TEACHER HOPE: DEFYING THE ODDS OF POVERTY
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

SHANNON HALL STANLEY

NATALIE ADAMS, COMMITTEE CHAIR
JUDY GIESEN
DOUG MCKNIGHT
JOHN PETROVIC
STEVEN THOMA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to address an area of hope through (a) administering a self-report instrument that measures the hope of Alabama public school teachers and (b) using data gathered from this scale and other areas to explore the following areas: (1) the levels of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools; (2) the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught; (3) the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom; and (4) the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and student achievement. This mixed methods research focused on using C. R. Snyder’s (1995) Hope Theory and Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) Conceptual Benchmarks for Learning and Teaching to develop the characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher.

The Hope Scale was administered online, and data were collected from 92 classroom teachers representing seven Alabama schools. Eleven teachers with diverse hope levels participated in interviews with the researcher. Informative data were coded, and categories emerged describing characteristics shared by all teachers and those unique to high-hopes teachers.

Results revealed significant relationships between teachers’ levels of hope and ethnicity as well as teacher hope and student achievement. The study also revealed a characteristic profile for high-hope teachers. Within this profile, five key elements of high hopes instruction emerged: (1) the shared belief that all students can learn at a high level; (2) the critical function that student goal-setting and shared responsibility plays in developing students’ ownership of the learning
process; (3) the significance that conversation, discussion, joint work, problem-solving, and debate play in critical thinking and learning due to students’ varied interpretations of information and ideas; (4) the importance of expanding students’ “pathways” to learning by teacher responsiveness and adaptability; and (5) the value of increasing students’ agency through motivation, interaction, and praise. When exploring teacher hope at the school level, data revealed HPHP schools have unique characteristics that enable them to overcome the effects of poverty on student learning.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

Of the many challenges that public schools face, poverty is a significant factor. Current statistics identify the United States as having the highest percentage of child poverty in any developed country, up 11% from 2000 to 2005 (NCCP, 2006). A multitude of factors are associated with socioeconomic status (SES) that affects children from birth to adulthood (Berlinger, 2006; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). Of all students in the United States, 35% attend high-poverty schools, including over two-thirds of all minority students (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Farah et al. (2006) asserts that poverty creates a “gulf between low and middle SES children in their performance on just about every cognitive test development (p. 3).”

In the age of accountability of public education, the effects of poverty are evident. The ecology of high-poverty schools is inherently irregular and more unpredictable than their low-poverty counterparts (Mass Insight, 2007). Studies on poverty indicate that as school poverty rises, proficiency drops and school performance varies extensively. However, high-poverty schools exist that defy the odds and achieve academic success by diminishing the effects of poverty. Research on high-performing, high-poverty schools reveals that a number of them are performing as well as schools serving more affluent populations. Many studies have been conducted involving pedagogical approaches to academic success (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Haberman, 1999; Haycock, 2001). However, very little information
exploring teacher characteristics exists as they relate to helping students overcome poverty’s effects.

Statement of the Problem

Although research is limited, a few significant studies exist that confirm effective teachers matter much more than curriculum materials or pedagogical approaches (Allington, 2002), as well as the importance that teachers can play a vital role in students’ academic performance and hopeful thinking (Snyder, McDermott, Cook, & Rapoff, 1997). For poor children in high-poverty schools, the only possibility of breaking the cycle of poverty lies in a quality education based upon high standards, resource equity, and high expectations for all; what occurs in the classroom has a significant impact on student achievement (Pellino, 2001). According to Snyder (1994), teachers can create an environment of hope and learning through their interaction with students and their approach to academic instruction.

This investigation explores a gap in hope research, teachers’ positive characteristics of hope, and how they affect student learning. In this study, hope is defined as a measureable construct conceptualized as the “perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Snyder’s hope theory incorporates three major components of hope: goals, agency (willpower), and pathways (waypower). Exploring these components and the attributes of high-hope teachers may result in the development of a “high-hope teacher” profile, or characteristic that help foster effective learning and academic success in high-poverty schools.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to address teacher hope, an area of hope that has yet to be explored, through (a) administering a self-report instrument that measures the hope of Alabama public school teachers and (b) using data gathered from this scale and other areas to explore the following:

- the levels of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools;
- the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught;
- the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom, and
- the relationship, if any, between teacher hope and student achievement.

Significance of the Study

Teaching behaviors that raise the hopes of students have been the focal point of hope theory studies. However, little attention has been given to defining characteristics of a teacher with high hope and how these characteristics apply to the lives of public school teachers in high-performing, high-poverty schools in Alabama. Expanded research is necessary to explore (a) the level of hope of teachers in high poverty schools; (b) relationships between teacher hope and gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught; (c) relationships between teacher hope and the types of instructional strategies implemented in high poverty schools; and (d) if hope is a predictor to student achievement in high poverty schools.
Teacher hope can be used to guide the development of instructional and pedagogical approaches, as well as professional development, addressing how to increase and sustain students’ hopeful thinking. The analysis of data collected could identify specific target areas of teacher improvement in hopeful teaching.

Implications of the Study

More generalized implications include a shift in pedagogical approaches, which includes the emphasis of teaching hopeful thinking as an integral part of the school curriculum, resulting in increased student success within public education. Specifically, implications of this study may also include transformations in professional learning that address goal-setting and feedback strategies. Integrating strategies for hopeful thinking into teacher planning and classroom instruction may become a catalyst to increasing levels of teacher and student hope in the classroom and beyond.

Research Questions

This study was an attempt to identify and examine the characteristics of teachers who embody high-hope, as defined by Snyder (1994, 2000). Using a quantitative self-report instrument of hope, as well as qualitative follow-up classroom observations and focus-group interviews, data collected from Alabama public school teachers were used to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools in Alabama?

2. How do the characteristics of a high-hope teacher differ from a low-hope teacher?
3. Is there a relationship between the level of teacher hope and gender, race, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught?

4. Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom?

5. Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and student achievement?

Research Design

This study is a mixed methods design, which examined (a) teachers’ level of hope high poverty schools in Alabama; (b) the characteristics of a “high-hope” teacher in high-poverty schools in Alabama; (c) the relationship between teachers’ level of hope and gender, race, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught; (d) the relationship between teachers’ level of hope and teachers’ instructional practices in high-poverty schools in Alabama; and (e) the relationship between teachers’ level of hope and student achievement. In order to investigate the relationship between teachers’ level of hope and instructional practices, a quantitative survey, The Hope Scale, was administered to determine the level of teacher hope.

Participants completed an anonymous self-administered survey, The Hope Scale, which included items measuring the levels of teacher hope, as well as demographic items related to gender, teaching experience, the level education attained, and the level of the school in which they teach (elementary, intermediate, middle, or high). A self-administered survey was chosen as the initial method of data collection in order to measure the selected attributes from the school teachers surveyed (Cresswell, 2003). The results of this survey can be used to identify high-hope and low-hope teachers and form generalizations concerning Alabama teachers’ level of teacher
hope and the impact that gender, teaching experience, level of education, and school level has on this construct, as well as the relationship among teacher’s level of hope and teaching practices. Results were analyzed to identify total levels of teacher hope as well as subscale levels of Pathways and Agency dimensions of teacher hope. Teachers were categorized using the following quartiles: (1) Total High-Hope (High Agency, High Pathways); (2) High Agency, Low Pathways; or (3) Low Agency, High Pathways, or Total Low Hope (Low Agency, Low Pathways). Analysis was conducted to determine whether a relationship existed between variables.

Teachers were selected for follow-up classroom observations and interviews based on the total sum scores and dimension scores of teacher hope. Teachers selected participated in follow-up observations and a focus group interview to gather more in-depth data concerning student/parent/teacher relationships, teacher roles in instruction, and the selection and implementation of instructional strategies.

The interview questions were generated to explore the beliefs, practices, and instructional methods used by high, average, and low hope teachers. In addition to helping shape the profile of a high-hope teacher, the follow-up interview process explored the areas of building relationships, setting goals, and creating a caring and supportive environment for student learning and success as identified by Snyder’s (2005) six principles of hopeful thinking.

Basic Assumptions

The need for individuals to develop hopeful thinking at an early age is crucial to their success during their school years as well as throughout life. Several key assumptions were made
in the development of teacher hope and its validation as a construct that can be measured. The key assumptions in this study included the following:

1. Hope has a direct effect on academic performance and success

2. Empirical evidence supports hopeful thinking as a primary factor in adapting and overcoming obstacles such as stress, poverty, and other traumatic events. Snyder (1994) explained that an individual who thinks with willpower (agency) and waypower (pathways) has a “special advantage when things get tough . . . high-hope people begin to think of alternative routes to their goals . . . and channel their energy to an effective alternative pathway” (p. 11).

3. Teacher hope has widely been ignored by the research. Although Snyder (1994) began investigating lessons of hopeful thinking in order to increase student hope in the classroom, most research has centered around hope in clinical settings, university classrooms, and with high school students (Snyder, 1995). Very little data have been collected on the relationship of teacher hope levels and their affect on increasing student hope.

Delimitations

The goal in administering The Hope Scale to teachers in Alabama was to utilize a short, self-report scale to assess the level of hope of teachers working in public K-12 schools, at the time of this study. The accuracy and usefulness of this scale is dependent upon the honesty and willingness of the participants completing the scale. When using a self-report instrument, several concerns with regard to method and participants become evident (Lucas & Baird, 2006).

1. Self-assessment as a socially influenced activity is complex. Multiple factors influence self-assessment capacity and accuracy including the nature of the performance and domains being assessed, clarity of assessment criteria, amount and quality of direction and feedback provided, context, and affective domains such as self-efficacy, motivation, and perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. (Sargeant et al., 2008, p. 48)
2. Self-assessments of learning and practice should be informed by external resources and that the process can be enhanced by guidance and facilitation (Duffy & Holmboe, 2006).

3. “Because performance assessment is about ‘self,’ it is emotionally charged and being objective about it is difficult. Emotion was a theme inherent within the processes of reconciling, assimilating, accepting, and using external feedback” (Sargeant et al., 2008, p. 50).

**Limitations**

This study has several factors that limit generalizability of findings. The limitations of the study included the following:

1. Survey participants were selected from a purposeful sample from public school systems in the state of Alabama.

2. The items of *The Hope Scale* were administered online, increasing the likelihood of a lower response rate of 46% as compared to surveys administered face-to-face.

3. Data analysis exploring the relationship between teacher hope and student achievement was dependant upon school-wide or grade-level achievement data provided by the Alabama State Department of Education.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Hope* was defined as “the perceived capacity to: 1) develop workable goals, 2) find routes to those goals (pathways thinking), and 3) become motivated to use those pathways (agency thinking)” (Snyder, 1994, 2000, p. 8).

*Instructional practices* were defined by the characteristics of Snyder’s (2005) lessons of hopeful teaching and Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks for teaching and learning. When
comparing both approaches, the following commonalities are identified: (1) incorporation of student goal-setting, (2) emphasis on active engagement in learning and interaction among groups of students, (3) the use of the inquiry process and problem-solving in order to think critically, and (4) the importance of the varied role of the teacher, ranging from director to coach and all facets in between.

For this study, engagement was defined as students meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks (Kearsby & Schneiderman, 1999) in which students exhibit the following three characteristics: (1) they are attracted to their work, (2) they persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) they take visible delight in accomplishing their work (Schlecty, 1994). It involves active cognitive processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision making, and evaluation. In addition, learning is intrinsically motivating due to the meaningful nature of the learning environment and activities.

Student Achievement was defined by students’ performances on the following measurements:

- Stanford 10
- Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
- Alabama High School Graduation Exam
- Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by the Alabama State Department of Education, which includes rates regarding graduation, attendance, academic progression, and participation in testing.

High-poverty schools were defined as schools that have at least 50% to 80% poverty rate (percent free/reduced meals).
High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools were defined as schools that share the same socioeconomic demographics as high-poverty schools in addition to meeting the following criteria:

- Have at least 80% of students score Level III or Level IV on the reading section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
- Have at least 80% of students score Level III or Level IV on the mathematics section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test
- Have at least 65% of students score in stanines 5-9 on Stanford 10 reading
- Have at least 65% of students score in stanines 5-9 on Stanford 10 mathematics
- Have at least 95% of Grade 12 students pass all required subjects of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam
- Have a graduation rate above the state average

Conclusion

This study explored the characteristics of high-hope teachers through the administration of The Hope Scale, classroom observations, and focus group interviews. The information and data collected through this examination were utilized to develop a profile of a high-hope teacher, describing attributes such as relationships with students and parents, instructional strategies and adaptations, and teacher roles to promote student learning. The profile and data collected were used to determine possible relationships between teacher hope and student achievement as well as the significance of hope as a construct that mitigates the effects of poverty on student learning and achievement.
The results of this study may be used as a springboard to develop future studies on the relationship between student and teacher hope and methods to increase hope in students and teachers.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Hope

Hope is universal and timeless; it is viewed as good and as a curse. Hope is found in writings ranging from Greek mythology’s story of Pandora’s Box to Judeo-Christian references of hope as a virtue along with love, faith, and charity. Throughout time, many writers have referred to hope as an illusion which seduces man, mesmerizes his thoughts, and fails to provide what is hoped for. One may agree that hope as a notion can be powerful and dangerous.

Let us, however, consider hope if it is attached to something realistic. Samuel Coleridge described this idea in this manner, “Hope without an object cannot live” (as cited in Snyder, 1994b, p. 3). The concept that hope, when tied to a concrete objective or target, would become more than a notion became the basis of thinking about models and theory of hope.

The Development of Hope Theory

The origin of studying hope began with a small group of physicians and their progressive view that positive thoughts and emotions, including hope, are part of the process of healing (Snyder, 2000). During the 1950s and 1960s, hope was examined using scientific approaches by both psychiatrists (e.g., Frank, 1968, Melges & Bowlby, 1969; Schachtel, 1959) and psychologists (e.g., Stotland, 1969). They concluded that hope was based on “positive expectations for goal attainment” (Snyder, 2000, p. 4). However, this view of hope was not accepted by the general scientific community.
Eventually, the 1970s and 1980s led to a multidisciplinary focus on hope from medical and psychological fields. Research studies began to address stress, coping, and illness and proposed that thoughts and emotions had an effect on health, coping, and medical recovery (Cohen & Lazarus, 1979). As these studies became more prevalent, evidence emerged supporting the importance of and relationship between positive self-perception and psychological and physical well-being (Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988, 1994). This marked a new era of research in positive psychology. Although numerous studies were conducted from the 1950s through the 1980s, research was not consistent and no prevailing line of argument emerged. Ultimately, little attention was given to the hope theory until a professor from the University of Kansas stumbled upon it in the 1990s.

C.R. Snyder was a professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Kansas conducting research on individuals’ behavior when they perform poorly. The desire to investigate the “why’s” behind poor student performance and associated behaviors led Snyder to review the existing literature on hope. As he studied earlier research, he began to engage in an investigation questioning people, many of them his students, about the thoughts they were having daily. Snyder (2000) discovered that many of those questioned described pursuing some type of goal (p. 8). He and his colleagues began to analyze the thoughts, or goal thinking, that accompanied these descriptions. He concluded that there were two distinct parts of goal thinking, pathways thinking and agency, which existed when one talked about their goals. When one’s thoughts pondered the feasibility of routes to meet a goal, this was called pathways thinking. In addition, Snyder discovered that goal thinking also included motivational thoughts about the willingness to use those routes to attain the goal. This component was referred to as agency. Because some of the students described this theory as “hopeful thinking,” Snyder began to refer
to the construct as “hope.” Thus, the initial research on the Snyder’s (2000) hope theory and the components of hope were developed.

The results of this study led Snyder to his initial research on the theory of hope, the components of hope, and eventually a self-report instrument was developed. C.R. Snyder and his colleagues began to further examine hope theory and its effect on college students in the 1980s. Because some students described this theory as “hopeful thinking,” Snyder began to refer to the construct as “hope.” Additional studies were expanded to address students’ academic performance (Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999), overall grade point averages for high-school students (Chang, 1998; Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997), and achievement test scores for grade-school students (Snyder, Hoza et al, 1997).

The theory of hope continued to be developed through the work of C.R. Snyder and his colleagues in the 1990s. They began to develop a conceptual definition of hope and its components. Snyder initially defined hope as “the sum of perceived capabilities to produce routes to desired goals, along with the perceived motivation to use those routes” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Hope was eventually defined as “the perceived capacity to: 1) develop workable goals; 2) find routes to those goals (pathways thinking); and 3) become motivated to use those pathways (agency thinking)” (Snyder, 1994, 2000, p. 8). According to Snyder (1995), hope is described as “phenomenological in nature and rests upon the cognitive appraisal of one’s goal-related capabilities” (p. 355). Although hope theory has expectancies similar to self-efficacy theory, hope is diagnostic and not determined by situation. In addition, Snyder’s theory incorporates three main components of hope: goals, pathways, and agency.
Goals are anchors of thought. They can be large or small, as well as simple or complex. They may take only a few minutes or may be more long term. Figure 1 represents the protagonist perceiving himself or herself as being capable of producing a route to a desired goal. Whatever the conditions, only those goals that are of value to an individual will sustain the attention needed to successfully meet them.

Pathways, or “waypower” thinking, refer to the routes that are developed in order to meet goals and the alternatives that are produced when obstacles appear (Figure 2). Pathways thinking
serves as the outcome expectancy, and it “involves those times when we move unencumbered toward our goals, as well as when we are impeded and must find new routes” (Snyder, 1995).

**Figure 3.** Agency thinking. (Lopez, 2005, 4)

*Agency,* or “willpower” thinking, is the ability to motivate oneself to use the routes created through pathways thinking in order to attain desired goals. Because motivation is not effective when directed toward encumbered routes, the use of agency allows one to guide motivation toward new routes as illustrated in Figure 3. Agency also serves as efficacy expectancy, or “mental willpower,” sustaining a person’s perception and ability to continue on the pathway to the goal (Snyder, 2000).

The relationship between Pathways and Agency components became evident through further studies addressing people’s responses to goal barriers. When faced with obstacles that impede goal acquisition, high-hope people often think of alternate pathways around the barrier to the pursued goal (Snyder, 1994). In order to accomplish this, agency provides the necessary motivation it takes to pursue alternate routes to the goal (Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998). It was concluded that positive or negative emotional reactions were produced as a result of goals thinking. The authors hypothesized that while unobstructed goals should produce a positive
emotional reaction, barriers to goals should yield a negative response. However, Figures 1-3 illustrate how the emotions of people with higher hope differ from those with lower hope. Those with higher hope responded with adaptive and more positive feelings when their goals were impeded, and they perceived the ability to use alternative pathways to meet their goals (Snyder, 1994).

Hope in Children

![Figure 4. The early developmental contribution to hopeful thinking. (Snyder, 2000, p. 26)](image)

To understand the validity of hope as a measurable construct, one must understand the birth of hopeful thinking. According to Snyder (2000), hope begins developing in the infant to toddler stage. Figure 4 illustrates the development of Pathways and Agency thinking from birth.
to 30 months. Pathways thinking develops initially, usually from birth to 12 months, and is constructed through three processes: sensing and perceiving external stimuli, learning temporal linkages of events, and forming goals. At birth, infants are immersed in “raw information” through sensory stimulation. Those sensations are then encoded in order for the infant to attach specific meanings to each. This is exemplified through an infant recognizing his/her mother’s face among many. Snyder (2000) refers to this as supplanting a sensation with a perception, a lesson in which the infant is able to link input and experiences, resulting in the understanding of significant life events (Mussen, Conger, Kagan, & Huston, 1990, p. 108). Eventually, lessons of perception and linkage may lead to the identification of desired objects in children as young as 3 months. These pointing behaviors enable an infant to identify a goal thus reinforcing the fundamental processes for pathways thinking.

Although pathways thinking emerges as early as 3 months, children at this age have not developed agency thinking or an awareness of their role in pursuing a goal. In order to attain agency, a child must develop knowledge of self (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979) and begin to realize that they can cause things to happen. Excellent examples of agency thinking include toddlers using the pronoun “I” (Kaplan, 1978) or exclaiming, “I can do it myself” (van der Meulen, 1987, p. 30).

In later childhood years, children think about their goals in a more sophisticated manner. A child’s brain grows exponentially from 3 years to 6 years old, creating a language explosion and enables a child to communicate thoughts and expressions of emotions. The development of language is the vehicle through which children can identify their goals, as well as realize their Pathways and Agency. This creates the opportunity to cultivate hopeful thinking through language.
The middle years, ages 7 to 12, bring an emphasis on reading for information. A child’s use of reading serves as a means of learning about people and processes in which goals are met and facts are produced. At this time in childhood, the speed of mental capacity has improved significantly. Children are capable of imagining goals clearly as well as the pathways to achieve their goals. In addition, relationships with peers begin taking a central role in a child’s perspectives of other people. It is at this time that children begin developing best friends and strong friendships. Snyder (2000) reported that high-hope people “readily describe themselves as social creatures that enjoy the pleasures of having a few close friends” (p. 35). Therefore, it is evident that goals identified and pursued at this stage are done so with the support of peers or best friends.

The adolescent years, ages 13 to 18, begin the changes in relationships and the dating behaviors. A substantial amount of time is spent thinking about relationships and their sexual components. The goals of adolescents are intertwined with other goals related to “having a relationship and expressing oneself sexually in that context” (Snyder, 2000, p. 25). Other goals include identity goals, which are primarily situational in context, and career goals exploring interests, talents, or particular vocations.

Measuring Hope

When investigating research on individual human differences, scientists and scholars have historically measured dimensions of human weaknesses. Lopez et al. (2000) stated that “researchers have measured depression, anxiety, aggression, hopelessness, to name but a few exemplars” (p. 57). The tools and techniques that were used to measure human weaknesses were then applied to human strengths, particularly the conceptualization of hope as developed by C.R. Snyder. This premise was the inception of hope scales as a tool to measure hope.
Hope scales were developed to be diagnostic measures to determine “perceived 1) motivation for pursuing their goals (agency thought) and 2) abilities to identify workable routes to goal attainment (pathway thought)” (Lopez, as cited in Snyder, 2000, p. 58). This allows a clinician or other professional the ability to develop a positive psychological framework to explore an individual’s strengths or lack thereof. The development of a formal assessment tool began with the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, or The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), a self-report, 12-item inventory designed to assess an individual’s dispositional hope in adults, ages 15 and older.

As the hope theory has been studied, more information has become available validating the existence of varying levels of hope in children, goals thinking focused on particular areas of life, as well as hope experienced at a particular time. To address these variations in research, additional hope scales were developed and validated, including the following: (1) the Children’s Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997), a 6-item self-report measure for children ages 7-16; (2) the Young Children’s Hope Scale (YCHS; McDermott, Hastings, Gariglietti, & Callahan, 1997), which measures children’s dispositional hope in pre-school through fourth grade using modified response choices and age-appropriate wording; (3) the Adult Domain-Specific Hope Scale (DHSH; Sympson, 1999), which measures individuals’ levels of hope in six life arenas--social, academic, family, romance/relationships, work/occupation, and leisure activities; and (4) the Adult State Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1996), a 6-item self-report scale that assesses goal-directed thinking in a given moment. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics and reliabilities of existing Hope Scales.
Table 1

Characteristics/Reliabilities of Hope Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Hope Index</th>
<th>Target Age</th>
<th>Number Of Items</th>
<th>Administration Time (Min.)</th>
<th>Internal Reliability</th>
<th>Construct Validation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope Scale</td>
<td>15-100</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>.70 - .80</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain-Specific Hope Scale</td>
<td>15-100</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Hope Scale</td>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>.72 - .86</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Children’s Hope Scale</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>Some support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Hope Scale</td>
<td>15-100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>.90s</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Scale - Observer</td>
<td>15-100</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHS – Observer</td>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Some support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCHS - Observer</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Some support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Hope Scale* has 12 items: four reflect pathways, four reflect agency, and four are distracters. *Note:* Indicates that data regarding psychometric properties are not available because reliability and validity of these measures have not been rigorously examined. (Snyder, 2000)

Other measures of assessing hope that have been developed and validated include observational measures of hope used with the Adult Hope Scale, CHS, and YCHS (Snyder & McDermott, 1998). Several lists of interview queries have also been developed to address the components and barriers of hope (Lopez et al. as cited in Snyder, 2000, pp.70-71). Finally, narrative approaches have been developed through the use of individuals’ writings, journals, and diaries as a means of assessing a person’s level of hope. McDermott et al. (1997) initially described methods to analyze children’s levels of hope through their writing, and McDermott and Snyder (1999) also addressed how to use these methods to assess adults’ level of hope through writing. Another narrative explored was the development of Vance’s (1996) Narrative Hope Scale, a method of measuring hope through personal narratives, in which further validation is needed.

When choosing an instrument or method for assessing hope, the scale used should be initially chosen based on the age of the targeted audience and the purpose of the particular assessment. For example, the dispositional, domain-specific, or state hope scale would be
administered based on the types of information needed to meet the needs of the targeted audience.

When analyzing scores of *The Hope Scales*, emphasis must be equally placed on the total scores and the Pathways and Agency subscale scores. The total score can reveal information concerning the overall hope of an individual, whereas the subscale scores can identify particular strengths or weaknesses in pathways-agency thinking. Hope profiles are revealed when an individual’s agency and pathways subscale scores are compared (Lopez et al. as cited in Snyder, 2000, p. 74). Hope profiles include low agency/low pathways; high agency/low pathways; low agency; high pathways; or the full high hope high agency/high pathways (Snyder, 1994a, pp. 30-43).

Raising Future Hopes

As Snyder’s hope theory developed, he and his colleagues began to further examine hope theory and its effect on college students in the 1980s. Additional studies were expanded to address students’ academic performance (Snyder et al., 1999). In one study, Snyder, Hoza et al. (1997) reported hope is not dependent upon an individual’s “intellectual capacity” (p. 416). Findings of their study concluded that the intelligence scores of 170 boys on the Wechslser’s Intelligence Scale for Children were not significantly related to their scores on the Children’s Hope Scale. However, they found a positive and significant relationship between the scores obtained from approximately 350 students on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and their hope scores on the Children’s Hope Scale, illustrating the correlation between hope levels and student achievement as opposed to student aptitude.

Additional studies addressed the overall grade point averages for high-school (Curry et al., 1997; Lopez, Bouwkamp, Edwards, & Teramoto Pedrotti, 2000) and college students
(Chang, 1998). Approximately 808 incoming college freshmen were surveyed, and 213 were selected. Researchers studied their ACT entrance scores, as well as their GPAs throughout their college career. The findings of their study revealed that overall hope scores of entering college freshman were more powerful predictors of overall grade point averages than entrance examination scores when controlled for variances (Lopez, 2005). Furthermore, low hope levels have been found to predict low coping strategies for studying and taking examinations (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000), as well as academic procrastination (Alexander & Onwuebuzie, 2007), with respect to fear of failure (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

As more and more information was obtained defining the characteristics of high-hope students, studies on hope began to shift toward school-aged children and adolescents. Further studies addressed levels of hope in children as related to diversity (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997; McDermott, Hastings, Callahan, & Gariglietti, 1998), hopeful thinking (McDermott, Gariglietti, Hastings, Gingerich, & Callahan, 1996), as well as achievement test scores for grade-school students (Snyder, Hoza et al, 1997). Findings revealed that children are found to have higher hope than adults (Snyder, 1994a). However, hope scores of ethnically diverse children have been inconsistent, reporting no differences to Caucasian counterparts (Snyder, Hoza, et al., 1997) as well as significant differences between groups of Hispanic, Native American, African American, and Caucasian children (McDermott, Hastings, Callahan, & Gariglietti, 1998).

Although some inconsistencies exist, McDermott and Hastings (in Snyder, 2000) have concluded that “young children are hopeful,” and they are capable of imagining a better future even when faced with atrocities (p. 185). Many examples of high-hope children have been cited in the research, including (1) children who survived the Holocaust, (2) children with terminal illnesses, and (3) children who have endured traumatic circumstances such as abduction and sexual or physical abuse. In these examples, it is not completely understood what allows some
children to endure and rise above tragic circumstances. However, when referring to Snyder’s (1994a) hope theory, it is possible that it is due to a high level of hope, including Pathways and Agency thinking.

Although a great number of U.S. children have not endured war-time, chronic illness, or other tragic events in their lives, there are many disparities that children in this country face each day: homelessness, poverty, abuse, inadequate health care, and malnutrition just to name a few. These conditions are all possible barriers of children’s hope and may impede their ability to develop or reach goals. In addition, peripheral consequences exist such as the lack of hope in parents and extended family members perpetuating a generational cycle of low-hope people who have little ability to create and sustain positive life goals (McDermott & Hastings as cited in Snyder, 2000, p. 185). According to researchers of children’s hope, most children fall between the two extremes of high-hope children who are able to overcome daily obstacles and those children whose hope is weakened through the many barriers that they experience.

Because many school-aged children “live in conditions that place them at risk for losing hope” (McDermott & Hastings, as cited in Snyder, 2000, p. 186), the classroom is a primary location to reach these children in order to develop and increase hope. Thus, the teacher is the contributing factor of increasing children’s hope. This sparked studies focused on teachers, the teaching process, and how to infuse hope-increasing techniques into the curriculum (McDermott & Hasting, as cited in Snyder, 2000, p. 187). This resulted in the design of hope-enhancing materials to fit into several different aspects of the curriculum, teacher guidelines for establishing hope-enhancing classrooms, and the development of materials focused on teaching children to think hopefully (McDermott, Gariglietti, Hastings, Gingerich, & Callahan, 1996).

Hope studies conducted within schools identify a high-hope school as one in which the adults assist children in (1) developing their goal setting abilities, (2) learn problem solving and
coping techniques to enhance pathways thinking, and (3) sustain their efforts toward goal attainment to enhance agency thinking.

Snyder’s (2005) creation and study of hope theory defined hope and its measurements, how hope benefits students, and how student findings can be applied to the teaching process. These high-hope school characteristics would later serve as the foundation of Snyder’s (2005) *Lessons in Hopeful Teaching*, the following six lessons to raise the hopes of students: (1) spending time and caring, (2) setting goals for the class, (3) creating pathways to class goals, (4) raising agency to pursue class goals, (5) teach hope and self-esteem will follow, and (6) the classroom as a We/Me environment of hope.

**Lessons in Hopeful Teaching**

*Lesson 1: Spending Time and Caring*

Surveys conducted by Snyder (1994) and Bjornesen (2000) questioned college students about their perceptions of the most important traits of college professors. The survey findings indicated that the most important activity was the professor spending time and interacting with the students. According to Snyder (2005), “hopeful teaching is built upon spending time with and caring about our students” (p. 76).

*Lesson 2: Setting Goals for the Class*

To create a classroom conducive to taking risks, it is important for teachers to establish an atmosphere of accountability and trust in the classroom. In other words, learners must be responsible for one’s words and actions, and students must feel confident to take risks and trust that they will not be criticized or ridiculed in any way. According to Snyder (2005), “low hope children hunger for boundaries and consistencies in their lives. Reciprocal respect between
students and teachers is needed” (p. 76), and teachers are the major determinant in the existence of a supportive learning environment.

Another facet of setting goals for the class is for the teacher to assist students in setting “growth-inducing, stretch goals” or goals where a student sets a somewhat more difficult goal, building upon previous tasks or labors. Snyder (2005) asserted that this approach inspires hopeful thinking, and it should be used to tailor the individual learning goals of students whenever possible. When using this approach, clarity of learning objectives, how they are mastered, and grading implications are essential to success.

A third facet of goal-setting addresses the determination of student grades. Instilling hopeful thinking requires students to become interactive with one another. It is imperative that teachers frame grading practices that encompass group activities in which cooperation is a key factor. In group activities, each student in the learning group must participate and be a respected collaborator so that the objectives can be met, resulting in “students that become more supportive and tolerant of one another” (Sndyer, 2005, p. 77).

A final aspect of goal-setting is to emphasize thinking and problem solving instead of disseminating facts as a rigid measure for learning. Snyder (2005) explained that it is essential to convey the usefulness of “facts” exist in the ability to use them in order to solve problems and ask more questions. The focus of teaching must lie in making learning an active process, searching for ways to convey information, as well as to initiate critical thinking and inquiry.

Lesson 3: Creating Pathways to Class Goals

When creating pathways to class goals, planning is essential to create a sequence in which information is disclosed in a clear, cumulative manner. In addition, alternative activities should be considered in the event that the initial method did not work. Instructional strategies
should be discussed and shared among teachers in order to expand the existing knowledge base. When evaluating the success of a particular strategy, it is also helpful to discuss instructional strategies with the students as to receive their feedback on which approaches work best. “All of these pathways, related teaching activities, rest upon a willingness to interact with and listen to our students” (Snyder, 2005, p. 78).

Lesson 4: Raising Agency to Pursue Class Goals

To motivate our students to pursue and attain class goals, it is imperative for teachers to be equally motivated about our subject matter. If teachers are to model hopeful thinking, lessons should be created that are interesting to the teachers, as the teacher’s enthusiasm will spread to the students. However, what does a teacher do when they are not enthralled by the subject matter, or they are just having a bad day? Snyder (2005) referred to this lesson as the “slug-buster” approach, doing whatever it takes to be enthusiastic when entering the classroom.

A second approach to raising agency is to be responsive to the reactions and needs of the students. It is crucial for the teacher to be observant concerning how engaged students are in the material, as well as to be a good listener and encourage students to speak up when they do not understand. Maintaining a trusting atmosphere, the teacher must take risks and encourage the students to do the same. This requires flexibility in interacting with the students, and teachers must be able to laugh at themselves if an activity does not work.

A final practice for raising agency is student praise. According to Snyder (2005), it is suggested that praise be delivered in a private setting. Public praise may make students uncomfortable and may increase competition among students. Encouragement from the teacher can be significantly empowering to students in their efforts to attain goals.
Lesson 5: Teach Hope and Self-Esteem Will Follow

Children’s self-esteem has become the focal point of education in the past several decades, and many troubling issues have emerged. First, the principles of self-esteem primarily concentrate on universal student praise. However, these principles are not specific to the situation or circumstance of the student praise. Instead, emphasis was placed on always telling students that they are valuable. Snyder (2005) referred to this trend as “pseudo-praise” and explained that students who were taught using these principles may not know how to learn due to the false feedback given concerning their efforts and skills. Many concerns have emerged from the self-esteem movement.

Snyder’s research (2002) shows that students have high self-esteem due to their own perceptions of success and learning to pursue a preferred goal. He explains that self-esteem is a vital “by-product” of a goal attainment and the hopeful though process. Therefore, teachers should focus on praising students based on their efforts and use of facts to solve problems. This authentic praise will become a part of the students’ learning process, and they will use this to promote their own hopeful thinking when pursuing learning goals.

Lesson 6: The We/Me Environment of Hope

According to Snyder (2005), “hopeful teachers” not only convey the content of the subject matter, but they also share the excitement of the learning process. They communicate “the larger take-home messages” for the students involving “‘learning how to learn’ (pathways) and the ‘I can’ motivation to continue to learn (agency). Thus, an effective instructor teaches the content of his or her particular topic, all the while engendering hope in the students’ thinking” (p. 81). This description of a hopeful teacher is an example of how high-hope people are concerned not only with their own goals, but with the goals of others.
According to Snyder (2005), high-hope individuals view their world in terms of “ME/WE” or “WE/ME” goals. It is imperative that teachers utilize the “WE/ME” lesson to create classrooms that honor the goals of both the teacher and the students. These types of classrooms establish meaningful group goals as well as individual aims addressing how the teacher and students will attain the goals. In addition to learning the content, students are learning how to think critically, problem-solve, as well as lessons in respect, tolerance, and hope, that will guide and empower them for lifetime.

Snyder’s work (2005) has contributed to creating lessons that are designed to elicit hopeful thinking and build student hope. However, little attention has been given in research to defining characteristics of a “high-hope” teacher, the teaching strategies they implement, and how these characteristics apply to the lives of public school teachers in the state of Alabama.

Conceptual Benchmarks for Knowledge, Teaching, and Learning

Although Snyder’s principles of hopeful teaching are reflected in many of the instructional practices identified in current teaching and learning theories, it is necessary to have research focusing on effective instructional strategies that are independent of hopeful thinking. It is important to consider the use of the general principles of good instruction to explore the relationships between hope levels and instructional characteristics of teachers. To examine these principles, Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) conceptual benchmarks of effective practice will be used. Wilson and Peterson (2006) provide one such model based on a synthesis of analysis on teaching and learning. This research describes nine seminal ideas drawn from recent studies on teaching and learning that have influenced educational reform. They explain that, “All teachers operate according to theories. Teacher practice is driven by our ‘theories’ about what will work for our students.” According to the authors, “some of the theories are explicit and are learned in
school; some are tacit and are the products of years of experience in schools—as teachers, parents, and students” (Wilson & Peterson, 2006, p. 7).

Using the conceptual benchmarks, Wilson and Peterson (2006) compare the existing ideas of learning, knowledge, and teaching found in today’s research to those more traditional notions of learning and knowledge. Figure 5 illustrates the progression from more traditional ideas of teaching and learning to those concepts supported by the most current teaching and learning theories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmarks for...</th>
<th>Moving from...</th>
<th>Moving toward...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Passive absorption of information</td>
<td>Active engagement with information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual activity</td>
<td>Both individual activity and collective work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual differences seen as problems</td>
<td>Individual differences among students seen as resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>What: facts and procedures of a discipline</td>
<td>What, how, and why: central ideas, concepts, facts, processes of inquiry, and argument of discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Simple, straightforward work</td>
<td>Complex, intellectual work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers in information-deliverer role</td>
<td>Varied teacher roles, from information deliverer to architect of educational experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher do most of the work</td>
<td>Teachers structure classrooms for individual and shared work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lessons contain low-level content, concepts mentioned; lesson not coherently organized</td>
<td>Lessons focus on high-level and basic content, concepts developed and elaborated; lessons coherently organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers as founts of knowledge</td>
<td>Teachers know a lot, are inclined to improve their practice continually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.* Benchmarks for learning and teaching. (Wilson & Peterson, 2006)
Within the benchmarks for learning and teaching (Wilson & Peterson, 2006) illustrated, the authors unveil the three key ideas encompassing most instructional scholarship and practices: learning as a process of active engagement; learning as individual and social; and learner differences as resources to be used, not obstacles to be confronted. In addition, they focus on the following strategic concepts of teaching: teaching as intellectual work, teaching using a range of roles such as information deliver and facilitator/coach, and teaching challenging content (Wilson & Peterson, 2006, p. 1).

Learning as a Process of Active Engagement

Before the accountability movement, most learning concepts were based on behavioral theories. U.S. schooling had been functioning on the principles that children were “blank slates” or “empty vessels”; student attentiveness was perceived as the primary factor in learning (Cuban, 1993). Within the past two decades, a critical shift in education occurred moving from the notion of “learner as a sponge” toward cognitive psychology’s concept of “learner as active constructor of meaning” (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). In this shift, several fields of theory emerged. Neuroscience revealed that the brain actively seeks new stimuli in order to learn (Greenough, Black, & Wallace, 1987; Kandel & Hawkins, 1992) and the structure of the brain changes when learning takes place (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

The research of cognitive theorists depicts students as “active agents of their own conceptual development” (Bransford et al., 2000). These theories describe student interpretation of meaning and the value of prior knowledge and experience in learning new information (Brown, 1994). For example, two students can receive the same information, but as active constructors of their own knowledge, student understanding may be distinctly different based on
their interpretation of the information presented. Wilson and Peterson (2006) emphasized that when we become aware of student interpretation of information and ideas, as opposed to absorption, teaching and learning becomes an extensively more complicated process. It is because of this complicated process that an eclectic and integral approach to teaching and learning is necessary. The concept of incorporating multiple theories in teaching and learning is supported through Sfrad’s (1998) argument that there is danger in discarding one theory in favor of another.

Learning as Individual and Social

A second shift occurred within the social aspects of learning, and current research has placed emphasis on the role of social groups in the development of understanding. In addition, the critical functions that conversation, discussion, joint work, and debate play in learning are also addressed. The research focusing on the social nature of learning, or sociocultural theories, shares several common principles.

The first principle is that one learns by doing; knowledge is inseparable from practice. Wilson and Peterson (2006) describe the importance of observing learners as they are working on authentic problems in order to “see” what they know. A second principle identifies learning as a social phenomenon taking place within the communities one belongs to. Thus, learning takes place through interactions among individuals in the contexts of the activities that one participates in. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized the importance of “learning communities” through their observations and description of different apprenticeships. Their research concluded that “we learn by participating in groups--first, by observing others do the work and then by gradually becoming a member and full participant of the group” (Wilson & Peterson, 2006, p. 5).
A third principle shared by sociocultural theories emphasizes that standards lie within the learning communities that are established. In learning communities, quality of performance is determined by the group and one’s performance is assessed through genuine participation (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). However, U.S. schools today are described as hierarchical, typically focusing on the individual aspects of learning in an assembly-line fashion as opposed to learning through group participation (Rogoff et al., 2003). A final principle is the importance of learners who understand more about their own learning have a great capacity to transfer their learning to new contexts.

The principles of sociocultural theories have led many researchers and educators to emphasize alternative approaches to schooling in the United States, including cooperative grouping, classroom discussions, and learning communities, in order to acknowledge the learner as an individual and a social being.

Learner Differences as a Resource

Another shift occurring in today’s schooling is the worth we place on differences among group or individual learners. Schools traditionally strive to universalize the educational experience for all students, and learner differences have been viewed as deficits. However, current trends contend that learners construct their own meanings based on their experiences and prior knowledge, and teachers must have a clear sense of what students know in order to help them create knowledge. Thus, “teachers need to give learners reason by respecting and understanding learners’ prior experiences and understanding, assuming that these can serve as a foundation on which to build bridges to new understandings” (Duckworth, 1987; Lampert, 1984, 2001). In addition to prior experience, researchers such as Gardner (1983), Delpit (1995), Rose
(1995), Au (1981), and Ogbu (1992) illustrate that students bring differences in intelligence and interest, in ethnicity and race, in culture, and in gender to the learning environment. Although it may not be possible for teachers to account for all differences among students, becoming aware of individual learner differences continues to be a challenge for teachers in today’s schools and poses important implications for teaching.

Teaching as Intellectual Work

One of the most significant inferences for teaching is that teachers shape the materials they use based on their knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003). Although beliefs have indicated that teaching is straightforward—quality materials produce student learning, resources are implemented and received by teachers and students, and they are presented within contexts that matter (Cohen et al., 2003). Much of a teacher’s thinking is directed by the concepts and theories of learning, and this may change the way that teaching is observed and evaluated. Through current research, effective teachers are intellectuals who consider both the subject matter and the learner, constructing bridges between the two, in addition to maintaining the moral aspects of teaching (Wilson & Peterson, 2006).

Teaching in Varied Roles

As learning theories have shifted toward the belief that learners are active constructors of knowledge, teachers have taken on divergent roles based on a variety of instructional configurations. Due to the differences that learners possess, teacher roles must vary depending upon the individual differences and needs of the learners. Wilson and Peterson (2006) maintained that “there are times when teachers must and should tell, and other times when
teachers should inquire” (p. 10). However, the concept of the teachers as a “coach” is explored in more detail due to the ability of a coach to utilize the strengths of the individual players, as well as provide an opportunity of meaningful practice. The role of the “teacher as coach” concept also encompasses observing and teaching through doing, all while building learners’ foundational knowledge or skill as a team. A coach must be able to play on individual talents and create group strategies to take advantage of players’ strengths. A teacher as “coach” must deliberate learning goals, strategies, and grouping that will enable student learning.

**Teaching Challenging Content**

International comparisons suggest that students in the United States typically get fed a diet of thin content “a mile wide and an inch thick” (Schmidt, McKnight, & Raizen, 1996). In-depth analyses identified three areas of content: level of difficulty, how extensively content was developed, and coherence.

As compared to German and Japanese content, U.S. lesson characteristics have been focused on “learning terms and practicing procedures” as opposed to “developing advanced procedures” and “emphasizing structured problem solving” (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 57). This comparison indicated that although effective teachers utilize a range of instructional strategies. From direct instruction to small groups and differentiated instruction, they must have strong content knowledge to make rigorous subject matter understandable to maximize student learning.

**Commonalities of Lessons of Hopeful Teaching and Benchmarks of Teaching, Learning**

When comparing Snyder’s (2005) lessons of hopeful teaching with Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks for teaching and learning, several characteristics emerge as
similarities. Both approaches incorporate the use of goal-setting with an emphasis on active engagement in learning and interaction among groups of students. In addition, attention is given to individual differences in goal-setting and portrays individual learner characteristics as a resource to be utilized. Snyder’s (2005) “hopeful teaching” concentrates on explicitly setting “growth-inducing, stretch goals” as a means to attend to individual learner needs, as well as the needs of the group. Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks approach goal-setting as an integral part of determining individual and group activities based on learners’ prior experiences and existing schema. Teacher decisions regarding individual and group goals must have a clear sense of what students know in order to help them create knowledge.

A second characteristic shared is the focus on the process of inquiry, argument of discipline, and problem solving in order to think critically as opposed to propagating facts. Both approaches function on the assumption that one must master the central ideas, concepts, and facts, as well as its processes of inquiry and argument, to truly know the field or discipline of study. Wilson and Peterson (2006) explained this line of thought as a response to current educational demands. They explained that students “must know the basics, but must also know how to use those basics to identify and solve nontraditional problems” (p. 7). Similarly, Snyder (2005) stressed the importance of the ability to use facts in order for students to solve problems and ask more questions.

A final common characteristic between both approaches is the varied role the teacher plays in student learning. The consensus of the authors is that teaching roles will range from director to coach and all facets in between. The concept of “hopeful teaching” (Snyder, 2006) depicts the teacher as a good listener who must take risks and encourage students to do the same. In some situations, the teacher must act as a “slug-buster,” doing whatever it takes to generate
enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Using another perspective, Wilson and Peterson (2005) portrayed a teacher’s role as ever-changing, becoming a director, inquirer, or a facilitator/coach. Although the importance of each role was emphasized, the teacher as a “coach” was described as a crucial role that creates the ability to assess individual learner needs while planning strategies that build on the strengths of the group.

Distinctions of Hopeful Teaching and Benchmarks for Teaching and Learning

As previously illustrated, both “hopeful teaching” (Snyder, 2005) and benchmarks for teaching and learning (Wilson & Peterson, 2006) highlight similar characteristics of effective teachers and instructional strategies. However, characteristics emerged from each approach that was distinctive to teaching and learning.

The benchmarks for teaching and learning (Wilson & Peterson, 2006) focused on the technical aspects of teaching, or the role of the teacher in implementing instructional practices and approach to pedagogy. Throughout the lessons of hope, the attributes of trust, caring, motivation, praise, enthusiasm, and responsiveness are described as a means to help develop a supportive learning environment. According to Snyder (2006), hopeful teaching is based on a foundation of relationships and “built upon spending time and caring about students” (p. 76). These relationships enable a teacher to teach the content of a particular topic while creating a sense of hope in students’ thinking.

In order to conduct a research study that measures many dimensions of teaching and learning, both Snyder’s (2005) lessons of hopeful teaching and Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks are needed to develop a survey instrument. The similar constructs of goal-setting, active engagement, and learner differences are necessary to determine how teachers plan
individual and group learning activities. It is also important to determine the various roles that teachers encompass, as well as the frequency that teachers utilize inquiry and problem-solving strategies to develop students’ ability to think critically.

However, it is also equally important to address the distinctive qualities of both approaches. Wilson and Peterson’s approach (2006) addresses the more technical approach to pedagogy and a teacher’s use of instructional practices while Snyder’s (2005) lessons in hopeful teaching concentrate on a teacher’s outlook on caring, developing relationships with students, and how a teacher develops a nurturing and supporting environment.

Through addressing the similarities and differences of both approaches of teaching and learning, a thorough examination of teacher hope and the factors that affect this construct can be conducted.

**Poverty: The “Perfect Storm” and Its Impact on Learning**

In 2003, 12.9 million children in the United States under the age of 18, or more than one in six children, were living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Over 30% of urban students live in poverty, with 42% eligible for free and reduced lunch, compared with 18% of suburban and 31% of rural students who are similarly eligible (Anyon, 2005). Risks associated with poverty can affect cognitive development and academic achievement from birth into adulthood, can be both direct and indirect, and can occur from the individual to the community level (Berliner, 2006; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

The effects of poverty on student performance are extensive and complex. Poverty’s forces act as a “perfect storm,” the combination of three distinct systems to produce one massive structure with devastating consequences. Poverty’s “perfect storm” comes in three
mutually-reinforcing forms: individual and family risk factors, community and environment effects and resource inequality. Each factor compounds the others, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The effects of poverty on learning are substantial and measurable even before kindergarten, as illustrated in poverty’s effects with respect to their impact on key learning factors in Figure 6 (Walberg, 1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Learning Factors</th>
<th>Individual &amp; Family Risk Factors</th>
<th>Community &amp; Environment Effects</th>
<th>Resource Inequality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Aptitude</strong></td>
<td>- Ability or prior achievement</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Development by age or maturation</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Motivation or self-concept</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction</strong></td>
<td>- The amount of time students are</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engaged</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The quality of instruction</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>- The home</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The classroom social groups</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Peer groups outside of school</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of out-of-school time</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6. Poverty effects: Impact on key learning factors. Adapted from Walberg (1984)*

**Individual and Family Risk Factors**

When investigating the academic achievement of students, a wide body of research supports that, persistent and extreme poverty affect both the cognitive development and academic achievement of individual children (Anyon, 2005). Many children come from families who endure serious economic situations, often bearing physical and psychological hardships that impede the individual or family’s ability to flourish.
Priorities for a family living in poverty are commonly placed on meeting the health and safety needs of the family. Inadequate nutrition or an improper diet may place impoverished children at risk for slowed brain development, placing a chronic stress on the body (Given, 1998). Other risks, including increased childhood disease, increased teen pregnancies, and inadequate medical care can negatively affect a child’s physical and cognitive development. Berliner (2006) described that “disease is not a product of poverty, but the number of cases that go undiagnosed and the number of children who do not receive treatment is affected by poverty and the lack of access to health care” (Mass Insight, 2007, p. 77)

The continuous economic hardships experienced by those living in poverty also contribute to the mobility of the poor. Parents are often moving to different locations in search of work. In some cases, families rent weekly or daily while job hunting or dealing with other family issues. The mobility of poor students adds to the complexities of academic and social contexts, often resulting in students transferring from one school to another with insufficient records or information that may be helpful to the new teacher and school (Pellino, 2001).

Anyon (2005) stated that even small increases in a poor family’s income can improve student performance. Dearing, McCartney, and Taylor (2009) concluded that poor families who were able to move up in socioeconomic levels had children whose achievement resembled their non-poor peers. In addition, other studies have also found that increases in family income resulted in improved school attendance and achievement (Salkind & Haskins, 1982) as well as behavior (Huston et al., 2001).

The psychological and emotional strain of living in poverty can also have an effect on the quality of parenting that a child receives. If a parent is unable to respond to the needs of their child, as well as provide emotional stimulation and support, the child’s development could be
delayed or negatively affected (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996). Studies addressing parenting styles of those living in poverty are described as more “punitive and coercive and less consistent” (Kaiser & Delaney, 1996, p. 71). Oftentimes, those conditions identified for successful families are absent when living in poverty: stability, security, emotionally positive time together, access to basic resources, and a strong shared belief (Pellino, 2001).

The emphasis on survival, health, and safety when living in poverty shifts the emphasis from the importance of higher order thinking skills. This results in the failure of the family to focus on school. Studies exploring the school readiness of children in poverty confirm a strong correlation between a child’s cognitive ability and their socioeconomic status (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Students in poverty often suffer from poor self-efficacy or engage in behaviors that jeopardize goal-setting and their ability to succeed. In many cases, research has alluded that many students arrive to the classroom already exhibiting a poor self-image (Ciaccio, 2000). In addition, the difficulties with self-image can be provoked by stereotyping (Anyon, 2005), diminishing motivation and student engagement in school for fear of failure and stereotype fulfillment.

“Downshifting,” according to Caine (2000, p. 60), is another phenomenon experienced by poor children. This occurs when an individual’s biological response is focused on survival, or the basic needs of security and safety on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. If these basic needs are not met, they are only able to focus on the basic needs of survival, contributing to a sense of hopelessness, fatigue, and sometimes defiance.

As illustrated through the many individual and family risk factors of poverty, the elements are interrelated, and one compounds the other. With families in poverty, the primary emphasis is placed on survival and meeting the individual’s or families’ basic needs of health.
and safety as opposed to developing higher order thinking skills and goal acquisition. Thus, as non-poverty students continue to develop at high trajectory rates, their poor counterparts fall further behind.

The Effect of Community and Environment

In addition to individual and family risk factors, children of poverty face other levels of risk, such as the community into which one is born or the neighborhood in which one lives. These community or environment effects make up the second factor of the “perfect storm,” and also have a significant impact on a child’s learning experience in a school or classroom. Many studies support that the community into which a child is born is a substantial predictor of the likelihood of a student graduating from high school or college.

Existing research concluded that living in poor neighborhoods increases the odds of a student’s involvement in gangs, teen pregnancy, behavioral problems, and dropping out of school (Lippman, 1996). Additionally, these studies also suggested that students are receiving many of their experiences and cues for behavior in their neighborhoods or communities (Berliner, 2006). Therefore, neighborhoods are establishing the behavioral norms and standards of expectation and achievement in which children operate. Behavioral norms that are community-based can result in the possibilities that even the most involved parents can lose their kids to the street.

Berliner’s (2006) study also described one’s zip code or neighborhood as a determinant of student success that is as influential as one’s family. This premise is illustrated in a series of studies focusing on the achievement of poor, inner-city students who attended school in middle class suburbs. All of these studies found that the poor students who attended the middle class
schools experienced more success that those who remained in poor schools. Thus, another significant impact on learning is the poverty context of the schools that children attend. Some studies have indicated that the poverty level of the school is more predictive of student achievement than the family poverty level. Students in high-poverty schools are less likely to be engaged, participate in extracurricular activities, put forth less effort, and have lower aspirations than high-poverty students who attend more affluent schools. However, further research revealed that children who grow up in poverty but transfer to more affluent schools show rapid gains in behavior and academic achievement (Anyon, 2005a), concluding that reducing poverty increases the likelihood of academic success.

Resource Inequality

Whereas the first two systems in the “perfect storm” of poverty represent a flawed social system, the third facet is an indication of the failure of our public educational system to allocate resources in an equitable manner. The equality of the distribution of resources between poor and non-poor have been at the center of controversy for many years, and research continues to substantiate the inequities that high-poverty urban and rural students suffer each year through the lack of financial resources and quality teachers.

Historically, the state formulas used to provide financial allocations for learning have been fundamentally flawed with the use of a tax base to generate allocated monies. Thus, states with the highest percentage of children in poverty spend less money per pupil because they generate fewer taxes. For example, wealthy states average approximately $9,500 per pupil, while poorer states spend around $5,300 per pupil. In addition, states that spend less per student also receive less money from the federal government through Title I and other federal funds (Tough,
The inequities in the formulas alone widen the disparities of financial allocations among states.

Teaching resources is another powerful area of inequality that exists in high-poverty schools. Two areas that are prevalent are teacher quality and teacher turnover. Research conducted through Education Trust (2006) exposed the disparity between qualified teachers and the districts in which they teach. According to the studies conducted, twice as many teachers of high-poverty schools failed their basic skills tests as compared to those teachers in low-poverty schools. One in eight teachers in high-poverty schools was not highly qualified as compared to 1 in 50 teachers in low-poverty schools. In addition, studies also indicated that 88% of teachers in high-minority, high-poverty schools ranked in the lowest quartile on teacher quality assessments. Therefore, poor schools are more likely to have less-qualified, lower quality teachers who have neither majored nor minored in the subjects that they teach (Whitmore, 1997).

The lack of qualified, quality teachers in high-poverty schools may create a “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2004), as illustrated in the 6% difference between teacher turnover in low-poverty schools as compared to high-poverty schools. In addition, teacher turnover impedes school functioning and the delivery of curriculum, which can negatively affect student performance. In addition, studies in high-poverty schools indicate that poor schools retain only 1% of the most qualified and highest ranking teachers (Tough, 2006). Therefore, research results suggest that not only do high-poverty schools experience difficulties in hiring and retaining high-quality new teachers, they tend to employ the lowest quality teachers. This results in teacher turnover and retention trepidations.

As described by the “perfect storm” triad, the cumulative effects of poverty’s influences are enormous and devastating. Although the influences of poverty are complex, recent studies
confirm that developing an improved understanding of poverty’s “perfect storm” (Mass Insight, 2007) will lead to the study of the framework of high-performing, high-poverty schools, resulting in the design of effective and concentrated interventions that will minimize the effects of poverty.

High-Poverty Schools

When considering the “perfect storm” of poverty and the effects on learning, the importance of school context is crucial as it relates to the achievement of students in high-poverty schools. When investigating the characteristics of high-poverty schools, research revealed three features illustrating their complexity. First, their ecology is significantly more unpredictable and irregular, as compared to their counterparts. There are disparate variations in student backgrounds and school readiness, as well as personal and family crises (Mass Insights, 2007, p. 25). The highest poverty schools have the highest percentage of Black and Hispanic students; English Language Learners, or those who speak a language other than English in the home; the highest percentage of teachers with less than 5 years experience; and the lowest number of White students per classroom (NCES, 2006). In addition, the lack of retention of students and staff, as well as the shortage of support through family and community, contribute to the turbulence of the organization. High-poverty schools experience more crises in 1 week than most low-poverty schools do in an entire school year.

A second feature of high-poverty schools is that traditional means and techniques of public education are unable to successfully address the unstable and turbulent structure of high-poverty schools. The most common practices, such as advancement by grade level or common teaching techniques, may do more harm by placing additional stressors on children in poverty.
Additionally, larger school systems utilize structures that may impede collegiality and create school environments that foster impersonality (Lippman, 1996), thus placing impoverished students in “greater risk of academic failure” (Borman & Rachuba, 2001).

In addition to the instability and tumultuous conditions of high-poverty schools, other compounding factors coexist which also emasculate a student’s readiness to learn. Poor students are more likely to change schools more often or have poor school attendance (Lippman, 1996; Pellino, 2001). When changing schools, students may arrive with no records or information that would be useful in determining the additional services those students may need. According to Pellino (2001), even when placement is successful, children usually move again within one school year. The mobility poor students experience may also negatively affect their ability to make friends, resulting in feelings of hostility or becoming socially withdrawn.

The analysis of the factors of high-poverty schools exposes the complexity of the conditions of high-poverty schools. Instability, turbulence, and crises describe the typical environment in most high-poverty schools each day. Yet some schools emerge from the “perfect storm of disadvantage” (Mass Insight, 2007) and are able to respond with strategies that address the daily challenges of a high-poverty environment. These high-performing, high-poverty schools serve as “trailblazers” for defeating the effects of poverty.

High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools

To be successful in mitigating the adverse conditions of poverty, high-poverty schools must possess an organizational design that can account for and overcome unpredictable circumstances that exist. This is not accomplished by reformation of the traditional model of education, but by reinventing what schools do. Research focused on the challenges that face
high-poverty schools have vigorously shaped the response of high-performing, high-poverty schools. A cross-examination of studies on high-performing, high-poverty schools has revealed many successful practices and intervention efforts, specifically, the transformation and creation of high-performing, high-poverty schools. High-performing, high-poverty schools are described by Brady (2003) as being, “a phenomenon of sufficient import to receive significant scholarly attention” (p. 24), and the organizational structures are described as being highly adaptable through “improvisation and innovation” (Mass Insight, 2007). Furthermore, high-performing, high-poverty schools diminish the unpredictable and unstable effects of poverty through the reconceptualization of what schools do. They reject the traditional “Old World” (Fullan et al., 2006) model of schooling, or one size fits all approach to student learning. Instead, they embrace the need for high expectations imbedded within a coordinated prescription of specific services addressing an individual student’s academic and developmental needs. According to Vallas (Mass Insight, 2007), high-performing, high-poverty schools do not accept excuses nor do they try to solve the problem of poverty. Instead, they do whatever is necessary to remove any barriers for learning and create new paths for students to pursue achievement. This process begins with the basic premise that all students can learn at a high standard.

Emerging research is redefining our knowledge of the ecology of high-poverty schools through the investigation and description of the high-performing, high-poverty school. Although high-performing, high-poverty schools are an emergent and evolving species, their responses have actively shaped successful practices and intervention efforts to the effectively overcome the challenges of poverty. Through these continued studies of high-performing, high-poverty schools, the High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools Readiness Model was introduced.
The High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Calkins et al., 2007) was developed as a construct that defines a framework in which high-performing, high-poverty schools operate (Figure 7). It begins with three interlocking dimensions that allow schools to (1) acknowledge and foster student’s *Readiness to Learn*, (2) elevate and focus staff’s *Readiness to Teach*, and (3) exercise more *Readiness to Act* in non-traditional ways in public schools. As illustrated in Figure 6, the converging arrows represent the “New World” (Fullan et al., 2006) model of schooling, a “triage” approach to a more student-centered, learning driven model as opposed to the existing linear, teaching-driven model.

All three dimensions are essential for systemic reform capable of removing poverty’s barriers to learning and creating new paths to student achievement (Figure 7). However, many reform efforts thus far have focused on the *Readiness to Teach* dimension through instructional changes or movements, such as the development of charter schools, to circumvent the traditional organizational design of the public school system.
Readiness to Learn

In this dimension, the high-performing, high poverty schools differ dramatically from other schools. The extent to which these schools address the relationships and environment set them apart from traditional schools. In a high-performing, high-poverty school, the primary task is removing any barriers of learning that may exist. These schools actively tackle the challenges that accompany their students as they walk into the door each day, ranging from providing clothing or food for a child in need to coordinating health services. Their goal is to develop good learners, which “must develop underlying perseverance, strong will, and positive disposition” (Borman & Rachuba, 2001, as cited in Mass Insight, 2007, p. 32). As compared to a high-performing, high-poverty school, a traditional high-poverty school ignores the importance of a child’s development, and “the whole school’s structure is not set up to support child development” (Comer, 2002, in Mass Insight, 2007, p. 32).

Through attending to the development of relationships and the environment, the focus in a high-performing, high-poverty school shifts from what is being taught to what is being learned. Within the Readiness to Learn dimension, the following elements are a focus: (1) Safety, Discipline, and Engagement; (2) Action Against Adversity; and (3) Close Student-Adult Relationships.

Before learning can take place, a sense of safety has to be established within the school, especially those that serve environments where crime and turmoil are a daily occurrence. Although rules of behavior are clear and concise, flexibility of routines are needed to address unpredictable circumstances. Additionally, practices must be employed consistently and transparently for students, parents, and teachers. Orr (2005) explained that creating a peaceful
and orderly environment reduces strain for students and teachers, enabling deeper instructional changes to occur.

As safe and orderly learning environments are being developed and sustained, high-performing, high-poverty schools also actively seek methods in which to engage the students in learning. Although particular attention is also given to reading, math, and writing, the high-performing, high-poverty approach also explicitly concentrates on subjects that are often ignored in traditional systems, such as music, art, physical education, world languages, technology, and career education. Reeves (2003) identified that involvement in these “peripheral” subjects is significant and has an impact on student achievement. When students are engaged, Schlecty (1994) explained that they exhibit three characteristics: (1) they are attracted to their work, (2) they persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) they take visible delight in accomplishing their work. By focusing on engagement, a high-performing, high-poverty school helps generate a cycle in which students are engaged and inspired; then motivated and learning; and, finally, positive contributors to a safe, orderly, and supportive environment (Reeves, 2003).

When addressing poverty effects, high-performing, high-poverty schools attempt to protect children from the adversities within homes, schools, and communities (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). By providing a wide array of services, these schools are able to connect with community resources and social service providers to address a range of needs, from economic to health and human. Becoming a community resource for students and parents, these schools have an increased likelihood of nurturing academic success than many other school-based efforts. Furthermore, high-performing, high-poverty schools develop and implement guidelines norms and behaviors that foster learning and self-advocacy. Faculty and staff members are often trained
in human services to improve their understanding of the challenges facing students and help them confront the students’ needs, such as conflict resolution, parenting, and life skills.

Another element that determines the Readiness to Learn in high-performing, high-poverty schools is the development of close student-adult relationships. Many studies identify a teacher’s ability to develop relationships with children in poverty as the key factor of high-performing schools (Haberman, 1999). High-performing, high-poverty schools focus on establishing intensive relationships through the development of small learning communities, looping of teachers and students, home visits, and intense advisory systems. As a result, students reported feeling known and supported by the school staff, and they acknowledged that they work harder and are reluctant to disappoint their teachers as a result of an improvement in interpersonal relationships (AIR/SRI, 2005).

Readiness to Teach

This particular dimension of the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model has been the focal point of educational reform for the past two decades. Most research studies on educational reform have emerged from efforts toward standards-based reform, such as developing instructional strategies and interventions, curricular reform and development, or using data to drive instruction. Although standard-based reform practices are fairly common among schools today, high-performing, high-poverty schools advance this dimension with more intensity than their low-performance counterparts. Instead of project-based reform, strategies are used in high-performing, high-poverty schools in the following manner: (1) they are implemented with shared responsibility of everyone in the school community; (2) they are used,
along with assessment, to personalize instruction for students; and (3) importance is placed on the development of a professional, collaborative teaching culture.

Contrary to the over-used mantra of “establishing high expectations for student learning,” high-performing, high-poverty schools focus on explicitly shared responsibility for student achievement as opposed to setting a bar of expectation. This responsibility is inclusive, involving all students, community members, and parents, as well as all of the adults in the school building. This shared responsibility is highly focused on learning and student behaviors, with a “laser-like” focus on student achievement (Reeves, 2003). Reeves described these high-performing, high-poverty schools as “90-90-90 schools,” referring to schools that score in the 90th percentile, are 90% minority, and are 90% free and reduced-price lunch. Of the many strategies that are employed in high-performing, high-poverty schools, shared responsibility for achievement is illustrated in the involvement of all staff in professional development, as well as home-school contracts.

More so than their peers, high-performing, high-poverty schools are organized to personalize instruction for each student using a student-centered approach to learning. Although many schools use data-driven instruction, high-performing, high-poverty schools organize instruction around an individually-focused “short feedback loop of formative assessment, adapted instruction, further formative assessment, and further adapted instruction” (Chenoweth, 2005, p. 84). A further description of this loop included core elements of

- Frequent formative assessment given as often as weekly or bi-weekly
- Immediate feedback is analyzed within days or hours and immediately used by teachers and coaches to guide instructional changes
• Instruction that is adapted quickly to identify gaps or problems utilizing a variety of approaches, including small group instruction and individual tutoring

• Teacher time and flexibility are provided to address the issues through innovative scheduling and time usage in order to suit the needs of the students and personalized instruction

As described by researchers, high-performing, high-poverty schools meaningfully integrate assessment into instruction and understand it to be a tool. Students in these schools understand the role of assessment and thrive on immediate feedback as a means to see their own learning. In other words, “They teach, they test, they teach, they test” (Kannapel & Clements, 2005 in Mass Insights, 2007, p. 35).

When developing the Readiness to Teach, the role of the teacher in high-performing, high-poverty schools is highly collaborative. Teachers work together naturally through professional learning communities, common planning times, group reviews of student work, and collaborative professional development. The most effective high-performing, high-poverty schools protect time for collaboration on a daily or weekly basis.

The cultures of these schools are extremely professional, and the teachers are focused on diagnosing student needs, improving instruction, and enhancing their instructional practices. Professional development at a high-performing school is distinctly different than other schools. It is often team-based, and it directly relates to changing instructional strategies to improve student achievement (CPE/Caliber Associates, 2005). Data analysis and instructional development is a meaningful part of a teacher practice because it takes place on site and is imbedded into ongoing work.
Readiness to Act

In this dimension, the readiness to act refers to the insistence among high-performing, high-poverty schools to relentlessly and strategically deploy every resource at their disposal without the bureaucracy that impedes progress that is truly best for students. Thompson described the alignment with theory as “the expectation of uncertainty’ in which high-performing schools “must resort to a different sort of logic” (Mass Insight, 2007, p. 36). In order to establish the Readiness to Act, elements that must exist are (1) resource authority, (2) resource ingenuity, and (3) agility in the face of turbulence.

In order to overcome the effects of poverty, high-performing, high-poverty schools need broad authority over principal resources--people, time, money, and program--in order to continually modify instruction for individual student needs, respond to daily disorder, and increase the effectiveness of the staff. These types of authority reveal themselves in the daily schedule, annual calendar, and teacher involvement in school decision making. Most public schools are unable to make those decisions, which undermines their ability to succeed. High-performing, high-poverty schools, however, do have the authority through charter-like conditions or special district allowances. Additionally, other high-performing, high-poverty schools can control unusual circumstances, such as unique partnerships with outside entities that allow them to respond as if they had such power.

According to Reeves (2003), the most important aspect of determining student success is teacher quality. This is supported through the extensive care that high-performing, high-poverty schools utilize when choosing staff members who are compatible with the mission of the school. In many instances, these schools have the ability to offer teacher incentives, such as financial
incentives or more flexible working conditions, that are absent in most traditional public school settings.

Another element present in high-performing, high-poverty schools is the resourcefulness of school administration and staff to locate additional resources. To fill the endless need for resources in a school of poverty, high-performing, high-poverty staff must be tenacious and relentless at locating and acquiring additional people, money, time, skills, materials, or equipment needed to improve student achievement. No stone is left unturned, and no one is left without a role in this process. Some examples of high-performing, high-poverty schools’ resource ingenuity include the use of every adult in the school building as a reading coach, the use of church groups to preserve safe passage to and from school through dangerous neighborhoods, social workers embedded within teacher teams, and school-wide teams structured to visit every student’s home (Chenoweth, 2007).

A final element that makes up the Readiness to Act is the ability to adapt and overcome the ecology of high-poverty schools. Unlike most traditional schools, high-performing, high-poverty schools are able to adjust to ever-changing circumstances with flexibility and skill. This enables the school to support student readiness and tackle those events that attempt to disrupt learning, as well as to develop a resilient organization that flourishes regardless of the challenges and turbulence of poverty. Leadership within a high-performing, high-poverty school is founded upon “an ever-changing balance of skills, experience, and intuition” through use of the leader’s own imaginative strategies to increase the effectiveness of existing projects and initiatives rather than managing the restrictions and guidelines of individual programs (Orr et al, 2005, as cited in Mass Insight, 2007, p. 37).
It is apparent that the concept of “whole school reform” (Mass Insight, 2007) has played a significant part in justifying the need for the integration of comprehensive strategies instead of another reform project or movement. Nevertheless, our nation’s definition of “whole” as it relates to systemic educational change to address poverty’s effects on learning have not been whole enough (Mass Insight, 2007). The High-Performance, High-Poverty Readiness Model continues to serve as a springboard for rethinking our approach to education reform, as well as a vehicle for fundamental change. According to national research (Mass Insight, 2007), many states have taken novel approaches to their role in restructuring, have implemented innovative strategies in underperforming schools, and have recognized high-performing, high-poverty schools in their state.

Alabama’s High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools: Torchbearer Schools

In Alabama, the Torchbearer School Program was created to recognize high-poverty, high-performing public schools. The program was established in 2004, and emerged from a professional learning community developed by the Alabama Leadership Academy. Upon studying the book *No Excuses: 21 Lessons From High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* by Samuel Casey-Carter, the cohort of educational leaders dialogued about the school case studies in the book, which were made up of private schools, magnet schools, or charter schools. They concluded that research had never been completed to recognize high-performing, high-poverty schools in the state of Alabama.

The development of the Torchbearer Program is used to identify schools as high-poverty, high-performing schools. Schools are selected each year based on the previous year’s assessment
data, and they are awarded $5,000 per school for their accomplishments. Criteria for Torchbearer schools include the following:

- Identified as Meeting the Challenge School (Met Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, for two consecutive years)
- Identified as Advancing the Challenge School (percentage of all students scoring in advanced in reading and math exceeded state percent scoring advanced)
- Identified as Exceeding the Challenge School (subgroup whose percentage of students scoring proficient in reading and math exceeded its state counterpart)
- Have at least 80% poverty rate, or free/reduced –price meals
- Have at least 80% of students to score at Levels III or IV on the Reading section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT)
- Have at least 80% of student of score at Level III or IV on the Math section of the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT)
- Have at least 65% of students score in Stanines 5-9 on Stanford 10 reading
- Have at least 65% of students score in Stanines 5-9 on Stanford 10 math
- Have at least 95% of 12th-grade students pass all required subjects of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)
- Have a graduation rate above the state average (high schools)

Defying the Odds: How Did They Do It?

Defying the odds of poverty’s effect on student learning, high-performing, high-poverty schools elicit the question: How do they do it? Children living in poverty endure challenges and conditions in which they have little or no control. They cannot determine where they live,
whether or not their parents are educated or employed, or if they have the basic necessities of survival. Being born into poverty was not a choice. Children often experience the need to escape the environment in which they live in order to be able to succeed, but they often do not have the concept of agency (Pellino, 2001), or an individual’s belief that they can intentionally make things happen through their actions. Brophy (1998) explained that if we can show children that they can be agents, we can enable them to play a part in their self-development and take responsibility for their learning, personal development, and achievement. They will not merely go through experiences, but they will become fully engaged participants to accomplish tasks and goals.

In addition, research also identified goal-setting, or goals thinking, as a critical aspect of agency because it enables children to construct outcome expectations (Pellino, 2001; Snyder, 2000). This reinforces the critical need for children in poverty to possess the knowledge of how to set goals and achieve them, the two dimensions of the hope theory.

Researchers have recently begun to explore the significance of hope in children and adolescents. Initial studies of hope in children (Snyder, Cheavents, et al., 1997; Snyder, Hoza, et al. 1997) concluded that high-hope scores of students positively correlated with optimism, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Other studies have accounted that adolescents with higher levels of hope also reported higher levels of global life satisfaction (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004).

More studies are needed to determine the functional role of hope in the development of adaptive outcomes. According to Snyder’s hope theory, hope should serve as a buffer when children or adolescents are faced with stressful life events. It may never be likely to protect children from all distressing events in life. Current research suggests that hope can be increased
through targeted interventions (Westburg & Martin, 2003). The development of cognitive-motivational strengths, such as hopeful thinking, enables children to successfully manage negative life events as they occur (Valle et al., 2004). To date, no assessment has explored the relationship between academic instruction, hope levels in teachers, and academic achievement in school-age children. As educators, an understanding of hope as a construct is crucial in order to determine how to equip students with strategies to overcome the effects of poverty.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study is designed as a mixed methods investigation to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools in Alabama?
2. How do the characteristics of a high-hope teacher differ from a low hope teacher?
3. Is there a relationship between the level of teacher hope and gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught?
4. Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom?
5. Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and student achievement?

In order to investigate and compare the types of instructional strategies implemented in the classrooms of high-hope teachers, follow-up interviews were administered after analyzing The Hope Scale results. Results were analyzed to identify total levels of teacher hope as well as subscale levels of Pathways and Agency dimensions of teacher hope. Analysis of the quantitative data collected through The Hope Scale was conducted to determine whether a relationship exists between variables. Analysis of qualitative interviews was also completed in order to develop an instructional and characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher.

To thoroughly explore the constructs described in this study’s research questions, a mixed-methodology was utilized. The research design used was a sequential method design
(Cresswell, 1995), consisting of a quantitative component followed by a qualitative component. A mixed-methods approach elicited a more in-depth examination of the profile and characteristics of high-hope teachers. This information was collected through the initial implementation of an online survey, followed by classroom observations and focus group interviews. The survey instrument was designed to collect quantitative data, while the interviews were employed to collect qualitative data.

The utilization of both quantitative and qualitative methods intensified the validity of the data collected, as well as the conclusions formulated (Patton, 1990). Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that “numbers and words are both needed if we are to understand the world” (p. 40). The use of multiple perspectives and sources within this study highlight the strengths and equalize the weaknesses of each method. Therefore, a “triangulation of data” (Tashakkorti & Teddlie, 1998, p. 14) occurred, which cross-validated evidence collected and resulted in increased integrity of the study’s results.

Quantitative Component

The quantitative component of this study included an online self-report survey consisting of The Hope Scale and demographic items. In addition, the survey included a section in which the participants consented to participate in follow-up interviews and submitted their name and contact information. The development of this component coincided with Patton’s (1990) belief that qualitative analysis encapsulates responses of a larger population, increasing the generalizability of findings and emerging patterns to other populations.
Participants completed anonymous self-administered surveys that included the following scales: (a) Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), a 12-item inventory designed to tap an individual’s dispositional hope in adults, ages 15 and older; and (b) demographic items related to gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught. A self-administered survey was chosen as the method of data collection in order to measure the selected attributes from the sample population of school teachers surveyed (Cresswell, 2003). The results of this survey were used to form generalizations concerning teachers’ level of hope and the impact that gender, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and grade level had on this construct.

The survey instrument contained 16 items, a combination of the survey instrument and four demographic items. The first section of the survey, teachers’ level of hope, was measured by using *The Hope Scale* (Snyder et al., 1991). This measure consisted of eight hope items and four fillers. The contents of the four agency items address the determination in relation to an individual’s goal. Within this dimension, one item reflects the past, two items refer to the present, and one item addresses the future. The four pathways items pertain to the individual’s cognitive appraisals of their ability to generate means for overcoming obstacles and reaching goals. The remaining four items were demographic items regarding gender, years of teaching experience, level of education attained, and level of teaching assignment. In addition, a final item indicated interest in follow-up interviews and provided contact information for those teachers who were willing to participate. The follow-up interviews were conducted to collect information regarding teacher characteristics and their use of instructional strategies.
The Hope Scale uses an 8-point continuum scale, with anchors at 1-Definitely False, 2-Mostly False, 3-Somewhat False, 4-Slightly False, 5-Slightly True, 6-Somewhat True, 7-Mostly True, and 8-Definitely True. Using the 8-point continuum, scores can range from a low of 8 to a high of 64. Four items reflect agency (2, 9, 10, and 12), four reflect pathways (1, 4, 6, and 8), and four items are distracters (3, 5, 7, and 11).

Descriptive Statistics

The Hope Scale was administered to six separate samples of University of Kansas introductory psychology students and two samples of individuals in psychological treatment, one outpatient and one inpatient (Snyder et al., 1991). Table 2 illustrates that Hope Scores for individuals undergoing psychological treatment were lower than scores of college students, at $t_s > 17.38$, all $p_s < .001$. The Hope Scores were combined for gender because there was no significant difference between men’s and women’s scores.
### Table 2

**Descriptive Statistics of The Hope Scale for Samples of College Students and People in Psychological Treatment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>College student sample</th>
<th>Psychological treatment sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stress center</td>
<td>state hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>12.81</td>
<td>12.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item remainder coefficient</td>
<td>.45 to .57</td>
<td>.47 to .59</td>
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<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>12.81</td>
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<td>$SD$</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item remainder coefficient</td>
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<td>.37 to .47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
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<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item remainder coefficient</td>
<td>.36 to .53</td>
<td>.29 to .51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total of men and women
Reliability Indexes Internal Consistency

Table 2 also describes information regarding internal consistency of The Hope Scale. For the total scale, Cronbach’s alphas ranged from .74 to .84 in previous research (item remainder coefficients of .23 to .63). The Agency subscale yielded Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .71 to .76 (item remainder coefficients of .40 to .72). Furthermore, the Pathways subscale generated Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .63 to .80 (item remainder coefficients of .36 to .63). As described by Nunnally (1978), scales with internal reliabilities of .70 to .80 are within acceptable limits for research purposes (Snyder et al., 1991).

Temporal Stability

The test-retest reliability of The Hope Scale has been examined in four samples of University of Kansas undergraduates (Snyder et al., 1991). Test-retest correlations were .76 and .82, respectively, \( ps < .001 \), in two samples over periods exceeding 10 weeks (Gibb, 1990; Yoshinobu, 1989).

Factor Analyses

Because items selected to form The Hope Scale addressed the two theoretical components of hope, a factor analysis was completed to explore the presence of agency and pathways factors. Via principal-components exploratory factor analysis with oblique rotations, two components were identified, agency and pathways. Sample items include (1) Agency Subscale: “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam”; (2) Pathways Subscale: “I energetically pursue my goals”; and (3) Distracter Items: “I feel tired most of the time.” As shown in Table 3, the four items that were identified to reflect agency demonstrated high loadings on Factor 1, but not on Factor 2.
Table 3

Principal-Components Factor Analyses Loadings (Oblique Rotations from Pattern Matrixes) of Hope Scale Items for Samples of College Students and People in Psychological Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>16.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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</table>

(Snyder et al., 1991)
Subsequently, the four items that were identified to reflect pathways demonstrated high loadings on Factor 2, but not Factor 1. Table 3 also revealed that the two factors accounted for 52% to 63% of the variance across samples. Thus, the two factor solutions appear to be a viable one (Snyder et al., 1991).

**Relationship of Agency and Pathways Components**

Factor analyses revealed that *The Hope Scale* reflects two separable theorized components (Snyder et al., 1991). However, the agency and pathways component scores positively correlated in each of the student samples as shown in Table 3. The correlations support the hypothesis that the agency and pathways components are interconnected, but not necessarily the same.

**Convergent Validity**

A common process of convergent validity entails the correlation of responses on a new scale to responses on an established scale which measures similar constructs. Gibb (1990) and Holleran and Snyder (1990) conducted a study in which 399 University of Kansas introductory psychology students completed *The Hope Scale* along with several other scales that moderately correlated with hope. In addition, Irving et al. (1990) administered *The Hope Scale* and other measures to 109 inpatients at a state mental health facility. As described in Table 4, the correlations established in these studies implied that predictable relationships exist among *The Hope Scale* and other measures, as well as the constructs measured in each.
### Table 4

**Hope Scale Correlations with Other Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs measured</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$ factor</th>
<th>factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generalized positive outcome expectations – optimism and cross-situational expectancies for attaining goals</td>
<td>*Life Orientation Test (LOT) (Scheier &amp; Carver, 1985)</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>$ps &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control perceptions – exerting personal control in life &amp; perception of problem-solving ability</td>
<td>*Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS) (Fibel &amp; Hale, 1978)</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>$ps &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>*Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenburg, 1965)</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>$p &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness &amp; Depression (inverse relationship to hope)</td>
<td>*Hopelessness Scale (Beck, Weissman, Lester, &amp; Trexler, 1974)</td>
<td>-.51</td>
<td>$p &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological problems (inverse relationship to hope)</td>
<td>*Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)</td>
<td>-.60</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td>-.59 – depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social desirability/self-presentation</td>
<td>*Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank (ISB)</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne &amp; Marlowe, 1960)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>$p &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Self-Presentation Scale (Roth, Harris, &amp; Snyder, 1988)</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>$p &lt; .005$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Snyder et al., 1991)

**Construct Validity**

Construct validity of this instrument was examined by assessing the correlation of this measure and other existing scales tapping similar psychological processes (Snyder et al, 1991).

For example, scores from *The Hope Scale* have correlated from .50 to .60 with scores on the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (Fibel & Hale, 1978). *The Hope Scale* also inversely correlated with the Hopelessness Scale (Beck,
Weissman, Lester, & Trexler, 1974). The results of these analyses indicated positive correlations with other measures, and provided evidence for construct validity.

**Discriminant Validity**

When establishing validity of a new measure, it is necessary to determine the independence of the new measure from other unrelated measures. To verify discriminant validity, *The Hope Scale* and two subscales of the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975) was administered to introductory psychology students. The correlation between the two instruments were not significant ($r_s = .06$ and -.03, respectively; Gibb 1990), confirming little variance between the measures.

**Survey Sample**

Participants chosen for this study were approximately 220 school teachers from a purposive and convenience sample of eight high-poverty schools in the state of Alabama. The schools served students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, and the school districts selected served urban, suburban, and rural areas. Individual participants included certified teachers from elementary, intermediate, and middle schools within the districts described above. The schools selected were categorized into high-performing, high-poverty schools and low-performing high-poverty schools based on accountability standards set forth by the Alabama Department of Education, as well as the criteria for the Torchbearer Schools Program for high-performing, high-poverty schools in Alabama.
Table 5

*Participating Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Pop.</th>
<th>Poverty %</th>
<th>Attendance %</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>HPHP</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100% African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>HPHP</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>74% White, 16% Asian 6% African American, 4% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>HPHP</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>53% African American, 44% White, 3% Hispanic/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>HPHP</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>60% White, 32% African American, 5% Asian, 3% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk Elementary (K-2)</td>
<td>LPHP</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>83% White, 12% African American, 5% Hispanic/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce Intermediate (3-5)</td>
<td>LPHP</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>83% White, 12% African American, 5% Hispanic/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Middle (6-8)</td>
<td>LPHP</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>63% White, 26% African American, 10% Hispanic/Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* HPHP = High-Performing, High-Poverty; LPHP = Low-Performing, High-Poverty.

As shown in Table 5, the schools in this study represented two groups: four high-performing, high-poverty schools and three low-performing, high poverty schools. The high-performing, high-poverty school populations ranged from 388-920, while the low-performing, high poverty schools served 312-482 students. Annual student attendance averaged 96% for both groups of schools. The most diversity was discovered in both the ethnicity and poverty subgroups.
**High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools**

School A, Washington Elementary, is an urban school located in the middle of the state’s second largest city. This school serves a student enrollment of approximately 484 students in Grades Kindergarten through 5. All of the students (100%) at Washington Elementary are African American, and 99% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. However, the annual attendance rate at Washington was 98% for 2009-2010, as was their average student attendance for the past 3 years. Teacher demographics for Washington Elementary revealed that approximately 57% of the 31 certified teachers have earned a Master’s degree or higher.

School B, Lincoln Elementary, is located in a remote, rural area in the coastal region of the state. Lincoln serves approximately 510 students in Kindergarten through fifth grade, and has 84% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. Annual student attendance averaged 96% over the past 3 years. The ethnicity at Lincoln Elementary is unique due to its location. A majority of the school’s students, approximately 74%, are White. However, the second largest ethnicity at Lincoln is Asian, followed by African American and Hispanic students. Of Lincoln Elementary School’s 26 teachers, 27% have a Master’s degree or above.

School C, Roosevelt Elementary, has a student enrollment of approximately 388 students in Grades Kindergarten through 5. It is located in a rural area, but near suburban areas surrounding a large city in the state. Eighty-six percent of Roosevelt’s students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and the average yearly student attendance is 97%. The ethnicity of the school is somewhat evenly divided, with 53% African American and 44% White students. In addition, approximately 3% of the student population are Hispanic or of other ethnicities. Of the 24 teachers at Roosevelt Elementary, 53% have earned their Master’s degree.
School D, Kennedy Elementary, is located in a heavily populated suburb directly outside of a large city in the state. The school’s enrollment is approximately 923 students, with 66% of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch. The average yearly student attendance rate is 96%. The ethnic demographics of the students are 60% White, 32% African American, 5% Asian, and 3% Hispanic and other ethnicities. There are approximately 60 teachers at Kennedy, and teacher qualifications are evenly divided between those with Bachelor degrees and Master’s degrees.

*Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*

School E, Polk Elementary School, serves students in Kindergarten through second grade. It is located in a small rural town nestled between two small mountain ranges in the state. The average yearly student attendance is 95% at Polk, and approximately 50% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. Polk serves 482 students, of which 81% are White; 15% are African American; and 4% are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or of another ethnicity. Of the 31 teachers at Polk Elementary, 69% of them have teaching qualifications at a Master’s level or beyond.

School F, Pierce Intermediate School, serves the third through fifth grade, and it is the subsequent school for Polk Elementary students. It is also located in a rural town between two small mountain ranges in the state. Pierce serves 471 students, of which 83% are White; 12% are African American; and 5% are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or of another ethnicity. The yearly attendance rate for Pierce students averaged 95%. In addition, 50% of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Of the 25 teachers at Pierce Intermediate, 57% have earned Master’s degrees or above.
School G, Jefferson Middle School, is a school serving 312 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Jefferson is located in a quickly growing suburb of a large city in the state. The average student attendance each year is 94%, and 54% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Of Jefferson’s 312 students, 63% are White; 26% are African American; and 10% are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or of another ethnicity. There are 23 teachers at Pierce, and 54% of them have earned Master’s degrees or above.

Methods and Procedures

Both probability and non-probability sampling were used to determine the schools involved in this study. Surveys were distributed through email to all teachers in the sample school systems. Each selected school system was then contacted to participate in the study, and a contact list of participating teacher emails from each school was compiled. Email invitations were distributed to individual teachers in the participating schools.

The email contained informed consent information; an introductory letter to the study; and a link to the web-based Hope Scale instrument via SurveyGizmo; demographic items; and a request to participate in follow-up interviews (Appendix A). A phone number and email address were provided as a resource for assistance, as well as the timeframe that the survey was collected. The introductory letter in the survey also served as an informed consent statement that had to be approved by the participant before the online survey was accessible for completion (Appendix A).

Participants were expected to read each item and rate their belief of each item using a Likert-type scale, with an 8-point continuum. For the teacher demographic items, teachers were asked to respond to questions to the best of their ability. A final item asked the participant if
he/she was willing to participate in follow-up classroom interviews, as well as provide their name and contact information. On-line access was intended to remain open for 4 weeks. A reminder was sent to those systems with low participation at the end of weeks 2 and 4. Two weeks were added due to a low return rate, and additional time was needed to reach the appropriate sample size for the study. A wave analysis was completed daily to determine response bias. After the research was completed, each school system received a psychometric report that contained teacher hope scores and interpretations.

In compliance with The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board and participating school system guidelines, participants’ rights were safeguarded. Each participant was asked to complete the on-line instrument, *The Hope Scale* (Appendix B), which involved a time commitment of between 10-15 minutes. Teachers were assured of complete confidentiality with names and schools of participants not used in any data sets, reports, or presentations. Data were available for participants and school boards upon request.

*Analysis of the Data*

The independent variables in this study were the participants’ gender, years of teaching experience, degree earned, and grade level. They were explored to determine whether they impact the level of teachers’ level of hope. The dependent variables were teachers’ level of hope, as well as the teachers’ beliefs about and attitudes toward relationships, the role of a teacher, and types of instructional strategies and processes implemented in the classroom. These variables were studied to determine whether a relationship existed among the dependent and independent variables, as well as to create and define the profile of a high-hope teacher. Materials required for
the quantitative portion of this study were limited to the self-administered surveys. No incentives or rewards were given.

Frequencies for each demographic item were then calculated and analyzed in order to identify the “natural breaks” in the data. Groups were combined in order to equalize the groups. In order to examine significant differences in participants’ level of hope as related to gender, years of experience, level of education/degree earned, and grade level taught, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a Tukey follow-up was conducted for each variable.

Total sum scores were computed for The Hope Scale (Snyder, 2006) by combining the sums of the items. The sum of each subscale, Pathways and Agency, was calculated in order to examine each dimension. The Hope Scale means were then compared among demographic items to investigate any differences in teachers’ level of hope. A \( t \) test was completed to explore the relationships between a teacher’s level of hope and the demographic items of gender and ethnicity.

When scoring results from The Hope Scale, the distracter items were not used in scoring. After gathering initial data, teachers were identified as teachers with high hope or low hope based on the preliminary survey data. Subscale totals were used to further classify teachers into the following quartiles: (1) Total High Hope (High Agency, High Pathways), (2) Willpower Hope (High Agency, Low Pathways), (3) Waypower Hope (Low Agency, High Pathways), and (4) Total Low Hope (Low Agency, Low Pathways).

When comparing an individual’s agency and pathways scores from The Hope Scale, hope profiles were revealed. The most typical hope profile was one in which the agency and pathway thoughts were equal. Snyder (1994) describes that there are various forms and combinations of hope components, and these are determined by the individual’s resources and motivation (Lopez
et al., 2000). Much diagnostic information can be acquired through reviewing case profiles of low hope, waypower hope, willpower hope, and high hope.

A low-hope profile is one in which the subscale scores are less than 32 in both dimensions. Low-hope people are those who “have exceedingly low levels of willpower and waypower for their goals” (Snyder, 1994, p. 33). Low-hope individuals often lack goals or goal-directed thinking. Many times, successes do not have a significant impact on changing this individual’s thinking because low-hope thinking permeates all areas of life and may lead to depression. According to Snyder (1994), depression is often “fueled by people thinking they are incapable of attaining their goals” (p. 33). These types of depressive emotions can strengthen when one lacks defined goals.

A second profile is identified as willpower hope, or a profile with a score of 48 or more on the willpower subscale, but a score of 32 or less on the waypower subscale. Individuals who characterize a willpower-hope profile have the “necessary mental energy” to get where he/she wants, but somehow does not think workable routes to his/her goals can be produced (Snyder, 1994, p. 34). People with a lack of waypower, or agency, may not have been taught how to think of ways to work around obstacles in order to reach goals. Eventually, problems in thinking of possible ways of attaining goals may lead to feelings of frustration or anger, resulting in a loss of hope. Snyder (1994) explained that when people are continually blocked from their goals for a long period of time, they also are likely to lose their sense of willpower.

Waypower hope is the third profile, which is characterized by a score of 32 or less on the willpower subscale and a score of 48 or more on the willpower subscale. Individuals with this profile may have a plethora of possible solutions to reach a goal, but lack the willpower to try them. Burnout is a term used to reflect a depletion of willpower, and this may reflect a long-term
deficiency in willpower or a short-term lack of energy due to a setback (Snyder, 1994, p. 38). In some situations, traumatic personal news, such as a terminal illness, can “take the wind out of one’s mental sails.” Low-willpower people are described to be “just going through the motions” (Snyder, 1994, p. 40).

A final profile is the high-hope profile, with both willpower and waypower subscale scores above 48. High-hope people have clearly defined goals and continually think of ways to obtain them. Snyder (1994) described them as being “very focused on their objectives, freely moving from one idea to another to facilitate obtaining their goals” (p. 43). These individuals interact easily with others and take risks to get what they want. This stems from their belief that there are always opportunities available to reach goals, resulting in a resolve of thinking and behavior.

After the survey responses were categorized using the hope profiles identified by Snyder (1994), a numerical system was used to determine survey responses from high-performing, high-poverty schools and low performing, high-poverty schools. In addition, teachers consenting to participate in interviews submitted their name and contact information. The information was used only to coordinate the selection of interview participants for the qualititative portion of the study. All participants remained anonymous when reporting results of the study.

Qualitative Component

Qualitative methodology is described as phenomenological in nature (LeCompte & Preissle, 1994). The qualitative inquiries in this study attempted to capture and understand the personal actions and accounts of participants on the topic of inquiry (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).
**Interview Instrument**

Follow-up interviews were conducted to gather more in-depth data concerning teacher beliefs about students, teaching, and learning. Sixteen interview protocol questions developed from Snyder’s (2005) lessons of hopeful teaching were used to conduct the group interviews (Appendix D). The questions addressed the following areas:

- The “why’s” about the importance of developing close relationships with parents and students
- The “why’s” about the need of goal development with students
- The use of strategies for group work
- Using learner differences to adapt instruction
- Fact and procedures vs. inquiry and problem solving
- Beliefs about a teacher’s role and student’s role in instruction

Follow-up interviews were conducted to explore the “why’s” behind the instructional methods used by high-hope teachers. Interviews also investigated and compared the instructional methods, beliefs, and characteristics of high-hope and low-hope teachers. This portion of the qualitative component helped shape the profile of a high-hope teacher through utilizing the interview protocol questions (Appendix D). Through face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, and online interviews, it was possible to explore the areas of building relationships, setting goals, and creating a caring and supportive environment for student learning and success as identified by Snyder’s (2005) six principles of hopeful thinking.
Interview Sample

A list of high-hope and low hope teachers was generated from The Hope Scale survey results (Appendix E) using the survey respondent number, total sum hope scores, and each subscale score for agency and pathways. Using the 20 teachers consenting to be interviewed, a second list (Appendix E) was generated in order to identify teachers, using the survey respondent number and the teacher’s name, school, and contact information from completed consent forms.

Using the list with respondent number and total sum hope and subscale scores, a random sample of 10 teachers was generated by the secondary investigator based on total hope scores. Ten respondent numbers were given to the primary investigator, along with four alternate numbers. The primary investigator then matched the respondent numbers with the names and contact information. This method was used to prevent the interviewer from being aware of the hope scores of the participants as well as to eliminate any bias during the interview process.

The selected teachers and their administrators were contacted to arrange a specific day and time for the interview to take place. Interviews were conducted at each participant’s home school, and the school administrators assisted with providing coverage for the teachers during their interview times. An informed consent statement describing the qualitative component of the study was presented and signed before classroom observations and interviews began.

Methods and Procedures

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, online, or by phone at a time convenient for the participants. When face-to-face interviews were conducted, consent information was discussed with the participant and opportunities were given to ask questions before signing the informed consent. The participant was assured that there was not one correct answer, and the interview
protocol questions were asked with opportunities to expand on each question. Each interview lasted approximately 60-75 minutes.

Selected teachers at each school were interviewed in an effort to document the differences in the beliefs of high-hope and low-hope teachers. Protocol questions were open-ended and encouraged beliefs and opinions to be expressed. Interview responses were recorded with an audiotape recorder or video recorder for face-to-face and online interviews, and electronic transcripts were created.

Analysis of the Data

Interview responses were collected and transcribed. The transcripts were coded and categories were identified in order to (a) clarify the relationships, if any, identified in the quantitative analysis of the survey results; (b) explore the “why’s” behind hopeful thinking and teaching; and (c) develop a characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher, which includes the types of instructional strategies implemented in his/her classroom.

Written records were then categorized according to the following areas: (1) teacher/parent relationships, (2) teacher/student relationships, (3) goal development, (4) grouping strategies, (5) instructional strategies to address learner differences, (6) student roles, (7) inquiry and problem-solving strategies, and (8) beliefs about the teacher’s role in instruction. Category descriptions were created for each participant and each teacher’s level of hope was identified. Among the teachers interviewed, the quantitative and qualitative data were compared to determine whether a relationship existed between a teacher’s level of hope, instructional strategies implemented, and teacher characteristics identified.
The mean scores and subscale scores from *The Hope Scale*, or the quantitative component, were then analyzed. A hope profile, as defined by Snyder (1994), was assigned to each participant interviewed. This hope profile was then compared to the profiles created through the interview process in order to determine whether a relationship existed. Using both data sets, a list of characteristics was identified describing a high-hope teacher, and a profile of a high-hope teacher was created.

**Hope Levels by School**

In order to determine the relationships that may have existed between teacher hope and student achievement, the hope level of teachers by school was explored. The Total Hope sum scores were calculated for each school. Schools were then arranged in ordered pairs. Using an independent samples *t* test, school hope scores were compared to determine whether a significant difference existed between the hope levels in individual schools.

The second dimension of the school hope comparison explored possible significant relationships between teacher hope and student achievement as compared to HPHP and LPHP schools. Schools were categorized as HPHP or LPHP schools as determined by the criteria for Torchbearer (HPHP) schools as defined by the State of Alabama. An independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine whether a significant difference existed between a student’s level of hope and student achievement.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study identified and examined the characteristics of high-hope teachers as defined by C.R. Snyder (1994, 2000). The investigation focused on teachers’ beliefs concerning the instructional process, as well as teacher perceptions about the roles individuals play in the education of impoverished students. A mixed method approach was used to gain an inclusive and thorough understanding of a high-hope teacher’s characteristics and profile.

Study Overview

Chapter 4 is divided into two sections, quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, in order to discuss the findings of each methodology. The first section addresses the findings of the quantitative analysis of the survey results. To examine the levels of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools across Alabama, an online survey was administered to 220 classroom teachers representing seven schools within the state of Alabama. A total of 101 surveys were returned; however, 92 were complete and 9 were disqualified due to incomplete data. This yielded a return rate of 46%, with 42% scoreable and 4% disqualified. This return rate corresponds with research conducted by Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000), which reported an average of approximately 40% for response rates from a synthesis of 39 separate online surveys. In addition, previous studies concluded that Internet surveys may induce a lower response rate (Best et al., 2001; Sheehan & McMillan, 1999).
This study was founded upon teachers’ completion of the self-reported online survey items, which measure the participants’ perceived capacity to (1) develop workable goals, (2) find routes to those goals (pathways thinking), and (3) become motivated to use those pathways (agency thinking) (Snyder, 1994, 2000). The online survey also collected demographic items related to gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught to measure the impact these variables may have on a teacher’s level of hope.

SPSS was used to conduct quantitative research measures to generate the descriptive and comparative data needed for analysis. Appendix F displays the demographic features of the schools represented in both the quantitative and qualitative portion of the study.

The second section includes the qualitative analysis of this study. Using Snyder’s (1995) *Lessons in Hopeful Teaching* and Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) “Conceptual Benchmarks for Knowledge, Teaching, and Learning,” an interview protocol instrument was created to identify and compare the teachers’ beliefs and perceptions of instructional methods and the roles of teachers, students, and parents in the following areas:

- The “why’s” about the importance of developing close relationships with parents and students
- The “why’s” about the need of goal development with students
- The use of strategies for group work
- Using learner differences to adapt instruction
- Fact and procedures vs. inquiry and problem solving
- Beliefs about a teacher’s role and student’s role in instruction
In addition, the interview protocol explored teacher beliefs and positions on current instructional practices, beliefs about student learning, and school-wide efforts and organizational characteristics. This area was designed to explore high-hope teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about the school dynamics conducive to student achievement as compared to the High Performing High Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007).

The interview protocol was administered to 11 teachers randomly selected from their Hope Scale scores, and the transcriptions were analyzed for emerging themes. Comparative analysis was conducted using both the quantitative data (sum hope scores) and qualitative data (emerging themes) to identify any trends in responses from high-hope teachers and low-hope teachers. This analysis resulted in the creation of a characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher.

Results of Quantitative Data Analysis

This section presents the results of the data analysis for questions 1, 3, and 5 of the five research questions. Before examining each research question, raw data from the survey responses were reported and a Cronbach’s Alpha was computed to determine instrument reliability. Reliabilities for the subgroups ranged from .76 for agency to .80 for pathways. The full-scale reliabilities for The Hope Scale were .85, which revealed that both subgroups are related and predictable of one another (See Appendix G).

Secondly, the relationships among the independent variable of the teachers’ hope level and the survey demographics on both the individual and school level were explored using applicable t tests, ANOVA with Tukey follow-up, linear regressions, and descriptives. Following the description of the data, research findings are summarized in narrative form including the organization of the raw data in tabular form for the purpose of analysis.
Research Question 1

What is the level of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools in Alabama?

This research question was examined using two units of analysis, the individual teacher responses and teacher responses categorized by school. In addition, the survey results were studied using the following data: (a) aggregate scores, or the Total Hope sum score, from items 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12; and (b) disaggregate scores from the agency subscale (items 2, 9, 10, and 12) and the pathways subscale (items 1, 4, 6, and 8). Table 6 represents the statistical description of the individual respondents organized by demographics information. Table 6 displays the statistical descriptions of the individual teacher respondents.

Table 6

Statistical Description of Individual Respondents Relating to Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>7-10 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Am.</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Ed. Specialist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-2nd</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd-4th</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th-6th</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th-8th</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Score Ranges for The Hope Scale Survey Instrument

For the first unit of analysis, individual survey results were observed, and the mean sum of The Hope Scale was determined. In addition, Pathways and Agency scores, subscales of Hope, were computed. The calculated mean scores were used to examine teachers’ level of hopeful, Pathways and Agency thinking. The distracter items were not used in scoring both the full scale or subscale responses. Survey response scores ranged from 8-64 for the full scale and from 4-32 for each subscale. Table 7 displays the identified levels of hope, score ranges, and the number and respondent mean scores in each category.

Table 7
Hope Scale Score Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hope Levels</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Hope (HH)</td>
<td>54-64 Full Scale</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85th percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Hope (AH)</td>
<td>37-53 Full Scale</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50th – 84th percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low Hope with Subscale Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Hope</th>
<th>Agency &gt; 18, Pathways &lt; 18</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>31.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Agency, Low Pathways (LP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Agency, High Pathways (LA)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Agency, Low Pathways (LL)</td>
<td>8-36 Full Scale</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Hope</td>
<td>&lt;50th percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Response Frequencies for Aggregate and Disaggregated Hope Scores

To study the level of hope of the teachers surveyed, a comparison of means was conducted for the overall hope level of the participants, as well as hope levels from the independent variables or each demographic area. In addition to the total sum hope score, the dependent variables examined included the mean scores for agency and pathways subscales. The
mean scores for both the full scale and subscales were studied to determine whether there was a
difference within each demographic area. The findings of this analysis identified whether further
examinations were needed to determine if teachers’ scores were significantly different within the
demographic areas. Table 8 displays the teachers’ mean scores for Total Hope, agency, and
pathways.

Table 8

Teachers’ Mean Scores for Total Hope (Aggregate), Agency, and Pathways (Disaggregate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Total Hope Mean</th>
<th>Agency Mean</th>
<th>Pathways Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Am.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K – 2nd</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd-4th</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th-6th</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th-8th</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Total Hope Mean</td>
<td>Agency Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Total Hope Mean</td>
<td>Agency Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed. Specialist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Response Frequencies for Aggregate and Disaggregated Hope Scores

For the second unit of analysis, teacher responses were categorized by school and
examined to determine whether any differences in mean scores existed among the schools
surveyed. In addition, the data generated from this investigation identified the need for further testing in order to determine whether there were statistically significant differences among the schools surveyed. Table 9 shows the data or survey responses by school.

Table 9

*Total Hope, Pathways, and Agency Mean Scores by School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School in which you teach:</th>
<th>Total Hope</th>
<th>Pathways</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington Elementary**</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>27.3529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt Elementary**</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>52.1333</td>
<td>25.3333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk Primary</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>53.7500</td>
<td>25.5625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Middle</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>57.3333</td>
<td>28.6667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce Intermediate</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td>25.4375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Elementary**</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>56.4444</td>
<td>28.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy Elementary</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td>25.4286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** HPHP school

*Research Question 1: Discussion of Findings*

The quantitative findings relating to Research Question 1 revealed that 89 teachers participated in the online survey. The sample consisted of 98% females and 2% males. The participants had a wide range of years of experience, but 51% of respondents had been teaching over 10 years. Only 16% of the teachers surveyed had been in the classroom less than 6 years. In the statistical analysis as shown in Table 6, four categories within the years of experience were collapsed to three, combining 0-3 years and 4-6 years into one category yielding 16 responses.
Participant’s ethnicity was composed of 90% Caucasian and 10% African American. Due to the Hispanic and Other categories having no respondents, the four categories within ethnicity were collapsed into two categories, Caucasian and African American.

As illustrated in Table 6, skewed response numbers were also reported in the demographic area of grade level taught. In order to report more equally distributed data for analysis, four categories were collapsed into three in the years of experience and grade level taught. More specifically, the 7th and 8th grade category was combined with the 5th & 6th to yield 17 responses.

When observing overall respondent means for the Total Hope scale, as well as Pathways and Agency subscales, ranges in low and high scores were established using the 50th and 85th percentile bands for the mean scores reported. As shown in Table 7, frequencies in the mean total sum scores indicated a low number of scores below 37, as well as greater deviations in scores in the 37-64 range. Due to this anomaly, the average hope category, ranging from 37-53, was added to the range based upon the 50th percentile band of the score range. Teachers were then identified as teachers with high hope, average hope, or low hope. Subscale totals were used to further classify teachers into the following categories: (1) high hope, (2) average hope, (3) low hope, (4) willpower hope (high agency, low pathways), or (5) waypower hope (low agency, high pathways). With the high hope category and a portion of average hope categories, the subscale scores were evenly distributed and the mean scores loaded above the midpoint of the scale. Within the average hope category, subscale scores varied for some of the participants while others were imbalanced. However, when an imbalance in the pathway and agency subscales existed, the total score usually loaded below the midpoint, indicating low levels of hope.
After the score ranges and hope levels were established, a means comparison was completed of the total hope, pathways, and agency mean scores for each demographic area as shown in Table 8. The unit of analysis for this data was the individual teacher survey responses. In the area of gender, both male and female participants scored in the high range for total hope, pathways, and agency. A difference was noted in that the full-scale and subscale mean scores for male participants were 17% higher than their female counterparts. However, due to the low number of male respondents ($n = 3$), statistical tests could not be completed to generalize this trend. In the area of ethnicity, Caucasian respondents scored 20% higher in all areas than their African American counterparts. In addition, mean scores for African American respondents fell into the average hope range, while the mean scores for Caucasians loaded in the high hope range. This data suggested the need for further testing using an independent $t$ test when addressing Research Question 3.

When comparing means among the teachers’ grade level taught, all category means were in the high hope range, but higher hope means were reported in teachers of Kindergarten through second grade, as well as teacher of Grades 5-8. The differences in mean scores among all grade levels taught were very small, which suggested no significant differences. In the area of years of experience, all of the categories within years of experience had mean scores in the high hope range. Mean hope scores were higher for teachers who had 0-6 years of teaching experience, and those teachers having more than 10 years of experience scored a total hope mean of 53.6, less than a point from the average hope level.

The final demographic area, level of education, indicated all mean scores in the high hope range. However, Table 8 indicates teachers with an Educational Specialist degree scored 8% higher on mean scale and subscale scores. Those teachers holding a Master’s degree scored 4
points lower, only one point from the average hope level. The same trend was noted in both the pathways and agency subscales. These data indicate the need for further statistical testing to determine whether a significant difference exists in scores of teachers with different levels of education.

The second unit of analysis used to address Research Question 1 consisted of survey responses categorized by the Alabama schools. As indicated in Table 9, seven schools were surveyed, and one school, Jefferson Middle, did not have an adequate number of responses to be analyzed. Therefore, Jefferson was disqualified as part of the data, and the six remaining schools were used for data analysis.

When comparing the means of total hope, pathways, and agency of the six schools, two schools (Roosevelt and Pierce) scored in the average hope range and four scored in the high hope range. However, Table 9 indicated that two of the high hope schools scored a total hope mean of 53.7, while two had total hope means of 56.2. When examining the means for pathways and agency, the scores varied, depending upon the level of total hope. For instance, the two schools scoring total hope means above 55 (Washington and Lincoln) had pathways and agency means that had very little difference. However, the differences in pathways and agency means among the other schools were greater, indicating the need for future statistical testing to determine significance.

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between the level of teacher hope and gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught?
In this analysis, relationships were explored on two levels. First, the existence of linear relationships among the variables was examined using linear regressions. Bivariate correlations were conducted with total hope mean score, pathways mean score, and agency mean score in order to assess the degree that the variables were linearly related.

The second analysis explored the demographic areas separately to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the total hope means within the categories of each area. For this analysis, independent t tests were conducted for those demographic areas with two categories, and multiple analysis of variances with Tukey follow-ups were computed for those variable containing more than two categories.

**Linear Regression of Total Hope and Demographic Areas**

To determine the existence of significance relationships in the area of total hope and the demographic groups, linear regressions were conducted using total hope mean score as the dependent variable. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis were identified as follows:

- $H_0$: The level of Total Hope is independent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education, or the grade level taught).
- $H_a$: The level of Total Hope is dependent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education degree earned, or the grade level taught).

When analyzing the relationships between demographics with the dependent variable of total hope, Table 10 illustrates the $p$-values ranged from .097 (level of education) to .853 (grade level taught), which was greater than the alpha risk of 0.05. Therefore, no significant relationships existed between total hope and the demographic areas. The null hypothesis was
retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographics gender, ethnicity, years of experience, level of education, and grade level taught.

Table 10

Total Hope and Demographic Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>67.158</td>
<td>8.519</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-6.301</td>
<td>3.826</td>
<td>-.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>1.771</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Taught</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-3.215</td>
<td>2.005</td>
<td>-.188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Total Hope

Linear Regression of Total Pathways and Demographic Areas

To determine whether significant relationships existed between total pathways and demographic groups, linear regressions were conducted using the total pathways mean score as the dependent variable. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis were identified as follows:

H₀: The level of total pathways is independent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education, or the grade level taught).

H₁: The level of total pathways is dependent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education degree earned, or the grade level taught).

Upon examining the relationships between demographics with the dependent variable of Total Pathways, linear regressions resulted in p-values ranging from .2 to .8, which was greater
than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographics gender, ethnicity, years of experience, level of education, and grade level taught. In other words, no significant relationships existed between total pathways scores and the demographic areas.

Table 11

*Total Pathways and Demographic Areas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Zero-order</th>
<th>Partial</th>
<th>Part</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>35.894</td>
<td>6.179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.635</td>
<td>2.821</td>
<td>-.151</td>
<td>-1.289</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>-.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>-.307</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-.676</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td>-.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>.492</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td>.517</td>
<td>-.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Taught</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-2.351</td>
<td>1.287</td>
<td>-.199</td>
<td>-1.827</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>-.204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Total Pathways

*Linear Regression of Total Agency and Demographic Areas*

To determine the statistical significance in the area of total agency and the demographic groups, linear regressions were conducted using the total agency mean score as the dependent variable. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis were identified as follows:

H₀: The level of total agency is independent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education, or the grade level taught).

Hₐ: The level of total agency is dependent of the demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education degree earned, or the grade level taught).
When investigating the relationships between demographics with the dependent variable of total agency, linear regressions conducted provided a *p*-value of .034 for the ethnicity category, which is less than the alpha risk of 0.05. This resulted in the rejection of the $H_0$, and it was concluded with 95% confidence that total agency is dependent upon the ethnicity demographic. Therefore, a significant relationship existed between total agency mean scores and the ethnicity of the respondent. Table 12 shows total agency as related to the demographic areas of gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education, and grade level taught.

Table 12

*Total Agency and Demographic Areas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td>39.468</td>
<td>4.946</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.568</td>
<td>2.258</td>
<td>-.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>-.619</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>-.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Taught</td>
<td>-.600</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>-.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>-2.217</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>-.227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Total Agency

*Relationships Between or Among Demographic Areas*

To reveal if correlations existed among the independent variables, bivariate correlations were completed using two variables at a time. A Pearson Correlation with a 2-tailed test of significance was used to determine whether there were statistically significant correlations
among the variables. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis were identified as follows:

$$H_0$$: The demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education, or the grade level taught) are independent of one another.

$$H_a$$: The demographic (gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education degree earned, or the grade level taught) are correlated and dependent upon one another.

When exploring the interaction among independent variables, Table 13 illustrates significant correlations in three areas: gender and grade level taught, years of teaching experience and level of education, and level of education and grade level taught. Correlations between gender and grade level taught revealed a $$p$$-value of .003, which is less than the alpha risk of 0.01. This resulted in the rejection of the $$H_0$$, and it was concluded with 99% confidence that the demographic areas of gender and grade level taught have significant correlation.

Table 13 also reveals a correlation between years of teaching experience and level of education with a $$p$$-value of .003, which is less than the alpha risk of 0.01. This resulted in the rejection of the $$H_0$$, and it was concluded with 99% confidence that the demographic areas of teaching experience and grade level taught are significantly correlated. A third area revealed is the relationship between level of education and grade level taught, generating a $$p$$-value of .034, which is less than the alpha risk of 0.05. This resulted in the rejection of the $$H_0$$, and it was concluded with 95% confidence that a significant relationship exists between the demographic areas of level of education and grade level taught.
Table 13

**Bivariate Correlations: Demographic Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Exp.</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Grade Level Taught</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>-.309**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.307**</td>
<td>-.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.307**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.222*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Taught</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.309**</td>
<td>-.202</td>
<td>-.222*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Total Hope by Gender*

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the total hope means within the categories of gender, independent *t* tests were conducted. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: The total hope mean score is independent of the teachers’ gender (or the male total hope mean score = female total hope mean score).

H<sub>a</sub>: The total hope mean score is dependent upon the teachers’ gender.
Upon investigation of the relationship between total hope and the teachers’ gender, independent samples \( t \) test resulted in \( p \)-values ranging from .14 to .18, which was greater than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographic gender. In other words, no significant relationships existed between total hope scores and the gender of the respondent. Table 14 illustrates total hope as related to the demographic gender.

Table 14

**Total Hope by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>( t ) test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( F )</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>( t )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hope</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.511</td>
<td>1.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances</td>
<td>assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances</td>
<td>not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hope by Ethnicity**

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the total hope means within the category of ethnicity, Independent \( t \) tests were conducted. The category was compressed into two categories, African American and Caucasian, due to 0 responses in the remaining categories of ethnicity. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are as follows:
H₀: The total hope mean score is independent of the teachers’ ethnicity (or the African American total hope mean score = Caucasian total hope mean score).

Hₐ: The total hope mean score is dependent upon the teachers’ ethnicity

When exploring the relationship between total hope and ethnicity, the independent samples t test illustrated in Table 15 reveals a p-value of .009 for the ethnicity category, which is less than the alpha risk of 0.01. This resulted in the rejection of the H₀, and it was concluded with 99% confidence that total hope is dependent upon the ethnicity demographic. Therefore, a significant relationship existed between total hope mean scores and the ethnicity of the respondent.

Table 15

*Total Hope by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</td>
<td>t test for Equality of Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>8.848</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.469</td>
<td>8.370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Hope by Years of Teaching Experience*

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the total hope means within the category of years of teaching experience, a multiple analysis of variance with a
Tukey follow-up was conducted. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{The total hope mean score is independent of the teachers’ years of experience.} \]

\[ H_a: \text{The total hope mean score is dependent upon the teachers’ years of experience.} \]

Upon investigation of the relationship between total hope and the teachers’ years of experience, a multiple analysis of variance with a Tukey follow-up resulted in a \( p \)-value of .602, which was greater than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographic years of experience. In other words, no significant relationships existed between total hope scores and the years of experience of the respondents. Table 16 illustrates total hope as related to the demographic years of experience.

**Total Hope by Level of Education**

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the total hope means within the category of level of education, a multiple analysis of variance with a Tukey follow-up was conducted. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are:

\[ H_0: \text{The total hope mean score is independent of the teachers’ level of education.} \]

\[ H_a: \text{The total hope mean score is dependent upon the teachers’ level of education.} \]

To determine the relationship between total hope and the teachers’ years of experience, a multiple analysis of variance with a Tukey follow-up resulted in a \( p \)-value of .663, which was greater than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographic level of education. Therefore,
Table 16 illustrates no significant relationship existed between total hope and the respondents’ level of education.

_Total Hope by Grade Level Taught_

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the total hope means within the category of grade level taught, a multiple analysis of variance with a Tukey follow-up was conducted. The category was compressed into three categories, Kindergarten through second grade, third grade and fourth grade, and fifth grade through eighth grade, due to few responses in the category seventh and eighth grade. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are as follows:

\[ H_0: \text{The total hope mean score is independent of the teachers’ grade level taught.} \]

\[ H_a: \text{The total hope mean score is dependent upon the teachers’ grade level taught.} \]

To explore the relationship between total hope and the teachers’ grade level taught, a multiple analysis of variance with a Tukey follow-up resulted in a \( p \)-value of .190, which was greater than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that the level of total hope was independent of the demographic level of education. Therefore, Table 16 illustrates no significant relationship existed between total hope and the respondents’ level of education.
Table 16

Total Hope and Years of Experience, Level of Education, and Grade Level Taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>β</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.147</td>
<td>3.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade Level Taught</td>
<td>-.398</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>-.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>1.220</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>-.970</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td>-.151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Total Hope

Research Question 3: Discussion of Findings

The quantitative findings relating to Research Question 3 were analyzed on two levels. The first level addressed those relationships between or among the dimensions of hope and the demographic items, using each demographic group as a unit of analysis. The second level addressed those relationships between or among the dimensions of hope and the categories within the demographic items, using individual respondents as the unit of analysis.

When examining the demographic groups, linear regressions were computed to determine relationships between each group, as well as the dimensions of hope, pathways, and agency. The results concluded that no significant relationships were found with the demographics in the areas of total hope and pathways. However, the linear regression conducted for the dimension of agency revealed a $p$-value of .034 ($p < .05$) in the demographic area of ethnicity. Therefore, agency was determined with 95% confidence to be significantly dependent upon ethnicity in this study.

Upon further investigation of the relationships among the demographic groups themselves, bivariate correlations resulted in three areas with significant relationships: (1) gender
and grade level taught, (2) years of experience and level of education, and (3) level of education and grade level taught. Correlations between gender and grade level taught produced a $p$-value of .003 ($p < .01$), indicating with 99% confidence that the gender and grade level taught have a significant relationship to the level of teacher hope. In this study, male teachers in Grades 5-8 had significantly higher hope scores than their female counterparts.

A second relationship was identified between the demographic areas of years experience and level of education, with a $p$-value of .003 ($p < .01$). This also indicated with 99% confidence that experience and education level were significantly linked. This study indicated that those teachers with fewer years teaching experience and a higher level of education had higher hope scores.

A final correlation emerged between the level of education and grade level taught with a $p$-value of .034 ($p < .05$). In this study, this indicated that there was a significant link between the teachers’ level of education and the grade level taught. This study revealed that the grade levels of K-2 and 5-8 displayed higher hope scores. However, the teachers having higher degrees in the specific grade levels had an even higher score.

The second level of analysis explored the relationships between total hope and the categories within each demographic area. Independent samples $t$ tests and analyses of variance were conducted to determine whether significant differences existed in levels of hope between the respondents within the categories of each demographic area.

For the categories of gender and ethnicity, independent samples $t$ tests were conducted. Although no significant differences in hope levels existed within the gender demographic, $t$ tests revealed a $p$-value of .009 ($p < .01$) within the demographic of ethnicity. Therefore, it was concluded with 99% confidence that there are significant differences of hope scores between
African American and Caucasian respondents. For the remaining demographic areas of years teaching experience, level of education, and grade level taught, the analyses of variance indicated no significant differences emerged within their categories. In other words, the hope scores of respondents representing each demographic category were not significantly different.

Research Question 5

Is there a relationship, if any, between teachers’ hope and student achievement?

To address this research question, the relationship between teacher hope and student achievement was explored on two levels. First, the school in which respondents taught was used as the unit of analysis in order to determine whether the individual schools had significant differences in total hope. The schools were ordered in pairs to compare each school to one another, and independent samples $t$ tests were then conducted with each pair to analyze if a significant difference existed.

The second level of investigation addressed the comparison between Torchbearer schools and non-Torchbearer schools to determine whether there is a significant difference between total hope scores between the Torchbearer schools, the high-poverty, high-performing schools, and non-Torchbearer schools, high-poverty, low-performing schools. To make this possible, aggregate total hope scores were computed for each school, and $t$ tests were conducted using all combinations pairing the schools in order to determine whether there was a significant difference in the total hope between schools. Codes were assigned to each school to indicate Torchbearer (1) or non-Torchbearer (2) status, and aggregate total hope scores for each group were analyzed. A $t$ test was also conducted at this level to determine whether significant differences existed. Due
to an inadequate number of responses compared to the other schools, Jefferson Middle School was not computed in the school level $t$ tests in order to retrieve reliable data for analysis.

**Total Hope and School Comparison**

To determine whether significant differences exist between each school’s level of total hope, $t$ tests were conducted using all combinations pairing the schools. The null and alternative hypotheses for this analysis are as follows:

$H_0$: There is no significant difference in the total hope mean scores among schools.

$H_a$: There is a significant different in the total hope mean scores among schools.

To explore the relationship between total hope and the school in which the respondents taught, for each pair revealed differences in the total hope scores, but the independent samples $t$ tests revealed $p$-values ranging from $.184$ to $.945$, which was greater than the alpha risk of $0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained and it was concluded that there is no significant difference in total hope scores between and among each school.

Table 17

**Comparison of Total Hope by School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington**</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.2667</td>
<td></td>
<td>.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington**</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td>.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6667</td>
<td></td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington**</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td></td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington**</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.444</td>
<td></td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington**</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.0588</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td></td>
<td>.242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
### Total Hope Comparison by Torchbearer Status

To determine whether there is a significant difference between total hope scores by Torchbearer status, each school was coded as a Torchbearer or non-Torchbearer school. A *t* test was also conducted at this level to determine whether significant differences existed between the Torchbearer schools, or high-poverty, high-performing schools, and non-Torchbearer schools, or high-poverty, low-performing schools. The null and alternative hypotheses were as follows:

- **H₀**: There is no significant difference in the total hope mean scores between Torchbearer and non-Torchbearer schools.
- **Hₐ**: There is a significant different in the total hope mean scores between Torchbearer and non-Torchbearer schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Sig. 2-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.2667</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6667</td>
<td></td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.2667</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td></td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.2667</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.444</td>
<td></td>
<td>.248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt**</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.2667</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy**</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td></td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6667</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td></td>
<td>.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6667</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.444</td>
<td></td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6667</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td></td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.444</td>
<td></td>
<td>.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.8125</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td></td>
<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln**</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.444</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.7692</td>
<td></td>
<td>.169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  
** HPHP
While exploring the relationship between total hope and Torchbearer and non-Torchbearer schools, independent samples $t$ test revealed a $p$-value of .043, which was less than the alpha risk of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded with 95% confidence that there was a significant difference in the level of Total Hope between Torchbearer schools and non-Torchbearer schools. In other words, the teachers at high-performing, high-poverty schools scored significantly higher total hope scores than those teachers in low-performing, high-poverty schools. Table 18 illustrates the differences between each group of schools.

Table 18

*Comparison of Total Hope by Torchbearer Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hope</td>
<td>8.530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Question 5: Discussion of Findings*

In order to examine hope at the school level, two distinct analyses were conducted. The first focused on the comparison of total hope means by school to determine whether significant differences existed. The second analysis focused on the schools grouped by achievement status.
Tests were then conducted in order to determine whether a significant difference in hope emerged between each group.

To compare the total hope mean by school, the individual schools were placed in pairs and t tests were conducted with each pair. Although total hope mean scores for each school ranged from 52.8125 to 56.444, t-test results revealed no significant differences in total hope scores between the schools. In order to compare schools based on student achievement status, each school was categorized as a high-performing, high-poverty school, a Torchbearer, or a low-performing, high-poverty school, non-Torchbearer. An independent samples t test was conducted to determine the levels of hope for each group, resulting in a p-value of .043 (p < .05). Therefore, it was concluded with 95% confidence that the hope scores from Torchbearer schools were significantly higher than the hope scores from the non-Torchbearer schools.

Qualitative Analysis

Organization of Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the results of the data analysis for questions 2, 4, and 5 of the five research questions:

Question 2. How do the characteristics of a high-hope teacher differ from a low hope teacher?

Question 4: Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom?

Question 5: Is there a relationship, if any, between teachers’ hope and student achievement?
The data from this section were divided into eight categories. Data collected from the 11 teachers participating in the follow-up interviews were transcribed, and emerging themes were developed using Berkowitz’s (1997) six questions. In order to develop a characteristic profile for a teacher with high hope, transcribed interview data were coded and analyzed to determine whether themes emerged from Snyder’s (2005) lessons of hopeful teaching and Wilson and Peterson’s (2003) benchmarks for teaching and learning.

The eight categories reflecting teacher beliefs were discussed, and emerging themes from each category were identified. An additional theme surfaced within the categories identifying the culture and practices of high-hope teachers at the school level, as well as comparing their characteristics with those of high-performing, high-poverty schools. Quotes from interviewees were presented to support each theme, and a summary of each category synthesized the responses. Quotes from the interviewees illuminated the common characteristics among all teacher participants, as well as characteristics unique to low-hope and high-hope teachers. These teacher accounts supported the validity of the characteristic themes that emerged from each category. The categories that emerged from the qualitative data are (1) the teacher’s role in instruction, (2) teacher/student relationships, (3) teacher/parent relationships, (4) goal development, (5) instructional strategies to address learner differences, (6) grouping strategies, (7) student’s role in instruction, and (8) factual/inquiry/problem-solving strategies.

The first category addressed the development of teacher/student relationships. This category emerged from interview protocol question 5, which asked teachers how they created, cultivated, and maintained a positive relationship with students. Within this category, a common theme emerged, as well as a theme that was unique only to the high-hope teachers. Similarly, the second category addressed the development of teacher/parent relationships. This category
emerged from question 6, which asked teachers how they created, cultivated, and maintained a positive relationship with parents. A common theme and a high hope theme emerged from this category.

The third category addressed is the development of student learning goals. This category emerged from question 7, which asked teachers about the importance of student learning goals and to what extent they involved students in goal development. Three themes emerged from the category, a common theme shared among all teachers in this study regardless of their level of hope, a theme unique to only teachers with low to average hope, and a theme unique to only teachers with high hope.

The fourth category identified in this study dealt with instructional strategies to address learner differences. This category emerged from question 8, which asked about the strategies teachers incorporated to address different learning styles in their classroom, how effective they think they are in using the strategies, and what works against being effective. Two themes emerged from the category, a common theme shared among all teachers in this study regardless of their hope level, as well as a theme unique to only teachers with high hope.

The fifth category addresses the importance of group work as a teaching and learning strategy. This category emerged from question 12 in the interview protocol. This question explores the frequency of group work in the classroom, as well as examples of how group work is used during the instructional process. Question 12 also asked teachers to identify any obstacles that would prevent them from using group work in the classroom. Two themes emerged from the category, a common theme shared among all teachers, as well as a theme unique to high-hope teachers.
The sixth category is the teacher’s role in instruction. This category emerged from questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16, and it is divided into two dimensions: teacher’s role in instruction and teacher’s beliefs and expectations of student learning. To explore the teacher’s role in instruction, question 1 asked teachers about their teaching style. Questions 2 and 3 were situational items asking teachers to describe positive and negative teaching experiences they have had. In addition, question 8 asked teachers about their role in instruction while questions 9 and 10 asked them to identify situations in which they felt they were effective and ineffective. To investigate teachers’ beliefs and expectations about student learning, questions 4, 11, and 16 introduced current controversial topics and asked the teachers to give their beliefs and positions on each.

In the teacher’s role dimension of category 6, teachers were asked to explore and respond about their teaching styles, positive and negative teaching experiences, and times when they have felt effective and ineffective. They were also asked to identify what the teacher’s role was in instruction. When exploring this area, three themes emerged: (1) a common theme by all teachers interviewed, (2) one theme unique to teachers with low to average hope, and (3) one theme shared exclusively by high-hope teachers. The second dimension, teacher’s expectations of student learning, teachers were asked to reflect upon and respond to their beliefs and expectations about student learning. When exploring this area, three themes emerged: (1) a common theme by all teachers interviewed, (2) one theme unique to teachers with low to average hope, and (3) one theme shared exclusively by high-hope teachers.

The seventh category addressed the student’s role in the instructional process. This category emerged from question 8, which asked teachers what they think a student’s role is during instruction and how this looks in practice. There were no common themes in this
category. Instead, two themes emerged from this category, one unique to low to average hope teachers and one unique to high-hope teachers.

The eighth category is the teacher’s role in instruction. This category emerged from questions 13, 14, and 15, and it is divided into two dimensions: factual learning and problem solving/inquiry/discovery learning. To explore the use of strategies in teaching factual information, question 13 asked teachers how much of their day was spent teaching facts and what types of strategies were used. To investigate teachers’ use of problem-solving strategies, as well as inquiry and discovery techniques, questions 14 and 15 asked the amount of the school days spent using each approach and what types of strategies were used for each.

In dimension 1 of category 8, factual strategies, teachers were asked to explore and respond about their use of strategies to teach factual information. They were also asked to identify the amount of the school day that they used teaching this type of information. When exploring this area, three themes emerged: (1) a common theme by all teachers interviewed, (2) one theme unique to teachers with low to average hope, and (3) one theme shared exclusively by high-hope teachers. In dimension 2, inquiry and problem solving, teachers were asked to investigate their use of problem-solving strategies, as well as inquiry and discovery techniques. Questions 14 and 15 asked the amount of the school days spent using each approach and what types of strategies were used for each. A common theme did not emerge from this dimension. Instead, two themes emerged from this category, one unique to low to average hope teachers and one unique to high-hope teachers.

A final area emerged from the responses in all eight categories, and it identified the culture and practices of high-hope teachers at the school level, as well as compared their characteristics with those of high-performing, high-poverty schools. As teachers were asked to
give their beliefs and positions on current instructional practices, beliefs about student learning, and controversial topics, two themes begin to emerge reflecting school-wide efforts and organizational characteristics. One was unique to teachers with low to average hope, and one theme was shared exclusively by high-hope teachers.

Common Characteristics of All Teachers

Before developing the characteristics unique to a high-hope teacher, interview responses were explored for beliefs, thoughts, and practices shared by all teachers in this study. The identification of common themes was crucial in determining the notable and significant differences between high-hope teachers and their counterparts. Themes common to all teachers emerged in every category except the student’s role in instruction and the use of inquiry/problem-solving strategies in instruction.

Common Themes: Teacher/Student Relationships

Ten of the 11 teachers interviewed identified the foundation of a good teacher/student relationship is a respectful, trusting relationship in which the student and teacher are open, honest, and genuine. Three areas that emerged from this were respect, trust, and open communication.

To establish respect, one teacher explained, “Respect, I think, is the one thing I look for. If I want my students to respect me, then I respect them in the same way.” Other teachers also described respect as reciprocal, coming from both the student and the teacher. When describing how to be respectful, Mrs. Green stated, “Don’t talk down to them, talk to them like you would like to be talked to and treated.”
Another aspect identified by the teachers that is necessary in developing a good relationship with students is building trust with the children. Mrs. Orange stated, “So, first of all he has to know that I care for him.” Teachers with all levels of hope expressed the importance of student trust as a building block for self-confidence, leading to more student success. Mrs. Yellow explained, “A good teacher/student relationship should be 100% a trusting relationship, and the student feeling that they can come to you in the learning environment and feeling comfortable.” In addition, many of the teachers indicated the significance of the role that teachers play in developing that relationship and trust. Mrs. Blue asserted,

If there is a problem, they know I will take care of it because if they can’t come to me, then who can they go to? Some of my students, half of them, don’t have parents when they get home and they don’t have somebody to go to, so I am that one person they need to be able to go to.

A final aspect identified in developing positive student relationships was the importance of establishing honest, open communication between the teacher and student. Mrs. Brown described a teacher’s responsibility as “being very present and being very open no matter what.” In addition, Mrs. Gold stated that teachers should “interact with them like a real person . . . have genuine conversations. Let’s sit down and talk.” Although this aspect was identified, the common theme did not include many details on how to establish open communication with the students.

**Common Themes: Teacher/Parent Relationship**

Of the 11 teachers interviewed, 10 responded that the basis of a good teacher/parent relationship was positive, ongoing communication that made parents feel comfortable. One teacher explained, “Communication is key with parents. . . . I have an agenda on my board, and the kids are required to write everything down daily, and I have a website.” Mrs. Blue also noted,
I send progress reports home every two weeks, and if I see a student struggling, I will send a note home or I will call or send an email. I even have parents text me. I know some teachers don’t like that, but I don’t mind it, because then the students know that the parents are communicating with the teacher, and you can’t go home and say ‘well this happened at school’, and come tell me a different story.

Six of the 11 teachers described the establishment of school-wide procedures that included consistent communication being sent to the parents. Mrs. Amber described communication from the perspective of the school level and grade level,

I think a well-informed parent is a happy parent and nothing is surprising. We send home weekly news letters from the office, as well as from the actual grade level. If they don’t know it, it is not from our part, because we send home letters about everything, and then our website is constantly updated as well. The upper grades have an assignment book, but we send home a weekly newsletter, and it will have all the tests of the week, all the homework for the week, everything that happens during the week.

*Common Themes: Goal Development*

Of the 11 teachers, 10 responded that student learning goals are identified and mapped out. All of the teachers in this study noted learning goals were established in reading through Accelerated Reader, a motivational reading program in which students set goals for earning points through reading books and taking quizzes. When responding to the question, one teacher described setting goals as “getting ready to start AR (Accelerated Reader),” and another teacher explained, “I let them set goals like in their independent reading.” Mapping out goals was another area identified by the teachers in this study. Brief explanations were noted of how teachers communicate the goals with the students. When describing this process, Mrs. Brown stated,

Usually the goals I set are in their individual plan, and there is a goal mapped out. I will let them know if they met their goal today and to keep up the good work, and if they didn’t meet it then I will tell them that we need to do it again.
Common Theme: Instructional Strategies to Address Learner Differences

Of the 11 teachers interviewed, all of them stated that they attempted to use strategies in the classroom that include varied techniques and approaches incorporating technology, hands-on activities, and the use of manipulatives and movement within the lesson. One teacher explained, “I try to do a combination of things--some learn by hearing, some learn by doing, it is usually a combination.” Mrs. Red noted,

We move from place to place (in reading); the kids to through three reading stations a day. One of them I call a fun station. They’re either on the computer or they’re at a listening center or they are over here (small table) reading. And then at one of them (stations), they have to do some kind of writing. And one of them they’re playing a game. But with reading they really have to be right here in front of me with one of these readers in order to know what they’re doing.

Although using varied strategies was a common approach shared by all of the teachers, those teachers with low to average hope expressed the need to control the learning environment. Mrs. Orange described this as an obstacle by explaining,

The obstacle that would work against me would probably be me, because I am a control freak and I like things to be in order at all times, and sometimes you just have to back up and let the kids experiment on their own, and find out for themselves how different things work.

Another obstacle identified by the low- to average-hope teachers addressed the difficulty in planning for and assessing all students’ learning styles. Mrs. Amber stated,

It’s hard to get something that meets everybody because you have 20 kids and 20 personalities, and there are sometimes where there are no options but this (one approach). But it is a good life lesson for them, because this is how it is in life. That is how you have to work in the world, I mean I can’t come here to work and say ‘you know what, I think I would work better if my classroom were outside and we sat on pillows’, it doesn’t work that way. You have to adjust, and any job that they get later on in life they are going to have to adjust.

Unlike low- to average-hope teachers, high-hope teachers expressed confidence in allowing the students to explore problems using their own learning styles in order to build on
their prior knowledge and connect to the larger community. High-hope teachers did not display the need for controlling the environment, resulting in a more flexible learning environment that meets learners’ needs through multiple approaches. As described by one teacher,

There are sometimes I need to let them explore, but the child who is frustrated because I am making him make those triangles, I need to go over and click together some triangles for him and say “now, you look at this.” I do not want it to be a frustrating thing for you, because kinesthetically, you are frustrated before you even got into the lesson. We make sure that every learner’s needs are met, just by structure and good solid lessons that make sense.

Other common responses concerning ways teachers addressed learner differences included the use of technology, manipulatives, or other hands-on, active approaches to instruction. Some of the teachers mentioned the use of smart board technologies, use of manipulatives in whole group and small group instruction, and the use of dance and movement in their lessons. The teachers expressed the need to incorporate strategies that used different modalities in order to address the students’ varied learning styles.

Common Theme: Grouping Strategies

All 11 of the teachers in this study conveyed that small groups are important to meet students’ needs in stations, centers, or using partner work. Many of the teachers, regardless of hope level, stated that small groups were necessary for intervention, stations, or centers to take place. One teacher noted, “I think group work is wonderful because you can assign different things or you can assign students different roles within the group.” Peer tutoring was identified by several teachers as one of the strategies used for students in small groups without the teacher’s guidance.

All teachers agreed that small groups allowed them to work on students’ needs with a smaller number of students. However, those teachers with low to average hope levels identified
activities to keep students busy as the main use of small groups, and most discussions centered on the products the students were producing. Mrs. Amber described her use of small groups as a flexible way to give assignments and engage the student while she directed small group intervention with others. She described,

When I send out an assignment like a tic-tac-toe sheet, I say “do three by the end of the week and if you finish the three then you get to do more,” but they may choose to do the writing or read the story and draw the picture type deal, where I have another group who will be more than happy to create a rap on the frog story, which reflect how they are.

Although a few of the low- to average-hope teachers mentioned students working together as an important factor of group work, all examples described using small group instruction involved activities that had little or no connection to the real world or implications for future use. In fact, many of the teachers with low to average hope identified obstacles to small group work as having too many concepts to teach at one time and being unable to manage all of the activities.

**Common Theme: Teacher’s Role**

The common theme shared by all teachers is that the teacher’s role changes and techniques are varied each year to meet student needs, including being prepared and acting as a facilitator. Many of the teachers described the teacher’s role as ever-changing, becoming an expert, a teacher, or a coach. One teacher noted,

During instruction, the teacher should be the facilitator at the beginning. She should set the tone of the rules and the procedures, and then the student should in turn become the one that starts to facilitate. It should rotate, I think. When you just dictate all of the time and you are teaching all of the time, you will lose some of the children. You just change the roles around easily, and the kids can teach the lessons.

Other teachers expressed the need for the teachers to be prepared in order to facilitate learning. Mrs. Green noted, “I feel like a teacher needs to be prepared and be able to present in a way that gets them [students] involved, and they really learn from each other.” Another teacher describes
the importance of preparation and facilitation as a means to engage students in learning and “give them the information they need.”

Common Theme: Teacher’s Expectations

A common belief shared among all teachers interviewed was that teachers can reach students, but a child’s home environment is a great influence. A teacher illustrates,

Well, if a kid is up at 2 o’clock watching gang banger films and there is shooting going on outside of their apartment, they are going to come to school and they are not going to have a good day. That’s not their fault. So, yes, it impacts them. We have students here who have some extremely horrific lives that you would never want to be in, and that affects them, but you just take what you have and go with it, and do the best you can.

However, low to average hope teachers believed the home environment overpowered the teacher’s impact on student learning, and the high-hope teachers believed the influence of the teacher minimized the effects of the home environment on student learning. When exploring students’ learning, abilities, and chances for success, student expectations differed greatly between these two groups.

A second common belief was that the biggest obstacle for teachers today was not enough time to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a teacher’s role. Many of the teachers described not having enough time in the day to adequately meet the students’ needs. Another stressor of time was identified as the teachers discussed the many other responsibilities of the teacher that do not relate to instruction. Mrs. Blue identified the biggest issue as “being able to teacher all the concepts we want to. Time.”
Common Themes: Factual Strategies

According to all of the teachers interviewed, factual, explicit, and direct instruction was usually about 30% of the day when the teacher is guiding instruction. Common responses included areas such as grammar and spelling. Both low/average and high-hope teachers agreed that factual instruction is most often explicit, teacher-directed, and usually occurs when introducing a concept. Although both groups agreed that factual information is an important part of the learning process, high-hope teachers again had a different perspective about factual information. One teacher explained,

There is that, first, kind of explicit instruction no matter what it is. But we do a lot of investigating and hands on and kind of exploratory. So, they learn some of the ‘why’ first, then we explicitly teach it. We always teach them why first.

Summary of Common Characteristics of All Teachers

Teachers in this study noted that building good teacher/student relationships was founded on respect, trust, and open communication. Responses expressed the importance of the teacher’s interaction with the students in order to build trust and develop an understanding of the student’s background. The establishment of a good relationship between the teacher and parent includes positive, ongoing communication from the teacher and school. The description of communication included the use of newsletters, email, phone calls, websites, and parent conferences throughout the school year. Many of the teachers expressed the importance of establishing school and classroom procedures that provide school to home communication which ensures that parents are informed of how information is shared.

The area of student goal development was viewed as an important part of the instructional process by all teachers, regardless of their levels of hope. All teachers interviewed
reported the necessity of identifying and mapping out goals in order to be successful. A common example identified was goal-setting using Accelerated Reader, an incentive reading program using technology that assigns points to books and assists students in developing a point goal.

Instructional strategies were identified as the primary means in which to address learner differences. All teachers in this group expressed the need to use a variety of techniques and approaches to address learning styles. Hands-on activities, manipulatives, and integration of technology were identified as types of instructional strategies used in the classroom. When asked what obstacles the teachers may face when trying to use varied instructional strategies, they unanimously identified lack of time as the key barrier. Teachers of all hope levels noted that there never seems to be enough time for preparation and implementation of the strategies that address learner differences.

Small group instruction and peer tutoring were identified as two main grouping strategies that were used by all of the teachers interviewed. Common uses of grouping strategies included small group instruction in order to teach intervention as well as small groups of students completing center work. Most of the teachers interviewed agreed that small group instruction is the best grouping strategy to meet students’ needs, and grouping high and low students was a common practice.

In the dimension of the teacher’s role in instruction, common beliefs identified were the teacher’s role changed each year based on the needs of the students. In addition, teachers should serve as facilitators and guide student learning. Although there were no common responses between both groups of teachers in the areas of positive or negative teaching experiences, all teachers interviewed agreed that a teacher must be prepared in order to be effective.
The second dimension was teacher expectations of student learning. Common themes identified included the teachers’ belief that they can reach students in poverty, but the home environment has great influence on a child. All teachers in this study mentioned the challenges that students who live in poverty experience, and that the home environment does affect a child’s experiences initially. A common challenge described was the lack of time to do all that is needed to reach students and enhance learning.

In the dimension of factual strategies, all teachers shared a common belief that teaching factual knowledge occurred approximately 30% of the day, and this type of learning was conveyed using explicit instruction. The teachers in both groups identified spelling and grammar rules as two common areas that rely on factual information when teaching most of the content. In addition, both low to average and high-hope teachers explained that explicit instruction usually took place at the beginning of a lesson or when introducing new concepts.

Characteristics of Low- and Average-Hope Teachers

One purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of high-hope teachers that identified and explained the uniqueness of teachers with high hope. In order to comprehensively develop a high-hope teacher profile, the differing attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and practices of their counterparts must be revealed. Therefore, interview responses were analyzed from teachers with low to average hope, or hope falling beneath the 75th percentile. Low and average hope themes emerged from the categories addressing goal development, the teacher’s role and student’s role in instruction, and the use of factual/inquiry/discovery strategies in instruction.
Low- and Average-Hope Theme: Goal Development

Although the common theme emerging from this study was that goals are identified and mapped out, low- to average-hope teachers noted that goals were set by teachers and mandates or not all students were able to understand how to set and meet their goals. Teachers with low to average hope indicated that state and district mandates prevent students from having input. One teacher explained, “We tell our kids what is going on, but they unfortunately do not get a lot of input because everything is so mandated.” Mrs. Amber then noted that she would enjoy having her students involved in learning goals, but she could not imagine how with all of the requirements.

When being asked about the importance of goal setting for the students, the expectations of the teachers with low to average hope varied based on the academic level of the student. Varied expectations are illustrated in one teacher’s description of goals as being

for the ones who were advanced, even the ones who were middle of the road because it pushed them. But for the ones that are your special ed and the ones who get no support at home, it didn’t make a difference.

Other teachers in this hope level expressed similar expectations by describing that “only the students that care take ownership of their learning goals.” Therefore, responses in this theme indicated that public goal setting and displaying of data were perceived as intrusive and bothersome. Another teacher described this practice as “just humiliating sometimes because you would go to your room and yours might say 80% and the person next to you says 95%.”

Low- and Average-Hope Theme: Teacher’s Role

Those teachers with low to average hope conveyed a teacher’s role as being the giver of information. They clarified that a teacher’s role is to be the expert of information, one that should
be able to impart knowledge to the student. One teacher described the teacher as someone who should “communicate what is going on . . .,” and another noted that the teacher “is to know where they (students) are going and to present whatever skill that is being covered.” Many of the low to average teachers described their teaching style as being “teacher-centered,” using lecture style instruction leading from the front of the classroom. Another quality of this group’s teaching style included a quiet environment free of a lot of student talk, or “chatter.” One teacher explained,

I like to be in front of the classroom because I feel like they get more with me in the front of the room. So, you know, if I sit down it’s when I finally have given them something that they can independently work on, you know. I don’t like the chatter in my room either. I like quiet working because mainly I work better in a quiet environment.

When describing their best teaching experience, many of the teachers with low to average hope related their most positive teaching experiences in the classroom were when all of the students understood. When recalling negative teaching experiences, responses centered on lessons in which all students did not progress at the same rate. A teacher described her experience,

I taught the progressive way of learning those cards and sounds and everything, but that baby could not learn to read by phonics. I have a phonics background, that is my whole structure, that is what I have learned. I didn’t have anything else to fall back on. I knew he could learn by sight, but time did not allow me to just do those sight word lessons with him.

In addition to being teacher-centered, low- to average-hope teachers conveyed that they were most effective when they were on schedule and everything was running smoothly without outside distractions, and they were least effective “when there’s so much extra outside stuff going on; when there’s just outside things going on that are not curriculum based.”
Beliefs of low- to average-hope teachers exhibited uncertainty about the student success of impoverished students. Many of the teachers in this group expressed doubt about the ability of students to succeed regardless of their home environment. In addition, the responses of low- to average-hope teachers reflected low expectations of student success and a “hands-off” approach to the complex effects of poverty. When describing if she feels a teacher’s impact on a student is limited due to the child’s home environment, one teacher responded,

I agree because family affects all of us. What goes on at my house will affect me when I come to work if I don’t know how to just brush it off and move on. A lot of children have not learned that skill yet. So, they will bring all of that baggage to school, and then I will have to try and smooth it over. Now in certain situations, like if they come to school without their supplies, I can provide that for them, and I can fix that problem. But any type of mental issues or bad situations that they have had at home, that is not my field. I don’t quite know how to fix that.

In addition to lacking the skill or resources to address the effects of poverty, several of the teachers celebrated minimal performances of students from poverty. One teacher explained,

Sometimes a C is a celebration when a kid who has to deal with all of that [traumatic home life] and can still come to school and make a C. I think that is even higher achieving than a kid that comes from a $600,000 home with no problems and makes an A.

A common response within this category identified students who had, according to this group of teachers, little or no chance of success. One teacher noted,

I think it’s very hard for them to get away from it [poverty]. I think even when they get away from it and they come home to it, they’re still back in that. You know, this one is not going to be, she’s not ever going to go to school, she’ll work at [local grocery store]. You can look at them and tell where they are going to work. There are very few that you can pull out of it, but there are some that you can.

When expressing their feelings about teacher merit pay based on student achievement directly related to their low expectations of students in poverty, low- to average-hope teachers referred to
their beliefs on students in poverty. All of the teachers in this group conveyed that merit pay was unfair based on the inequalities in student performances. Mrs. Brown explained,

There is never going to be a time when you are going to have equal students in their abilities, and therefore I feel like it will be a situation where one teacher may have very low kids, and their kids won’t perform as well as somebody else’s class.

Similarly, most of the teachers in this group illustrated scenarios similar to Mrs. Brown’s account of the inequities of merit pay.

Low- and Average-Hope Theme: Student’s Role in Instruction

According to the low- and average-hope teachers, students’ roles included being attentive and taking in what is going on so that they can produce what is being asked. Instead of viewing learning as a discovery or exploration, many of the teachers in this group related student learning as the students’ “job.” Explanations of this belief described students’ roles as sitting in their chairs or desks taking in the information. Several teachers described the following:

Teacher 1: “My role is to communicate what is going on and their role is to take it in.”

Teacher 2: “Their role is to pay attention and look at me. Their role is really that they come here to work.”

In addition to describing student learning as a “job,” low- to average-hope teachers also described the student’s role in which learning is a vague, complacent, passive process. Similar to Mrs. Brown’s response, many teachers in this group thought a “child should be listening and be able to reproduce whatever that is.” In other words, students should be able to absorb learning passively, with little or no interaction. Another low- to average-hope teacher explained, “I think the child’s role is just to sit there, they are the sponge and I think they need to behave.” Teachers in this group did not clarify the steps or processes in which students were expected to learn the information.
Low-and-Average-Hope Theme: Factual Strategies

In addition to the use of teacher-directed strategies to teach factual information, low- to average-hope teachers expressed a common belief that lecture was direct instruction, and if the students do not know the answer, the teacher should tell them. Many of the teachers in this group reflected the need to maintain control of the learning experience and the importance for teacher-directed instruction as the only means that students could receive the information. One teacher noted, “We start pretty much all lessons with ‘this is what we are going to learn, this is how you do it, and these are the facts of it.’” Low- to average-hope teachers also described direct instruction as lecturing with the teacher delivering information from the front of the room. Mrs. Red stated, “Well that’s with me in front of them. That would be direct instruction strategies.”

A second aspect of this theme was the teachers’ belief on how to respond to students when they did not understand the factual information. Because teachers in this group expressed the need to maintain teacher control of instruction, many of the teachers responded that the teachers should clarify any student misunderstandings of the factual concepts being taught. One teacher explained, “When the students don’t understand, then I need to give them the answer.”

Low-and-Average-Hope Theme: Problem Solving and Inquiry/Discovery

The responses of low- to average-hope teachers revealed that inquiry and problem-solving were about 30% of their day and only happened in math or science. This group of teachers defined problem-solving in math as the word problems presented in the text, science experiments with each unit, and what they need to know on high stakes testing. One teacher explained,
We do hands-on discovery in science and math, not as much reading. Problem solving is a big chunk because that is what they are going to use on ARMT and SAT10, and all of that, so we do give a lot of problem solving, both group and individual practice on that.

Low- to average-hope teachers did not address a real-world connection to any of the strategies mentioned in this category.

Summary of Low- and Average-Hope Teachers

All teachers shared the same sentiment about the importance of goals development, but the depth of the goal-setting process and the expectations of students were viewed differently between the low- to average-hope teachers and the high-hope teachers. When asked about how they involve students in developing learning goals, the low- to average-hope group explained that goals were set by teachers, as well as local and state mandates, and that students did not have input in determining the goals. In addition, some teachers described particular mandates as being restrictive in allowing teachers to determine the goals for student learning. The low- to average-hope teachers also commented on the abilities of students to set and meet their own goals. The common belief that emerged was that only the more “gifted” students were able to understand goal-setting and see their long-term goals. They explained that those students not performing at a high level were unable to set and reach goals.

Although high-hope teachers consistently used data displays to set and monitor learning goals, those teachers with low to average hope described displaying student data as unfair and uncomfortable. In some cases, displaying data was referred to as humiliating, depending upon student performance. Some of the teachers noted that data should not be displayed due to teachers not being able to control the outcome for “at-risk” students.
The identified obstacles of grouping students differed between low- to average-hope teachers and high-hope teachers. Those teachers with low to average hope perceived obstacles to grouping strategies as having too many concepts to teach, making management of the learning environment extremely difficult.

Teachers of all hope levels shared common instructional strategies; however, the implementation was very different between high-hope teachers and low- to average-hope teachers. Low- to average-hope teachers conveyed the need to control the learning environment while high-hope teachers allowed students to explore. Low- to average-hope teachers also commented that addressing learner differences was many times an obstacle, or too much for a teacher to manage or assess.

Concerning the teacher’s role in instruction, the low- to average-hope teachers identified the role of a teacher as the “giver of information,” or the primary source for knowledge. Teaching styles described in this group were “teacher-centered” and corresponded with the belief that the teacher is in control of all learning in the classroom. This belief was also supported by this group’s descriptions of positive teaching experiences and effectiveness. According to low- to average-hope teachers, their best experiences included situations where all students understood the lesson, resulting in neat and orderly learning. Furthermore, teacher effectiveness reflected scheduled and controlled learning environments where the teacher was the expert and the students were receptacles for learning.

Although the low- to average-hope teachers believed that teachers can reach students, this group explained that the home environment of students in poverty overpowered the teachers’ influence on student learning. When faced with a dilemma surrounded by poverty, home-life, and students’ needs, most of the teachers in this group had a “hands-off” approach. This group
noted that they were not experts in helping students with “mental” or “home-life” issues, and they lacked the skills and training to be equipped to do this. Some low- to average-hope teachers also mentioned their belief that this was not a teacher’s role, instead this role belonged to other entities such as social services.

Another practice implemented by this group of teachers was the celebration of mediocre, or less than average, performances for children in poverty. Teachers with low- to average-hope articulated that any success achieved by a student with a challenging home life should be celebrated. One teacher even described a poverty student’s C being equal to an affluent student’s A. In addition, most of this group expressed the belief that students in poverty have little or no chances to be successful. This related to those low- to average-hope teachers’ opinions about merit pay. They believed merit pay to be inequitable due to those teachers having “low” students would look bad, and those teachers with the “high” students will get paid additional monies.

Responses from the low- to average-hope teachers concerning factual strategies included common responses, but how this group defined explicit instruction differed greatly from high-hope teachers. Low- to average-hope teachers believed explicit instruction was completely teacher-directed, lecture-style instruction in which the teacher’s place was in front of the classroom delivering information verbally. In this model of explicit instruction, the student’s role was passive, listening, paying attention, and behaving.

In addition, the teachers in this group described explicit instruction as laying out the learning for students. They expressed the need and importance of the teacher maintaining control of the learning environment. In some cases, low- to average-hope teachers explained that teachers needed to provide answers for the students who did not know the concept.
When reviewing the low- to average-hope responses from a school level, teachers alluded to the use of a traditional, or “Old World” model of schooling (Fullan et al., 2006), using a one size fits all approach to instruction. This is reflected in their beliefs of teacher and student roles in the instructional process. In addition, low- to average-hope teachers perceive the challenges they face as obstacles they cannot overcome due to external circumstances and restrictions by district and state standards. It is evident through the low- to average-hope teachers’ responses that shared beliefs with their professional peers are not present. In addition, the responses of this group did not reflect a confidence in the school’s ability to adjust to changing circumstances with flexibility.

Characteristics of High-Hope Teachers

In order to develop the characteristics profile of a high-hope teacher, interview responses from teachers scoring above the 85th percentile on The Hope Scale were explored and analyzed. Common themes emerged in every category, and quotes from the interview transcripts were cited in order to provide an intimate and concise profile of a high-hope teacher’s thoughts, beliefs, and practices.

High-Hope Theme: Teacher/Student Relationship

Unlike the common emerging theme, the theme from high-hope teachers comprehensively addressed the development of a positive relationship with students. A high-hope teacher described a good teacher/student relationship as knowing students and their families, their needs and wants both inside and outside of the learning environment, and how to help them solve problems.
When asked how good student relationships are developed, Mrs. Violet responded, “Well part of it is knowing the kid. Like, what do they do after school? What is their home life like? What teachers did they have before?”

Similar to the responses of developing positive parent relationships, high-hope teachers exhibit a deeper knowledge of a student including family dynamics, talents, interests, and the home environment. Mrs. Scarlet stated,

I think making personal contact with the students that I see, and asking them about their day. And actually be genuine with it, not just for the sake of I know I need to build this relationship, but really have that care and concern.

When explaining how to develop a deeper understanding of the students and their families, Mrs. Yellow noted,

Just sitting down with them in small groups, making sure you interact with them. Keeping in contact with them outside of the school environment such as phone calls at home, and keeping in touch with the parent so that they know you care and they know that you are there for them.

As described in Mrs. Yellow’s comments, many of the high-hope teachers expressed that teacher interaction with the children is vital in developing a deeper understanding of the child’s life.

Another teacher addressed the importance of the teacher sharing about their life, making their experiences real, and students being able to see the teacher as a real person. She noted,

Well, part of it is knowing the child. Like, what they do afterschool, what is their home life like, what teachers did they have before? I’ve been to football games. Knowing the coaches can be huge because the coach will hold them out of a game if they are not doing what they should be doing. I also think you have to share some of what goes on with you. You can’t just be the teacher that only exists at school and then poof disappear. And I let them know when I’m frustrated with myself or with them or with something we have to do. I mean there is of course a line, but I need to let them know I am human.

In addition to teacher interaction, responses also revealed that the depth of student knowledge gained impacts the level of the relationship developed with the student. One teacher explained,
It is just so natural for me to get to know those students. I want to know about momma, I want to know about daddy, I want to know what is going on. I have to know, and I think you build that by just having genuine conversations. It is so important that we build those relationships that we get to know them. For the kids in this community, no adult really ever talks to them, they don’t. Nobody really cares about what they say, so for me to come in and say “hey, I really care, what did you do last night?” “I didn’t do anything.” “Yes, you did something, tell me.” “Well, I ran around outside.” And then they think that what they have done is important.

During the interview process, questions were asked about strategies used in the classroom to help teachers build positive relationships with students. Teachers reported that more positive student relationships were developed when teachers helped students solve their problems, and students felt more comfortable confiding in the teacher when conflict or worries existed. This results in students who are more confident and will take more ownership for their learning. When discussing the conflicts of bullying, one teacher noted,

I have a zero tolerance of bullying, and if they don’t have the self-confidence to say that in class then they write me a note and put it on my desk. Then I will handle the situation privately because they are intimidated. By the end of my school year, I do not have any more notes on my desk because they have self-confidence. I feel like if we give them the self-confidence, then we won’t have bullies.

A second teacher related the development of student relationships through the use of problem solving by providing students with choices and input in the classroom. Mrs. Green described this approach as “giving the students the freedom to make choices, and to feel responsible, and to be congratulated for success.”

**High-Hope Theme: Teacher/Parent Relationship**

In addition to positive, ongoing communication, a second theme unique to high-hope teachers identified a good teacher/parent relationship as one where communication is deeper through a personal connection and respectful conversations that included a team approach, identifying specific ways that parents can help their child. High-hope teachers emphasized the
importance of letting parents know that teachers are real people and they are there to help the children.

Mrs. Yellow commented on the need to make a personal connection with the parents in order to have honest, open communication. When discussing the parents, she described that a lot of them made it past high school and that’s it, they didn’t go any further to college. So making them feel comfortable and welcome; and actually sitting down with them and showing them ways to help their child, I think that is part of the success of it.

Mrs. Gold described the beginning of a good teacher/parent relationship as recognizing the value of not placing blame or being judgmental toward parents. She stated,

We also have to understand that parents send us their very best; their very best hope, their very best. They sent us their child, and we have got to be tender to that. I have to be real to that; I have to say “I understand that you have six children at home, I can’t imagine what you are going through.: I have to set them at ease.

Working in a high-poverty school, Mrs. Gold also expressed the importance of knowing the parents and understanding “where they come from.” She said,

Ruby Payne’s research talks about people in poverty, and how people are their possessions, and so I know that when they call me ‘my teacher’, that I belong to them, and should anything happen to me, they are here because I am theirs, I am their possession. So, it’s just like the kids, you have to get to know them, and they have to get to know you.

In describing the key to a good teacher/parent relationship, five of the six high-hope teachers noted that positive teacher/parent relationships must include working with parents on how to successfully help their child. High-hope teacher Mrs. Scarlet clarified that “it’s about how you approach people and how you approach things.” She also explained that asking for a parent’s help is crucial in establishing a team approach to helping their child. This corresponds with Mrs. Black, who commented that she “needs to have compassion for them and see what I can do to help their child.” Parent conferences were identified as the most common approach to establish the teacher/parent team and help the children.
Other methods identified by high-hope teachers included the development of individual action plans. Mrs. Violet explained that when students are not progressing or meeting the standards and expectations, the principal schedules a meeting for the students’ parents followed by a parent/teacher conference in which she “individually meets with the parents that we’ve brought in and we’re required to come up with a plan of action that we can do together to bring the kid up.”

Another approach identified that enables teachers to work with parents was “going to the parent” if they could not come to you. One method used is a school-wide plan to walk the students to a crossing guard in the community where the parents are waiting. Mrs. Gold described,

We walk the kids a half mile to the crossing guard every afternoon, and walk through the community every afternoon because I want them to know that I am here, I am part of this. I have more parent conferences at the corner than I do in this building.

Another method used to maintain a positive relationship with parents was the use of home visits by the schools’ administration. Mrs. Violet explains, “Administration makes a really big move to do parent visits, home visits. And they go on countless every week; they’re out and at the houses. They really know the families and know the houses--kind of incredible.”

High-Hope Theme: Goal Development

Contrary to the theme emerging from the low- and average-hope teachers, high-hope teachers described goal development as routine and essential to the instructional process. According to high-hope teachers, all students develop learning goals, monitor goals, and dialogue about their progress with the teacher, who then guides students along the path to meet their goal. Five teachers addressed goal development as an indispensable part of the instructional
process. When discussing how her perception has changed about students setting goals, Mrs. Violet stated,

I think when I started, I didn’t give the kids a reason we were doing it. It was just we’re doing it because I said so and now I try to back it up with this is something you are going to need when you grow up and go grocery shopping. And that goes back to that real world thing. I mean if I knew growing up in school if somebody tells me why I had to do it I really had no interest, and so I need to give them some kind of reason to learn it.

Within the theme from high-hope teachers, three additional factors emerged from teachers’ responses about goal development: Frequent and corrective teacher feedback, high teacher expectations, and displaying student and class data. The first factor mentioned was the importance of frequent and corrective feedback when monitoring learning goals. The high-hope teachers in this study emphasized the need for teachers to dialogue with their students in order to review goals, grading criteria, as well as to discuss performance. One teacher noted that she set learning goals at the beginning of the year and met “once to twice a week to discuss their progress.” Mrs. Yellow explained,

I have learned if you just give them this goal, the future to them is just, they don’t understand. If you can break it down even further, I feel that they can understand it better. I break it down further saying you need this many points per week in order to reach your goal.

A second teacher described the discussion of the data graph showing each student’s daily progress. She described that this process makes the students “accountable, especially to their peers or it encourages, it’s an opportunity for growth and improvement.” Conferencing time was mentioned by many high-hope teachers as another effective approach to student accountability, as well as a meaningful way to “bring it [the work] back out and say ‘This is why you missed this.’” This time was described by high-hope teachers as an opportunity to talk to the students about data, and even showing them student examples of the different levels of work and the rationales behind the score. Mrs. Scarlet described this process as,
showing them examples and modeling what’s a good answer according to the state. Of course we do take it a little further here; we make it a little bit more rigorous than the state because that is the minimal standard. If they are going to be held accountable for something, they ought to know why they are.

In addition to frequent monitoring and feedback of learning goals, high-hope teachers explained that setting high expectations was a crucial part that enables students to meet their learning goals. Not only did teachers raise the expectations of evaluation or scoring, but they guided and encouraged the students to raise self-expectations, resulting in higher learning goals.

Mrs. Gold noted,

If our students don’t ever know where they need to be, and we don’t ever help them set a path to get there; they are just going to stay where they are. So, we, in this school building have said that we are going to set goals with them and we are going to hold them to much higher expectations.

According to many of the teachers in this study, the journey of helping the students realize their potential began with the question “What do you need to do and how can you get there?” This essential question was followed by dialogue between the teacher and student serving to plan the “path” to meet their goals. It then continued with a second question: “What happens when they don’t reach their goal?” One teacher stated,

Well, sometimes we have to be real, and I have to say, “you know what, sometimes I don’t meet my goal guys. I didn’t lose three pounds this week like I was supposed to, I just didn’t do that. Y’all saw me eat that Snickers bar, why didn’t one of you tell me to stop?” And I have to bring it back to what relates to them. We are all going to beat ourselves up when we don’t meet it, but we are all going to take a deep breath and say “what am I going to do now?” Well, you are going to set another goal, and we are going to reach it this time.

The final factor emphasized by high-hope teachers was the use of data displays when evaluating student learning goals and providing corrective feedback. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, 8 of them mentioned using data displays to provide authentic feedback to the students. One teacher noted,
We certainly display our data everywhere. The kids know by class, by whole school where we are, and they know where we need to be, and we display their testing scores. We have big charts about stanines, and we teach the kids that there is a difference between scoring at a stanine-5, which is a cut score, and we explain all of that to them; even third graders, and they understand. I will pull last years’ scores for them and I will say “let’s look at where you were. Did you score a 2, did you score a 3, did you score a 4?”

The teacher further explained that individual conferences during small group stations is when and how they engage in dialogue with the students about their learning goals, their progress, and the paths to reach their goals.

**High-Hope Theme: Instructional Strategies to Address Learner Differences**

In addition to using strategies and techniques that were common among all interviewed, high-hope teachers stressed that “hitting all of those modalities” was crucial to student learning. When describing the best learning environment for children in poverty, one teacher noted, “Research has shown that children who grow up in poverty are very tactile learners, so I would say most everybody is very much hands on no matter what they’re doing.” High-hope teachers also accentuated the value of providing experiences and building on students’ prior knowledge by incorporating additional curricular studies, such as history and geography, to connect to the larger community and real world. Mrs. Gold explained,

We are building foundational things, so that the more they know, the more they make connections in their minds, and the more they can make applications. We try and always make a real world connection. We don’t ever want anything in isolation. “Let me show you how this connects to the future.”

Many of the high-hope teachers explained that because their students live in extreme poverty, they have limited experiences and most have never traveled outside of their neighborhood. Therefore, teachers identified field trips and many activities or projects to build
background experiences that help students connect to larger meanings. For example, Mrs. Black noted,

We talked about plants in our reading and we diagramed a plant, but then they saw that seed sprout and putting in the soil to see if it grows. Those are all things that they question; when I asked what they would plant in a garden, one little girl answered “salad.” I asked what is in a salad, and they said “the green stuff.” They didn’t understand. So we connect them to the real experiences, and we went to the farm. Leaving this little neighborhood and driving to the country was very eye opening for them.

Another teacher expressed the importance of teachers recognizing their responsibility in building students’ experiences. When describing her students’ field trip to the state’s capitol, she explained,

We ride down Dexter Avenue straight up to the capitol. I always make the bus driver come in straight in. I wanted to be at the bottom of the hill, and those kids say “oh is that the White House?” “No it’s not, it is the state capitol,” and I want there to be that “oh wow!,” because of giving them something no one has ever given them. My parents took me to the state capitol when I was little. Well, I cannot fault the parents for not doing that. What I have to do is put those kids in a bus and drive them up Dexter Avenue. Who else, why not me? I get the joy in that.

In addition to field trips, guest speakers have been utilized to introduce real world situations to the students, as well as aspirations to explore various careers for their future. Many of the high-hope teachers have utilized outside business partners to come in and talk with the students. One teacher described a time when a financial advisor came in to speak with the students about the stock market. The students then developed a project in which they watched the stock market each day for 4 weeks, completed mock stock purchases and sells, and predicted and explained the fluctuation in the market. As the teacher described, “That was a real world connection to us. This is not just something we hear that adults talk about.”

Another approach described to build students’ experiences while connecting to prior knowledge was project-based learning. Several of the teachers depicted activities in which the
students used real-world situations in order to create a project or solve a problem. One example illustrated by one teacher was creating a BBQ stand and “menu map,” which was used to plan several events for various groups around the community. In order to successfully manage the stand, the students had to determine the amount of food needed for each event and the cost for them compared to the cost of the consumer. In addition, the students also used recipes to create the dishes served and determine the number of servings needed, which resulted in applying math concepts in order to complete the order.

A final example was using literature to incorporate additional experiences addressing other cultures, events in different periods of history, and geography. Mrs. Violet describes the project using the novel *The Whipping Boy*, and the introduction of the Middle Ages and kingdoms during that time period. She described,

> The vocabulary is very hard but they are getting to learn about the middle ages, knights, and swords, and they get to learn something totally different. We compare and contrast the move with the book, and we dress the students in period costumes and set up the tables like a big feast. The students have roasted apples and everything, and the classroom is decorated like a castle.

*High-Hope Theme: Grouping Strategies*

High-hope teachers also expressed the importance of small group instruction. However, a great deal of emphasis was placed on grouping as a connection to the world of work, giving students experiences to problem solve, collaborate, and be responsible for each other’s learning. As true for many of the other categories, high-hope teachers stressed the significance of connecting all aspects of instruction to the real world, making learning meaningful and applicable to any situation. One teacher described the connection to the world of work,

> Group work, I feel, is very important, cooperative learning is very important, especially in this day and age. In our work environment, you are responsible for somebody else first,
and if you cannot work cooperatively in a group setting then your jobs are going to be limited. Yes, I am in my classroom working with students, but I also have to work with the teachers around me so that we are all on the same page. “Work it out, put your differences aside, solve your problem, and then you can leave,” and that is how your job environment has to be.

Relating it to adult learning, another teacher noted, “I think we, as adults, work better as groups. I sure do work well when I have somebody to bounce my ideas off of.”

A second aspect of grouping strategies highlighted by high-hope teachers were the experiences students gained working to solve problems collaboratively. They explained the need to design the classroom for collaboration in order for the teacher to understand group dynamics and individual students. Mrs. Gold described,

Every student in this building sits at a table. We have got to learn to work together; individually, we have to learn to be beside each other and do our own work. Together we have to learn how to work together and get our work done. It’s a real good way to watch and see how they are processing. There are kids who jump right in, kids who hang back and think it through, and to watch them work that out together.

Many of the high-hope teachers noted that group work was an excellent way to discover the leaders as well as those students who have unique talents to share with others.

Other teachers within this group focused on the role of the teacher when small group strategies were being implemented. According to most of the high-hope teachers, the teacher should be interacting with the students, participating in the student conversations and dialogue taking place. In addition, they explained that the teacher should be providing feedback, modeling, and facilitating how to work together in a group, as well as how to approach solving a problem. Describing an obstacle of group work, Mrs. Scarlet explained the “chatty Cathys” use group work for teacher-centered reasons. She notes,

just making sure that the teacher is not giving them group work and then going off doing something else. They are really walking around each table, interacting, having these conversations and being a part of and then moving on to another table. And part of that is what happens when you see kids not thinking about something, and that’s the time where
I say “you know, I heard this other table saying . . . do you think they are right? Do you think they are wrong?” Asking open-ended questions about what is going on.

Similar to Mrs. Scarlet’s response, many high-hope teachers recognized that small group work has a positive impact on student growth. They identified an increase in students’ responsibility for each other’s learning, as well as the ownership of their learning as a major benefit of working in groups.

High-Hope Theme: Teacher’s Role

Although all of the teachers had a common belief that the teacher’s role should be facilitative and change to meet the needs of the students, high-hope teachers had vastly different responses addressing how a teacher arrives at that point. Unlike low- to average-hope teachers, they expressed that teachers must have high expectations and a shared philosophy that all children can learn, and they must give students a reason for learning that connects to the real world. Many of the teachers identified characteristics such as guiding students in solving problems and showing them multiple avenues of learning. One teacher noted,

That whole philosophy of the teacher is the teacher, and the giver of information and the student is the receiver of the information, and then at three o’clock we go home. . . . I have to come along beside them and I am the guide to instruction. I am there to offer assistance and to correct misconception, to teach skills and to show them the instructional education and academic part of it, but to let them be themselves. For us to think that there is only one way to solve a problem or there is only one way to do things, I want my kids to know that there are hundreds of ways to solve it, and yours just might be the very best.

High-hope teachers described a teacher’s primary role as being a facilitator; they referred to this as a collaborative role with the students. When describing this relationship, one teacher worded it best, “The teacher’s role--I do see that as the facilitating of learning and not always being the ‘sage on the stage.’”
Other high-hope teachers emphasized that teachers must develop the students’ confidence and ownership of learning. Many teacher responses indicated the use of discussion, questioning, collaboration, and problem solving to develop the students’ levels of confidence. As one teacher described,

They are not going to learn just by sitting and listening. I feel like the teacher needs to be prepared and be able to present in a way that gets them involved, and they really learn from each other. So just a lot of questioning, a little topic and give a little background knowledge and let them go. You are not going to know that they know unless they tell you.

According to high-hope teachers, another emphasis in a teacher’s role was the ability to connect student learning to the real world. They described this as a necessity for making learning relative or meaningful to the student, as well as giving them the connection to the world of work. High-hope teachers expressed an awareness of their role in preparing students for a 21st century workforce, including what type of problem-solving and thinking strategies are needed to be successful. One teacher explained,

I am teaching kids who are going to have jobs that have not even been invented yet with the technology that we have. I have to keep that in mind. Even McDonalds is going to function differently in 10 years. So if I am teaching them skills for a job that was happening ten years ago, I am doing us all a disservice, I am doing myself a disservice when I need them in the future. So, we always have to keep that in mind, that at some point they are going to have to be their own learner.

Many of the high-hope responses mirrored Mrs. Scarlet’s response, and focused on the student’s ownership of learning as the result of the teacher’s efforts.

When identifying all of the necessary components of a teacher’s role in instruction, high-hope teachers described their teaching style as “non-traditional, interactive, and hands-on.” They placed a key focus on initially developing relationships with their students. However, these teachers also clarified that they have very clear procedures and structured routines in which to carry out various types of instruction. One teacher described this as being “personable, but very
strict with very clear standards in their behavior and work.” Many of the high-hope teachers contributed the evolution of their teaching style to the culture of the schools in which they taught. One teacher explained,

I started several years ago to see if I could do one project-based unit a year, and in a couple of years, I will have a whole year’s worth, and that is almost where I am now. So, it is definitely an evolution, to say “if this isn’t working, can I try this?” Being in an environment where I can take those risks, I can put the text book in the closet, and I can say “alright, if I were going to teach this, and I was going to make this matter for the real world, how would I teach it?”

When depicting when they feel the most effective, many of the high-hope teachers response of “prepared” was also common among low- to average-hope teachers. However, several of the high-hope teachers mentioned other attributes or behaviors such as,

I am more effective when I stop talking; I am more effective when I give more think time; I am more effective when I have no interruptions; I am more effective when it is something the students enjoy doing.

High-hope teachers included responses that were more student-centered and focused on the teacher’s behavior. Conversely, this group of teachers identified being least effective when they were preoccupied or frustrated with outside activities that did not relate to instruction, or if they were absent from the classroom. One teacher explained,

preoccupied with other parts of my job. When the RtI paperwork that has to be turned in is sitting on my desk. When I know there are visitors are I have gotten emails about planning an event. I am least effective when I take the focus off of those 25 faces in my room, and I let my focus be on other things.

When describing a teaching experience that went well, all of the high-hope teachers described purposeful, interactive lessons tied to real world applications using collaboration and problem-solving strategies. One teacher described,

Lessons that go well are ones when you see the light bulb go off, and students say, “I know how I can remember that.” That was real exciting for me to see them say, “Oh, I see this, let me tell you how I remember it, let me tell you what I wrote down,” for them to take ownership of that.
When identifying negative teaching experiences, high-hope teachers’ responses focused on the teachers’ lack of adaptability and responsiveness to the students’ needs. Many of the scenarios described occurred during the teachers’ first years of teaching or as their teaching style evolved. For example, one teacher described a lesson in which she was teaching measurement with a ruler, and she was the only one with a ruler. Mrs. Yellow noted, “the kids were just sitting there like ‘this is going over my head,’ and that was absolutely terrible.” Another teacher commented on her experiences,

I think when I started I didn’t give the kids a reason we were doing the work. It was just we’re doing it because I said so, and I would try to back it up by saying this is going to be on your test.

She explained that by not giving her students a purpose to learn the material, they in turn exhibited negative behaviors during instruction.

*High-Hope Theme: Teacher’s Expectations*

High-hope teachers believed that the home environment is not a big factor in learning because the teacher is the greatest influence in learning if the student is at school. When asked if a teacher’s impact is limited due to a child’s home environment, one teacher responded,

I disagree with it 98% of the time and I disagree with it because of what this school has been able to do. When you look around our neighborhood, you see people without power, without running water, my kids come to school with the one set of clothes they own down to their underwear. I’ve had kids with no underwear or socks, you know. Their living in conditions that we don’t even like to think exist in the United States. So you have all those things going on, however, our school’s one of the top achieving schools in the country. We have national awards and it’s not just the test scores that are really good. But it’s the things that we have been able to do for the kids. They hold their heads up when they come to school now, they don’t suck their thumbs like they used to, I mean, it’s huge and changes that have impacted the community and the kids and the achievement here. And so if you say well you can’t do it because of their environment, then you would have to look at our school. And there are others like us that are able to overcome.
Within this belief that the effects of poverty and the home environment can be overcome, high-hope teachers also expressed that the change has to be school-wide. It cannot be a few teachers, it has to be the entire school, the administration, custodian, lunchroom workers, everyone has to be invested in making a change.

Another significant difference in the responses of high-hope teachers was their expectation of the students’ performance. Contrary to teachers with low to average hope, high-hope teachers had very high expectations of their students regardless of their home environment. A teacher explained,

I don’t think we can ever pass the buck and say “well, it’s their home situation.” We don’t do that with kids who are in upper society. We don’t ever say “oh, well they are going to learn because look at them, they have everything they need.” We don’t pass the buck there, so why should we pass the buck here? Why should we say “well, they are just poor little children living in poverty?” Okay, and so what, and so in this building we are going to say “alright, we recognize it and we are still going to teach you. We are going to teach you bigger and better, and we are going to work harder because we have a lot to overcome.”

In addition, all teachers in this group warned that lowering expectations of their students was the worst thing they could do for their chances of overcoming poverty and being successful in the world of work.

When responding to identifying the biggest challenge facing teachers today, high-hope teachers expressed the need to maintain the progress their students had gained, as well as keeping teachers energetic and ideas new and fresh. Of this group, challenges seemed to center around staying innovative, maintaining positive momentum, and accelerating student achievement.

*High-Hope Theme: Student’s Role in Instruction*

The responses of high-hope teachers were considerably more detailed in identifying specific roles for the students as well as how they related to learning. The students’ role includes
(1) an ownership of learning and the ability to apply knowledge to other areas, (2) identifying learning goals and how to reach them, (3) collaborating and interacting with peers and teachers, and (4) appropriately responding when goals are not met.

High-hope teachers noted that the importance of students taking charge of their own learning and being responsible for their choices. One teacher clarified that, “The students should be responsible and take ownership of everything in the classroom because they are ultimately the ones who have to apply the knowledge.” This group emphasized the use of higher order skills in order to apply student learning in other areas relating to the real world. Another teacher explained,

We think their role is to soak up everything and to give it back to us. It is what we think. Maybe their role is to take what we have given and to process that and to apply it. I would say their role is really to process it. You know, if we don’t ever make it to that higher order of thinking what we have learned and applying it, not just to this situation, but how does that affect the next situation, and the next I am encountered with, then we have missed it. We are building foundational things, so that the more they know, the more they can make connections in their minds, the more they can make applications.

When discussing the topic of student ownership of learning, high-hope teachers identified the need for setting learning goals and teaching students how to self-assess in order to reach them. Many of the high-hope teachers related the setting of learning goals as the initial role of the student. However, the students’ behaviors after goal-setting was stressed as the most important part of the process. Among the behaviors described, teachers in this group discussed the need for students and teachers to map out a “path” toward the goal, which included students recording their responses, analyzing and evaluating them, and questioning one another about the goals and steps identified. Many of the teachers referred to their responses about goal-setting, describing the collaboration and discussions with students. When discussing setting learning goals, one teacher described,
There has to be some guiding and some molding to say to them “your goals to graduate from college right now means nothing, your goal is to make an A in math class. An then because you passed this grade you can go to a really good middle school, you can get into a magnet school, and then what?” “Well, I can go to high school and I can do really well, and then I can get into college.” Do I want that to be their ultimate goal? Absolutely. We talk about that all the time, you are going to college, no question about it, but today what are we going to do? What steps are we going to make? What happens if or when they don’t reach their goal? I have to bring it back to what relates to them.

Within the process of monitoring learning goals, high-hope teachers identified the importance of collaboration and interaction between students and teachers. This group explained that because students need to learn how to map the “path” to their goals, teacher modeling and conversations served as a primary tool for students to receive that information. Among the many collaborative strategies used, high-hope teachers identified student and teacher questioning, students recording their own data, as well as conferencing and dialogue with teachers to monitor performance. One teacher noted,

I think the student should participate, should attend mentally but not only do I think they ought to open their mouths have some communication so there’s something going on there, make connections. If they don’t talk if you’re doing that lecture style and the students don’t talk, how do you ever know what they’re learning if you don’t ever ask them to write it down on paper, to record their responses in some way, how do you know they can write?

A final area identified as part of the student’s role is being able to appropriately respond when a goal is not met. As one teacher commented when asked about goal-setting, “If our students don’t ever know where they need to be, we don’t ever help them set a path to how to get there, they are just going to stay where they are.” While conferencing with students in small groups or individually, high-hope teachers discuss the student data, review progress toward their goals, and question the students concerning “What do you need to do if you haven’t met your goal? How can you get there? What are some steps you can take?” Teachers in this group then collaborate with the students to set their new learning goals, and talk through developing a
different “path.” According to high-hope teachers, students then begin monitoring their own progress again through data displays, mapping the data, and questioning one another in order to evaluate their responses. In addition to the steps of goal attainment, another important aspect of student learning is the personal connection made with the teachers and fellow students.

**High-Hope Theme: Factual Strategies**

Unlike the responses of the low to average hope group, high-hope teachers expressed that explicit instruction mostly consisted of scaffolded approaches, including teacher modeling and think-aloud activities. Responses from this group focused primarily on supporting the students as they learn the content as well as the types of strategies needed at each level of support. This group of teachers described factual information as “memory anchors” to higher learning. One teacher explained,

> I think factual information is going to anchor it to something. It has got to be in context. We have to use those things that we as adults help remember. We have to teach our kids how to remember. We have to make those memory anchors. We have to start building those hooks that we just hook things on in our mind, and I think that is really important. Things you just really have to know like vocabulary words, definitions, spelling words, grammar rules.

Of the strategies discussed, teacher modeling, was identified by all of the teachers in this group. High-hope teachers described modeling as a strategy used to guide students through the set steps of a process, focusing on how to anchor the steps with each student’s existing schema. This group also explained that modeling different strategies to arrive at the same answer, especially in math, allows students to form more memory anchors. Therefore, students are more successful in applying their learning to other areas. A teacher explained the relevance of the use of modeling as well as using a variety of strategies in math,
There is a very set way to do things. I mean, some math is open-ended and you can think about it and you have this different strategy, but some of it is basic facts like basic multiplication facts, division facts. There are algorithms that go with solving math, but there are also different ways that students can think about those algorithms.

Vastly different than their low- to average-hope counterparts, high-hope teachers conveyed the role that factual information plays in learning to think critically and solve problems. A teacher noted, “We do those type of things that anchor, because if we don’t have anything to connect to, it is just taking up space, and there is no real continuity to that.” In other words, factual information served as the foundation of being able to solve problems. As Mrs. Violet articulated, “How are you going to apply it to other things?"

*High-Hope Theme: Problem Solving and Inquiry/Discovery*

When exploring this dimension with high-hope teachers, responses indicated that problem solving and inquiry/discovery strategies were used 100% of the day, and should be connected to real world experiences and focus on critical thinking. High-hope teachers expressed the importance of using these strategies to accomplish four main tasks: (1) to make connections to prior knowledge through inquiry and discovery, (2) to guide students through the problem-solving process, (3) to illustrate that there are many ways to solve problems, and (4) to focus on critical thinking and how to apply the process to other areas.

To make connections to prior knowledge, high-hope teachers employed several techniques. One strategy that this group identified was not giving the students the information explicitly before having them explore through activities. Many of the high-hope teachers described the use of project-based learning as one way of having students explore concepts and information before “giving them the answer.” One teacher explains,
Everything that I do has to be specifically related to something. It has to be related to the course of study which is also related to ARMT and the SAT10. It all has to be connected, but we [two of the teachers] collaborate and come up with projects for students. When discussing collaboration among teachers, project-based learning was described as “inquiry that leads to the problem-solving aspect. Let’s look at how that relates to one another. Are they blended?”

A second task identified was guiding students through the problem-solving process. High-hope teachers described this as “getting them to see the picture, see what the question has asked them.” In order to assist the students with “the big picture,” teachers in this group identified strategies such as visualization techniques, drawing, and mapping out a plan. Teacher modeling was also discussed as being an important strategy used because “problem solving is not an automatic process.” Instead, teachers described it as a process that needs to be shown to the students in parts. One teacher described,

I am teaching the students to pull the important information out, what is the question asking for, then solving, so they are doing that procedure. Then they are summarizing it, so they see all of it together. I feel that it is important to do that. It is everyday practice.

In addition to the techniques, high-hope teachers identified that it was important to illustrate that there was more than one way to solve a problem. Teachers in this group expressed the belief that there can be many different ways to solve problems, and teaching students how to think critically is an essential skill in today’s world. One teacher illustrated her discussion with students. She noted,

I don’t solve every problem the same way you would, but sometimes it’s okay, was anybody else thinking about that a different way? Sometimes our math coach has to come in and say ‘here’s how I thought about it.’ She and I think totally different. I am very visual, she is not, she wants the numbers on the paper. So she will show them “well this is how I did it,” and sometimes the kids will say, “well, I saw it better how she did it.”
High-hope teachers also illustrated the use of problem-solving strategies across the curriculum. As one teacher explained,

We don’t only use problem-solving strategies in math, we do it in science, they will hypothesize and plan out experiments. We do it in social studies as a reading concept. We call them compromises in social studies and problem solving in math, so it is all relevant. It all goes together.

According to high-hope teachers, students must be able to use critical thinking strategies in order to apply their knowledge to other situations. This group illuminated the connections between factual, problem solving, and the inquiry and discovery process, as well as how it relates to the solving problems in many areas. On teacher noted, “We have to take them from that [factual knowledge] to critical thinking and applying, you know, and all these parts working together.” The responses of the high-hope teachers referred to the purposes behind guiding students through the problem-solving process, illustrating that there are many solutions to each problem, as well as using real world examples with the students. All of the teachers with high hope understood that the overlying purpose of these strategies was “how they can address a problem in their life. What is the important information in this life, what do you need to do to solve this problem, and as long as they make that connection they will always use those steps.”

When observing high-hope teachers at the school level, it became evident that teachers with the highest hope levels were employed at high-performing, high-poverty schools. Teacher responses exposed school-wide approaches that involve all school and community stakeholders for the express purpose of overcoming barriers of poverty to increase student learning. All stakeholders of high-performing, high-poverty schools were unified in their beliefs that all students can learn at high levels regardless of their circumstances. High-hope teachers within these schools identified themselves as student-centered, tackling the challenges necessary to meet the needs of the students. This group shared examples of unified beliefs and commitments
through the description of how resources were utilized by the school to care for the students, parents, and community. For example, teachers explained that the school had a partnership with social services in which available classrooms served as an on-site office for therapeutic counselors. The counselors would meet with students and parents to address any mental health needs in the community. Another example of school resourcefulness identified by high-hope teachers was the use of a school bus twice weekly to transport students and parents for medical services at the local health department clinic. Other school efforts ranged from providing clothing for those children who did not have clean clothes to the schools’ procurement of funds to help families with utilities. In one high-performing, high-poverty school, a shower was installed in the office complex so that students with no running water had the opportunity to bathe each morning. High-hope teachers in high-performing, high-poverty schools stressed that a unified approach involving everyone was a crucial component to overcoming the ecology of high-poverty schools.

Summary of High-Hope Teachers

When discussing teacher/student relationships, high-hope teachers revealed that it was crucial to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding about their students in order to enhance the strength of the relationship. They explained that the depth of this relationship was directly related to the level of the student’s performance. According to high-hope teachers, one’s knowledge about a student must extend beyond the classroom and school walls into family dynamics, home environment, and the student’s interests. In addition, responses identified that teachers helping students solve problems contributed to positive teacher/student relationships, increased student self-confidence, and increased student performance in the classroom.
Similar views were also reflected in the high-hope teachers’ responses concerning teacher/parent relationships. In addition to positive, ongoing communication, the responses of high-hope teachers included the significance of making personal connections with the parents and establishing a team approach to helping their children. A majority of high-hope teachers expressed the need to know the parents as well as they know their students, and to learn and understand their community and how to approach people and situations. In order to develop a team approach in helping their children, high-hope teachers identified specific strategies to initiate and maintain positive parent relationships. Responses ranged from making frequent home visits to asking parents for help with developing specific action plans for student improvement. The high-hope teachers reflected the belief that the partnership of their children’s parents was crucial and a necessary part of the learning process.

In the area of goal development, high-hope teachers emphasized that students develop, monitor, and refine their own learning goals. In addition, high-hope teachers described themselves as facilitators guiding students and helping them determine the “paths” to reach their goals. As facilitators, this group explained that they must give opportunities in the classroom for explaining how data are interpreted, what is expected on accountability data, and how the school and class performed on this data. In addition, high-hope teachers planned classroom time for dialogue and individual conferencing about students’ goals and progress toward meeting their goals.

Within this theme, high-hope teachers identified three additional factors in the goal-setting process. The first factor involved the need for frequent and corrective teacher feedback to the students, showing students how they performed and discussing the areas that need improvement with them. High-hope teachers identified questioning techniques as primary
examples to help students determine their “paths” for success. Vital questions included “Where do you need to improve?” “How do you think we can improve that area?” “What will you do if you don’t meet your goal?” When giving feedback, the teachers explained the significance of modeling and giving students ways to overcome their challenges. Teachers modeled using think-aloud strategies in which the teacher would work through an obstacle aloud showing the students how to think about different ways to reach the goal.

A second factor identified was high teacher expectations concerning students’ ownership in setting learning goals. Differing from the attitudes and beliefs of teachers with low to average hope, high-hope teachers believed that all students were capable of setting and reaching learning goals. In addition, many of the high-hope teachers’ responses indicated that it was the teachers’ responsibility to model and teach the students how to set goals, monitor their growth, and how to respond if their goals were not achieved. This shared belief was also reflected in the categories of teacher roles and student roles, and differences were consistent between low- to average- and high-hope teachers.

The final factor was consistently displaying student and class data. High-hope teachers noted that it was essential for the students and teachers to know where they were and where they needed to be. According to many responses, data included ARMT (the Alabama Reading and Math Test), Stanford Achievement 10, DIBELS Benchmark, and data predictive to high-stakes testing. The data displayed reflected school-wide results, as well as performance by grade level and homeroom. When asked about their perceptions of displaying data, good or bad, high-hope teachers clarified the purpose of data displays was a process that focused on identifying ways to help the students improve. According to this group, the process was a way to explain the scoring system to the students, both norm-based and criterion-based, and dialogue with the students.
about their score within these systems. They also stressed the need for students to chart and graph data throughout the year in order for the children to know what learning goals should be established.

High-hope teachers’ perceptions of instructional strategies also differed from low- to average-hope teachers. They emphasized the need to create new experiences, build on students’ prior knowledge, incorporate other academic concepts, and connect to the real world. Activities such as field trips, project-based learning, and partnerships with outside business professionals were among the approaches discussed. As identified by high-hope teachers, the overlying purpose of these types of activities was connecting the students’ experiences, background, and new learning to real world applications. As one teacher explained, “We are not reinventing the wheel. We are teaching good, solid lessons. We are just making it meaningful.”

In addition to the common beliefs about grouping strategies, high-hope teachers also expressed the need for students to work in small groups for more complex reasons. Beliefs in this group reflected the importance of the real world connection, problem solving, and collaboration. High-hope teachers consistently responded that students must learn to problem solve and work collaboratively because it is reflective of the world of work. Using this approach with small group instruction, teachers and students worked together to share learning. Teachers were able to interact with students, model, and facilitate the problem-solving process. Working in small groups also provided the teachers with insight on group and individual student dynamics. The only obstacles identified by high-hope teachers were teachers’ inappropriate use of small groups in order to “take a break.” In one teacher’s words, ‘you have ‘chatty Cathys’ who want to use small groups and then go do something else.” High-hope teachers’ expectations reflected the
seriousness of being able to capitalize on the time spent interacting with students in small groups, making learning more meaningful and applicable to the real world of work.

When addressing the teacher’s role in instruction, high-hope teachers responded very differently in all areas. The teacher as the facilitator was a common belief, but this group also believed it was necessary for teachers to embrace a shared philosophy that all students can learn. In addition, a teacher’s role should encompass the need to connect students to the real world and help them develop an ownership for their learning. These beliefs were reflected through this group’s description of their teaching style.

High-hope teachers described themselves as non-traditional, hands-on, and interactive with clear procedures and expectations for student learning. Effectiveness was measured by a teacher’s evaluation of their own behavior and how well they responded to the needs of their students. Positive and negative experiences described by this group also reflected a focus on student learning. High-hope teachers described an ideal lesson as one where students were able to connect to the real world and apply learning to varied situations. Conversely, they identified negative experiences as ones in which they were not as responsive or adaptable to their students’ needs.

The most significant difference between the low- to average- and high-hope teachers was in the area of teacher expectations. Although high-hope teachers agreed with the entire group that teachers can reach their students and that the home environment was a factor, they expressed the belief that teachers’ influence on the students was the greatest factor in student learning and success. All of the high-hope teachers stated that although the home environment was there, it was not a big factor. This group explained that poverty could be overcome, but it had to be a school-wide effort that involved everyone.
A second factor identified by high-hope teachers was the significance of high teacher expectations with students of poverty. This group clarified that expectations of student performance had to be higher because of all of the things that the children have to overcome in order to be successful in the world of work. High-hope teachers clarified that the worst thing a teacher can do to a child in poverty is lower their expectations. They also noted that when teachers accept less from a child in poverty than what they would expect from any other student in any other environment, the chances of these children being successful decreases considerably. In fact, the responses of high-hope teachers indicated an understanding of the students’ circumstances, but the teachers did not sympathize for them or treat them any differently than they would any other student in any other school.

Many high-hope teachers identified the biggest challenge in teaching was staying innovative and not losing the momentum that they had gained with their students and positive academic performance. They expressed concern over keeping “things new and fresh” in order to keep the students engaged and progressing. In addition to student-centered challenges, all high-hope teachers expressed an indifference regarding teacher merit pay. They described merit pay as a “bonus” and flattering to be recognized for something good, but this group explained that merit pay was neither expected nor necessary for them to do their jobs at the level they currently perform. Many of them described that they had merit pay in the beginning of their teaching experiences, but no longer have it, and it has not been an issue either way.

Contrary to the responses of the low- to average-hope group, the high-hope teachers identified an overall goal of students being able to connect to their prior knowledge in order to apply what they have learned to a variety of real-world situations. All of the teachers in this group expressed the need for students to acquire knowledge that could be applied at different
times to different situations. They identified four areas that students need to use during the instructional process: (1) an ownership of learning and the ability to apply knowledge to other areas, (2) identifying learning goals and how to reach them, (3) collaborating and interacting with peers and teachers, and 4) appropriately responding when goals are not met.

A majority of the high-hope responses were made up of detailed explanations and scenarios of how teachers assist students in developing their role during instruction. They identified collaboration daily through teachers conferences, identification of learning goals, student-to-student questioning, students’ recording their own performance or response data, and self-evaluation and reflections. This group explained that they did not leave anything to chance, supporting the students at every step in the collaborative process.

With high-hope teachers, the definition of explicit instruction reflected a very different meaning. Teachers in this group expressed that explicit instruction was scaffolded to provide support, and included strategies such as teacher modeling and think-alouds. Factual information was considered “memory anchors,” or that foundational knowledge needed in order for students to connect new concepts to existing schema. Teachers in this group explained the need for factual knowledge in order to get to the next level, problem solving. Unlike the low- to average-hope teachers, high-hope teachers understood the purpose of explicit instruction. They also exhibited an awareness that these “anchors” must be present in order to develop critical thinking and application to other areas.

Unlike their low- to average-hope counterparts, high-hope teachers expressed that problem solving occurred 100% of the day and happened throughout the curriculum. Detailed explanations were given illustrating the connections between solving a problem in math, hypothesizing in science, and studying compromises in social studies. In order to be critical
problem solvers, high-hope teachers explained that students must be able to (1) make connections to prior knowledge through inquiry and discovery, (2) guide students through the problem-solving process, (3) illustrate that there are many ways to solve problems, and (4) focus on critical thinking and how to apply the process to other areas.

In order to make connections to prior knowledge, teachers in this group explained that students should be given the opportunity to explore the content before “being given the answer.” They articulated that the inquiry/discovery process allows students to begin asking questions and developing their ideas and thinking. One example of inquiry/discovery learning identified was project-based learning. Many of the high-hope teachers described the use of projects in content areas that allowed students to explore and discover the “why” of the concept before learning the details. They also explained that projects demonstrated how the different areas of factual, problem solving, and inquiry/discovery learning blend together in order to develop a response or product.

A second area this group emphasized was guiding students through the problem-solving process. The teachers in this group believed that problem-solving was not an automatic process for students, and students should be taken through every step. They discussed at this point, factual knowledge “blended” with problem-solving in order to explicitly teach students how to solve real-world problems. Each step should be revealed, and this group articulated that questioning and dialogue should be used to ask such questions as: What do I do next? What steps should I take? How will this look? How can I measure my progress?

When working through the problem-solving process, high-hope teachers also illuminated the importance of identifying many ways to solve each problem. This group talked about the necessity of their students being able to find different “paths” to solve a problem, and that this
skill is needed in today’s world of work. Many of the teachers elaborated upon the strategies used to highlight different ways of thinking about problems. In addition to developing varied approaches, the teachers also identified this as another way to reach learners during instruction.

A final goal for students in problem solving is being able to apply what they have learned to others areas and situations. High-hope teachers described how integrating problem solving into 100% of the school day across subject areas would provide students with the opportunities to work through the process in different situations. Although this group did concede that this type of learning would benefit them on high-stakes tests, all of the high-hope teachers clarified that the reason for this type of approach goes beyond testing and the classroom. One teacher explained,

It is everyday practice, but also it is how they can address a problem in their life. What is the important information in your life, what do you need to do to solve this problem, and as long as they make that connection they will always use those steps.

Unlike low- to average-hope teachers, high-hope teachers exhibited awareness that their students needed problem-solving skills as a survival tactic to be successful in life. They explained that students in poverty often endure horrific events and live in grim circumstances, and students must develop strategies and skills to navigate through the conditions of poverty.
Chapter 5 is divided into three sections. The first section is a summary of findings from this study exploring the level of teacher hope in high poverty public schools in Alabama. In this section, teachers’ beliefs about the instructional processes and practices are discussed as they relate to the level of teacher hope. In addition, a characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher is identified and described. The quantitative and qualitative findings are integrated to address each research question as it is presented. The second section is a discussion of the possible implications from this study and how they relate to teachers, school and district administrators, postsecondary education instructors, and administrators of instructional and educational leadership. The final section is a conclusion of the findings from this study addressing their significance and how they contribute to the research community, as well as the practical applications in the college classroom and the K-12 educational arena.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

What is the level of hope among teachers in high-poverty schools in Alabama?

The analysis for this question clearly indicated that differences existed among the individual’s level of hope and the overall level of teacher hope among the schools. The individual analysis revealed that scores loaded on the high end of The Hope Scale continuum, but
were densely distributed across the 50th to 85th percentile bands. Of the 92 teachers surveyed, individual hope scores reflected that 59 teachers exhibited high hope and were above the 85th percentile band of the scoring scale, while 26 of the teachers scored in the average range exceeding the 50th percentile band of the scoring scale. Seven teachers scored in the low-hope range below the 50th percentile, and most indicated pathways scores significantly lower than agency. Although the high hope category represented 64% of the teachers surveyed, only 8 teachers scored above the 95th percentile, indicating those with the highest levels of hope. The data reflected that teachers generally have higher individual hope as compared to participants in previous studies conducted using *The Hope Scale* (Snyder, 1995, 2005). Another contributing factor for teachers’ elevated hope scores may be a lower survey response rate for teachers with low hope. Hope is defined as “the perceived capacity to: 1) develop workable goals; 2) find routes to those goals (pathways thinking); and 3) become motivated to use those pathways (agency thinking)” (Snyder, 1994, 2000, p. 8). When teachers possess low hope, they often are not motivated and exhibit behaviors that impede their ability to follow through with daily tasks. Therefore, low-hope teachers may not have pursued the task of completing the online survey for this study.

When analyzing total hope means by school, high-performing, high-poverty schools were higher than low-performing, high-poverty schools. The high-performing, high-poverty schools’ total hope mean was approximately 56.7, while the low-performing, high-poverty schools’ mean was approximately 53.4. In addition, data revealed the high-performing, high-poverty schools scored the highest hope levels, but two schools, Washington Elementary and Lincoln Elementary, had the highest total hope mean. Consequently, Washington was the only school with teacher hope levels above the 95th percentile. As the varying individual and school hope
levels were identified, interview responses revealed many of the differences in teachers’ beliefs and practices as compared to three areas of research: Snyder’s (1995) Lessons in Hopeful Teaching, Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks of learning and teaching, and the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007).

Snyder’s Lessons in Hopeful Teaching (1995) is a culmination of hope studies conducted within schools to identify the culture and practices of high-hope schools. The six lessons identified to raise the hope of students are (1) spending time and caring, (2) setting goals for the class, (3) creating pathways to class goals, (4) raising agency to pursue class goals, (5) teach hope and self-esteem will follow, and (6) the classroom as a we/me environment of hope.

Snyder’s (1995) lessons in hopeful teaching are reflected in many of the instructional practices identified in today’s current education research. However, it is necessary to have research focusing on the technical aspects of instructional strategies independent of hopeful thinking. Wilson and Peterson (2006) provide a model based on a synthesis of analysis on teaching and learning. The benchmarks of learning and teaching describe nine seminal ideas drawn from recent studies on teaching and learning that has influenced educational reform.

The High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Calkins et al., 2007) was developed as a construct that defines a framework in which high-performing, high-poverty schools operate. It begins with three interlocking dimensions that allow schools to (1) acknowledge and foster student’s Readiness to Learn, (2) elevate and focus staff’s Readiness to Teach, and (3) exercise more Readiness to Act in non-traditional ways in public schools. This model of schooling uses a “triage” approach to a more student-centered, learning-driven model as opposed to the existing linear, teaching-driven model. All three dimensions are essential for
systemic reform capable of removing poverty’s barriers to learning and creating new paths to student achievement.

Research Question 2

How do the characteristics of a high-hope teacher differ from a low hope teacher?

Research Question 2 explores the differences between the characteristics of a high-hope teacher and those of low-hope teachers. While exploring the relationship between teacher hope and the types of instructional strategies implemented in the classroom, it was evident that teachers’ instructional strategies and approaches to learning changed as their level of hope increased. Therefore, it was necessary to develop a profile describing the beliefs and practices of teachers with high hope for the purpose of understanding the unique qualities of this group of teachers and investigating ways to replicate their effectiveness in the classroom.

During the development of the high-hope characteristic profile, the framework used was reflective of the interview protocol. The protocol was determined through a comparative analysis of Snyder’s *Hopeful Teaching* (1995) components and the development areas of benchmarks of learning and teaching (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). This analysis revealed three dimensions shared by both approaches: (1) student and teacher goal-setting, (2) strategies using the inquiry and problem-solving processes, and (3) the varied roles of teachers and students in the instructional process.

In addition, the distinctions of each approach were encompassed in additional protocol questions. Focus questions on building relationships with students and parents reflected the importance of relationships in the hopeful teaching (Snyder, 1995) approach, while questions about grouping techniques and instructional strategies addressed the more technical aspects of
teaching as echoed in Wilson’s and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks. A final component of the protocol concentrated on the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007), exploring teacher beliefs about students in poverty and what is needed to remove barriers of learning that may exist. Considering these three areas of research, the following dimensions were addressed in creating a characteristic profile of a high-hope teacher: (1) teacher/student relationships, (2) teacher/parent relationships, (3) student and teacher goal-setting, (4) grouping strategies, (5) instructional strategies, (6) inquiry and problem-solving strategies, (7) a student’s role in instruction, and (8) a teacher’s role in instruction.

In the area of building relationships, a high-hope teacher believes that it is crucial to develop a deeper understanding about the students they teach in order to be able to strengthen the bond they have with their students. High-hope teachers insisted that the depth of the relationship with their students directly affects the child’s academic performance. In addition, this group believes it is necessary for their knowledge of the students to extend beyond the classroom to include understanding of the child’s family dynamics, home environment, and the student’s interests. High-hope teachers’ beliefs about student relationships are directly related to Lesson 1 in Snyder’s (1995) *Hopeful Teaching: Spending Time and Caring*. According to Snyder (2005), “hopeful teaching is built upon spending time with and caring about our students” (p. 76).

When developing relationships with parents, high-hope teachers share common beliefs with their low- and average-hope counterparts that communication should be positive and consistent. However, this group of teachers also believes that making personal connections with parents and establishing a team approach to help the students is vital for the learning process and academic success of the students. High-hope teachers identified the need to know their parents as
well as they know their students, which included home visits and requesting that parents assist with their child’s plan when developing action plans for student improvement.

When exploring the beliefs of building relationships with students and parents, low hope teachers’ understanding of this process proved to be superficial, focusing on generalized student/teacher communication such as conferencing and “getting to know” the student as opposed to the depth and complexity of high-hope teachers’ approaches. When discussing relationships with parents, low-hope teachers limited their discussions to include frequency and consistency of communication through email, notes, newsletters, and report cards. A small number of teachers with average hope discussed the use of phone calls as another way to build relationships. However, the greatest misconception with these groups was that the knowledge and connection needed from the teacher could be established with the simplest form of communication absent of collaboration.

One of the most significantly developed areas for high-hope teachers is the use of goal development with students. High-hope teachers emphasized that students should develop ownership of learning through creating, monitoring, and refining their own learning goals. During this process, the high-hope group perceived their role as facilitators guiding students, modeling how to develop short-term and long-term goals, and helping students determine the “paths” to reach their goals. High-hope teachers planned classroom time for individual conferencing to dialogue with students about progress toward their goals.

In addition to creating an environment conducive to setting and monitoring goals, the high-hope teachers believed that three key factors to successful goal-setting is frequent and corrective feedback, high teacher expectations, and the importance of displaying and using classroom and student data to measure progress. This group of teachers prioritizes the need to
develop a classroom environment in which dialogue, conversation, and collaboration is the driving instructional force. High-hope teachers use corrective feedback and questioning as the primary tool to model and think aloud with the students about how to set “stretch” goals, or goals where a student sets a somewhat more difficult goal building based upon previous tasks or labors. In addition, they use questioning techniques to overcome challenges, as well as to communicate how to regroup if your goal is not met. Snyder (2005) refers to this as a “willingness to interact with and listen to our students” (p. 78).

When asked about how they involve students in learning goals, the low- and average-hope groups explained that goals were set by the state, district, or teachers, and students had little or no input due to all of the mandates present. This group also expressed their belief some students were unable to set their own learning goals. The common belief among the low- and average-hope teachers is that only those students performing at a high level academically are capable of setting learning goals for themselves. Low- and average-hope teachers maintain their focus on the students’ abilities to already possess goal-setting skills instead of the teachers’ responsibility for facilitating or modeling the goal-setting process for the students. This group explained that the home environment of students in poverty overpowered the teachers’ influence on learning. This “hands-off” approach, the absence of teacher ownership concerning their role in goal-setting, and no use of collaboration and dialogue indicates that low- and average-hope teachers exhibit low student expectations for learning.

Teacher expectations were the most complex dimension of high-hope teachers’ perceptions of effective teaching practices. Not only did this emerge when discussing goal-setting, but it played a significant role in high-hope teachers’ beliefs about their identity as the teacher. When asked about the effects of poverty on children’s learning, high-hope teachers
emphatically believed that all students are capable of reaching their goals regardless of their external environments. Although they acknowledged that a student’s home environment may be a factor, high-hope teachers believe that the teacher has the greatest impact and influence on student learning. This group explained that poverty could be overcome, but it takes a school-wide effort that involves everyone. Teachers believed that expectations of student performance had to be higher for students in poverty, because of all of the obstacles the children have to overcome in order to be successful in our society and the world of work. High-hope teachers articulated the belief that the worst thing a teacher could do to a child in poverty is lower their expectations and accept less from them. This group acknowledged the students’ impoverished conditions, but these teachers did not feel sorry for the students. Instead, they showed concern through working harder to empower the students so they could change their circumstances through goal-setting, hard work, and maintaining their focus on meeting their goals.

In order to help the students succeed, they expressed that part of their responsibility is to help students learn how to set goals, monitor them, and teach them how to respond if their goals were not achieved initially. This included the use of data to show students how they performed, or to know where they are and where they need to be. High-hope teachers explained that the purpose of data displays was to enable students to focus on ways to help themselves improve. They also explained the need for students to chart and graph the data throughout the year so they will know what learning goals should be established for their learning.

Although high-hope teachers consistently utilize data displays, low- and average-hope teachers convey a negative opinion of this practice. They refer to this as unfair, uncomfortable,
and often humiliating. Their perception is that teachers have no control of “at-risk” student data, and they should not be held accountable, or “punished,” for the data.

As high-hope teachers identify their needs through data, they also use questioning techniques as a way to maximize student involvement in evaluating and adjusting goals for mastery. Reflecting the principles of *Hopeful Teaching* (Snyder, 1995), high-hope teachers also believe that student collaboration and interaction with the teacher and their peers is important in order to build an environment of tolerance, respect, and risk-taking.

When describing instructional strategies used, high-hope teachers emphasized the need to create new experiences for the students, build on their prior knowledge, and connect student learning to the real world. They believe that activities such as field trips, guest speakers, and project-based learning are ways to bring in new perspectives for the students and broaden their knowledge base of the world. The use of teacher/student conferencing, dialogue within small group instruction, and shared ownership of learning is consistent among all high-hope teachers. An underlying thread throughout all of the instructional strategies used by high-hope teachers included the importance of connecting all of the experiences to the real world, emphasizing to the students how they would be able to use the knowledge or skills in a real situation. This reflects Wilson’s and Peterson’s (2006) belief that “one learns by doing; knowledge is inseparable from practice” (p. 2).

Teachers of all hope levels share common instructional strategies, but the quality and depth of implementation is vastly different between high-hope teachers and low- to average-hope teachers. Low-hope teachers convey the need to control the learning environment with little or no exploration. This group also perceives learner differences as an obstacle and difficult to manage. Unlike high-hope teachers, low- and average-hope teachers believe that effectiveness in
teaching equates to students progressing at the same rate. Wilson and Peterson (2006) referred to this striving to universalize the educational experience for all students, and learner differences are viewed as deficits. This more traditional approach to instruction is located on the lower end of the benchmarks of learning and teaching.

High-hope teachers identified grouping strategies as a crucial part of making instructional strategies successful. Correlating with Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) concept of learning as individual and social, high-hope teachers recognize that small groups provide students with ample opportunities to solve problems, work collaboratively, and share learning. They believe that small groups allow them to interact with students as well as model and facilitate the problem-solving process. According to high-hope teachers, working in groups provides teachers with insight on group and individual dynamics. High-hope teachers expressed a genuine concern about those teachers who do not use their time efficiently, and instead use small groups inappropriately in order to “take a break.” They conveyed the seriousness of being able to capitalize on the time spent interacting with students in small groups, using this time to provide corrective feedback, making learning more meaningful and applicable to the real world or work.

Although low- and average-hope teachers identified small groups as an instructional strategy used in their classroom, they did not elaborate on the purpose of using small groups nor did they explain the use of small group instruction. The lack of depth and detail in discussions of small group instruction clearly indicates that this practice is not used in conjunction with instructional strategies to make real world connections.

When discussing the use of problem-solving and inquiry strategies, high-hope teachers explained that problem solving transpired 100% of the day across the curriculum. They illustrated detailed connections of problem solving in math, hypothesizing in science, and
exploring compromises in social studies. High-hope teachers explained that students must be able to make connections to prior knowledge through inquiry and discovery and guide students through the problem-solving process. In addition, this group believes that students must be able to illustrate a variety of ways to solve a problem and apply these processes to other situations in order to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. High-hope teachers believe that utilizing the inquiry and discovery approach allows students to ask questions and develop their own thinking. They specified project-based learning as one approach which demonstrated how factual, problem solving, and inquiry learning integrate in order to create a product or solution to a problem that may extend outside of the classroom and benefit the students throughout life. High-hope teachers expressed the importance of problem-solving skills as a survival tactic for students in poverty. They expounded that students in poverty often experience traumatic events and live in dire circumstances, and these students must develop skills to mitigate the effects of poverty. Therefore, high-hope teachers believe that their students need these skills in order to increase their chances of being successful in life.

When discussing factual, inquiry, and problem-solving strategies, beliefs of low- and average-hope teachers differed greatly from their high-hope counterparts. This group defined explicit instruction teacher-centered lecture, in which the teacher is in control of the environment and laying out learning. This perception also defines students as passively listening and absorbing the information. This group also believed that the teacher’s responsibility was to give answers to those students who did not know. Low and average teachers only mentioned problem-solving and inquiry strategies as an event, such as a special science lab or project for math. This group focused only on mastering minimum standards identified by the State Standards.
Furthermore, they did not address the importance of or the students’ need for critical thinking, real world connections, and problem solving.

According to high-hope teachers, the overall goal of the students is to connect to their prior learning and develop new learning and apply what they know to a variety of real-world situations. They conveyed the importance of students to acquire knowledge that could be applied across a variety of situations throughout their life. High-hope teachers stressed four areas crucial to a students’ role in the instructional process. They described that students must develop an ownership of their learning and be able to apply knowledge to other areas. Secondly, students must have the skills needed to identify learning goals and how to reach them. In addition, they must know how to respond appropriately and set another goal when they do not reach their goal. Lastly, students must be able to successfully collaborate and interact with peers and teachers.

Low- and average-hope teachers believe that students’ roles include listening, paying attention, and behaving. Although this group mentioned the use of hands-on activities and small group instruction, they did not identify a connection between the instructional strategies and goal-setting, prior knowledge, or application to the world of work. The lack of responses in this area coupled with the passive role of the student noticeably indicated an absence of the student’s ownership in the learning process.

Regarding the teacher’s role in the instructional process, the teacher as a facilitator was a common belief among teachers of all hope levels. However, high-hope teachers facilitate student learning, but all of the teachers in this group also embrace a shared philosophy that all students can learn regardless of their background or circumstance, as reflected in their high expectations for student performance. High-hope teachers described their teaching style as non-traditional, interactive, and hands-on, but with clear expectations and procedures for student learning. They
described how they varied their role from facilitator to guide, and, at times, to giver of information, depending upon the goal or the task at hand. High-hope teachers also emphasized that a teacher’s role included being equipped to connect students to the real world, helping students develop ownership of their learning, and being responsive and adaptable to students’ needs. This group explained that they did not leave anything to chance, supporting the students every step of the way with conferencing, student-to-student questioning, identification of learning goals, recording data, and self-evaluations and reflections. High-hope teachers believed that effectiveness should be measured by one’s evaluation of their own behavior and response to student needs.

Contrary to high-hope teachers’ beliefs, low- and average-hope teachers described the role of teachers as being the “giver of information.” Most teachers in this group identified their teaching style as teacher-centered and corresponded with the traditional theories of education of being the fount of knowledge as described by Wilson and Peterson (2006). Low- and average-hope teachers equated effectiveness to a controlled learning environment in which students are passive learning receptacles and the teacher is the expert. However, teachers in this group adamantly believed that the teacher was only the expert in content, and the responsibility of helping students with “mental” or “home life” issues belonged to other areas such as social services or counseling. This “hands off” approach contradicts Snyder’s (1995) component of caring in Hopeful Teaching, Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) component of teaching using a range of roles, and the Readiness to Act in the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007).
Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between the level of teacher hope and gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, level of education (degree attained), and the grade level taught?

After the scores ranges were established and hope levels were identified for each teacher, a means comparison of the total hope, pathways, and agency scores was completed for each demographic area. To explore if significant differences existed among hope levels within each demographic area, statistical testing was completed using independent samples t tests and analysis of variance. The results were then compared to an alpha risk of .05 to determine whether significant differences existed with a 95% confidence interval or higher.

In the area of gender, both the male and female teachers scored above the 50th percentile. Because pathways and agency scores were predictive of one another and did not have any significant differences, the focus of this demographic analysis was the total hope mean score. The mean scores for the male respondents were approximately 17% higher than the mean score for the females. However, statistical testing could not explore the significance of this difference in mean scores due to the low number of male respondents (n = 3). Therefore, generalizations could not be made regarding gender differences in total hope mean scores.

The category of ethnicity revealed a 20% higher score with Caucasians as compared to African American teachers. The mean score for the African American category loaded in the average hope range, while the mean score of the Caucasian category was in the high hope range. To explore the significance of this difference, an independent samples t test was conducted, and the results revealed a p-value of .009 (p < .01), indicating that a significant relationship existed between the hope level of teachers and their ethnicity. Particularly, the hope level of African American teachers is lower than the hope level of Caucasian teachers.
When comparing total hope means by grade level taught, pathways and agency scores were predictive of one another and did not have any significant differences. Therefore, the focus of the demographic analysis was the total hope mean score. In this category, all mean scores for each grade category fell in the high hope range. However, higher hope means were reported for teachers in Kindergarten through second grade and teachers in fifth through eighth grade. However, the differences in means among all grade levels were very small, which suggested no significant relationships existed. Further statistical testing revealed no significant differences in total hope mean scores among the grade levels.

As scores were compared by years of experience, the mean scores of all categories in this area scored in the high hope range. Because pathways and agency scores were predictive of one another and did not have any significant differences, the focus of the demographic analysis was the total hope mean score.

Mean scores were higher for teachers with 0-6 years of teaching experience, but those teachers with over 10 years teaching experience had a mean score within a point of the average hope range. Differences existed in the mean scores of several subgroups, but further statistical testing did not reveal any significant relationships between teacher hope and years of teaching experience.

The final demographic category of level of education revealed that mean scores for all subgroups loaded in the high hope level. Teachers with an Educational Specialist degree had a higher mean score than the other subgroups, and teachers with a Master’s degree had a mean score of one point above the average hope category. Further statistical testing did not reveal any significant relationships between teacher hope and level of education.
A second examination of the demographic groups explored the relationship between each group using the dimensions of total hope, pathways, and agency through linear regressions and bivariate correlations. When linear regressions were computed, no significant relationships were found in the dimensions of total hope and pathways. However, the dimension of agency revealed a $p$-value of .034 ($p < .05$) in the demographic of ethnicity, indicating that the level of agency is dependent upon the teacher’s ethnicity. In addition, bivariate correlations identified three areas with significant relationships: (1) gender and grade level taught, $p = .003$ ($p < .01$); (2) years of experience and level of education, $p = .003$ ($p < .01$); and (3) level of education and grade level taught, $p = .034$ ($p < .05$).

As a result of the demographic analysis, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between the level of teacher hope and one demographic area, ethnicity. Further analysis clarified that the dimension of agency was the area most dependent upon the teacher’s ethnicity. Relationships also existed between the demographic categories, illustrating a correlation between the hope scores. The significance between gender and grade level taught was attributed to the trend of more male teachers in upper grades. Upon closer examination, it was observed that the only male respondents taught at the middle school level, which resulted in a significant correlation between the two demographic areas. Consequently, the relationship noted between the areas of years of experience and level of education revealed that teachers with more years of experience earned higher degrees, resulting in the relationship between the two.

The final relationship identified through bivariate correlations was the level of education and grade level taught. Further investigation did not reveal noticeable conditions that could explain the relationship between the two areas in this study. Therefore, the correlations between these two demographic areas cannot be discounted.
Research Question 4

Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and instructional strategies implemented in the classroom?

Interview responses noted many commonalities and differences among low, average, and high-hope teachers. Comparing the total hope scores to the interview responses of the teachers, the data clearly reflected a correlation between the level of teacher hope and teacher beliefs and practices identified in the interview responses. As the teachers’ hope scores increased, responses concerning instructional strategies and beliefs changed, and common characteristics shared among the teachers decreased. Teacher responses became more aligned to *Hopeful Teaching* (Snyder, 1995), utilizing the benchmarks of learning and teaching (Wilson & Peterson, 2006). However, no distinct separations between low-, average-, and high-hope responses were evident. Instead, a subtle continuum evolved as teachers’ hope scores increased. Due to this transition into high hope characteristics, the greatest differences emerged with those teachers at or above 61, or above the 95th percentile, of the total hope scores reported. Therefore, the need for the development of a characteristic profile for a high-hope teacher was created.

Research Question 5

Is there a relationship, if any, between teacher hope and student achievement?

To address this research question, the total hope mean score was computed for each school, and two analyses were conducted. Independent samples $t$ tests were conducted in order to compare total hope scores between each school and to compare total hope mean scores of high-performing, high-poverty schools to those of low-performing, high-poverty schools. Total hope
mean scores for each school ranged from 52.8125 to 56.444, but *t* tests did not reveal significant differences in the total hope scores between the schools.

To compare the schools based on student achievement status, schools were categorized and coded as Torchbearer, or high-performing, high-poverty, or non-Torchbearer, low-performing, high-poverty. An independent samples *t* test revealed a significant difference (*p* = .034, *p* < .05) between the hope scores of Torchbearer schools as compared to non-Torchbearer schools. Therefore, it was concluded that student achievement was dependent on the level of hope in this study.

In addition to the quantitative evidence correlating high-performing, high-poverty schools and student achievement, teacher interviews also exposed the school-wide approaches which involve parents, teachers, staff, administration, and all community stakeholders in removing the barriers of poverty to increase student learning. All stakeholders in high-performing, high-poverty schools were unified in identifying themselves as non-traditional and student-centered, doing whatever it takes to meet the needs of the students. This shared belief and commitment was evident in the resources utilized by the school to care for the community, including schools serving as satellite offices for therapeutic counseling and mental health needs, as well as the use of a school bus twice weekly to transport students and parents for medical services at the health department clinic. Other school efforts identified included providing clothing and laundry services for those children who do not have clean clothes. In one high-performing, high-poverty school, the principal installed a shower in the office complex so that students with no running water at home had access to bathe when they came to school each morning. The relevance of a unified approach to overcoming the ecology of high-poverty schools is stressed by the high-hope teachers. They acknowledged that their beliefs and instructional strategies were necessary for
student achievement in high poverty schools. However, they insisted that high-performing, high-poverty school-wide reform takes a unified effort from all educators in the organization, as well as an administration that is resourceful, tenacious, and relentless in meeting the needs of the students.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research study have implications for public school teachers, school and district level administrators, as well as postsecondary education professors. Due to the accountability components of No Child Left Behind, classroom teachers and all levels of administration in public schools are responsible for student learning and achievement regardless of the barriers and obstacles students face outside of school. Both teachers and principals should be equipped with tools and resources to fill the endless needs of schools with impoverished students. In addition, this study also has applications for the central office administration who oversees curriculum and instruction, Title I, and other programs designed to meet the needs of impoverished students. Their roles are to ensure that the curriculum utilized by the district not only addresses primary content areas such as reading, math, and writing, but also incorporates “peripheral” subjects that may have impact on student achievement.

The findings of this study also have implications for college and university professors within the education and leadership programs. Professors who deliver instructional courses within the K-12 spectrum need to consider the beliefs, practices, and instructional strategies of high-hope teachers when developing curriculum and programs to train pre-service teachers in the education profession. Professors in educational and instructional leadership should integrate
research from this study into their courses in order to expose existing and potential educational leaders to hopeful thinking and its impact on student achievement.

Classroom Teachers and School Level Administrators

Classroom teachers need to develop an awareness of the relationship between levels of teacher hope and student achievement. The beliefs and practices of high-hope teachers should serve as a framework for instruction. Levels of teacher hope may vary depending upon a teacher’s belief system, life experiences, and professional aspirations. However, it is important that the curricular and instructional expectations in all public schools reflect the level of ownership, depth, and tenacity of a high-hope teacher. In addition, all schools should replicate the high expectations, teamwork, and adaptability exhibited in high-performing, high poverty schools.

Teachers must be given access to current research and practices that have resulted in high student achievement. So often, teachers receive training in instructional initiatives, activities, and techniques without being given the research behind the practice. The lack of exposure to research that connects to practice results in the “bandwagon effect,” or teachers’ perception of jumping on the next new thing only to move on to something newer in the future. Therefore, the development of professional learning communities is necessary in order for teachers to examine current research and the instructional practices that have proven to increase student achievement. An environment of professionalism and collaboration must be established in which teachers commit to the basic premise that all students can learn at a high standard. Using the framework of high-hope teachers, all teachers would be capable of working together in order to coordinate a
prescription of specific services addressing individual students’ academic and developmental needs.

To make this happen, the role of the principal is to provide opportunities within professional learning communities for teacher learning about the beliefs and practices of high-hope teachers, as well as the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007) and Wilson and Peterson’s (2006) benchmarks of learning and teaching. Using the five key elements of hopeful instruction, a framework for school culture, beliefs, and classroom instruction could be developed resulting in a driving force for school improvement and teacher professional development. Thus, the principal must be knowledgeable of the connections between current research, curriculum development, instruction, and teacher training. This may require additional training of school-level administrators in order to provide the adequate resources needed to develop an environment that encourages a change in teacher beliefs and instruction.

**District Level Administrators**

District level administrators need to ensure that instructional development includes an eclectic and integral approach incorporating multiple theories of teaching and learning. Teacher and administrator training from the district level must include the five key elements of high hope instruction: (1) the shared belief that all students can learn at a high level; (2) the critical function that student goal-setting and shared responsibility plays in developing students’ ownership of the learning process; (3) the significance that conversation, discussion, joint work, problem solving, and debate play in critical thinking and learning due to students’ varied interpretations of information and ideas (Wilson & Peterson, 2006); (4) the importance of expanding students’
“pathways” to learning by teacher responsiveness and adaptability; and (5) the value of raising students’ agency through motivation, interaction, and praise.

In addition to the concepts of high hope instruction, district level administration must be aware of the ecology of high-performing, high-poverty schools and the “New World” model of schooling, which includes a “triage” approach to a more student-centered, learning model (Mass Insights, 2007). District leadership must recognize that to overcome the effects of poverty, schools need broad authority over principal resources--people, time, money, and program--in order to continually modify instruction for individual student needs and increase the effectiveness of the staff. Additional support must be given in order for school leaders to be able to develop a plan of action for teacher training and classroom implementation utilizing all of the facets of high hope instruction and the High-Performing, High Poverty Readiness Model.

Postsecondary Professors

This research justifies the need for colleges and universities with K-12 instructional and leadership programs to make a concerted effort with school and district level administration to acknowledge and incorporate hopeful teaching and the key elements of high hope instruction into the existing curriculum and instructional program. As observed with the large number of high-poverty failing schools, it is obvious that colleges and universities have not prepared for their teachers and administrators to understand the complexities of overcoming the ecology of high-poverty schools.

To address this growing need, teacher education programs need to know how to raise the hope of students, as well as what type of instructional strategies are needed to address the needs of children in poverty. Leadership programs need to address what characteristics determine high-
performing, high poverty schools and how district and school level administrators can transform a school into a high-performing, high-poverty school. In addition to the technical aspects of overcoming poverty’s effect on the learning process, professors must learn how to assess the beliefs of their students. For instance, those instructors in teacher education programs must know the hope levels of their teaching candidates, as well as how to change the beliefs of their students, if they are not conducive to student learning. Based on the high score ranges of the teachers surveyed, as well as the break in data between the 50th and 85th percentile of the score range, an instrument should be developed which measures hope utilizing the perceptions and experiences of teachers. This will allow collection of data that will better determine the hope level of teachers, as well as what is needed to cultivate and nurture high hopes in teachers.

Further Recommendations

The following are recommendations for further research based on the results of this study:

1. This study needs to be replicated with a larger sample in the Southeast U.S. and other regions of the U.S. for comparison of teacher hope levels, teacher beliefs and instructional practices, and student achievement throughout the United States.

2. Further studies need to be conducted exploring the relationship between levels of hope and the demographic areas of race/ethnicity.

3. Further studies need to be conducted to investigate the relationship between the demographic areas of level of education and grade level taught and their correlation to levels of teacher hope.
4. Further studies need to be conducted investigating the relationship between teacher hope and the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model.

5. This study needs to be replicated using a survey instrument specifically designed to measure the levels of hope in teachers.

6. Further studies need to be conducted to investigate if a relationship exists between the progression of teacher hope and the continuum of teacher practices.

7. Further studies need to be conducted exploring if a relationship exists between the level of teacher hope and individual student achievement scores.

8. Professional development needs to be created for teachers and administrators addressing high hope instruction. A study needs to be conducted using a control and the professional development training as the treatment in order to measure its effectiveness.

Conclusion

When working with children in high-poverty schools, much has been written about the possibilities of breaking the cycle of poverty, and what occurs in the classroom has a significant impact on student achievement. A few significant studies also exist supporting the theories that effective teachers matter much more than curriculum materials or pedagogical approaches, and teachers are the greatest influence on students’ academic performance and hopeful thinking. According to Snyder (1994), teachers can create an environment of hope and learning through their interaction with students and their approach to academic instruction. These studies primarily focus on teachers’ ability to raise student hope levels, but they do not address the teachers’ levels of hope and how this affects their ability to improve student performance. There is a significant gap in research regarding the investigation of teachers’ positive characteristics of
hope and their relationships with student achievement. The research in this study provided valuable insight about the methods successful schools use to mitigate the effects of poverty on two levels: the beliefs and practices of high-hope teachers and the characteristics of collective school-wide efforts from all stakeholders in high-performing, high-poverty schools. By identifying and defining these dimensions, efforts can be undertaken to provide teachers and administrators with the necessary tools and support to overcome the effects of poverty in public schools across Alabama as well as the United States.

When exploring the levels of hope among teachers in HPHP and LPHP schools, a strong positive correlation existed between teachers’ Hope Scale scores and their teaching profile. As teachers’ hope scores increased, interview responses revealed student-centered instructional strategies that offered more opportunities to discuss, create, analyze, and evaluate. Student and teacher goal-setting was also a primary focus for teachers with high hope. The higher the hope score, the more complex teachers responses became. Those teachers with hope scores in and above the 95th percentile on the score range described an instructional approach in which teachers were intensely focused on providing meaningful, real-world experiences that will serve as the survival skills needed to work through problems encountered. In addition, teachers with high hope responses integrated goal-setting strategies throughout the curriculum, as well as self-monitoring of their goals and developing action plans to meet their goal.

Although many of the strategies were identified in Wilson’s and Peterson’s (2006) Benchmarks of Learning and Teaching, the purpose and depth in which the strategies were implemented increased as the hope scores increased. The interview responses of teachers with high hope levels exposed five belief and instructional characteristics unique to high-hope teachers: Upon analyzing the characteristic profile of high-hope teachers, five overlying concepts
were identified which reflected the foundation of their beliefs and practices. The five key elements of high hope instruction are (1) the shared belief that all students can learn at a high level; (2) the critical function that student goal-setting and shared responsibility plays in developing students’ ownership of the learning process; (3) the significance that conversation, discussion, joint work, problem-solving and debate play in critical thinking and learning due to students’ varied interpretations of information and ideas (Wilson & Peterson, 2006); (4) the importance of expanding students’ “pathways” to learning by teacher responsiveness and adaptability; and (5) the value of raising students’ agency through motivation, interaction, and praise. Although the high-hope teachers interviewed had not been trained using the research cited in this study, their beliefs and practices are closely aligned with Hopeful Teaching, benchmarks for learning and teaching, and the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model.

Of the many beliefs and practices embraced by high-hope teachers, expectations of student learning are the most powerful dimension of the high-hope teacher’s profile. High-hope teachers emphatically believe that all students can learn regardless of their circumstance, and they are willingly ready to do whatever it takes to help the students succeed. A genuine belief is expressed that students in poverty can excel like the most affluent student if barriers for learning are removed allowing students to create new paths and pursue achievement. High-hope teachers articulated that the belief in their students was strengthened by building deep and meaningful relationships with the students and parents. Within the high-performing, high-poverty schools, it was common for teachers and administrators to make home visits and go to students’ football games. In addition, teachers and administrators in the highest performing high-performing, high-poverty school maintained a tradition of walking the students home each afternoon to meet the parents at the crosswalk four blocks away. Because most of the students in this school lived in
the same government housing complex, the teachers believed that relationships could be built
with parents by seeing them at the crosswalk each day. As a result, the parents began referring to
the teachers as “theirs,” a feeling of possession that occurs when those living in poverty are
connected to their child’s teacher.

When imagining a teacher preparing for a lesson, one can picture him/her reviewing the
content, planning the activities that the students will be working on, and even planning how to
assess the students’ learning. One would hope that small group instruction would be in the recipe
to some degree. However, the approach to instruction that high-hope teachers utilize
encompasses a complexity unlike any traditional classroom setting. High-hope teachers are
constantly asking themselves, “How will my students use this in the real world? Will it help
him/her be able to find ways out of the cycle of poverty? What can I expose them to that will
show them there is a big, wonderful world out there and they can do anything they want?”
Lessons are delivered as problems to be solved, with debates, conversations, and working
together to create solutions to real situations. In the middle of this think tank, goal-setting serves
as the vehicle by which students carry out their plans, analyze their data, evaluate their progress,
and devise new plans if current ones are not successful. High-hope teachers cleverly plan
opportunities for conversations and dialogue with students in order to assess student learning
concerning how students develop their goals, meet them (pathways), and respond if they do not
succeed. Dialogue is the most effective way to understand how students are thinking about their
goals, and this process sparks critical thinking and problem solving, which increases students’
chances of being successful when dealing with the circumstances of poverty. Amazingly, the
student learning with high-hope teachers mirrors the learning of successful people, high hope
individuals, as they accomplish goals and become “active agents of their own conceptual
development” (Bransford et al., 2000).

For students in poverty, an eclectic approach to instruction using multiple theories is
required because students will interpret information and ideas in a variety of ways. Strategies
used by high-hope teachers incorporates a blended approach of direct instruction and
project-based learning using questioning in order to set the stage for collaboration with the
student. Questions asked include (1) What is your goal? (2) How are you progressing? (3) (What
can you do to improve? (4) If what we are doing is not working, what else can we do? and 5) If
you didn’t meet your goal, what can you do next? This approach allows the students to
“practice” pursuing their goals and finding alternate ways around obstacles. This process results
in students expanding their “pathways” of learning and increasing their “agency” or drive to
meet their goal.

This study has revealed the significant relationship between high-hope teachers’ beliefs
and practices; high-performing, high-poverty schools; and student achievement. High-hope
teachers have illustrated their ability to be highly adaptable in order to overcome the
unpredictable circumstances that exist in schools of poverty. However, one must take into
account that the importance of school context is crucial as it relates to the achievement of
students in high-poverty schools. Traditional means and techniques of public education are
unable to successfully address the unstable and turbulent structure of high-poverty schools. Yet
some schools emerge and are able to respond with strategies that address the daily challenges of
a high-poverty environment.

Another crucial aspect emerging from this study was the school-wide efforts of the high-
performing, high-poverty schools to involve all stakeholders in overcoming the circumstances of
poverty for increased student learning. The faculty, staff, and administration in the high-performing, high-poverty schools possess shared beliefs embracing high student expectations and the willingness to tackle the challenges that accompany students as they come to school each day. School efforts reflecting this shared belief ranged from providing food and clothing for a child to coordinating health services and transportation for children and their families. Their efforts illustrate the commitment for high-performing, high poverty schools to meet the basic needs of the families, as well as take on any and all challenges that accompany their students in order to remove barriers of learning.

It was evident that the practices and organization of the Torchbearer schools were closely aligned with the High-Performing, High-Poverty Readiness Model (Mass Insight, 2007), and these schools were able to adapt and overcome the ecology of a high-poverty school. This transformation resulted in 85-100% of the students performing at a level exceeding the Alabama State Standards as indicated on the Alabama Math and Reading Test (ARMT) thus establishing a relationship between the level of teacher hope and a school’s ability to defy the odds of poverty, dispelling the rhetoric that student achievement is primarily defined by socioeconomic status.
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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
FOR THE HOPE SCALE SURVEY
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

I have been informed of the procedures to be used in this study. I understand that this is a research study that deals with teacher hope, and it is a requirement for a PhD dissertation study. The required participation time of the survey will be approximately 15 minutes. During this time, I will be asked to respond to and complete survey items. I understand that there are no known foreseeable discomforts or risks to be expected from my participation in this study. I also understand that there are no direct benefits for me. However, there is a possibility that society at large may benefit due to the addition to the research knowledge base in the area of instructional leadership.

I understand that all information I provide will be used in aggregate form; therefore, it will be kept completely confidential.

I understand that I may choose not to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable. My participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I have the opportunity to ask any questions about what to expect. I may contact Shannon Stanley, (256) 310-1787, sstanley.ceh@oxford.k12.al.us, to further inquire about the procedure or any other aspects related to the study.

I give my consent to participate. I understand that I am completely free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue my participation at any time for any reason without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

_______________________________________  ________________________  
Signature of Research Participant     Date
The Adult Hope Scale

Part I Directions: Read each item carefully. Using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided.

1. = Definitely False     5. = Slightly True
3. = Somewhat False     7. = Mostly True
4. = Slightly False     8. = Definitely True

___ 1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.

___ 2. I energetically pursue my goals.

___ 3. I feel tired most of the time.

___ 4. There are lots of ways around any problem.

___ 5. I am easily downed in an argument.

___ 6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me.

___ 7. I worry about my health.

___ 8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.

___ 9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.

___ 10. I’ve been pretty successful in life.

___ 11. I usually find myself worrying about something.

___ 12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.
Part II Directions: Read each demographic item carefully. Please choose the answer that best describes you.

___13. Gender
   1. Male   2. Female

___14. Years of Teaching Experience
   1. 0-3 years  2. 4-6 years  3. 7-10 years  4. Over 10 years

___15. Level of Education

___16. Grade Level Taught
   1. K-2nd  2. 3rd-4th  3. 5th-6th  4. 7th-8th

Part III: Please indicate your interest in participating in follow-up observations and interviews in order to gain more information about successful teaching strategies.

Yes, I am interested in participating in follow-up classroom observations and interviews. I understand that the following contact information will only be used to coordinate observations and interviews, and will not be used as part of the reporting data.

Contact Information:

Name_______________________________________________________________

School_______________________________________________________________

Contact Phone Number: _______________________________________________

Contact Email Address: _________________________________________________

Note. The agency subscale score is derived by summing items 2, 9, 10, and 12; the pathway subscale score is derived by adding items 1, 4, 6, and 8. The total Hope Scale score is derived by summing the four agency and the four pathway items.
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
INSTRUCTIONAL OBSERVATION
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW
Informed Consent Statement

Dear Teachers,

You are being asked to participate in a research student for the completion of my doctoral degree at the University of Alabama. The title of the study is “Teacher Hope: Defying the Odds of Poverty in Public Schools.” The purpose of the research is to examine teachers’ level of hope as it relates to student academic achievement and instructional strategies.

This portion of the study will utilize qualitative research methodology. You may be asked to allow me to conduct classroom observations that will last approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked to participate in a focus group interview using twelve open-ended questions created in advance. The interview will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes. You may also be asked to participate in an email clarifying interview. The focus group interview will be recorded by audio tape and responses will remain confidential. Your name or the name of your school will not be used in the project. Your identity and the identity of your school will be protected by the use of pseudonyms.

There is no foreseeable risk to you. Benefits from this study include the opportunity to participate in and create knowledge to improve the field of instructional leadership.

Participation in this study is voluntary and offers no compensation. Refusal to participate will not involve penalties or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled. All information will remain confidential. You may also discontinue your participation at any time. All documents related to interviews and observations, including audio tapes, written observations, and email documents will be destroyed after one year.

If you have questions about this research project, please contact me at (256) 241 – 3896. If you have any questions concerning your research participants’ rights, you may contact the Research Compliance Officer at The University of Alabama at (205) 348 – 5746.

Sincerely,

Shannon Stanley

I have read this consent form and understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that the researcher will respect the confidentiality of the participant. I agree to participate in the study. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep for my records.

______________________________________   __________________
Signature of Research Participant      Date

______________________________________   __________________
Investigator          Date
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
The title of the research project is “Teacher Hope: Defying the Odds of Poverty in Public Schools.” The purpose of the research is to examine goals thinking and goal attainment as it relates to student academic achievement and instructional practices.

Questions

1) Tell me a little bit about your teaching style. How did you develop it? Does it change every year?

2) Tell me about a lesson that you taught that went really well. Why do you think it worked?

3) Tell me about a bad teaching experience that you have had. What was bad about it? What could you have done differently?

4) Many states are considering tying teacher raises to student performance. How do you feel about that?

5) What constitutes a good teacher-student relationship? How do you go about cultivating such a relationship? Do you think you have been successful in cultivating such a relationship? Why or why not?

6) What constitutes a good teacher-parent relationship? How do you go about cultivating such a relationship? Do you think you have been successful in cultivating such a relationship? Why or why not?
7) To what extent do you involve students in setting learning goals? How important do you think that is? How does it work in practice?

8) What are some of the strategies you incorporate to address different learning styles in your classroom? How effective do you think you are in doing this? What works against you being as effective as you might want?

8) What do you think is the role of the teacher in instruction? What is the role of the student? How does this work in practice?

9) Finish this sentence: I am most effective in the classroom when ______________.

10) Finish this sentence: I am the least effective in the classroom when __________.

11) Many people would argue that a teacher’s impact on a student is limited because a teacher cannot control the living environment of children. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

12) How important do you think group work is as a teaching and learning strategy? Give me an example of a time in your own classroom in which you incorporated group learning. How often do you incorporate it in your classroom? What obstacles might prevent you from incorporating it as much as you would like?

13) What teaching strategies do you use to help students acquire facts? How much of your time (an estimate) would you say in any given day is devoted to these types of strategies?

14) What teaching strategies do you use to help students acquire problem-solving skills? How much of your time (an estimate) would you say in any given day is devoted to these types of strategies?
15) What teaching strategies do you use to help students develop inquiry or discovery skills? How much of your time (an estimate) would you say in any given day is devoted to these types of strategies?

16) What is the biggest challenge facing teachers at this school? Why? How do you address this challenge in your own classroom?
APPENDIX E

THE HOPE SCALE SURVEY CODED RESULTS
AND TEACHER LIST
**Participant First Name and School Name were removed due to confidentiality of study subjects**

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APPENDIX F

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS
## Demographics of Participating Schools

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APPENDIX G

FULL SCALE RELIABILITIES OF *THE HOPE SCALE*
## Reliability

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<sup>a</sup> Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

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## Reliability

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<td>I meet the goals I set for myself</td>
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Scale: hope total

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<tr>
<td>.854</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Item Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can think of many ways to get out of a jam</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>1.186</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I energetically pursue my goals</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are lots of ways around any problem</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>1.134</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My past experiences have prepared me well for my future</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>1.044</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been pretty successful in life</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I meet the goals I set for myself</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scale Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53.99</td>
<td>34.865</td>
<td>5.905</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Message Line: "Research Invitation"

Shannon Stanley, Principal Investigator from the University of Alabama, is conducting a study addressing teachers’ goals thinking. She wishes to find out information on teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward goals thinking, goal attainment, and approaches to effective instruction and student interaction. She is working under the supervision of Dr. Natalie Adams, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School and Professor in Instructional Leadership at the University of Alabama.

Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 10-15 minutes. This survey contains items about addressing goals, as well as demographic items that will be helpful in the study. A final item requests your participation in a follow-up interview to discuss approaches to effective instruction and student interaction.

We will protect your confidentiality by encrypting this information. Only the investigators will have access to the data. The data are password protected and encrypted for your protection. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you. The findings will be useful to educators, researchers, and society at large for the contribution toward the knowledge base of research addressing instructional leadership.

The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Shannon Stanley at 256-832-3892, 256-310-1787, or by email at sstanley.che@oxford.k12.al.us. You may also contact Mrs. Stanley’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Natalie Adams, at 205-348-8283 or by email at nadams@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the University Institutional Review Board at (205) 348-8451.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the _____ (CONTINUE or I AGREE) button to begin.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 6/11/2010
EXPIRATION DATE: 6/15/2011
Study title: Teacher Hope: Defying the Odds of Poverty in Alabama Public Schools

Shannon H. Stanley, PhD Candidate
University of Alabama

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is called Teacher Hope: Defying the Odds of Poverty in Alabama Schools. The study is being done by Shannon H. Stanley, who is a PhD candidate at the University of Alabama. Mrs. Stanley is being supervised by Dr. Natalie Adams, the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School and a professor in Instructional Leadership at the University of Alabama.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?
This study is being done to explore:
- teachers' goals thinking.
- information on teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward goals thinking
- goal attainment
- approaches to effective instruction and student interaction.

Why is this study important or useful?
This knowledge is useful because the exploration of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward goals thinking, goal attainment, and approaches to effective instruction and student interaction may produce information that will be useful to educators, researchers, and society at large. In addition, the findings of this study will serve as a contribution toward the knowledge base of research addressing instructional leadership.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?
You have been asked to be in this study because you are a certified teacher in the Alabama public schools selected to participate in this study.

How many people will be in this study?
Approximately 40 other people will be in this study.

What will I be asked to do in this study?
If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the investigator. You will also be asked to be audio-taped during the interview.

How much time will I spend being this study?
The interview should take about 60-75 minutes.

Will being in this study cost me anything?
The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?  
You will not be compensated for being in this study.

Can the investigator take me out of this study?  
The investigator may take you out of the study if she feels that something has occurred which may mean you no longer meet the study requirements.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?  
Little or no risk is foreseen in this study. The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may choose not to be audio-taped during the interview. At any time during the interview, you may choose to skip any questions you do not want to answer.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?  
There are no direct benefits to you. Although you will not benefit personally from being in the study, you may feel good about knowing that you have helped contribute to the knowledge base of research on instructional leadership.

What are the benefits to science or society?  
This study will help educators, researchers, and the greater society through the contributions to research in the field of instructional leadership.

How will my privacy be protected?  
Your privacy will be protected throughout the interview process. You may be interviewed at a site of your choosing and you will be informed in advance concerning what you will be asked about. In addition, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you may choose to end the interview at any time.

How will my confidentiality be protected?  
We will protect your confidentiality by using ID numbers for records of this information. The data will be restricted to only the investigators. All databases will be encrypted, and informed consent and identity information will be collected and protected in two separate locations. Audio tapes will also be stored in a secure location. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications. All audio tapes, raw data and identifiers will be destroyed after the data has been entered.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?  
The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.
What are my rights as a participant in this study?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice. You can refuse to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board ("the IRB") is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems?

If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study later on, please call the investigator Shannon H. Stanley at 256-832-3892 or 256-310-1787 or email her at sstanley.ceh@oxford.k12.al.us. You may also contact Mrs. Stanley's faculty sponsor, Dr. Natalie Adams, at 205-348-8283 or by email at nadams@bamaed.ua.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870104, 152 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0104.

I understand that this study is strictly voluntary. I have read and understand this consent form, and I have had a chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in this study, and I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

______________________________  ________________________
Signature of Research Participant  Date

______________________________  ________________________
Signature of Investigator  Date

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 61111
EXPIRATION DATE: 51512011