountability for student achievement.			
9. Perceives self as the leader of teachers.			
10. Establishes a <i>culture of learning</i> in the school.			
11. Creates a culture in which deep knowledge of instruction and learning serves as the foundation for an interdependent professional community.			

Criteria	Evident	Not Evident	In Progress
12. Figures out what to do for a teacher.			
13. Provides the right kind of specialized professional development opportunities.			
14. Attends institutes/meetings that focus on particular instructional programs or practices.			
15. Builds (among staff members) an interdependent culture of learning and increasing levels of skill in specific practices.			
16. Creates both intellectual capital and social capital within their school.			
17. Asks: "To what extent are the students learning the intended outcomes of each subject?"			
18. Asks: "What steps can I take to give both students and teachers the additional time and support needed to improve upon existing levels of learning?"			
19. Maintains a focus on improving teaching and learning by helping teachers improve their instructional practices and by making student achievement the highest priority.			
20. Develops the skill to collect and use data from a variety of sources to inform school improvement decisions.			
21. Makes creative use of all resources/people, time, and money to support school improvement.			



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## Leading for Learning

It's a classic trial-by-fire story: As a freshly minted principal, Deborah Wortham was assigned to one of the worst elementary schools in Baltimore, Md. There were bars on the windows, she recalled, and a sign above the door that read, The School for Coloreds. The school was located in an area of the city renowned for its poverty and crime, all the students were on free and reduced meals, and the student attendance record was the worst in the state. It was at this school that Wortham first realized that "we don't have three

to five years" to enact reforms.

What Wortham did have was an instinctive impulse to "rally her teachers" and create a culture of high expectations—for teachers

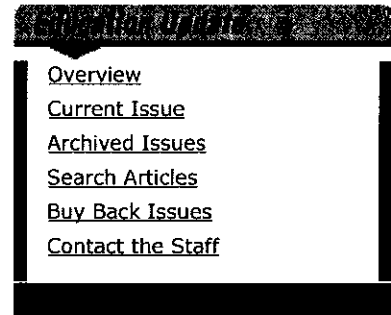
and students alike. She and her staff created a mission statement and began "inspecting what we expected" at regular intervals. They would "constantly talk about what to do when students didn't learn." They benchmarked best practices and learned how to use those strategies in the classroom. In short, Wortham instituted a

professional learning community.

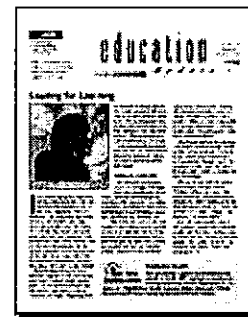
It was an approach that worked. After one year, the school gained national recognition for significant improvements in student achievement.

### Lessons in Leadership

The experience of turning a school around helped Wortham refine some key ideas about leadership, which she shared during her workshop at the conference. According to Wortham, school leaders interested in establishing professional learning communities should take the following steps:



Deborah Wortham



January 2004

- Clarify beliefs first. A team can't work together if its members haven't reached consensus on what they believe about learning. If improved student achievement is the goal, she added, then teachers must believe that they can "mobilize available resources to solve problems and promote achievement." Teachers who hold this belief have a sense of efficacy, Wortham explained. These teachers "believe it is their responsibility to see that others learn—and they examine their own performance when others experience failure."
- Hold meaningful faculty meetings. "Our faculty meetings became purely professional development," Wortham stated. School-related information, such as schedule changes, can be disseminated in other ways, she noted—through a daily e-mail or a weekly bulletin, for example.
- Review the data and "be restless" about the pace of improvement, Wortham advised. And spend time in the classroom—let teachers know immediately what is working well and what they need to focus on. "Don't wait until the test to make a change," she instructed. "Act immediately."

Above all, school leaders need to "feed teachers" emotionally and professionally, said Wortham. Celebrate their successes and cultivate their leadership qualities. True leaders reproduce, she observed. True leaders "make other people great."

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## Teacher Efficacy Scale

### Teacher Version

Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with each statement below by selecting the appropriate response.

Ratings:            A = Disagree            F = Agree

1. When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exerted a little extra effort. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The hours spent in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment. \_\_\_\_\_
3. If parents comment to the teacher that their child behaves much better at school than he/she does at home, it would probably be because I have some specific techniques of managing his/her behavior which they may lack. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If I have adequate skills and motivation, I can get through to the most difficult students. \_\_\_\_\_
6. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem. \_\_\_\_\_
8. My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Many teachers are stymied in their attempts to help students by lack of support from the community. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Some students need to be placed in slower groups so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Individual differences among teachers account for the wide variations in student achievement. \_\_\_\_\_
12. When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level. \_\_\_\_\_
13. If one of my new students cannot remain on task for a particular assignment, there is little that I could do to increase his/her attention until he/she is ready. \_\_\_\_\_
14. When a student gets a better grade than he usually gets, it is because the teacher found better ways of teaching that student. \_\_\_\_\_
15. When teachers really try, they can get through to most difficult students. \_\_\_\_\_
16. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement. \_\_\_\_\_

17. Teachers are not a very powerful influence on student achievement when all factors are considered. \_\_\_\_\_
18. If students are particularly disruptive one day, I ask myself what I have been doing differently. \_\_\_\_\_
19. When the grades of my students improve it is usually because I found more effective approaches. \_\_\_\_\_
20. If my principal suggested that I change some of my class curriculum, I would feel confident that I have the necessary skills to implement the unfamiliar curriculum. \_\_\_\_\_
21. If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps teaching that concept. \_\_\_\_\_
22. Parent conferences can help a teacher judge how much to expect from a student by giving the teacher an idea of the parents' values toward education, discipline, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
23. If parents would do more with their children, I could do more. \_\_\_\_\_
24. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson. \_\_\_\_\_
25. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him quickly. \_\_\_\_\_
26. School rules and policies hinder my doing the job I was hired to do. \_\_\_\_\_
27. The influences of a student's home experiences can be overcome. \_\_\_\_\_
28. When a child progresses after being placed in a slower group, it is usually because the teacher has had a chance to give him/her extra attention. \_\_\_\_\_
29. If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty. \_\_\_\_\_
30. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students. \_\_\_\_\_

Gibson and Dembo 1984

Note: Adapted from "Teacher Efficacy: A Construct Validation," by S. Gibson and M. Dembo, 1984, Journal of Educational Psychology, 76, p. 581. Copyright 1984 by the American Psychological Association, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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2. The hours in my teachers' classes have little influence on our students compared to the influence of their home environment. \_\_\_\_\_
3. If parents comment that their child behaves much better at school than he/she does at home, it would probably be because my teachers have some specific techniques of managing his/her behavior which they may lack. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The amount that a student can learn is primarily related to family background. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If my teachers have adequate skills and motivation, they can get through to the most difficult students. \_\_\_\_\_
6. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline. \_\_\_\_\_
7. My teachers have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem. \_\_\_\_\_
8. *My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.* \_\_\_\_\_
9. Many of my teachers are stymied in their attempts to help students by lack of support from the community. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Some students need to be placed in slower groups so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Individual differences among teachers account for the wide variations in student achievement. \_\_\_\_\_
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13. If new students cannot remain on task for a particular assignment, there is little that my teachers could do to increase his/her attention until he/she is ready. \_\_\_\_\_
14. When students get better grades than they usually get, it is because my teachers found better ways of teaching those students. \_\_\_\_\_
15. When my teachers really try, they can get through to most difficult students. \_\_\_\_\_
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18. *If students are particularly disruptive one day, I ask myself what I have been doing differently.* \_\_\_\_\_
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