



**The Role of Self-Celebrations in Teacher Resilience**

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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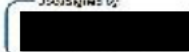
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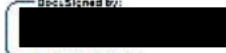
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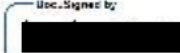
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### **Abstract**

This qualitative case study explores the story of celebration for kindergarten teachers at a suburban elementary school in northern New England. This study explored the reality of self-celebration in kindergarten teachers' current practices during staff meetings, planning meetings, response to intervention (RTI) meetings, with their colleagues, and at other times. This research found that teachers believe in their ability to teach (**self-efficacy**) when a teacher can notice and reflect on when things go well in their teaching (**celebration**) and they have a strong collaborative team that values each members' different teaching style where they can give and get support and feedback (**collaborative culture**) because the team has a culture of mistake making (**growth mindset**).

## Acknowledgements

I have been so lucky to have so many supporters and cheerleaders throughout this academic pursuit! My husband, Matt, is always my number one champion. Thank you for listening to far more edu-speak than any husband should have to, and you can pay me back in baseball lectures. I also owe so many members of my family for establishing the importance of education throughout my life. My parents always encouraged the idea of ongoing academics despite having never attended college themselves. Some of my earliest memories are of going into the bank with my dad to deposit money into my college fund and academics were always of the utmost importance to my mom—she would be over-the-moon proud of this accomplishment. I didn't foresee continuing my academics to the doctoral level until my grandfather-in-law asked me when I was going back after I finished my master's degree; in that moment I triumphantly answered, "never!" and we now see how that turned out. Many family members have kept me engaged in the process by talking through my learning and my research at holidays and family events—continually re-inspiring me in my work!

Many people at Southern New Hampshire University, including professors and staff, and most importantly, my dissertation committee, have helped me to this place. I have so enjoyed the collegiate learning. Thank you to my dissertation chair, Sara, who encouraged this topic from the beginning. My cohort, the Ladies of Lebanon (LOL), have more than supported me through the years of this program in supportive, sarcastic, and even snarky ways, all provided at the most opportune times. We grew so close while being apart, having started this program during Covid and being thrust into online learning, virtual residencies, and canceled abroad experiences. You are an amazingly resilient, dedicated, and caring group of women. I am so proud to have undergone this adventure with you.

My research would literally not have been possible without my colleagues. Dr. Timiny, you got me interested in this program over smores in my backyard, and I think I am grateful for that... So many educators at my school allowed me to test my interview questions on them, practice interviewing on them, and actually being a part of my research, as well as listening to me talk about it or even politely recycling academic articles I printed off for them because they were about something that reminded me of them.

I celebrate all of these people and the relationships and connections that brought me to this place in my life. Thank you!

### **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Dayle Ann Smedy. She always believed in me and my knowledge of her belief in me has allowed me to overcome all obstacles. She was an actual cheerleader in high school, and she took that mindset forward with her throughout her life. She embodied the topic of this dissertation, self-celebration, as well as celebration in community. She loved acknowledging people's successes and accomplishments.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Background

I came to this doctoral program for many different reasons, but the most resounding reason was that I was looking for something to energize me. I had been teaching first grade for a number of years and could already feel the enthusiasm and energy that I had once felt, slipping away. I have always considered myself a life-long learner. I was a first-generation college student, and it was always my parents' expectation that I would go to college. I never even considered an alternative. Going into college I had grand expectations. I planned to study government and global studies, with law school in my future. My high school friends had running jokes about me running for president—they even made pins for my campaign.

I chose to attend college at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York. Days into my freshman year which were full of government and global studies courses, I realized that those courses were not the path for me. I took refuge in my other class, a large lecture style Psychology 101 class. I loved learning about how people learned. That semester I also worked in our school reading and math tutor program, where we went into elementary classrooms and worked in small groups with students. That was my favorite part of my day. I would come back to the dorm and tell stories for hours of my time in the classroom. So, I decided to focus on psychology and education. But, I couldn't get enough of learning. I overbooked myself every semester, taking the maximum amount of credits. I followed up my bachelor's degree by rolling straight into a Masters of Education degree at Saint Michael's College in Vermont.

Upon my graduation with my master's degree, I was hired into a teaching job, first teaching third grade, then switching to first grade, where I remained for nine years. Now I teach second grade. All of my teaching experience has been at the same elementary school. I am close

with many colleagues and serve on many teams with them—grade level teams, vertical teams, support teams, and leadership teams. Even with a high level of comfort and trust with these colleagues, I have noticed that I often refrain from sharing my successes and strengths, and if I do, I tend to downplay my involvement in the successes. One example was a day that I designed and led a successful lesson which integrated our science and reading curricula. I ended the lesson and went next door to tell a colleague and close friend about the triumph. However, when I shared the story with her, I left out the fact that I had designed the lesson and almost made it seem like it had happened to someone else.

I entered into this doctoral program around the same time as the above anecdote occurred. This story has remained in my mind throughout, and it has guided my research and resulted in this exploration of how teachers celebrate their successes.

### **Statement of Inquiry**

In my experience, the terms “self-care” and “resilience” have been used in teacher staff meetings more and more in recent years. Truebridge (2014) explains that the popularization of the term has benefits and drawbacks. It is great that people are talking about resilience, however, she argues that the term “resilience,” a construct based on 50 years of longitudinal research, could lose its true meaning or become a fad in education (Truebridge, 2014). This is inopportune as building resilience for teachers is increasingly vital. Teaching has only grown more stressful due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Pressley, Ha, & Learn, 2021; Chan et al., 2021, Wolfe et al., 2022). Instead of placing so much emphasis on challenges in teaching, this researcher seeks to know: what would be the result of being intentional and focusing on successes in teaching?

A professor at State University of New York (SUNY) Plattsburgh writes about how hard it is for her to acknowledge her teaching successes, even when being presented with a teaching

award (Neuhaus, 2019). In her article she explains that there is a lot of research about how teachers need to recognize and reflect on mistakes they make but she says there is not enough emphasis on the need, “to consciously acknowledge and thoughtfully reflect on what we do well as teachers” (p. 100). Teachers need simple and ever-present ways to boost their resilience and well-being. Researchers have found that people who have high self-efficacy also have high resilience and well-being (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022). While reading these articles I began to wonder if teachers could build up their self-efficacy, it would have a positive impact on their resilience and well-being. It stands to reason that acknowledging and celebrating teachers’ successes could build teacher self-efficacy. This research could positively impact schools by giving administration and leadership teams specific ideas of ways to promote self-efficacy in their teachers and staff, and it would provide teachers with an intrinsic way to boost their resilience and empower them to feel pride in their skills and expertise.

It is clear that teachers with higher self-efficacy are happier, more effective, and tend to stay in the profession longer than teachers with lower self-efficacy (Hong, 2012). There is currently a plethora of research about how external factors such as leadership, coaching, mentoring, and professional development can impact self-efficacy (Klaeijssen et al., 2018; Taheri et al., 2019).

Roberts et al. (2005) begins their article with the following scene:

All of us can recall our own extraordinary moments—those moments when we felt that our best-self was brought to light, affirmed by others, and put into practice in the world. These memories are seared into our minds as moments or situations in which we felt alive, true to our deepest selves, and pursuing our full potential as human beings. (p. 712)

People remember the moments in their careers when things go right and those are the moments that encourage them to continue on, even when things are hard. And yet, people are encouraged by social norms not to share their successes or identify their strengths (Roberts, 2005). There is limited research on how educators acknowledge and celebrate their own successes. This study explores if and how kindergarten teachers acknowledge their own successes and opens the door for further research into exploring if celebrating successes could build one's own self-efficacy.

### **Purpose Statement**

Teaching can be very stressful and at times an overwhelming job (Blazer, 2010). Simultaneously, it can also be joyful, creative, uplifting, and empowering (Nair, 2018). This research sheds light into the ways teachers are celebrating their successes and how it affects them. This research also provides insight into the ways that teachers are celebrating, and highlights ways to encourage teachers to do more of it.

The results of this research will be used in future research to design protocols for educational leaders to encourage teacher self-celebration and/or to explore a relationship between self-celebration and resilience. Teachers who demonstrate resilience are happier and healthier, and they stay in the field of teaching longer (Blazer, 2010). This research will lead to further research on ways teachers can continue to build their resilience.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore self-celebration for three kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School (pseudonym) in a suburban town in northern New England. For the purpose of this study, self-celebration was defined as “any action that acknowledges what went well in one's teaching” (Manz, 2023).

### **Overview of Research Design**

This qualitative case study explored the story of celebration for kindergarten teachers at a suburban elementary school in northern New England. This research lies in the constructivist worldview; the data uncovered and explained participants' meanings and reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study explored the reality of self-celebration in kindergarten teachers' current practices during staff meetings, planning meetings, response to intervention (RTI) meetings, with their colleagues, and at other times. This study is a qualitative study based on emergent design so various aspects of the research changed throughout the process. Emergent design allowed the researcher to adapt the study by shifting interview questions, data collection, and participants in order for the researcher to best discover the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), in this case, the true story of celebration for kindergarten teachers. Yin (2022) also describes the need to remain adaptive during case-study research. He states that, "The skilled researcher must remember the original purpose of the case study but then must be willing to adapt procedures or plans if unanticipated events occur" (p. 122). Any shifts in this research were carefully considered based on the purpose of the study; the research questions; anticipated results or findings in this study; and information on if, how, and/or when teachers celebrate their successes.

The participants, all three of the kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School, voluntarily participated in this research. The researcher communicated with the participants through email or face-to-face conversations. As this story lies in the constructivist worldview, the researcher focused on the participants' meaning as it relates to the research questions in order to uncover how each participant derived meaning from their experiences with self-celebration. The researcher engaged in reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) by thinking

about how her background and experiences shaped interpretations based on the participants' data.

### **Key Terms**

Self-celebration is defined by this researcher as any action that acknowledges what went well in one's teaching. Celebration in community is defined by this researcher as any action that acknowledges what went well in someone else's teaching and is shared by another, such as a team of teachers or a family. When "celebration" is used in this dissertation it consists of both self-celebration and celebration in community, unless otherwise specified as self-celebration or celebration in community.

Self-efficacy is generally defined as a teacher's belief in her ability to teach (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Bandura (1997) explains self-efficacy as a person's belief in their own competence. He explains that self-efficacy comes from four main sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, physiological feedback, and verbal persuasion. He states, "Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's personal efficacy" (p. 80).

Pearce & Morrison (2011) define resilience as "the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances" (p. 48). Resilience will be defined as, "the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress" (Truebridge, 2014, p. 12).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**



This qualitative case study focused on exploring the story of three kindergarten teachers' experiences with self-celebration. This is a significant limitation because the findings from this study are specific to the three teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School and cannot be generalized to all teachers, to any other teacher, or to teachers from a different grade, school, or location (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study fits into social construction and constructivism (Patton, 2014), which is described more in section three. This theoretical orientation believes that people experience their work differently based on their culture and past experiences. One of the challenges of this orientation of research is that the researcher needs to try to capture different stakeholders' views in the research, for example, a teacher may view the world differently than an administrator. By performing a qualitative case study focusing on kindergarten teachers this researcher will not be capturing different stakeholders' views. This research can be a catalyst for future research in this area with different populations such as different grade level teachers, stakeholders, age groups, and even employees in different professions.

Another limitation of this study is the focus on interviews and document review. Excluding observations from this study meant that the researcher did not witness planned or spontaneous self-celebration from teachers. Celebrations were included in meeting agendas or notes. Teachers could disclose planned or spontaneous celebrations in their interviews, but without observations, the researcher was not able to see the celebrations occur.

### **Researcher Assumptions**

Researchers must think about their assumptions prior to and ongoing throughout research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I came to this research topic through previous research in resilience and self-efficacy. Much of the research around teacher resilience focuses on tools and techniques that have an external locus of control (Yin, 2022). There is less research that focuses

on ways that teachers can grow their own resilience from within. Yin (2022) writes, “an external locus of control was found to be significantly negatively associated with self-efficacy” (p. 6). He also states that, “self-efficacy is one of the most stable predictors of subjective well-being” (p. 6). Other researchers have also found that people who have high self-efficacy have high resilience and well-being (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018). There is currently little research around the concept of how and if teachers celebrating their own success impacts their resilience. As a researcher interested in this topic I am eager to find out the answers to the research questions. I am passionate about helping teachers build resilience and be successful in their field. Because of that, I am hopeful that when teachers celebrate successes they will build self-efficacy, which in turn will support their resilience. This research may inspire further research more focused on the links between teacher self-celebration, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Conducting my research in my own school adds some assumptions to this research. I know the history of my school building though not the history of everyone teaching within it. People who have had experiences with celebration may have different reactions to this research. Someone who has had previous experiences with celebrations will bring that experience with them into this experience. Someone who has had good experiences may already integrate these practices into their life whereas someone who may have had negative experiences such as forced celebrations in staff meetings may meet this experience with hesitation. Also, knowing me as the researcher may change the participants’ reaction to the topic. For instance, colleagues who have asked me about my doctoral process or dissertation work may have already heard my ideas regarding the role of teacher self-celebration. Colleagues who have served on teams with me

may have been a part of celebration or success protocols. These are all aspects I need to keep in mind as a researcher.

## **Summary**

This constructivist case study will uncover if, and how, three kindergarten educators celebrate their successes. This research could provide important insight into how educators can build their self-efficacy and their resilience, hopefully resulting in teachers with high well-being who will remain in the profession longer.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction**

Do teachers acknowledge and celebrate their successes, and is there any reason for teachers to do so? The research on resilience continually finds that teachers with higher self-efficacy also have high levels of resilience (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022). It is clear that teachers with higher self-efficacy are happier, more effective, and tend to stay in the profession longer than teachers with lower self-efficacy (al-Baradie, 2014; Hong, 2012; Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). There is currently a great deal of research about how leadership, coaching, mentoring, and professional development can impact self-efficacy (Baez-Hernandez, 2019; Knight, 2020; Richter et al., 2013; Rumnarian & Rudzirai, 2020; Vesley et al., 2013; Wilcoxon et al., 2019). There is also some research about ways to boost self-efficacy such as working in a positive climate (Kaynak, 2020; Hong, 2012), receiving positive feedback (Roberts et al. 2015; al-Baradie, 2014; Bedard, 2015; Prilop et al., 2021) and sharing empowering stories (Aguilar, 2012; Haverback, 2020). However, there is very little research regarding the role of acknowledging and celebrating one's own successes and building self-efficacy. Furthermore, acknowledging and celebrating one's own successes often goes

against social norms (Körner & Schütz, 2023; Roberts et al., 2005). Some people may confuse acknowledging and sharing successes with boasting or being overly prideful.

## **Acknowledging and Celebrating Successes**

### ***Why Celebrate?***

Acknowledging and celebrating one's own successes is an important thing to do as it can motivate people to persevere, mark movement on projects, and even promote "feel good" responses in the human body (Johnson, 2022). Johnson finds that there is a neuroscience component involved. She shares that "celebrating small wins stimulated dopamine release in the brain, a feel-good chemical that reinforces the learning experience" (p. 3). Amabile and Kramer (2011) found that when employees had small wins and felt productive their inner work life was more positive. They found that, for the most part, when people had a big win they had a big emotion, but "over 28% of the small events triggered big reactions. In other words, even events that people thought were unimportant often had powerful effects on inner work life." (p. 20). They explain that people with a more positive inner work life are more innovative, more intrinsically motivated, and more creative.

Johnson (2022) reminds us that, "celebration is an important opportunity to cement the lessons learned on the path to achievement" (p. 1). She defines celebrations as, "commemorative events that encompass complex emotions including solemnity and poignancy, as well as pleasure and joy in the journey" (p. 1). She goes on to explain that every endeavor starts with some struggle. As we grow and learn we hit small achievable goals leading eventually to competence. People have many opportunities to celebrate achievements and milestones yet, unfortunately, many people and many organizations do not take the time to engage in celebration. Avrahami et al. (2022) explain that there are few opportunities in the workplace for workers to recognize

accomplishments and that there is more emphasis in the workplace on work that remains to be done, rather than positive highlights. They argue that “when workers have a more positive inner work life, they do better work, are more intrinsically motivated to do good work, approach their work with more creativity, and have better well-being” (p. 1). Amabile and Kramer (2011) also found that most employers are not focusing on and supporting their employees in noticing when they are productive. Celebrating an individual's strengths and successes should be a natural part of people's and organizations' routines and yet, it is not.

**Social Norms Regarding Personal Achievement.** There are many reasons why being prideful of one's strengths and successes are important (Burr, 2022; Körner & Schütz, 2023; Roberts et al., 2005). However, many people often feel inhibited in acknowledging and celebrating their successes. One reason celebrations may not happen as often as they should is because for some people, celebration is deemed unimportant (Johnson, 2022). Other people feel uncomfortable sharing their strengths or successes (Körner & Schütz, 2023; Roberts et al., 2005).

Some people may confuse acknowledging and sharing successes with boasting or being overly prideful. Körner and Schütz (2023) splits pride into authentic pride and hubristic pride. Authentic pride is defined as, “prosocial and achievement-oriented” (p. 61). They explain that authentic pride is associated with advice-giving, generosity, healthy relationship functioning, and mental health. Hubristic pride is defined as, “self-aggrandizing” (p. 61) and is linked with terms such as conceit, arrogance, prejudice, and anger. Through their research they found that people with higher authentic pride were more likely to strive for highly respected jobs, high income, and high education. They explain that authentic pride was also associated with prestige-based status and higher socio-economic status. They also found that authentic pride and optimism were

closely related. They determined that authentic pride was aligned to more positive traits. Being proud of your successes is an important and positive attribute.

Burr (2022), writing about nursing, states that “celebrating is not a feature of our profession” (p. 3). She goes on to say that “nurses too often feel that it is not appropriate professional behaviour to publicise their achievements” (p. 3). Yet she explains that it is important for nurses to celebrate their successes highlighting the fact that when nurses celebrate their successes it benefits patients and can inform policy formulation. This isn’t just true of nurses. Roberts et al. (2005) also acknowledges that most people often do not celebrate their successes when he states that, “norms of humility often constrain people’s willingness to ask others to identify their own sources of strength” (Roberts et al., 2005, p. 715).

Both Johnson (2022) and Roberts et al. (2005) speak about the importance of people acknowledging growth despite hurdles, struggles, and setbacks. Many definitions for resilience also include similar words such as rebound, spring back, or adapt (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Werner, 1995).

### **Resilience and Self-Efficacy**

Truebridge (2014) defines resilience as, “the dynamic and negotiated process within individuals (internal) and between individuals and their environments (external) for the resources and supports to adapt and define themselves as healthy amid adversity, threat, trauma, and/or everyday stress” (p. 12). She further explains that resilience can be fostered with internal or external protective factors—individual attributes, characteristics, and strengths as well as external environmental conditions—that mitigate and buffer adversity and risk. One of the internal protective factors is “tapping into one’s personal strengths” (p. 12). People may have many different types of personal strengths such as cognitive, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual.

These personal strengths both foster resilience and are an outcome of resilience. External protective factors also foster resilience such as opportunities to participate and contribute. When people can participate and contribute, they feel included and successful. She goes on to say that “resilience is a process, not a trait” (p. 15). People are constantly adapting, changing, and growing, and so is their resilience. Much research points to a link between people with high self-efficacy and high resilience (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022).

Bermejo-Toro et al. (2016) explored how personal resources, like job demands, personal resources, and job resources impact teacher well-being. They found that, “personal resources (self-efficacy and coping skills) have much importance, even more than job resources in teacher well-being.” (p. 495). They go on to say, “The results of this study show that, in order to improve well-being at work, it is necessary to promote personal variables such as self-efficacy and appropriate positive coping styles” (p. 496). These researchers focused their research on what works for teachers to have higher well-being instead of focusing on why teachers might burnout.

Kaynak (2020) found that teachers who taught in a positive climate with supportive administration and colleagues had higher well-being. Their research also found that manageable workload and high self-efficacy were important factors contributing to teachers having a higher sense of well-being. Kaynak defines well-being as, “a positive emotional state, which is the harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand, the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other hand” (p. 20). He cites prior research in his rationale for this study saying that reasonable workload, supportive school culture, job satisfaction, sense of autonomy, and sense of efficacy all impact professional well-being. He goes on to explain how these factors are interrelated. He states that, “when teachers feel that these are sufficient to

contribute to students' growth, they are intrinsically more motivated, which in turn promotes their sense of well-being" (p. 22). This article focused on factors within the school framework, and it should not be ignored that other factors, such as families, relationships, and life contexts outside of the work day also contribute to well-being (Khan et al., 2006).

As mentioned, much of the research posits that self-efficacy is an important factor in building teacher resilience (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022). Thus, it makes sense to explore research and ways to build self-efficacy.

Schussler et al. (2018) and Vesely et al. (2013) found that emotional intelligence (EI) is highly associated with self-efficacy. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence have higher self-efficacy. People can enhance their emotional intelligence through tools and activities such as mindfulness (Schussler et al., 2018). The work of Vesely et al. (2013) looks into how understudied internal supports might promote efficacy. In their results they explain that a developmental EI training enhances certain emotional competencies. Ramnarain and Rudzirai (2020) found that quality professional development raised self-efficacy specific to the material of the professional development. The style of professional development was an "empowerment evaluation approach." This style of professional development is designed to "help people help themselves and improve their programmes using a form of self-evaluation and reflection" (p. 1742). Vesely et al.'s article was of interest to my work because it showed that self (intrinsic) acknowledgment of growth and success can build self-efficacy. Acknowledging and celebrating one's own successes is actually one of many needs that people require in order to be their best selves. Some of these needs are internal and some are external, and they all affect peoples' well-being and effectiveness.



**School Climate, Leadership, and Employee Needs.** School leadership is strongly connected to employee well-being (Wheatley, 2006). There are many different leadership styles and frameworks that impact employee well-being (Ashoke, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Brown, 2018; Wheatley, 2006). Employees' basic psychological needs have to be met before an employee can feel effective, motivated, or innovative (Klaeijssen et al.). Furthermore, the more that one's basic psychological needs are met, the more likely they are to feel effective. In turn, the higher one's occupational self-efficacy, the higher their innovative behavior (Klaeijssen et al., 2018). People don't only have basic needs though. Taheri, Pour, and Asarian (2019) found that an employee's secondary needs have to be met in order to feel motivated. Taheri, Pour, and Asarian (2019) define secondary needs as things like self-esteem and self-actualization. Secondary needs can be met through working in a supportive climate.

Similarly, Iannucci, Richards, and MacPhail (2021) found that teachers with a higher perceived level of personal accomplishment had lower levels of occupational stress and higher resilience. They state that, "as feelings of personal accomplishment increase for a teacher, so could their level of resilience" (p. 629). They say their research, "identifies personal accomplishment as a strategy or approach that may facilitate the development of teacher resiliency" (p. 630). They outline that when teachers believe they matter, feel satisfied, and work in a supportive environment they can increase their feelings of personal accomplishment.

By acknowledging and celebrating one's own successes one continually shapes their idea of themselves—their best self. Roberts et al. (2005) explored how people compose their reflected best self. They define the reflected best self (RBS) as a "portrait of who we are when we are at our personal best" (p. 712). They argue that people develop this reflected best self throughout

their lives through interactions with others when others see them at their best and through self-monitoring. They state:

As individuals learn more about their personal strengths, limitations, and ability to add value, they are likely to change the content of the RBS portrait by adding and subtracting qualities so that the RBS is more closely aligned with their revelations from these experiences (p. 715)

**Feedback Can Boost Self-Efficacy.** Although there are opportunities for others to witness positive interactions and behaviors of teachers, Roberts et al. (2005) finds that performance evaluations in work places continue to rely on negative feedback and areas for improvement. There is some research that points to how leaders can use rewarding, acknowledging, and celebrating successes to promote self-efficacy (al-Baradie, 2014). Bedard (2015) found that people like when their successes are celebrated. He looked at ways video games, specifically the Candy Crush Saga video game, celebrated people's success and relates it to how employers can do the same. He argues that positive reinforcement is important to employee well-being. Prilop et al. (2021) explain that self-efficacy can be cultivated through feedback from both peers and leaders. They found that teachers' self-efficacy was boosted, especially when teachers were given feedback that showed a social comparison of how multiple teachers were performing, specifically when other teachers were struggling in some way.

Employees feel valued when managers and mentors support them (Goldsmith, 2005). He writes that, "a good manager believes in publicly recognizing the contributions of their entire team by celebrating large and small successes" (p. 23). He also valued self-evaluations in which mentors or managers ask employees what they are doing well. Hong (2012) described how encouraging feedback from colleagues and administrators, as well as "recognizing and

acknowledging teacher's effort and achievement" (p. 433) boosts teachers' self-efficacy. It is the leader's responsibility to create a culture that encourages a collaborative school community including collaborative and encouraging colleague groups.

Although many job performance review structures are focused on negative feedback (Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011; Skylar, 2010), Skylar (2010, 2015) writes about how the medical field could be more focused on a strengths-based approach. He states that much of the medical field focused on, "review of errors, complaints, malpractice litigation" (2015, p. 835). He goes on to say, "An emphasis on what can go wrong ignored the performance of exemplary care that might also inform our understanding of both individuals' and health systems' excellence" (p. 835). He says a focus on the negative results in practitioners feeling enhanced anxiety. Though this research is not from the field of education, many of the lessons from Skylar's work in the medical field could be applied to education.

Bouskila-Yam and Kluger (2011) put forth a new performance evaluation exercise based on Appreciative Inquiry (Kluger & Nir, 2009), reflected best-self (Roberts et al., 2005), developing strengths, and happiness research (Fredrickson, 2001). Part of their exercise is a "feedforward interview" in which the manager engages with the employee in a discussion about a specific positive story the employee shares as well as writing down three good things that happened each day and using employees' strengths in new ways. Employees can also gain motivation through recognition of their accomplishments. Whyte (2008) explains that, "recognizing achievements plays a vital part in sustaining motivation" (p. 10). He says that many organizations do not have a framework for celebrating employee successes. He states that people leave the workplace due to not being recognized and that the most effective leaders incorporate

celebrating their employees' successes into the workday. Employee recognition can come directly from a leader, from a peer, or from the employee themselves.

al-Baradie (2014) researched a style of leadership that she called "encouraging the heart." She lays out this style of leadership as having seven essential components, "1. Set clear standards, 2. Expect the best, 3. Pay attention, 4. Personalize recognition, 5. Tell the story, 6. Celebrate together, 7. Be an example" (p. 12) She writes that, "celebrating success builds momentum and commitment and energizes people to do well" (p. 14). She states that leaders who encourage the heart see increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, greater initiative, increased cooperation, stronger bonds among co-workers, better communication, and fewer conflicts.

al-Baradie (2014) notes how much of a leader's time is spent identifying problems or weaknesses in their organization. When a leader is spending much of their time looking for weaknesses they are missing opportunities to celebrate successes. She explains that recognition should be given to an individual and should highlight their values and how they align with the company's values. She speaks about intrinsic rewards like overcoming challenges instill a sense of accomplishment in an employee but must be given with genuine respect and sincerity. al-Bairdie (2014) also explains the importance of celebrating together. Celebrating successes, as well as commitment to shared ideals, reiterates the company's standards and values while also strengthening bonds among employees, which encourages respectful and trusting relationships.

**Sharing Stories to Build Self-Efficacy.** Quality leadership is not the only path to self-efficacy. There is research that employees can build self-efficacy through sharing their successes (Haverback, 2020; Aguilar, 2018). Haverback (2020) studied how teachers could grow self-efficacy while unexpectedly teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. She argues that

teachers telling others about and hearing their stories of remote teaching could promote self-efficacy during a situation that teachers did not think they would ever encounter. Aguilar (2018) is another writer who focuses on resilience. She explains that 12 habits of resilient teachers; one such habit is telling empowering stories. According to Aguilar (2018) resilient people are realistic optimists. Aguilar states that, “If you want to shift the way you feel, you must shift the way you think” (p. 71) and “you need to identify empowering thoughts for your mind to latch on to” (p. 80). Much of what she talks about incorporates the ideas that people can frame their experiences in positive or negative ways. She also writes about the use of affirmations. She posits that, “Saying affirmations to yourself raises your levels of feel-good hormones and pushes your brain to form new clusters of ‘positive thought’ neurons” (p. 81). Aguilar’s ideas are some of the best evidence that when teachers’ share their positive stories they will naturally build their resilience.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This qualitative case study explored the story of celebration for kindergarten teachers at a suburban elementary school in Northwestern, Vermont. This research lies in the constructivist worldview; the data explains participants' meanings and reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study explored the reality of self-celebration in kindergarten teachers' current practices. As this story lies in the constructivist worldview, the researcher focused on the participants' meaning as it relates to the research questions in order to uncover how each participant derives meaning from their experiences with self-celebration.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is social constructivism. Creswell and Creswell (2017) states that “social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 45). Researchers using this lens rely on the perceptions of the participants being studied. In this study the researcher looked at the role of self-celebration in educators' practices. Social constructivism is both an epistemology and a conceptual framework. Kalpana (2013) explains that “the core of constructivism is that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from their experiences” (p. 27). She goes on to explain that social constructivism also includes the belief that knowledge is built through interactions with others, thus “generating a shared understanding related to the concept” (p. 28). Van Hover and Hicks (2017) further define the social constructivist theoretical framework. They explain that this framework “recognizes that learners actively construct their own knowledge, and that new learning is a function of an individual’s existing understandings and experiences. Ultimately, social constructivism stresses the primacy of contextually specific social interactions within and through various discourse communities.” (p. 273). This theoretical framework was key to this study because the researcher focused on exploring each participant’s true reality with self-celebration through a discussion of the participants’ past experiences.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative, constructivist case study is focused on the role of self-celebration in the work culture of kindergarten educators.

This study was a qualitative case study. Yin (2022) explains that case study research, “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 45). Case study research was the ideal research method in this instance because the

phenomenon (self-celebration) was bound to the context (this specific team at this specific school). The team and school are important features of this case study research.

## **Research Questions**

### ***Central Research Question***

What is the story of self-celebration for kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School, a K-3 school in Northwestern Vermont?

How does self-celebration impact self-efficacy for kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School, a K-3 school in Northwestern Vermont?

### ***Sub-questions***

How do kindergarten teachers know they are capable?

How do kindergarten teachers describe their successes?

How do kindergarten teachers celebrate their own successes?

## **Population and Setting**

### ***Participants***

The participants of this case study are all of the three kindergarten classroom teachers at a suburban elementary school in a suburban town in the northeastern United States. Using a qualitative case study allowed for purposeful selection of the setting and participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This allowed the researcher to reduce bias and the bias of the participants as the researcher was able to select teachers who had not been a part of previous research and work. Doing a qualitative case study has pros and cons. It limits the sample size, in this case to three participants, but it allowed the researcher to dig deep and truly uncover the story of celebration for these individuals.

### ***Setting***

This educational research study took place at Mountain Top Elementary School (pseudonym). Mountain Top Elementary School is a small pre-kindergarten through third grade school in a suburban town in Northern New England. This is the school that the researcher works in. She is in her 12th year working in the school. The school is in its seventh year since merging with a neighboring district to create a new unified school district—the Great District (pseudonym). Mountain Top Elementary School is one of 10 schools in the district, and one of five schools that teach first through third grades.

Mountain Top Elementary School has approximately 218 students in 13 classrooms (Vermont Agency of Education, 2019). 17% of the students are considered “economically disadvantaged.” The school has one principal and 19 full time licensed teachers. There is a committee of teacher leaders who organize meetings and facilitate the school’s response to intervention and professional learning communities.

Mountain Top Elementary School is in a suburban area. This research was conducted in what is considered a natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This means that the research was conducted on site in the school. Information was gathered directly from the participants. The researcher met with participants one-on-one which added depth and understanding to the research.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 2009) and document review. Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that it is important to collect multiple forms of data. Collecting multiple forms of data allows participants to share their stories in multiple formats and gives the researcher more data to evaluate. It also adds to the validity of the research as triangulation can occur. Creswell and Creswell explain that triangulation is when the



researcher examines evidence from various sources. In this research, examples of teacher self-celebration could be verified through interviews and document review. Each kindergarten teacher was interviewed one to two times. Each interview took between one and two hours so that the participant could fully discuss the questions and explain their experiences with self-celebration.

These interview sessions were focused on the purpose of the research, exploring the role of self-celebration in the participants' elementary teaching career (Yin, 2022). The interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured so that participants could, “share their ideas freely, not constrained by predetermined scales or instruments” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that interview questions in constructivist research should be broad and general and embedded in discussion. This allows the participants to construct their own meaning of the topic. It was important for each participant to be able to fully share their past experiences in these interviews. The theoretical framework for this dissertation, social constructivism, posits that people construct their knowledge and understanding of the world from past experiences, environment, and social interactions (van Hover & Hicks, 2017). By allowing the participants enough time to fully tell their story the researcher was able to get insight into each participants' past which informed their current use of self-celebration. There were between 10 and 20 interview questions, beginning with an opening question which allowed the participant to settle into the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam, 2009). Next there were content questions which focused on how the teacher celebrated their successes and how that celebration made them feel. The content questions included probes that asked for more information or details (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam, 2009). Yin (2022) states that case-study researchers need to be flexible. Having a set of probe questions prepared allowed the researcher to dig deeper

during interviews. The researcher must continually think about why events or perceptions appear as they do. Content questions explored the “whys” and “hows” for the participants in regard to their experiences with self-celebration. Yin argues that starting questions with “how” can cause less defensiveness than “why” questions.

Interview questions were tested on two teachers who were not part of the study. This helped ensure that the questions elicited the kind of information that they were intended to. Using a semi-structured interview allowed for participants to share their experiences and to portray their unique “take” on the world (Merriam, 2009) and to, “reconstruct their experience within the topic of study” (Seidman, 2019). The goal of the interviews was to fully understand each participant's reality with celebrating their successes in their role as a kindergarten teacher. Interviews were video recorded. Case-study researchers glean information from more than just the words a participant uses (Yin, 2022). The researcher advised interviewees that they were being recorded on the video. The video recordings and transcript were saved in Google Drive folders. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym and the files were labeled as such. A document containing the actual interviewee names and pseudonyms was kept on a secure folder on a local hard drive. Interview videos were deleted when they were no longer needed. The researcher composed a process memo after each interview. These memos included information about the setting of the interview, observations during the interview, technology used, and any issues that arose during the interview. These process memos were saved in the same Google Drive folder as the interviews.

Each grade level team kept a common agenda. The researcher reviewed grade level meeting agendas to explore if there were any topics of relevance to this research study. Analytic memos were composed while reading the team agenda and highlighted areas that were relevant

to the research. Topics of relevance in the agendas were coded based on themes that emerged from the interview coding.

### **Proposed Data Analysis**

The researcher's main protocol for data collection was interviews, though document review of past meeting agendas also occurred. Seidman (2019) explains the importance of interviews in exploring the true story of a phenomenon for each participant. Document review was used to triangulate data from interviews as well as add depth to the data. The data was analyzed inductively, the researcher looked at the data to determine central themes that emerged (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data was examined for patterns and themes. The researcher took notes as well as recorded the interviews and wrote up a narrative of each interview afterward. Interview data was coded based on categories or patterns that were found within the data. Interviews and observations were coded using multiple cycles of coding. The first iteration of first cycle coding was in vivo coding (Saldana, 2016). In vivo coding was selected as the first cycle coding so that participants' exact language could be honored. The researcher also used values and versus coding as first cycle coding methods to find deeper meaning in the data. Pattern coding was used for second cycle coding. Since this research is a qualitative case study it was important for the researcher to be adaptive to whatever coding style best uncovered the themes of the participants' experiences with self-celebration.

The researcher ended up applying many coding methods and completing many coding exercises, which will be explained more in Chapter Four. By inductively analyzing the data, the researcher was able to notice themes or additional relationships that emerged from the data (Yin, 2022). From the coding, themes emerged that led to a storyline (Saldana, 2016). The themes that emerged also were used when analyzing the meeting agendas during document review. The

findings were communicated through a narrative passage. Data was also collected through document review of meeting agendas. Team meeting agendas were coded in a similar way to the interviews.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The researcher collected data from documents and interviews following the case study protocol to ensure validity and reliability. All data, including transcripts, videos, notes, document summaries, and post-interview memos were organized in a case study database stored in a Google Drive. Yin (2022) explains that a case study database increases reliability because all of the research data is organized and accessible. From the data in the case study database, narrative reports were created.

The researcher used multiple validity procedures. The research setting for this case study was one entire grade level team at a specific elementary school. By interviewing each and every member of this grade level team about the way that their team acknowledges and celebrates their successes, the researcher was able to triangulate different pieces of data. Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that triangulation from obtaining perspectives from different participants is one way to add validity to research. The researcher was also able to triangulate data using information from the interviews and compare it to the information from agendas. The researcher also used the words and descriptions from participant interviews to write, “rich, thick, descriptions” in her findings (Creswell & Creswell). When a researcher provides detailed descriptions of the setting, the results become more realistic to the reader and gives the reader, “an element of a shared experience” (Creswell & Creswell, p. 274). This allowed the participants’ language and true stories to come through in a way that added validity. The researcher engaged in reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell) by thinking about how her background

and experiences shaped interpretations based on the participants' data. By self-reflecting the researcher created, "an open and honest narrative" (p. 274). The researcher also presented all themes that emerged from the data. As this is a constructivist case-study, the researcher was looking for the participants' true reality with experiences of self-celebration on their kindergarten grade level team and the research discussed all themes that emerged.

### **Ethical Issues**

Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that qualitative research design allows for purposeful selection of research sites and participants as opposed to random sampling. In this case, participants were purposefully selected based on their relationship to the researcher. This research is unique in that the researcher already had a relationship with each of her participants because they teach together at the same school. In an effort to minimize the influence of the personal relationship, the participants selected have not taught on the same grade level team as the researcher and therefore are less familiar with the researcher's interest in topics of resilience, self-efficacy, and celebration. This is intended to reduce bias for both parties.

Another area of ethical consideration is the researcher's preconceived position on the topic. She has spent a lot of time researching teacher resilience, self-efficacy, and self-celebration, and is hopeful that teachers in her school are practicing and building these concepts. Designing this research in the constructivist framework allowed the researcher to explore the participants' realities with the concept thus lessening her bias.

This qualitative case study research utilized emergent design including semi-structured open-ended interview questions. Emergent design and open-ended interview questions allowed the researcher to uncover each participant's experience and reality with the study's focus (self-celebration) by being flexible and adapting the methodology and/or interview questions

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2022). Any shifts in this research were carefully considered based on the purpose of the study; the research questions; anticipated results or findings; in this study, information on if, how, and/or when teachers celebrate their successes.

This study included human participants and it was the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants. Participants signed a letter of consent prior to being included in the study. Interviews were recorded using the web app Zoom. This allowed the researcher to obtain a transcript of the interview as well as video evidence of the participants. The researcher advised interviewees that they were being recorded on the video. The video recordings and transcript were saved in Google Drive folders. Each interviewee was given a pseudonym, and the files were labeled as such. A document containing the actual interviewee names and pseudonyms was kept on a secure folder on a local hard drive. Interview videos were deleted when they were no longer needed. This research design and methodology went through Southern New Hampshire University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure all ethical needs were met.

### **Researcher Positionality**

This research was conducted in the school in which the researcher works and has worked since 2011. As with all constructivist research, the background of the researcher shaped their interpretation and understanding of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As a constructivist researcher I positioned myself in my research, acknowledging how my existing relationship with the participants as well as my interest in the topic and my background knowledge and interests impacted my readings on all interactions with my participants.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis of Data and Findings**

### **Introduction**

Multiple forms of analysis and coding were applied to this research data including multiple iterations of analytic memo writing, in vivo coding, values coding, versus coding, theming the data, pattern coding, and after-coding exercises such as code mapping, code charting, identifying the study's "trinity," code weaving, categorizing codes, and formatting. The processes of analysis and coding in this study were thorough and exhaustive, and in that, also messy. The researcher returned to various coding types and coding exercises until the full picture of the data had emerged. In order to effectively explain the process, the researcher had to organize the process in a way that would make sense to the reader while also showing the complex data analysis process. Initially, in vivo coding and values coding were used. The researcher then moved on to a coding exercise, code mapping. Code mapping revealed that more information could be gleaned from the data with the use of versus coding. The researcher went back and completed a third round of first cycle coding using versus coding. Then the researcher moved on to the second cycle coding method of pattern coding. Further coding exercises, finding the study's trinity and code weaving, were employed after second cycle coding to establish the themes of the data.

## **Results and Findings of the Research Study**

### ***Analytic Memo Writing***

The researcher began by writing analytic memos just after completing each interview as well as after reviewing the kindergarten team year-long agenda. These memos noted the researcher's feelings, hunches, and observations from the interview process, the interviews themselves, and the agendas. Saldaña (2016) explains that analytic memos are an important part of data analysis. In some of the interviews, as soon as the recording was switched off the participant immediately responded with new insights, and those insights were included in the

post-interview analytic memo. These memos also served as a way to start organizing the data and thinking about themes that each participant individually brought up. The researcher was able to triangulate the data by comparing the interviews with the year-long agenda. This provided validity to the interviews as certain aspects of the interviews were corroborated in the agendas. The agendas also revealed more about the team's focus during their response-to-intervention (RTI) meetings and the researcher was able to capture this information in an analytic memo. Saldaña explains that coding can start concurrently with data collection. Analytic memo writing helped the researcher start to notice the patterns and themes. In this case, analytic memo writing helped the researcher understand the important themes in the interviews and agendas and provided a lens in which to determine what codes were relevant.

### ***First Cycle Coding: In Vivo Coding***

The researcher began working through the data using in vivo coding. This coding method fit the purpose of this study well as it used the exact language of the participants. As this constructivist study's aim was to discover the "story of self-celebration for kindergarten teachers," having the exact language of the participants was a priority. The in vivo coding allowed the researcher to better capture each participant's reality and to discover their meaning (Saladaña, 2016). After applying codes to the interviews, the researcher then wrote analytic memos based on the in vivo codes. She included many words and phrases from the participants in these memos. One reads: Penny found that teaching kindergarten at a charter school which had a "difference in philosophy" than her own was "rough" and "very hard." Another example, from a different participant, reads: When I asked Ellery if she shares with her teammates about literacy being her best subject, she said that she couldn't tell them that because she isn't "an expert," she doesn't "know everything," she just knows "what works for me." Including the participants'



exact language in these memos allowed the researcher to more fully understand each participant's reality because the exact words of the participants were used.

In vivo coding and analytic memo writing based on the in vivo codes allowed the researcher to take notice of the participants' feelings based on the types of words they were using. When one participant, Penny, spent time working at a charter school with a different philosophy than her own, she used words like "really challenging," "shattered," "depression," and "feeling very lost." When she spoke about her current employment she used words like "living the dream," "warm and friendly," "felt really good," and "makes me laugh." These words that elicit emotion display a much more thorough picture of Penny's journey.

The other participants also used emotional words in their interviews. Another participant, Ellery, spoke about piloting a literacy program that did not align to her style of teaching. She used language such as "I'm exhausted," "winging it," and "floundering." When she talked about teaching students and connecting with them, she used language like "sweet to hear," "I love bringing books alive," and "opened my brain." The different emotions elicited through her words show when she felt like her teaching was successful and when it wasn't. The last participant, Braden, used emotional language like "all the hard work, it has gone to something" and "it can be frustrating" when talking about supporting students behaviorally and the need to notice small successes. All three participants used language that better helped the researcher understand their stories. Since so much understanding had been gleaned through the emotional language noted in the in vivo codes, the researcher decided to apply values coding to the interview data and analytic memos.

### ***First Cycle Coding: Values Coding***

Saldaña (2016) explains that sometimes more than one coding method is needed to fully “capture the complex processes or phenomena in your data” (p. 69). Values coding highlights the participants’ values, attitudes, and beliefs. Since the researcher believed that using participants’ specific language was integral to the goals of this study, she used the in vivo codes within the values coding method. By looking at the in vivo codes the researcher was able to apply values codes to sections of each interview, and then nestle the in vivo codes underneath to further elaborate upon the participants’ feelings. For example, Penny held a belief that a collaborative team must trust each other’s styles and allow each other to teach in their own way. The language she used to explain this were phrases like: “There is no better way, we each have our own styles,” “that feels yucky when people get so rigid with ‘my way is the only way,’” and “everyone understands that they're all great teachers with their own ways of doing things, and that it's not about comparing who is better than the other.” Values coding allowed the researcher to lump many in vivo codes into one value, attitude, or belief, and then the multiple in vivo codes nestled under it helped more fully round out the picture of what the participant meant.

Another participant, Braden, also spoke about the collaborative quality of their kindergarten grade level team. This team has two weekly meetings per week, one is called a “team time” meeting, and the only people present are the three kindergarten teachers. The other meeting is called an “RTI meeting” and many teaching professionals attend this meeting as needed based on the agenda. Braden talks in his interview about the differences between these two meetings. He says “between the three of us I feel like they are very, very stress free. I do feel like sometimes when we bring in the greater team or the larger team, things can get stressful because people do things very differently. And so, I think that sometimes there are thoughts around how people do things and sometimes it gets stressful. And I feel like it's more stressful

because the three of us don't have that stress. And so, when it comes into the space that we've created, it is a little stressful.” He uses very different language than Penny, but the belief is the same— their grade level team trusts, understands, and even appreciates that they each have their own teaching style. The in vivo codes from both Penny and Braden were able to be applied to the belief that a collaborative team values each member’s different teaching style.

The team kept a year-long agenda which listed the weekly “to-do’s” as well as the notes from each RTI meeting. The same codes that emerged through values coding with the interviews could be applied to the themes seen in the agenda. The agenda begins with the team’s norms, roles, and purpose. Many of the team norms focus on creating and maintaining a collaborative culture. One norm is to “Embrace the village to grow the town (ask for help, give help, be kind to yourself)” and another is “Recipe for understanding my impact on the team: Relate, reflect, revisit, read the room, respond with empathy, remain curious.” Other norms encourage a growth mindset and a focus on strengths. A norm that promotes these reads “Use student performance information as opportunities for student and teacher reflection, progress, growth, change, and celebration.” In their weekly notes there were mentions of the teachers sharing their strategies of things that worked for them as well as student celebrations embedded into units of study.

Another belief that was captured through values coding was “it is important to celebrate.” This was noted in one of the team norms “use student performance information as opportunities for student and teacher reflection, progress, growth, change, and celebration.” It could also be seen in the agenda and notes for certain meetings. On October 31st the agenda listed “Completed Space Camp: celebration, reflection, next steps” and then in their agenda notes they explained that this agenda item was referencing their teaching of a social-emotional program called Space

Camp. The agenda went on to outline how they celebrated this accomplishment with students and how the teachers would share their techniques with other teachers.

### ***Making Sense of the First-Cycle Coding Methods***

**Code Mapping.** Saldaña (2016) explains that “the qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather than linear” (p. 68). The coding processes explained here may seem straightforward, but in reality, they were not. The researcher repeatedly returned to the data searching for another way to see the connections. Values coding provided the researcher with some overarching ideas and patterns that were present in the data, but they still seemed elusive at this point. Saldaña offers some exercises to help the researcher make sense of her first-cycle coding methods such as code mapping. Saldaña explains that code mapping enhances the “credibility and trustworthiness” (p. 218) of the data analysis.

By organizing the different codes with the code mapping process, the researcher was able to establish nine groups of codes. The codes were: self-efficacy, teaching style, program/school matching your philosophy, growth mindset (mistakes are OK!), celebration (acknowledging your successes), self-reflection, collaborative culture, feedback and/or support, and time. This led the researcher to a second iteration of code mapping, where she categorized the nine codes. Engaging in code mapping allowed the researcher to better make sense of the plethora of codes that were created through in vivo coding. This was helpful as she transitioned to further coding methods.

### ***First Cycle Coding: Versus Coding***

Engaging in code mapping allowed the researcher to notice similarities and differences in the three participants’ interview responses. She noticed some dichotomies in participant responses such as positive or negative feedback from peers and supervisors and the difference

between sharing successes or boasting. Because these themes became apparent during code mapping, the researcher went back into the data and applied versus coding to make better sense of the conflict within the data. Although versus coding did not fit all of the data, the researcher was able to note areas either within an interview or across interviews where diametric views were shared. Versus codes that emerged were celebrating versus boasting, positive feedback versus negative feedback, support versus neglect, and belief versus disbelief.

Two of the participants shared views that sharing successes can be seen as boasting, although both said there are times when sharing successes can be done without it being boasting. Penny explained that there has to be a culture established that allows the team members to be able to share while still valuing the fact that all of the team members have their own teaching style.

Penny spoke effusively about the importance of feedback from peers and supervisors. She said that negative feedback from a supervisor was “seared” into her mind and that it took a lot of positive feedback to “heal her.” She also talked about times in her career when she was “left out to dry” and times when she felt supported. Other participants also noted times in their career when they were asked to teach in a way that did not match their beliefs and how hard this was while noting the most successful lessons they have taught often coincided with a subject they really understood and believed in. Braden spoke to this when he said, “I feel like literacy, the last two years in kindergarten has been my strongest suit. I feel like I've been able to put my, the most of my energy and I feel like it's the school that we work in has such, or at least I felt it's been so literacy focused the last couple years that I've really felt like I've been supported, had gotten some great ideas of how to teach it.” He is explaining that the subject he feels most confident in is the subject he is best at teaching. Ellery noted a similar belief. She realized she

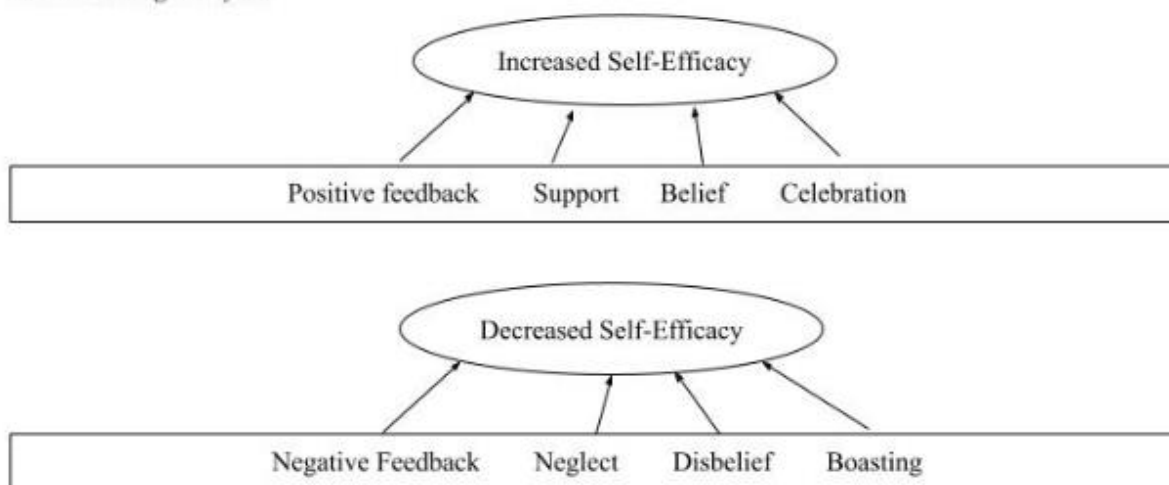
was best at teaching literacy because she spends most of her day doing it and because her school is so focused on it. She says, "I would say I'm probably best at teaching literacy, just because I feel like that's what we spend most of our day doing is activities that continue to build their literacy knowledge. So, I feel like I'm probably stronger in that." Penny also talked about this same phenomenon. She explained that as she felt more comfortable with a content area then she felt stronger teaching it and enjoyed it more. She explained that she didn't love teaching phonics until she got comfortable with the scope and sequence, and once she was comfortable she was able to be more creative with the teaching and to adapt the teaching to the specific needs of the students.

These insights became clearer after second cycle coding and understanding the conflict within the data enabled the researcher to see more depth. From these conflicts, the researcher was able to notice that certain criteria had to be met for a participant to feel self-efficacy. They had to be supported by colleagues and supervisors, get positive feedback, have a growth mindset, and understand that making mistakes is ok, and they had to be able to share their successes by serving on a team with a culture that valued each person's individual teaching style. This was evident in the types of language that the participants used in their interviews such as when Penny shared that she is "passionate about writing, it's always been a little bit clearer for me about how to teach it or some different strategies or ways that help students understand what to do." The opposing factors, negative feedback, neglect, disbelief, and boasting, led to a decrease in self-efficacy, as shown in Figure 1. Examples of this in the interviews are from Ellery when she was talking about piloting a new literacy program. She said it "has been very hard for me to pilot it. It's very confusing and not teacher friendly and what they're asking the kids to do just seems unrealistic. So, I haven't fully implemented it...I don't know. It's all confusing." She went on to

say, “I’m exhausted after trying to teach that... I honestly can’t pick something up midyear and try to teach it because I’m not going to do well and I don’t think I did well.”

**Figure 1**

*Versus Coding Analysis*



### ***Second Cycle Coding: Pattern Coding***

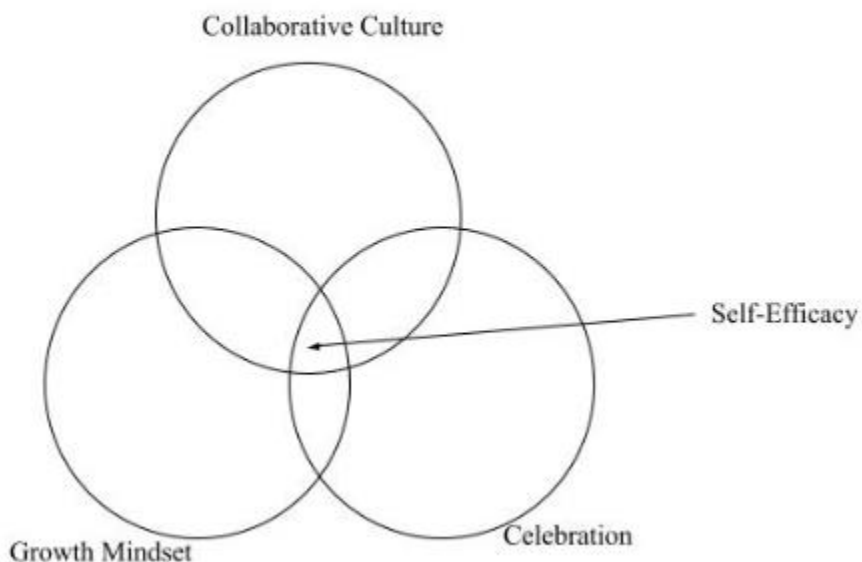
At this point in the data analysis the researcher was well acquainted with the data and maneuvering through the multiple coding methods and codes felt comfortable. Themes had started emerging from the data, especially from the first cycle values coding and the code mapping with nuances underneath the themes provided by in vivo coding and versus coding. The researcher then went through the data using the second cycle coding method of pattern coding. Saldaña (2016) explains that pattern coding “is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories” (p. 236). The researcher started this process by looking at the nine themes that had emerged during code mapping. She went through the interview transcripts again, highlighting sections of the transcripts according to the nine themes. Through pattern coding, she was able to combine themes until she was down to just four: self-efficacy, growth mindset, celebration, and collaborative culture.

### *Making Sense of Second Cycle Coding Methods*

**The Study's Trinity.** At this point Saldaña (2016) offers many exercises for “focusing, theorizing, formatting, writing, ordering, networking, and mentoring” (p. 273). One exercise is to identify three big concepts—hence the trinity— that come out of the study, Saldaña refers to these as “the study’s trinity” (p. 275). Using a three circle Venn diagram, the researcher thought about the four codes that process coding had consolidated, as seen in Figure 2. Three of the four codes (growth mindset, celebration, and collaborative culture) were precursors to the fourth (self-efficacy), so they fit neatly in the three circles of the Venn diagram and the self-efficacy fit neatly into the overlapping sections of the three other circles. A teacher must have a collaborative culture, a growth mindset, and celebrate their successes to have higher self-efficacy.

**Figure 2**

*The Study's Trinity*





### **Code Weaving.**

Another exercise that Saldaña (2016) suggests is code weaving. During code weaving the researcher wrote a narrative using the codes to “see how the puzzle fits together.” The researcher used the codes and their definitions in this narrative: Teachers believe in their ability to teach (SELF-EFFICACY) when a teacher can notice and reflect on when things go well in their teaching (CELEBRATION) and they have a strong collaborative team that values each members’ different teaching style where they can give and get support and feedback (COLLABORATIVE CULTURE) because the team has a culture of mistake making (GROWTH MINDSET). This practice allowed the researcher to explore the connections between the identified big concepts that came out of the research. It further explained that all three precursors (celebration, collaborative culture, and growth mindset) need to be in place so that a teacher can feel higher self-efficacy.

Each of the exercises offered by Saldaña (2016) resulted in similar theories where celebration, collaborative culture, and growth mindset operated with concurrency to affect self-efficacy. Saldaña explains that categories of data can interact with each other in many different ways. Concurrency is when “two or more categories operate simultaneously to influence and affect a third” (p. 279). When analyzing the data using values coding, versus coding, or pattern coding, a similar theory emerged. By using so many coding methods and exercises the researcher was triangulating the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The themes that emerged came from multiple coding methods and exercises. These findings are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Findings “At a Glance”*

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
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Code or theme	Datum Supporting the Code or Theme	Researcher's interpretive Summary
SELF-EFFICACY	<p>“I definitely noticed that was a really successful lesson. I can so clearly see the next step for this kid. I completely understand this is the misconception. This is what I'm going to do next. I was able to clarify a little bit of vision and focus on the actual work, and it felt good. It felt like, I do know what I'm doing. I know exactly what I'm going to do next. I do know how to help that kid. I do see what they need, or I am seeing some success, or they are making improvements.”</p> <p>(Penny)</p>	<p>SELF-EFFICACY occurs when a teacher can notice and reflect on when things go well in their teaching (CELEBRATING) and they have a strong collaborative team (COLLABORATIVE CULTURE) where they can give and get support and feedback because the team has a culture of mistake making (GROWTH MINDSET) and values each member's different teaching styles.</p>
COLLABORATIVE CULTURE	<p>“The culture of our team is that it's not just sharing like, ‘I'm a great teacher I figured this great</p>	<p>A truly collaborative team culture (COLLABORATIVE CULTURE) accepts that the teachers on the team</p>

	<p>thing out' it's this idea of, we're all in it together and all of our kids are our kids and so, if my kid's struggling with this and I figured something out, they might also have a kid that's struggling with that. It feels very collaborative. And it feels like it's a space where you don't feel like you're bragging if you share something. It's more like, 'this worked for my kid, it might work for yours'. And then they're like all excited" (Penny)</p>	<p>each have their own style and that what works for them (SELF-EFFICACY) might not work for the others, yet, they can share strategies (CELEBRATING) and be flexible in how they teach (GROWTH MINDSET).</p>
CELEBRATING	<p>"I've been able to share some of my successes and some things that I might do differently than my colleagues. And, I think that's been helpful for them. I also work on a team with two very experienced teachers, so</p>	<p>Educators can share stories (CELEBRATING) about what goes well in their teaching (SELF-EFFICACY) with trusted colleagues (COLLABORATIVE CULTURE) while also problem-solving issues (GROWTH MINDSET).</p>

	I've been able to gain a lot from them.” (Braden)	
GROWTH MINDSET	“You can make mistakes because how can you grow if you don't take risks? And if you take a risk, you're going to make a mistake. It's just the way it is.” (Penny)	Educators must understand that mistakes are okay (GROWTH MINDSET) when they teach while also acknowledging the things that go well (SELF-EFFICACY) and can share these stories (CELEBRATING) with their trusted colleagues (COLLABORATIVE CULTURE).

Based on the various coding methods as well as the post coding exercises this study found that the three-person kindergarten team at Mountain Top Elementary school were part of a very successful team in which celebrating their successes was valued and encouraged. Teachers spoke with self-efficacy about certain lessons and areas of the curriculum, as well as in regards to social emotional learning and behavior management.

### **Research Question Analysis**

#### ***Central Research Question***

**What is the story of self-celebration for kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School, a K-3 school in Northwestern Vermont?** The research questions outlined for this study focused on “self-celebration,” yet the teachers engaged in both self-celebration as well as celebration-in-community with their colleagues. Through the data analysis it became

apparent that the researcher needed to distinguish between “self-celebration” and “celebration-in-community” thus the terms were created to distinguish between the two types of celebration. The kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School do participate in self-celebration, however, they have some reservations around the terminology used. In their year-long agenda, the word “celebration” is used, however, in their interviews, the two female participants preferred to label celebration with other titles such as “best practices.” Gregory et al. (2016) define “best practices” as “proven strategies” (p. 10) for teaching and are often research or evidence based. When this team of teachers spoke about “best practices” they were often referring to strategies that someone on their team implemented and found success with, rather than a research or evidence based tool. Based on how they defined the term best practice in their interviews, I have included it as a form of celebration in this data because when asked for ways they were successful as an educator, they would often talk about discovering or sharing a “best practice.” When asked what subject Penny was best at teaching she said, “It's funny, that's still like a triggering thing. Like now that we've been talking and analyzing it, I know I'm a good teacher, but I still struggle with like, am I best at something?” Regardless of what they label it, there was evidence in the agenda and interviews that this team of teachers celebrates their successes with each other.

The team's year-long agenda makes two references to celebration in their team norms, which are listed at the top of their agenda document. These norms are “We will support each other by focusing on strengths, staying on task, and assuming the best intentions” and “Use student performance information as opportunities for student and teacher reflection, progress, growth, change, and celebration.” These norms show that their team focused on celebration-in-community this school year with their colleagues. The first norm lists “focusing on strengths”

which could denote celebration under the definition outlined in this dissertation (any action that acknowledges what went well in one's teaching). If the teachers are able to note their strengths, then they are acknowledging what goes well when they are teaching. This could be an area in which their team shares successes, therefore celebrating! The second norm uses the word "celebration" in regards to student performance. Many of the teachers spoke about using student data as a measure of whether their instruction was successful and as a catalyst for celebration. Penny says, "I think most of our celebration has been kid centered around like, wow, look at our data."

Ellery also spoke of the district's use of data, "We take a lot of data around here, and check their data and see how they are progressing with the skills that we are focusing on with our essential standards that we decided as a district. So that is obviously one way you can see that they are progressing." The team uses data in their team time meetings and RTI meetings to gauge their success teaching as well as to inform and plan further instruction and intervention. By using data as a means to gauge their instructional success the teachers are removed from self-selecting what they deem successful teaching. The use of data was also apparent in the team's year-long agenda notes. Items like "discuss math data" or "bring letter/sound data" were listed in the agenda on different days.

In the agenda weekly items and notes there was also evidence of teacher celebration-in-community with colleagues. On October 10th, the teachers shared their best practices for math strategies around teen numbers. They shared the clear language that they use explaining that teen numbers are "ten and some more." They explained visuals for the teen numbers with stacks of 10 and then some more and to write the numeral below the visuals. Another teacher gave a suggestion of having the students explain how a teen number would be visualized before

showing them the visualization. These are examples of times that a kindergarten teacher shared with their team about something that went well in their teaching. Later that month, on October 31st, the teachers shared social emotional learning strategies, including when they created a team-wide bulletin board in the hallway so that other teachers could see their work and utilize the same strategies. They wrote in their notes, "Keep up the wall of Kindergarten Fame for another month so all teachers can see it. Add photographs of the skill that is being taught for reinforcement and to share with the school what we are working on." This example showed that the team also shared their successful instructional strategies with teachers outside of their team. By leaving their bulletin board up in the hallway, they were encouraging other teachers in the school to note their successes.

In the process of conducting the interviews for this research all three kindergarten teachers explained times their team shared successes, though the teachers referred to these practices by different terms. The team seemed to prefer to refer to this idea as sharing best practices. Braden said the following:

We've talked in our team meetings, not necessarily about our strengths. I feel like we've talked about things that we can improve on. I do feel like our team likes to share best practices, things that work really well, so I feel like in that respect, I've been able to share some of my successes and some things that I might do differently than my colleagues. And, I think that's been helpful for them. I also work on a team with two very experienced teachers, so I've been able to gain a lot from them.

Braden started this statement by saying that his team mostly talked about ways they can improve and then shifted to saying that his colleagues, as well as himself, do share their successes, and that it has benefited everyone. This is one example of a participant being hesitant of the

terminology about sharing successes. When I asked about sharing successes with the team, the other two team members said that they feel like they are “boasting” or “bragging.” Penny said, “I think the boastful arrogance thing is like... I have worked with other people that were like, you know, I know more than you do.” When I asked her if there is a way to share successes without boasting she said:

Yes. And I think the way that you share it is, you have to build that culture of mistake making. You have to build that culture of acceptance. You have to build that culture of self-confidence that we can all do things our own way. So, when I'm sharing something, I'm not sharing it thinking that you're going to immediately go back and do exactly what I'm doing.

She continued to talk about the collaborative culture of her team saying, “everyone understands that they're all great teachers with their own ways of doing things, and that it's not about comparing who is better than the other.” The idea that the team needed to have this high level of trust in their colleagues was very important to Penny as the basis for her team being able to share their successes with each other. She also shared that she has worked on teams that did not have this trust and where members expected her to change her instruction based on things they shared. Working on a team like that diminished her self-efficacy as shown in the negative language she used about the experience.

In the interviews each participant was asked what they do when a lesson goes really well. Braden said, “I take a moment to just think ‘hey, that really sunk in.’ Maybe I make a note on my plans of ‘hey, this went really well, make sure you do it again next year.’ Sometimes I'll bring it to my co-workers like, ‘hey, this worked really well, this is what I did. Maybe you should, if you want, give it a try, that sort of thing” I was struck by this last sentence. “Maybe you should, if



you want, give it a try." In one light, this sentiment mirrors another participant's language around how their team values how each teacher teaches differently, and a good teacher has to match the strategies to their styles and to the students' needs, but in another light, this statement might be indicative of this participants' hesitation about sharing with his colleagues.

Another hindrance that multiple members of this team mentioned was the lack of time to talk with colleagues about their successes. Ellery said:

We are down to like no time at all, ever. When is there ever time to talk about beliefs with your colleagues? We can barely finish talking about placement or report cards or about whatever grades need to be entered. I mean, I feel like you never have time to talk.

Braden echoed this sentiment. He said:

We are so short on time. We have 45 minutes, but people show up five minutes late. We have five minutes to go to the bathroom at the end, like, we really try to get in what is going on, what do we need to fix, what do we need to try differently. We do get to those successes, but I feel like that's less frequent than the problem-solving.

Time is so often a limitation when teachers explain why important things do not happen. There are things that absolutely have to get done like report cards, placement, or using the bathroom, and because of that, important-yet-skippable things get left out—like sharing about successes.

Two participants shared the importance of celebrating the small successes that happen each day. Braden explained that "if you only wait for the big successes, it can be very frustrating and so you need to find the small successes every day to kind of keep you coming back, keep you rejuvenated, keep you focused on what those long-term goals are. And so what I've really tried to do is really focus on those small successes because that's what brings me back every day." Another participant, Penny, shared a daily practice that she engaged in for one year. Every

day while driving home from school she would state one positive thing from that day out loud. Penny had had a traumatic year working at a charter school in another state. She explained that this experience had a very negative impact on her. She said, “my confidence level, my self-esteem had been shattered from that experience. I really, truly thought maybe I wasn't a good teacher and I shouldn't be teaching, and that I didn't deserve my own classroom.” She went on to explain that colleagues at a new school where she was hired as an assistant, and then this daily practice, are what “healed” her. She explained that, “by the end of a year I definitely noticed a reduction in negative thoughts.” She said that when she started the practice, she often thought she was lying to herself but as time went on and she continued the practice she found that it became easier to come up with positives from her day. She stopped the practice after a year because she said she didn't need to continue it, though, to this day, if she finds herself in a “negative spiral” then she re-starts it for a couple of weeks. When Penny was not surrounded by a collaborative team where she felt okay making mistakes and was able to celebrate her successes, her self-efficacy was very low. Penny said she couldn't remember how she came to this practice of saying one positive thing aloud each day but that she probably read about it somewhere. Recently, The New York Times published an article about this exact practice. Caron (2023b) writes that “taking a few minutes a day to count our blessings, can also reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, increase self-esteem and improve life satisfaction” (para. 3). In a separate article Caron (2023a) interviewed a psychologist who recently fell while hiking and broke both legs. She explained that she has been thinking of one thing each day she is thankful for. She said that this practice has helped her “to avoid spiraling into negative thoughts while she continues to heal” (para. 27). Her language mirrored the language Penny used in regards to her

daily practice of saying aloud one success. Research backs up this claim when it comes to sharing gratitudes (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kerr et al., 2003).

**How does self-celebration impact self-efficacy for kindergarten teachers at Mountain Top Elementary School, a K-3 school in Northwestern Vermont?** The participants in this study had times when they showed evidence of having high or low self-efficacy. The researcher was able to evaluate the self-efficacy of the teacher by looking at the types of in vivo codes (positive or negative) the researcher used (see Table 2). This research found that **celebrating**, having a **growth mindset**, and serving on a team with a **collaborative culture** concurrently increased teacher **self-efficacy**. Teachers spoke with the most positive language regarding their teaching and behavior management when all of these conditions were met.

**Table 2**  
Positive and Negative In-Vivo Codes

	<b>Positive In-Vivo Codes</b>	<b>Negative In-Vivo Codes</b>
Penny	Living the dream Collective efficacy Felt really good Things I did right Really successful lesson Clearly see next step It felt good I do know what I'm doing I am seeing some success More aware of all the positive pieces I was accountable for the positive pieces Honoring mistakes Growth mindset Unlocked my confidence I'm a good teacher It was super magical Crazy amazing academically rigorous things	Left out to dry Can't trust you Bad teacher Didn't have confidence Confidence and self-esteem shattered Wasn't a good teacher Shouldn't be teaching Didn't deserve my own classroom Zero self-confidence and self-esteem I'm not supposed to be here Questioning everything I did I can't do that I'm a terrible teacher I could never do third grade
Ellery	I love bringing books alive	We are floundering

	Watching them become readers We were very successful I saw kids reading I still feel good about literacy I do anything I can do to help them get there We celebrated the growth usually great	I'm not an expert Winging it every day What am I supposed to be doing? It's all confusing Not teacher friendly Seems unrealistic I don't believe in what they are asking me to do It's not what is best for kids Teaching is exhausting I don't think I did well
Braden	Strongest subject that I teach Things we've done well Help them with their students Know what to do	It can be very frustrating Struggling

### *Sub-questions*

**How do kindergarten teachers know they are capable?** The kindergarten teachers who participated in this study spoke about how they were capable teachers in a variety of ways. They explained that they could tell their teaching was working when students performed well on assessments, when their students were engaged in the learning, and they also spoke about the feelings they got when they knew their teaching was going well. Teachers also seemed more confident in areas of the curriculum in which there seemed to be a school priority.

Penny explained that when something was going well she got a feeling. She went on to describe it as, “that feeling of being in synergy with the kids and in synergy with the learning targets and knowing what's next, and, I guess feeling confident, like, yes, this is it, this is how it should feel. This is what teaching and learning should be every day.” In this example the teacher's self-efficacy was apparent in the words that she used and the feeling that she conveyed. She knew she was a capable teacher because she could see the students making progress with the learning target and she could envision what to do next. She also talked about times when students weren't understanding the lesson or the learning target but when she, as a capable

teacher, understood their misconception and knew what to do to get them back on track. She said, "I can so clearly see the next step for this kid. I completely understand this is the misconception. This is what I'm going to do next." Penny knew she was capable when she could see what was going on for a student and what she should do next.

All of the teachers noted that they knew they were capable teachers when students were engaged in the learning and when they were able to adapt the teaching to the student and make it fun. Ellery said, "I try to make teaching fun in everything I do, because if it's not fun, you're not going to engage the kids." She had examples of times she had had someone come in and tap dance to demonstrate a key concept, students acting out stories, and likening reading strategies to super hero powers as ways that she made learning fun. She said that she was able to adapt the curriculum in this way when she had taught it for a few years and she fully understood the goals. Penny also spoke a lot about making teaching fun. She said, "we usually laugh a lot. And it's usually when I can be super goofy and yet in the same time as we're being really goofy and silly, they're doing these crazy things, like crazy amazing academically rigorous things." She also noted that when she was comfortable with a curriculum, that was when she was able to be more flexible teaching it to make it more fun and also to make sure it was right at the level the students need it to be. She said, "once I get comfortable enough with the content area, then I can be a bit more creative." This idea also went along with the idea that the school was prioritizing this curriculum. When a school prioritizes a curriculum there is often more professional development and support in that area. Braden explained that this school is very focused on literacy and there had been a lot of support in literacy since he started at the school. He said, "I feel like literacy, the last two years in kindergarten has been my strongest suit. I feel like I've been able to put most of my energy and I feel like the school that we work in has been so literacy focused the last

couple years that I've really felt like I've been supported and I have gotten some great ideas of how to teach it." The fact that the school was focused on literacy means that he had been more supported and therefore felt more capable in this area.

**How do kindergarten teachers describe their successes?** This research found common themes around how the kindergarten teachers described their successes. Each participant felt that when they were able to tailor lessons to specific student needs or interests they were more successful. They all also spoke about how they knew a lesson went well when students were engaged in their work with minimal adult direction needed. The participants also noted how they felt more successful when their lessons were fun.

Multiple participants spoke about the need to differentiate lessons to specific students or to student needs in order to feel successful. Penny explained that it took her some time to be comfortable teaching phonics because she needed to learn the curriculum. She said, "once I get comfortable enough with the content area, that I can be a bit more creative and less hyper-focused on 'you have to do it this way all the time'." She said, "I can just move at the pace the kids need it to be." Ellery also shared the viewpoint that she needed to meet the needs of all students. When describing teaching reading strategies she said, "coming to a word and the kids are all looking at their strategies and knowing what strategies to try and just seeing them understand the process because you work so hard to get them to understand how to use these strategies and those lessons when they're putting it all together and they try one strategy and can't get it and then try another one. It's always very exciting to see." Braden also spoke about the need to connect lessons to specific students. He shared about a lesson in which he used a variety of established literacy routines to explore a book about the five senses that was written in Nepali, a language spoken by two of his students. He said, "I felt like it was a really strong connection

for those two students to be able to share about their connection to Nepal." He went on to explain, "it just gave them a moment to shine, where one of them doesn't like to talk as much in class. I feel like that was the most I heard from him in a small group or a large group setting through the entire year. So, I felt like that was really successful." He also shared a story about a student who didn't like to participate in the math lesson, until Braden re-created the math lesson using things the student was interested in, like Legos. He said, "I feel like that has allowed him to be more efficient and to also be more engaged."

The participants also shared how students were more engaged when lessons were successful. Penny shared the feeling she gets when a lesson is going really well, "I get these moments of real clarity, where I know the words I'm saying, the words I'm hearing, the students say what the next step is, is the exact right next thing, and I can just feel that that synergy of that back and forth where I can feel they're engaged, the questions that they're asking." This quote showed both the feeling for the teacher and for the students and Penny explained that these are not independent from each other, she called it a "synergy" and a "back and forth." Braden also spoke about this phenomenon. He explained that he knows a lesson has gone really well when students are talking with each other about the content area at length. He said, "they don't just turn to each other and say a one word answer" and "I go back to the general buzz of kids talking and interacting and I feel like that's when I know, that whatever I've just taught has sunk in, whether it's when they're working at their tables or on the rug, if they're connecting with each other, I think that's when I know, something has gone really well." Ellery also explained that she can tell a lesson has gone well when students are engaged with the work and not needing reminders from adults on the expectations or routines.

Another similarity in times the participants noted success was when their lessons were fun for the students. Penny explained that she is successful when, “I’m relaxed and the kids are relaxed and usually there’s a lot of laughing happening, we usually laugh a lot. And it’s usually when I can be super goofy and yet at the same time as we’re being really goofy and silly, they’re doing these crazy things, like crazy amazing academically rigorous things.” She went into detail about a few different times that she was able to adapt the curriculum and stretch what was expected of students by making the learning fun. She explained that the students felt incredibly proud in these moments because, “they know they’re doing something really hard” but they were laughing while doing it.

The participants of this research found that they knew their teaching was successful when students were engaged in the learning, when the learning was specifically tailored to the students, and when the students were having fun with the learning. This also allowed the students to engage successfully in more rigorous learning.

**How do kindergarten teachers celebrate their own successes?** The participants in this research celebrated their successes in a variety of ways. Their team valued sharing best practices and celebrating successes, as is highlighted in their team norms. Sharing what worked in their lessons (sharing best practices) is a form of self-celebration under the definition of self-celebration used in this dissertation—“any action that acknowledges what went well in one’s teaching”. They also were able to acknowledge their successes to themselves by taking notes on their lesson plans, adding best practices to team documents, and by taking time to notice things that went well in their day. All participants also spoke about celebrating successes with students and some participants shared professional successes with their families.



The kindergarten team's year-long agenda included a list of norms at the top and two of the team norms include references acknowledging successes. The first of these norms is "We will support each other by focusing on strengths, staying on task, and assuming the best intentions." The team indicated that they "focus on strengths" which implied that the team valued self-celebration as focusing on one's strengths is acknowledging what you are good at. This was evident in the weekly agenda items and notes from each meeting as the team often dedicated time to sharing best practices and kept team documents that list best practices for various essential standards. When a teacher shared a best practice, they were telling their team about what worked in their teaching—they were acknowledging what went well for them. This was also referenced in multiple participant interviews. Penny explained that they kept these best practice documents because they often needed to adapt their lessons to match the needs of specific students. She explained that sometimes best practice information could spin from a more negative conversation where the team was troubleshooting how to best approach a specific student who was struggling with a concept, yet the team was able to share success stories in these times to promote new teaching ideas. She explained that the team had a "very deep-seated belief that all students can learn, and that they will learn, and that they deserve to learn, and that is our job." She said they approached situations like this as a team which was important because they knew they were not alone. This helped them approach times like this as a challenge. She said, "I feel like it's a challenge and that we're all in it together." The team was able to keep and use their compiled lists of best practices so that if they had a student in the future who may benefit from a past success, they could look back and find it. She explained that, "a good teacher knows themselves, knows their style, and is able to own it. But is flexible enough to do what they need to do. To help all of their kids make growth and make progress and so every once in a while, you

might end up doing something that maybe is outside of your wheelhouse, but that's what that kid needs and so that's what you do." Compiling these lists of best practices allowed the team to be flexible with their teaching and to teach each student individually.

Another norm from this team that promoted teacher self-celebration was, "Use student performance information as opportunities for student and teacher reflection, progress, growth, change, and celebration." This norm showed that the team prioritized learning for both students and teachers, including teacher celebration. Nearly every time that Penny talked about her successes she also spoke about a growth mindset. When she was asked if she celebrated her successes she answered that she celebrated her successes and she celebrated her mistakes. For Penny, the two were intertwined.

Each of the participants also spoke about how they celebrated successes with students for both academic and behavioral successes. Braden explained that a routine in his classroom that is established early in the year is to have a class debrief after most activities. During these debriefs he has a short discussion with the class about what went well and if they need to continue working on anything. He said, "they're prepared for that after most lessons, that we're going to chat quickly about all those positive things that I've seen." Ellery also spoke about how she celebrated student growth during the school year. She explained how her class made a goal to focus during learning times and then on the 50th day of school they invited the principal to their classroom to show her their great academic skills. Penny also spoke about celebrating with students. She said that she would gather their attention in the middle of a lesson when they were doing exceptionally hard work or their focus and engagement was especially high and draw their attention to it, and she would also explain to the class how far they had come by showing work from earlier in the school year. She said that her class also focused on how making mistakes was

ok. She said, “you can make mistakes because how can you grow if you don't take risks? And if you take a risk, you're going to make a mistake. Like it's just the way it is. And so that was one of our hopes and dreams this year in kindergarten. We totally did this, we said that even our mistakes are going to feel good in our classroom. And it did. When they reflected on their class hopes at the end of the year they agreed that they accomplished this.” She described this moment as “celebratory.” For Penny, this was a very important aspect of her classroom community and she ensured that other adults entering the space, such as interns or other teaching professionals, understood and honored the culture, for the students and for themselves. When talking about having student teachers, Penny explained, “I'm not there to point out everything they're doing wrong. I'm there to help them grow and they're going to make mistakes and it's okay.”

Some of the participants also explained that they share their professional successes with their families at home. Braden explained that his wife is also an educator, and they have many friends who are educators as well. He said that this makes it easy for him to share his successes as well as any struggles he is having. He said:

Even though they're not direct colleagues, they're other people that are in the field, and I feel like that's been helpful to bounce ideas and get ideas from other people in the field that I've been able to apply in the classroom as well.

Penny also said that she shared professional successes with her husband and sometimes with her mom. She explained that compliments can make her feel uncomfortable, so when she was able to get a card or note that is complimentary, she was able to process the compliment in her own space, and then was more likely to share it with others.

All three of the participants shared that scheduled celebrations made them feel uncomfortable. Penny, who served as the team's teacher leader on the school's guiding coalition,

said, “scheduled celebrations are always really awkward. They feel very forced. And that is definitely a piece that is not as comfortable for my team, and it is for me too. If somebody gives me a compliment, I enjoy the compliment, but then I also can't really handle it and then I kind of freak out." Ellery and Braden both shared that the school sometimes shared successes at the bigger staff meetings, but when that happened it was short and not specific.

### **Conceptual Findings**

This research was designed as a constructivist case study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) states that “social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 45). Researchers using this lens rely on the perceptions of the participants being studied. Van Hover and Hicks (2017) further explain that social constructivist theoretical framework focused on how participants past experiences, environments, and social interactions influences their current knowledge and practices. In this study the researcher looked at the role of self-celebration in educators' practice. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to have a discourse with the participants that allowed each participant the opportunity to share stories from their past. From this, the researcher was able to gain insight into past social interactions, experiences, and environments that helped shape the participants use of self-celebration and lead to some of the findings in this dissertation.

This study is a qualitative case study. Yin (2022) explains that case study research, “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 45). Case study research is the ideal research method in this instance because the phenomenon (self-celebration) is bound to the context (this specific team at this specific school). The team and school are important features of this case study research.

This was thoughtfully designed in this way so as to be able to dig deeply into the lived experiences of the participants. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) explain that when participants are able to share their stories they seem more real and the reader can relate to the participant more. This study met Lyons and LeBoskey's criteria for exemplar narrative research because the participants were able to reflect on their practices in the interviews, they were interviewed about a specific context, they were able to tell their stories, their identity was an important aspect of their stories, and their stories were used to construct meaning. By using a variety of coding methods, including in vivo coding, the participants' voices were able to be amplified and shared in the findings and discussion of this research, further allowing the participants' stories to be highlighted.

### **Implications and Limitations**

The most evident limitation of this research was the small sample size of teachers. This research focused on celebrations—both self-celebration and celebration in community—in one kindergarten team of teachers, where the whole kindergarten team consisted of three teachers. The findings of this research ascertain the true-story of celebrations for these three teachers and their team, but cannot be generalized to other teachers or other teams.

Another limitation of this study was the time frame in which the interviews were conducted. The researcher interviewed each teacher one time. Some of the interviews ran out of time and had to be broken down into two smaller time slots. Two of the three interviews occurred during the final days of school, in the teachers' classroom, and one interview was done after the school year had finished in the teacher's home. The interviews that were completed at school in the final days of the school year had a different feel to the one completed at the teacher's home after the school year finished. The teachers at school seemed mostly focused on

their current school year and were more distracted by things going on in their space. The teacher who was interviewed at her house seemed to have a bigger picture, was thinking back to past years, and had longer answers to the prompt questions. Conducting the interviews at the end of the school year also provided positive impacts on the research. Since the interviews were conducted at the end of the school year, teachers were able to remember their students' full year in full detail and were able to talk about things that happened this year from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The researcher was also able to use a full year's worth of agendas in document review to gather more information about the team's meetings.

### **Application of Findings**

This research will be applicable to educator team structure and individual teachers. This research shows that teachers have higher self-efficacy when they serve on highly collaborative teams, when the team values each members' different teaching style, the team has a belief that making mistakes is ok, and they can celebrate their successes with colleagues. This research will be used to encourage teacher teams to be more collaborative, have a growth mindset, and to celebrate their successes in a supportive atmosphere.

This research will promote the idea to teachers that there is not one right way to do things. Different teachers have different teaching styles and good teachers use their skills to meet the needs of every student. Teachers need to have a relationship with students so that the teacher truly knows each student including their interests and skills. They need to be able to use best practices as needed, flexibly, with students based on their current level, their misconceptions, and by taking their interests into account. Teachers need to be flexible enough to try a teaching strategy that may be less familiar to them, if it is what the student needs. This research will also encourage teachers to value the diverse expertise of different teachers and to appreciate that

every teacher teaches differently. Teams can do this by compiling a list of their best practices to utilize as needed.

Allowing teachers the flexibility to teach in their own way encourages self-celebration as teachers will feel they can share their expertise and skills with others in a non-threatening way that is student-centered and promotes collective teacher efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy is an important concept in schools. Hattie (2009) lists collective teacher efficacy as the second most important factor for student achievement. This research confirmed that when teachers collaborate on teams that value each teacher, they are more able to share and celebrate their successes, thus building their collective self-efficacy. In addition, Demirkol (2023) found that there is a positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy and teacher collective efficacy. This means that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to have higher collective efficacy.

This research also encourages teachers to cultivate a culture of growth mindset for themselves, as well as within their teams and classrooms. Teachers will be more likely to share their successes when it is in response to a student need. Teachers will problem solve how to best help one student by sharing their skills and successes. This can only happen when teachers believe that it is okay to make mistakes and feel comfortable sharing with colleagues when they need help. When teachers extend their growth mindset attitude to their classrooms as well, they become a growth mindset role model for their students.

## **Summary**

Teachers will celebrate-in-community by sharing their successes with colleagues more often when they know that they serve on a supportive, collaborative team that values their individual teaching style. They will share what has worked for them in the past with their team when team-members reach out for support for specific students especially when the conversation

is student-centered and focused on problem solving. Teachers should be encouraged to share small successes related to the curriculum, behavior management, and social-emotional skills, as well as larger accomplishments.

## **Chapter 5: Contribution to Practice and Practitioner Reflection**

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

This research found that teachers believe in their ability to teach (**self-efficacy**) when a teacher can notice and reflect on when things go well in their teaching (**celebration**) and they have a strong collaborative team that values each members' different teaching style where they can give and get support and feedback (**collaborative culture**) because the team has a culture of mistake making (**growth mindset**). All of this research arcs back to the idea that relationships are important. For teachers to be able to celebrate with their colleagues and value making mistakes, they have to serve on a team with a strong collaborative culture. There has to be trust between the teachers on the team. They have to trust that each person has their own teaching style and trust that they will do everything they can to help students. They have to trust that they can be vulnerable with their team to share when students aren't learning to get ideas to help them learn. This is all more possible when teachers have high collective efficacy and believe that it is everyone's responsibility to help students learn. The kindergarten team who participated in this research had a strong relationship which every participant spoke about in their interview.

### ***Building Relationships on Teacher Teams***

There is a plethora of research that supports the idea that trust is an important characteristic of teams (Costa et al., 2001; Erdem & Ozen, 2003). As a scholar practitioner who works in this school, I have seen the value of strong relationships on teams and across teams as well. The participants in this study repeatedly mentioned ways in which their team trusted each



other. Reilly (2023) explains that work teams need to be “emotionally intelligent” (p. 203). Teams with higher emotional intelligence have higher trust and lower rates of conflict. He explains that successful teams are often small. Small teams are more likely to have higher levels of trust and thus they can share their vulnerability with their team. The team in this study valued the fact that each teacher on their team had a different teaching style and they understood that what worked well for one teacher might not work as well for another. They also shared an understanding that every child will learn and that they would work together to make sure that that happened. They valued “mistake making” for themselves and as a tenet for their classrooms. Because of these shared trusts they were able to be open and honest with each other when sharing successes and when asking for help. These are all qualities of a team being emotionally intelligent. Reilly explains that:

Emotionally intelligent teams are confident in their ability to cope with stressful situations and overcome any obstacles, which confronts them while achieving their goal. They grow stronger from these experiences by actively seeking them out, which is determined by the amount of time and effort they commit to solving them” (p. 213).

This team’s growth mindset allows them to continually frame their work together in successes. When one teammate has a question or problem, others are able to problem solve by sharing ideas, solutions, or best practices.

What is interesting about this team is that they are a relatively new team. One of the team members, Braden, is only in his third year of teaching and second year at this school on this team. Researchers have found that building trust in work teams has to be earned (Griffiths, 2006). Braden explained in his interview that he became comfortable around his teammates very quickly once starting at this school. Research also shows that teams with “continuous and

frequent interaction” maintained higher levels of trust (Iacono & Weisband, 1997). Each of the participants of this study mentioned “time” at some point in their interviews, specifically how hard it is to find time to talk to colleagues as a classroom teacher, and yet, this kindergarten team has been able to establish a level of trust despite a lack of time.

Recognizing the value of “time,” this school has prioritized collaborative time for their teachers. Each grade level team has two dedicated meeting times each week, one for the three teachers on the team designated as a grade level planning meeting, and one with a larger group of educators designated as an RTI meeting. In addition to these planning times this district dismisses students one hour early once weekly and the faculty has two-hours of meeting times that rotate between whole staff meetings, collaborative grade level meetings, and district meetings.

The one other thing that this school has recently done to promote interaction between grade level teachers is reorganize the building so that classrooms that teach the same grade are in close proximity to each other. Two of the three kindergarten classrooms are next to each other with a door joining between the two rooms and the third is just around the corner of the hallway. Previous to this reorganization the three kindergarten classrooms were widely spaced out in the building with one upstairs and two downstairs on opposite sides of the building. Both teachers in the conjoined rooms spoke about how they are able to chat during the day because they are so close to each other. Iacono and Weisband (1997) went on to explain that groups can more quickly establish trust when they can initiate and respond to interactions and when they efficiently move through projects. These are scenarios that teaching teams encounter often, which may have led to the quickly built trust on this kindergarten team. Trust was a vital part of

this teacher team. The team had to build their trust before they could honor each other's teaching style or celebrate their successes.

Building teacher teams in which the teachers are able to trust each other is an important first step for schools. Once teams with trust are established the teams need to be encouraged to value each teacher's teaching style with the understanding that all teachers are doing all that they can do to ensure all students learn. The teams also need to be encouraged to value mistakes and celebrate their successes. Marker and Heller (2023) share a meeting agenda that incorporates these two concepts. One agenda includes sections labeled "grow" and "glow" (p. 26). In the "grow" section the team can note next steps, follow up actions, or team suggestions. The "glow" section is for, "teams to name and claim the celebrations of their work including reaching goals and gains in student achievement" (p. 26). Incorporating these important concepts into the meeting agenda is a way to ensure that the team keeps a focus on growing from mistakes and celebrating what is going well.

Lastly, this researcher's biggest recommendation is for educators to own their celebrations! Research explains that a dopamine release that happens when people celebrate a small win (Johnson, 2022) and reap the benefits like being more creative, innovative, and motivated (Avrahami et al., 2022). This team of teachers all spoke about what went well in their teaching in guarded ways, hiding behind phrases like "best practices" or "strengths" and multiple participants said they feel uncomfortable sharing their successes because they feel like they are "bragging" or "boasting". The evidence uncovered in this research proves that teachers need to feel successful in their occupation and one way to feel successful is to self-celebrate— and furthermore— teachers need to call it celebrating.

### **Plan for Disseminating Findings**

The findings of this research will be shared with the principal of the school in which the research was conducted before the school year starts during a one-on-one meeting between the principal and this researcher. At this meeting the researcher will present the findings of the study and discuss the ramifications. The goal of this meeting will be to promote the ways in which the team in this study was successful in celebrating their successes and exhibiting self-efficacy. It will also draw attention to the fact that the team did not feel the same levels of trust and relationship at the larger RTI meeting. This research will be shared through an Appreciative Inquiry lens (Cooperrider, 2005). The information shared will focus on what the research found that the kindergarten team was doing well. This way the school can focus on all teams having access to similar resources, such as time with colleagues and close physical spaces in the building.

The findings from this study will also be drafted into an article and submitted to NEA Today, the National Educators Association monthly magazine. The article will focus on the need for teacher teams to have the time necessary to build trust in their collaborative teams so that they feel they can celebrate their successes with their colleagues and feel increasingly successful. This is important information for teachers to know and understand because teaching can be a “closed door” profession. This research shines a light on how important it is for teachers to build relationships with their colleagues.

This research will also be shared in an EDLINKS™ webinar. EDLINKS™ is an organization that cherishes all of the same values that I do: resilience, strengths-based approaches, and Appreciative Inquiry (EDLINKS™, 2023). One of the services EDLINKS™ provides is webinars that promote these values. The findings from this research, as well as recommendations for educators, will be shared in a two-hour webinar in December.

## **Implications for the Future**

This research is ripe with implications for the future. Though there is research providing insight that self-efficacy and resilience are related (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022), there is relatively little research about how teachers can foster their self-efficacy, especially from within themselves. This research started to look at self-celebration as a tool to do this, but much more research could be done in this area.

This research came about and was focused on the role of self-celebration in elementary educators' practices, however, during the data analysis it became apparent that teachers also celebrated their successes with colleagues and that the celebration-in-community was an important aspect to consider along with self-celebration. The participants in this study spoke about the ways in which their kindergarten team shared responsibility for all of the kindergarteners at the school despite which class each student was in and they encouraged and helped each other meet the needs of every student through celebration-in-community. They shared teaching strategies that worked in specific contexts when they thought those ideas would help with other students. By sharing their successes, the team was able to ensure that all students had access to every teaching strategy and would be able to learn. This researcher continues to be interested in the role of self-celebration in growing self-efficacy as it would be a fully intrinsic way for teachers to build resilience.

This research showed that teachers who serve on collaborative teams with a growth mindset are able to celebrate their successes and have higher self-efficacy. The teachers on this team celebrated their successes with their team by sharing best practices and problem-solving teaching strategies when they were concerned with student growth. Research could be done into different ways teachers celebrate their successes or different celebration strategies. This research

also focused on one teaching team at one school. Similar research could be conducted in different schools, at different grade levels, or with teams of different sizes.

This research was of a constructivist design and was focused on listening to and learning from the lived experiences of teachers. All of the teachers in this study spoke about the lack of time teachers usually have to engage in this type of activity and how they felt it was a powerful experience for them. There is research about the benefit of people telling their stories (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2022; Wolfe et al., 2022) and more research should be conducted that allows teachers to share their actual lived experiences as well as research that explores the importance of this phenomenon.

Another area of further research is exploring gender differences when it comes to acknowledging, sharing, and celebrating successes with teammates. This research focused on a three-person teacher team consisting of two female teachers and one male teacher. There were notable differences in how the male and female participants spoke about celebrating their successes. Both of the female participants brought up “bragging” or “boasting” when asked about whether or not they shared their successes with colleagues whereas the male participant did not share this belief. He was the most adamant that the team did share their successes with each other and even said that the team “almost always” saved a few minutes to share things that were going really well. When asked if he thought there would be a difference in how educators felt about sharing their successes with colleagues based on the participant’s gender he hesitated and then answered, “I don’t know. That’s a good question.”

### **Personal Reflections**

During the writing of this dissertation, my state was hit with catastrophic flooding. It was during the summer break for teachers, but in about a month, they will be returning to school

buildings despite having lost their houses and their personal belongings, and they will need to be able to support students who are dealing with the same sort of trauma. I came to this dissertation topic during a world-wide traumatic event, the COVID-19 pandemic, another time when teachers were asked to support students while concurrently going through a traumatic event. Hirshberg (2023) states that educators had higher levels during this time of severe anxiety or depressive symptoms than the general population and that those with higher anxiety and depressive symptoms were more likely to leave the field of education. This finding rings true for me as a classroom teacher during that time. Six of the 20 licensed teachers at my school left teaching during the 2020-2021 school year. With this research, I set out to explore ways in which teachers could feel more successful, a research topic with possible implications for future research in building self-efficacy and promoting teacher retention.

The research that most inspired me when I was first exploring this topic noted the importance of teachers sharing their stories (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2022; Wolfe et al., 2022) and how self-efficacy could boost resilience (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kaynak, 2020; Schussler et al., 2018; Yin, 2022). I was reminded of the importance of sharing stories at my district in-service during the COVID-19 pandemic lock down when I was teaching remotely in the spring of 2020 and upon the return to the classroom following the outbreak of COVID-19 in August of 2020. Teachers in my district were able to attend in-service sessions led by a psychologist who spoke to us about how to work with students during a traumatic time. One of the main takeaways I had from these training sessions was how important it was for students to be able to share their stories. Siegel and Bryson (2012) write about how children need to “name it to tame it” (p. 44). This means that when a child shares their story about an event or their feelings, it can calm the child and it also builds resilience, allowing the child to deal with bigger emotions in the future (J.

van Lent, personal communication, August 27, 2020). Though these trainings, and Siegel and Bryson's book, are intended for children, the same message rings true in regard to adults about sharing stories. Right now, when teachers in my state are dealing with catastrophic flooding in their communities, they need to be sharing their stories and be able to allow students to do the same. Wolfe et al. (2022) reiterated the importance of educators sharing their stories in the conclusion of their article when they say early childhood teacher's "voices are powerful and emphatic" (p. 907), and they encourage more studies that allow teachers to share their stories.

### **Summary**

This research found that teachers believe in their ability to teach when a teacher can notice and reflect on when things go well in their teaching and they have a strong collaborative team that values each members' different teaching style where they can give and get support and feedback because the team has a culture of mistake making. Teachers need to make sure that they have supportive teams in their schools in which they can collaborate with colleagues whom they trust so that they can make mistakes and also celebrate their own successes (self-celebration) or the successes of their colleagues (celebration-in-community). Teachers should not shy away from calling this celebration!



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## Appendix A

### Southern New Hampshire University Institutional Review Board

#### Informed Consent Form for **The Role of Self-Celebrations in Teacher Resilience**

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Rachel Manz, who is a doctoral candidate at Southern New Hampshire University.

You are invited to participate in a research study about if and how kindergarten teachers acknowledge and celebrate their professional successes.

You will be asked to participate in a one to two hour interview with the researcher. The interview will be recorded. The interview will focus on how you acknowledge and celebrate your professional successes.

The potential risks associated with this study are minimal. We expected the project to benefit you by providing insight into your current practice and providing more information about educators acknowledging and celebrating their professional successes.

If you have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time with no penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason with no penalty.

In addition, your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. Interview recordings will be stored in a private Google Doc folder labeled by pseudonyms until they are no longer needed. They will be deleted when they are no longer needed. Participants names will not be included in the final research document, nor will the name or location of the research setting.

If you have any questions regarding this project, you may contact the researcher at [rmanz@ewsd.org](mailto:rmanz@ewsd.org). If you have questions regarding your rights as research participant or any

concerns regarding this project, you may report them – confidentially, if you wish – to the University Campus Institutional Review Board Chairperson at [IRB@snhu.edu](mailto:IRB@snhu.edu).

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to participate in the research.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

IRB Approval Number: **IRB-FY2023-29**

IRB Expiration Date: **5-25-24**

## Appendix B

### The Role of Self-Celebrations in Teacher Resilience

#### Interview Questions

##### Possible Guiding questions:

Tell me about your background in education?

What subject are you best at teaching?

Do you ever talk about this with your colleagues?

How do you talk about this with your colleagues?

Tell me about a specific lesson that went well?

How did you know students were learning?

What makes a teacher a good teacher?

What do you do when a lesson goes well?

How do you feel when a lesson goes well?

How do you share with colleagues when something at work goes great?  
Do you celebrate your professional successes at work?

How?

If not, why not?

Do you celebrate your professional successes at home?

How? To whom?

If not, why not?

**Probes:**

Tell me more about that.

Would you give me an example?

Can you elaborate on that idea?

Would you explain that further?

What else / is there anything else?

Why...? How...?