

# Analyzing the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Wellbeing Among Mentor Teachers

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This mixed-methods study explored the relationship between professional self-efficacy and wellbeing among experienced teachers who completed a year-long mentoring program. While mentoring has empirically been shown to improve job satisfaction and retention for beginning teachers, less is known about its impact on mentors themselves. Guided by social cognitive career theory (SCCT), which suggests that self-efficacy and goal-related beliefs influence career outcomes, this study focused on how mentoring affects the professional growth of mentor teachers. SCCT, rooted in Bandura's work on social cognition, emphasizes the link between self-efficacy, wellbeing, and individuals' sense of control and organizational contribution. The mentoring program, designed by Adams State University, trained experienced teachers to support pre-service and beginning teachers through bi-weekly seminars and an internship. Participants became eligible for a state mentoring endorsement upon completion. Data were collected from three cohorts over three years (n=47). Quantitative analysis showed an average increase in Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale scores from the start to the end of the program. Qualitative findings highlighted shifts in how mentors perceived their professional roles, increased confidence in leading school-wide efforts, enhanced resilience, and notable personal and professional growth.

*Keywords:* Mentoring, coaching, self-efficacy, mixed-methods

## Introduction

Within the field of K-12 education, teacher self-efficacy has been linked to positive outcomes on teacher retention, teacher quality, and overall job satisfaction (Barni et al., 2019). More recent research has explored the ways in which mentoring can contribute to greater feelings of confidence and self-efficacy among mentees. This, in turn, may form a psychological foundation for other observed outcomes and contribute to the overall wellbeing of teachers through collective efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2018; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2012).

A less explored area of research has been around the effects of mentoring and coaching on the mentors themselves, and the extent to which the experience of mentoring of beginning teachers contributes to the collective-efficacy and wellbeing of experienced mentor teachers. It stands to reason that if mentoring contributes to the efficacy and wellbeing of beginning teachers (mentees), then similar and related outcomes may be observed among those doing the mentoring (mentors). The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the literature, while contributing to theoretical understandings of self-efficacy and wellbeing in ways that support the development of policies and practices focused on teacher retention. The study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do mentor teachers demonstrate changes in self-efficacy after completing a 1-year mentoring program?
2. What is the relationship between mentor teachers' sense of self-efficacy and sense of wellbeing and what does this relationship reveal about mentor teachers' role and performance within their school?

## Literature Review

Self-efficacy is a construct developed by Bandura (1977, 1997) and is based on an individual's beliefs and perceptions about their ability to succeed in particular situations or around a specific goal. In the field of teaching, this translates to a teacher's belief in their ability to effectively engage students through effective classroom management, instruction, and assessment of student outcomes, even when faced with challenging or unmotivated students (DTEC Report, 2015; Lazarides & Warner, 2020). Teacher self-efficacy has been measured using the the Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy Scale (TSoSS), first developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk (2001) and deployed through various research studies to measure the effects of professional development and mentoring on teachers (Craig, 2021; Seneviratne et al., 2019). The TSoSS was used in this study to address RQ1.

Building on the work of Bandura (1977,1997), Lent et al. (1994) proposed the Social Cognitive Career

Theory (SCCT), which suggests that beliefs related to self-efficacy have the power to influence career decisions, including career interests, aspirations, resilience, and leadership. The theory presents a framework for understanding how individual, behavioral, and environmental factors interact within the career field, and, for the purposes of this study, provides a foundation for addressing RQ2.

Teacher wellbeing is a construct related to self-efficacy that has seen a steady increase as a focus of research and in publications in recent years. It includes such components as job satisfaction, job engagement, teacher teamwork, student outcomes, school outcomes, and system outcomes (Dreer, 2023; Hascher & Waber, 2021; McCallum et al., 2017). These components provide a supplemental framework for addressing both research questions in ways that contribute to the extant literature on teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing.

## Methods

This mixed methods study focused on analyzing the relationship between mentoring, self-efficacy and wellbeing on mentors who participated in a 1-year mentor endorsement program at Adams State University. The seminar curriculum was based on a foundational text on mentoring new teachers (Boreen et al., 2009) and incorporated various coaching models, including Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2016) and Instructional Coaching (Knight, 2022). Each seminar was co-facilitated by full-time faculty members from the School of Education. Data collected from 3 separate cohorts were analyzed as part of this study. The study employed a mixed-methods triangulation design to “validate, confirm, or corroborate quantitative results with qualitative findings” (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 65). The study design—including the development of research questions and approach to data analysis—was guided by a theoretical framework grounded in existing literature on teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing. This framework incorporates the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) developed by Lent et al. (1994).

Quantitative survey data were gathered using pre- and post-assessments completed by mentor teachers on the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). Qualitative data were collected through mid-year and end-of-year surveys in which mentor teachers responded to a locally developed instrument designed to understand mentor experiences in the program, both in terms of professional learning within the seminars and their experience in mentoring beginning teachers. Additional qualitative data were collected through bi-annual one-on-one interviews between the program’s faculty and mentor teachers.

Quantitative data were analyzed by comparing pre- and post- group means using all program participants (n=47) in the three cohorts of the program. It is important to note that the small

sample size limited the ability to determine statistical significance for any of the findings.

Qualitative data were analyzed using a blend of deductive and inductive coding methods (Hatch, 2002) to develop themes aligned with the constructs of the theoretical frameworks. This approach also facilitated the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the quantitative findings derived from a small sample.

## Results

A summary of results from the quantitative data analysis are presented in Table 1. These data are presented as the combined mean scores of all program participants across items that form each of the domains of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). Increases in mean scores were observed across all domains of the scale, with the highest increase occurring in the domain of student engagement. The second highest increase in means occurred in the domain of instructional strategies and the third highest increase was in the domain of classroom management.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the highest and lowest changes in mean scores on individual items within each of the three domains. This includes two items in which pre-test means were higher than the post-test means - the first within the domain of student engagement and the second in the domain of classroom management.

Results of the qualitative analysis are presented in Table 3 and include the themes extracted from the analysis, sample quotes illustrating each theme, and alignments to specific constructs within the theoretical frameworks used in this study.

## Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the extant literature by providing new insights into the ways in which mentor teachers’ sense of efficacy and wellbeing are affected by their experiences working with beginning teachers. With regard to research RQ1, the analysis of quantitative data suggests that - like beginning teachers - mentor teachers experience an overall increase in their sense of efficacy and particularly around the areas of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management (Table 1). For participants in this study, the largest increase in perceptions of efficacy was in the mentor teachers’ ability to “get through to the most difficult students” while the greatest decrease in perceptions of efficacy (albeit minor) was around their ability to “get students to believe they can do well in school work” (Table 2).

While the findings of this study may appear somewhat paradoxical in terms of revealing two differing patterns of efficacy related to student engagement, they suggest that locus of control may be a factor in teachers’ perceptions of their abilities to engage students. Indeed, research has shown that teachers’ sense of wellbeing is

influenced by the extent to which they exhibit internal vs external characteristics related to control (Bandura, 1997; Venema-Steen & Southall, 2024). Specifically, teachers who exhibit an internal locus of control are known for being more focused and proactive in the workplace, whereas those with characteristics reflecting an external locus of control are more guided by outside influences and therefore are more accepting of external outcomes. Getting students to believe they can do well in schoolwork involves an external locus of control that is more dependent on the motivation of the student. Comparatively, getting through to the most difficult students is more directly related to the teachers' own motivation and skills, which this study suggests were enhanced by the mentoring experience. This difference may account for the greatest differences in efficacy around student engagement noted in the data.

Research has also shown that the experience observing other teachers (a key function of mentoring) has the potential to deepen teachers' reflections on practice, perhaps in ways that are more self-critical (Engin & Priest, 2014). This could help to explain a similar paradoxical pattern observed in perceptions of classroom management, where mentor teachers demonstrated increased efficacy in keeping "problem students from ruining an entire lesson" yet showed a decrease (albeit small) in "making expectations clear around student behavior." In any case, the findings of this study provide a basis for more research in understanding how locus of control and deeper reflection on teaching function to influence teacher perceptions on efficacy within specific skills and domains related to teaching.

Mentor teachers' perceptions of efficacy around instructional strategies was found to increase on each item of the survey. The greatest increase was observed in the teachers' level of confidence in "adjusting [their] lessons to the proper level for individual students" while the smallest increase was in their confidence around "providing an alternative explanation or example when students are confused." These findings provide further support for the hypothesis that locus of control and ability to more critically reflect on their own teaching (Engin & Priest, 2014) as a result of observing and supporting their mentee (Venema-Steen & Southall, 2024), provided mentor teachers with greater self-efficacy in these areas of their practice.

The findings of the qualitative analysis provide a basis for addressing RQ2 and contributed several insights around the relationship between mentor teachers' sense of self-efficacy and sense of wellbeing and the ways in which this relationship impacts the mentor teachers' role and performance within their school. The themes derived from the analysis illustrate that the experience of being a mentor contributes positively to mentors' sense of leadership (i.e. positioning among colleagues, leadership and focus on school and systems-based outcomes, resilience in teaching, and reflections on personal growth and change.

With regard to positioning, several mentor teachers expressed increased interest and confidence in assuming leadership roles within their school, either by continuing to serve as a support system for new teachers, or by contributing to team- or school-based leadership efforts. As one participant stated,

"I would say this has encouraged me to be a leader. It has given me more confidence and looking for those leadership roles and, in the past, I was not pursuing them."

These findings correlate with the research of Lent et al. (1994) and suggest that mentoring can serve as a means for teachers to not only increase their own sense of self-efficacy, but also contribute to the fulfillment of career aspirations as proposed by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

The findings of the qualitative analysis also provide evidence that mentor teachers' sense of wellbeing - as it relates to enhanced focus on team, school, and system outcomes (Dreer, 2023; Hascher and Waber, 2021; McCallum et al., 2017) - was enhanced by the experience of being a mentor. Indeed, participants not only expressed an increased desire and confidence to communicate with school- and district-level administration on issues related to the school, they also expressed a desire to sustain the work of mentoring within the school. As one participant stated,

[I support mentoring] being more of a practice that we do as a school. I feel like I have the relationship and rapport with the principal to bring it up and talk about how we do this more. We want to get there. How do we find the time/make it a priority. I think it would definitely raise morale and it is what we need. I get observed and we get an email, but it is very surface level, I think this could take it deeper. The principal is really good with new teachers but how can I make it more structured?

Here, the focus on enhancing the quality of mentoring and classroom observation while "[taking] it deeper," is evidence that mentor teachers' enhanced sense of efficacy contributed to greater focus on morale and wellbeing, not only for themselves, but for their colleagues, and in ways that pertained to school-based systems and processes to support observation and feedback. This suggests that the increased sense of confidence that mentor teachers gain from mentoring provides a foundation for influencing more than just a teachers' own practice and also contributes to greater focus on school and systems-based processes and outcomes that influence all teachers within a school.

Increased resilience in teaching was the third major theme drawn from the qualitative analysis and served to reinforce the findings of the quantitative analysis. Indeed, several participants reported a renewed sense of "excitement" about their own teaching while expressing strong desires to help other teachers and remain in the profession, despite prior feelings of leaving the profession. As one participant stated,

I will say, I was like, I was really over my job last

year and this has been a really good breath of fresh air. I have things I can offer others. I think it has really helped me to have a way better year. Yes, I could have quit my job last year.

Prior research has established that mentoring can have powerful effects on mentees' desire to remain in the teaching profession, thereby providing a mechanism for teacher retention efforts (Donohoo et al., 2018; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2012). The findings of this study add to this research by providing evidence that the experience of mentoring can also have a profound impact on the mentor teachers' desire to remain in the profession of teaching by reigniting their passion for teaching while helping them to reconsider thoughts of quitting. This suggests that school district efforts to build and sustain mentoring programs is not only a viable strategy for supporting the wellbeing and retention of new teachers, but can also be a viable strategy for supporting the retention of veteran teachers as well.

The final theme noted in the analysis of qualitative data was that of personal growth and change. While related to other themes in terms of connecting to the mentor teachers' role within

the school and impact on beginning teachers, it is distinct in that mentor teachers discussed how the skills they developed as mentors contributed to very personal outcomes, including in their lives outside of the classroom. As one teacher stated, "This has not only been beneficial for my mentee, but for my students and family as well."

Indeed, several participants noted how the skills in communication and support they gained as part of their training and experience as mentors transferred into their daily experiences with family and friends. These findings suggest that a new dimension of wellbeing that has yet to be thoroughly explored in the literature may warrant additional inquiry and that is the connection that teachers draw between professional experiences and fulfillment in their personal lives. Further research should be conducted to explore the ways in which such transferability between professional and personal outcomes can contribute to greater understanding of teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing.

**Table 1**

*Quantitative Results from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale by Domain*

	Student Engagement	Instructional Strategies	Classroom Management
Pre-test Mean	6.981	7.237	7.536
Post-test Mean	7.405	7.608	7.868
Difference	0.424	0.372	0.333

Note. Items in the survey are scored using an 8-point scale.

**Table 2**

*Highest and Lowest Changes in Mean Scores on Individual Items of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale by Domain*

Domain	Item	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Difference
Student Engagement	How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	6.851	7.619	0.768
	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?	7.708	7.667	-0.023
Instructional Strategies	How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	7.104	7.595	0.491
	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation for example when students are confused?	7.5	7.738	0.238
Classroom Management	How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	6.875	7.5	0.625
	To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	8.396	8.380	-0.016

**Table 3**  
*Results of Qualitative Analysis of Survey and Interview Data*

Theme	Related Construct(s)	Sample Quotes
Change in Positioning Among Colleagues	Self-efficacy	I must admit that being a coach adds a lot to my self-efficacy. I feel like I am more capable of helping my mentee just because of the guidance and professional discourse we go through every time, and I know it is helping her, too.
	Leadership	I would say this has encouraged me to be a leader.
		Yes, I think just wanting to step into some leadership roles and gain some confidence. I had a hard time thinking I had enough experience. This is the first year I felt successful.
		I am on the instructional leadership team, they are more apt to come to [me] knowing I am doing this [the mentoring program]. It is among the people that know I am doing this. I would say this has encouraged me to be a leader.
		It has given me more confidence and looking for those leadership roles and in the past I was not pursuing them.
		I think maybe my peers are looking at me differently and they come to me more. More traffic is coming in [asking for advice].
		My principal has noticed [the change in me] she has asked me to apply for the position of the instructional coach.
		I have 25 years of experience and some level of confidence. I think being able to communicate with my admin and being listened to has changed. I communicated with my admin about the whole mentorship program.
		I feel like this endorsement has given me the confidence to be more of a leader in my school and has given me knowledge to identify more things in my school and help mentees. Encourages me to take more leadership roles next year, whatever that may be.
		I'm not afraid to say something- I'm on the school leadership team. I'm always timid and quiet in those meetings. But the more I've been reflective and working with my mentees, I'm more willing to speak up in those meetings and I feel more confident in saying something.
Increased Focus on School and System Based Outcomes	Self-efficacy	I will strongly advocate for our district to build a mentor/mentee program.
	Collective-efficacy	I want to help other teachers and now I have the tools.
	Leadership	I have learned and have grown. I have benefited. My students will benefit. My mentees will benefit. The district I teach in will benefit.
		We are working together in the math department, and we are working on coaching each other.

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Well, I was honestly thinking of somehow forming a mentorship team to collaborate at my school.

Supporting [mentoring] being more of a practice that we do as a school. I feel like I have the relationship and rapport with the principal to bring it up and talk about how we do this more. We want to get there. How do we find the time/make it a priority. I think it would raise morale and it is what we need. I get observed and we get an email, but it is very surface level, I think this [mentoring program] could take it deeper. The principal is good with new teachers but how can I make it more structured?

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Increased Resilience as a Teacher

Self-efficacy  
Resilience  
Wellbeing

I feel more excited about my future as a teacher. As a veteran teacher, it is often difficult to find joy in teaching and not feel weighed down.  
Made me more excited about teaching. Some days, especially towards the end of my career. Reignited my desire to teach and help fellow teachers.

I love teaching. I want to do it and I have always loved to teach. It has changed my attitude towards some teachers.

It has renewed me and reminded me how much I love it and I am good at something and happy to be here.

I will say I was like I was really over my job last year and this has been a good breath of fresh air. I have things I can offer others. I think it has really helped me to have a way better year. Yes, I could have quit my job last year.

I am still going to be a teacher. Next year it will be more focused on how I support new teachers. I am more motivated to support them wanting to stay.

It has only changed things for the positive (about teaching).

It is my 16th year of teaching. This felt like a "reset" of sorts just to experience new learning. Revisiting things. I feel like I can take those next steps and grow as a teacher.

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Personal Growth and Change

Wellbeing

I see myself reflecting more often and implementing new concepts and ideas.

This whole coaching process becomes a two-way road for us (mentor and mentee) because we both lift each other. With the rapport that we have greatly contributed in evaluating our abilities as teachers.

I have changed myself. I want to be more intentional in my conversations.

It has given me confidence and a voice. It has also helped my communication skills about certain situations. I can communicate in conflict

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This has not only been beneficial for my mentee, but for my students and family as well.

A personal goal is to be more open to hosting pre-service teachers and student teachers. We have an interventionist who is nearing retirement in the next couple of years. Perhaps I aspire to a role like that.

It increased my confidence. I realize that I do so many things well that I don't even think about.

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