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Educator Perceptions of Self-Efficacy and Preparedness to Work in High Poverty Schools

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EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY AND PREPAREDNESS TO WORK IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The school leader and teacher have the greatest impact on student success. The level of self-efficacy and level of preparedness is of the utmost importance for educators and students alike. This study investigated the perceptions of educators in the belief of whether they were adequately prepared to teach in a high poverty school. The participants, educators from four school districts, completed a survey based on their perceptions of their own level of self-efficacy and preparedness to work in high poverty schools. The results of this study are aimed at impacting educator preparedness to better understand how to best support students who live in poverty. The analysis through descriptive statistics and correlation analyses indicated an overall perception that educators felt well-prepared with limited supporting evidence to work in high poverty schools in the K-12 setting in the areas of student learning and engagement including curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment. Educators felt a moderate level of self-efficacy, which indicated a need for professional learning in how to best support students in the high poverty setting in terms of problem solving when issues arise in the classroom. The implications of practice for this study indicated a need to ensure educators' perceptions of preparedness to work in a high poverty school are at a high level and educators need to have a high level of self-efficacy to have a positive impact on student success. Future research should be conducted to pinpoint specific areas of need within student learning and engagement in order to

determine how to best develop professional learning. Additional research should be conducted to determine if teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy and perceptions of preparedness are correlated to the leadership style of the school leader in place. Additional research should also be conducted to determine what specifically makes the educator feel a higher level of self-efficacy in the high poverty setting.
KEY WORDS: Transformational leadership, Self-efficacy, Perceptions, Preparedness, High poverty, Professional development

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and my parents for always supporting and encouraging me to achieve anything I set my mind to along the way.

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EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY AND PREPAREDNESS TO WORK IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Poverty adversely affects academic and non-academic outcomes due to unfavorable conditions in the home, school, and community (United States Government Accountability Office [USGOA], 2018). Furthermore, students face homelessness, hunger, trauma, and chronic stress, which all negatively impact student academic success (USGAO, 2018). In addition, these factors impact a child's ability to learn and process information. Children who live in poverty are the least likely to become educated in our nation (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Furthermore, more than one million students a year in the United States leave school between the ages of 14 and 16 after enduring years of schooling in which frustration, embarrassment, failure, and minimal achievement were daily realities.

In the United States, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program provides a measure for the concentration of low-income students within a school (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2020a). In this indicator, public schools are divided into categories by FRPL eligibility. Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0% or less of the students are eligible for FRPL. Mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1% to 50.0% of the students are eligible for FRPL. Mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1% to 75.0% of the students are eligible for FRPL. High-poverty schools are those where more than 75.0% of the students are eligible for FRPL (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2020b).

Research pointed to differences in access to reading materials by students from low-income families compared to their more affluent peers (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Research has demonstrated that children's social class was one of the most significant predictors of their educational success and performance gaps by social class take root in the earliest years of children's lives and failed to narrow in the years that follow (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). In addition, children's socioeconomic status was considered one of the most significant predictors of educational success. How educators think about poverty was important because it influenced how teachers respond to students and their families who live in poverty (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Educators' perceptions of working in high poverty schools typically face challenges as teachers feel inadequate to teach students who come from impoverished backgrounds and serve students who are from a different race (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). Furthermore, 40.0-50.0% of teachers who taught in high poverty schools transferred to schools with higher socioeconomic status within the first five years of teaching.

Evidence suggested that teachers have the most significant effect on student achievement of any school-based factor (Stosich, 2016). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) promoted the need for access to well-qualified teachers to close the equity gap (Cook-Harvey et al., 2016). Additionally, ESSA mandated that each state establish an accountability system for school quality and student success, as well as address disproportionate rates of ineffective teachers who serve low-income students to examine the root causes and consequences of inequities across school districts. Teachers need to be adept at continuously learning and improving their skills to acclimate to the ever-changing needs of students (Yoon & Kim, 2021).

There was a gap in the literature in identifying educator perceptions of their own preparedness specifically to work in high poverty schools, thus warranting further research. The

literature suggested that teacher self-efficacy had the greatest impact on student achievement (Yoon & Kim, 2021). It was also suggested that educators' perceptions do not align with the needs of students who live in poverty (Wronowski, 2018). Research was lacking in determining what educators' perceptions of their own effectiveness were in high poverty schools and what professional learning was needed to best support students, which indicated further research was warranted to determine educator perceptions of effectiveness in working with children who live in poverty.

Background

Students from impoverished backgrounds often have not had their basic needs met, which provides a challenge for teachers in the public school setting (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Are educators adequately trained to teach students from impoverished backgrounds? Are educators able to address the high academic needs of these students? To address these questions, this review of the literature included the theoretical framework of transformational leadership in conjunction with deficit theory, high-poverty schools, high-achieving schools, self-efficacy, professional learning around curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, assessment, student success, and teacher retention.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational Leadership Theory

The study of educator perceptions of preparedness to work with children who live in poverty was grounded in transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory is based on the emotions, ideals, ethics, standards, and longstanding goals of the leader (Northouse, 2018). In addition, this theory focused on empowering others and leading for

change. Furthermore, a transformational leader has a clear vision, is a great role model, and is adaptable to the needs of the individuals in the organization.

Transformational leadership involved an explicit sense of purpose, the use of strategies that provide opportunities to work through difficult problems and being held accountable by measurable success indicators (Fullan, 2001). An organization cannot change unless the individuals within it change (Hall & Hord, 2006). Additionally, transformational leadership is paramount in making sure positive change occurred within an organization. Moreover, the leadership goals developed were shared, training was on-going, and frequent check-ins were essential.

Transformational leaders integrated creative insight, remain persistent, were sensitive to the needs of others, and had the ability to inspire others (Duraku & Hoxha, 2021). School leaders had the greatest impact on teacher efficacy and teachers' work performance (Hartinah et al., 2020). When school principals developed a transformational leadership style, they can provide individual support for professional learning (Geijsel et al., 2003). Furthermore, this leadership style provided a positive impact on teachers' sense of competence and self-efficacy.

Deficit Theory

This study was also grounded in deficit theory where educators may blame a child's socioeconomic status when a child fails in school instead of supporting the child and finding ways to help them succeed (Valencia, 2010). Moreover, deficit theory thinking did not hold educators accountable for student performance of those that come from poverty, instead, it blamed the child and their economic status for students failing in school. Furthermore, deficit theory was defined as "the idea that minority students labor under intellectual handicaps because of their family structure, linguistic background, and culture" (p. 10).

Teachers have the greatest impact on student success in the classroom (Lombardi, 2016). “Teacher’s expectations impact student success more than a student’s own motivation” (p. 1). The Center for American Progress shared a 2014 report that supported the notion that some teachers believed that students who come from impoverished backgrounds were less likely to graduate compared to their more affluent peers (Lombardi, 2016). Additionally, in this study, teachers also indicated they believed that students who did not have access to the internet and a computer in the home, a place to study, and parents whose income fell below the poverty line were less likely to perform in school. Moreover, teachers who had high expectations and high standards for their students were more likely to have a positive impact on the students. These students were more likely to meet the expectations and succeed in school. Furthermore, it was found that students who were taught by a teacher with high expectations, no matter what their background, were three times more likely to graduate college when compared to students who had teachers with low expectations. Through transformational leadership, teachers would be more likely to break free of the deficit theory thinking model and be able to better support students who came from a high poverty home because the leader would have the ability to inspire others to change their thinking (Duraku & Hoxha, 2021).

Educator Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy could influence one’s ability to set goals, make decisions when faced with challenging situations, and persevere in certain situations (Woodcock et al., 2022). Self-efficacy was a “construct described as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). More specifically, teacher self-efficacy is the “belief in their own capabilities to facilitate desired student outcomes” (p. 3). Furthermore, teachers with a high self-efficacy were confident that they could be successful in

classroom management and instructional strategies. In addition, teachers with a higher self-efficacy had a higher level of job satisfaction and had a positive impact on others as well as students. Leader self-efficacy was described as an individual's level of confidence in their ability to lead others (Kwok, 2020). Additionally, teachers and leaders with more years of experience had a higher level of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy was strengthened by professional learning communities in a supportive and creative climate (Liu et al., 2021). Furthermore, educator self-efficacy was stronger when provided a climate that was innovative and supported taking risks in the school setting. Additionally, teachers were more innovative when they have higher levels of self-efficacy.

High Poverty Schools, High Achieving Schools

Excellence and equity were aligned goals in high performing, high poverty schools, and excuses were never made or accepted for a student's level of performance (Calkins et al, 2007). "Leaders and educators in high performing, high poverty schools were willing to examine data and asked questions in order to peel back the layers of the ways in which schools systemically perpetuated underachievement" (Parrett & Budge, 2020, p. 66). Additionally, when teachers and leaders work together, they can eradicate destructive policies and practices, such as inequitable funding to improve student achievement. Furthermore, it was also suggested that educators could be successful and provide an environment where families felt they belonged.

Professional Learning

Professional learning was a topic of discussion amongst educators for years, however, professional learning that was offered did not prepare educators for what they faced in the classroom (Moore et al., 2021). Additionally, effective professional learning was a fundamental component in making school practices and student learning changes. It was also suggested, "the

most effective professional development activities for increasing teachers' knowledge and skills included those that provided teachers with opportunities to actively engage with each other around curriculum and instruction" (p. 3). Furthermore, professional learning should be on-going and not just a one-time event.

Professional learning needs to be at the forefront when building capacity and building learning communities for teachers to deliver high level instruction to students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Additionally, professional learning should be well planned and organized to benefit all teachers. Furthermore, continuous improvement should be the goal of every educator where student needs are addressed, instructional strategies are shared, impact was determined through data analysis and was engaging, meaningful lessons were developed, and professional learning was job-embedded.

Effective professional learning should focus on specific teaching and learning strategies relevant to the teacher, relevant to the content area, and relevant to the type of students in the classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In addition, teachers need hands-on learning experiences and opportunities to practice what they have learned. Furthermore, teachers need to collaborate with others, share ideas, and create learning communities. Moreover, teachers need a model of what best practices look like in the classroom through peer observations and coaching.

Teachers should be provided time to reflect on their practices and receive feedback from the administration as the implementation of professional learning is critical to making a change and producing desired outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) suggested that professional learning would not be successful if the following barriers were in place, "inadequate resources, lack of a shared vision, lack of time for implementation, failure to align state and local policies,

dysfunctional school cultures, and inability to tackle and assess the quality of professional development" (p. 6).

In seminal work, Guskey and Sparks (1995) created professional development standards for educators that have since been revised and implemented in many curriculums (Moore et al., 2021). Additionally, the quality of staff development was based on administrators being knowledgeable about instructional practices and the school culture was led by administration with a coaching mindset and learning communities with access to resources that needed to be embedded in the culture of the school were the norm.

The following sub-sections, assessment, differentiation, curriculum, and pedagogy are related to professional learning and impact student and teacher success, which fall under the umbrella of student learning and engagement (McBrayer & Melton, 2018).

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Pedagogy is *the art, science, or profession of teaching* (Merriam-Webster, 2022). When assigned the appropriate instruction level, all students could demonstrate success (Carter, 2001). Additionally, instruction in the classroom should have a "direct, systematic approach" no matter the student's socioeconomic status (p. 29). Best practices in education were when students were taught in small, homogeneous groups created by skill level and the material was delivered and was necessary, re-taught and re-tested until the student demonstrates mastery of the skills (Carter, 2001).

Differentiation

Differentiated instruction in the classroom was critical to student success. A teacher must be knowledgeable of each students' strengths, needs, and interests to best plan for differentiation (Goddard & Kim, 2018). Furthermore, differentiation must be implemented with purpose and

must be adaptable to student needs. Differentiated instruction requires time and reflection to be implemented with fidelity (Tomlinson, 2022).

Assessment

There is a need to create a system for administering and creating assessments that provide the opportunity for the assessment data to guide instruction to impact student achievement (Cunningham, 2011). Furthermore, in this study, six high-poverty, high-performing schools were surveyed and interviewed. Regular assessments were given at all six schools where data were utilized to drive instruction. The school had an assessment wall where student data were displayed and celebrated and administrators attended grade level data team meetings to support instructional planning based on the assessment data. Moreover, benchmark tests were administered and data were analyzed among the teachers and the administrators. Administering appropriate assessments was a way to uphold the schools' goals and promoted high quality instruction (Carter, 2001). Furthermore, assessment should be a tool to ensure the student was on the correct instructional level. Additionally, high quality assessments and evaluations of the output demonstrated the level of implementation and fidelity in which a curriculum was taught. Moreover, assessment should be utilized to demonstrate mastery of the standards as well as align to instruction. When a student fails, re-teaching must occur. Furthermore, it was imperative that not only the teacher monitor assessment uses, but the administrators in the school must also take ownership and disaggregate the data in an effective manner.

Student Success

Research showed that teachers with a deep understanding of the content and subject matter and a plethora of teaching experience were more successful in asking higher level questions in class than less experienced teachers (National Research Council, 2000). Teachers

had the greatest impact on student achievement, which indicated a need for professional learning that provided teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide meaningful instruction (King & Newman, 2000). A well-qualified teacher should be the priority for the classroom to have a positive impact on student achievement (National Science Board, 1999). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) shared that research has proven that the teacher-student relationship and the correlation between teacher preparation and teacher effectiveness had a significant impact on student success in the classroom (AACTE, 2012).

In the state of Georgia, the College and Career Performance Indicator (CCRPI) was a comprehensive tool used to measure student achievement, school improvement, and accountability (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). Additionally, CCRPI was an indicator to measure how well a school was performing and how well-prepared students were for college. Furthermore, helping students succeed and graduate high school ready for college and/or career was the goal of CCRPI. Moreover, data obtained from CCRPI could be used to support schools in the improvement process to better support teachers and students alike.

Teacher Retention

In the first few years of teaching, teachers were 6.0% more likely to leave high poverty schools than those working in lower poverty schools (Bettini et al., 2021). Additionally, the most effective teachers who transferred often choose to leave a high poverty school and move to a low-poverty school, consequently intensifying inequalities in access to effective teachers for students. Furthermore, to help curb the attrition rate, all novice teachers should be provided a mentor to improve their rate of success in a school setting as teachers who work in a high poverty setting need a mentor at an even greater proportion than those serving in a low poverty school. Moreover, feedback from a mentor teacher has proven to be influential in helping

teachers learn effective strategies when working with children who live in poverty. School leaders should also purposefully plan for others to provide support as new teachers depend on a support system that school leaders could facilitate by providing instructional support personnel for each new teacher (Hopkins et al., 2018).

In summary, poverty negatively impacts academic performance due to the challenging conditions in the home, school, and community that these children face. One of the most important factors in raising student achievement was a highly efficacious teacher who was well trained in their content area and understood cultural differences. With highly efficacious teachers having the greatest impact on student achievement, this indicated a need to determine educators' perceptions of preparedness to teach in high poverty schools.

Statement of the Problem

Poverty can negatively affect children and can have a direct impact on academic success. Children who live in poverty face many barriers which hinder academic success. Often, teachers were not prepared to teach children from impoverished backgrounds. Most high poverty schools fall into the failing category for the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) in Georgia, which could be an indication that educators are not adequately prepared to support students from impoverished backgrounds because of failing test scores. Teacher attrition rates were high in some areas across Georgia, leading to an inability to properly train teachers due to high turnover, specifically in high poverty schools. If better training programs are implemented, then teacher retention may increase and teachers may feel more adequately prepared to support students who live in poverty, and in turn, student achievement may increase.

Educators often come to the education platform with their own norms and expectations of how students should perform and behave in school. Many educators had very little exposure or

knowledge of teaching children of poverty and also had very little knowledge of how to work through the many barriers children who live in poverty face. Children who live in poverty must have their basic needs met before being successful academically. Educators need to recognize behaviors a child may exhibit when they have experienced poverty and in turn need to know how to best support that child. Without proper training, such as in teacher preparation programs and on-going professional learning, a teacher may not be able to meet the needs of children who live in poverty. Educators' perceptions of preparedness to work with children who live in poverty are critical to a student's academic success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree educators felt prepared to work in high poverty schools. One of the critical factors in raising student achievement was a highly-qualified teacher, who was well-trained in their content areas. Highly-qualified teachers have a significant impact on student achievement, and this indicated a need to determine perceptions of preparedness to work in high poverty schools. This study is intended to determine the type of professional learning educators need to prepare them to support students who live in poverty.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study was: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools?

The following sub-questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools?
2. What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high-poverty school?

3. What is the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for working in high-poverty schools?
4. In what parts (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) do educators perceive themselves as well prepared or not well prepared?

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to determine to what degree educators felt prepared to work in high poverty schools as well as identify the types of professional learning educators need to prepare them to support students who live in poverty. There is a need for educators to provide feedback regarding their current role in education and their perceptions of preparedness to work with children in poverty to see if there is a connection. The results of this study aimed to impact educator preparedness in an effort to better understand how to best support students who live in poverty. Educator perceptions were identified and will be shared within the school district to improve teacher preparation system-wide. Educators need to feel prepared to make a positive impact on students' learning and achievement. The information obtained from this research may be utilized by school systems to prepare all educators better and determine what types of professional learning needs should be provided by the district and individual schools. Educator preparedness was peremptory to student and teacher success. Educators must be prepared for the challenges they face in high poverty schools to retain the best workforce possible and positively impact the classroom.

Methods

Research Design

This was a descriptive quantitative study that used a modified version of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (PPS; Darling-Hammond, 2006) coupled with The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; see Appendix A). The PPS and GSES surveys were modified to gather additional information regarding perceptions of preparedness to work in the K-12 high poverty public school setting and utilized in a new researcher-developed survey titled *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey*. Utilizing a survey was an effective way to collect and analyze data from participants because data may be quickly collected and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The overall intent of the researcher was to determine in what areas educators who work in high poverty schools felt they were not prepared to work in high poverty schools and later to develop professional learning agendas that may support educators in their current roles.

Setting and Participants

Participants in this study included educators currently employed in the Current County School District (CCSD), a pseudonym to include four surrounding counties, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels during the 2022-2023 school year (See Appendix B). Educators included school leaders, teachers, and support personnel all of whom rated their own perceptions of preparedness. The surveys were shared with approximately 235 school leaders, 3,127 school teachers, and 400 support personnel across four school districts in anticipation of achieving at least 938 responses for a 30% participation rate. A recent study found that the average response rate for online empirical studies utilizing a survey was 34.2% (Poynton et al., 2019). Personal demographic information was not collected; however, years of experience, grade level range,

highest level of education, current role, content area, and district in which the educator currently work were collected.

Appendix B contains demographic information for each of the four school districts in the CCSD which includes the number of certified teachers, number of high poverty schools, number of school leaders, number of students, mobility rate, College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator (CCRPI), percentage of economically disadvantaged students, and graduation rate (See Appendix B). Appendix B also contains additional demographic information in regard to the ethnic make-up of each school district in CCSD.

Instrument

The researcher used an adaptation of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The researcher merged the two surveys to create a comprehensive researcher-developed survey titled: *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* to gather perceptions of preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy of educators to work in high poverty schools (See Appendix A). The question stems from Darling-Hammond's (2006) survey were adapted to reflect the perceptions of preparedness of educators in the high poverty school setting and will be noted as for high poverty students in a K – 12 setting. For example, if the question read *the teacher is prepared to* present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable students to learn, then the adaptation included the *educator perceives themselves as prepared to* present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable high poverty students to learn in a K – 12 setting.

Evidence for survey validity of the original survey was obtained by the author as the questions were created to align with standards of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support

Consortium (INTASC) and National Board for Professional Teaching (NBPTS). The survey was divided into three Sections, which included Section One, educator preparedness of student learning and engagement, Section Two, educators' general self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools, and Section Three, demographics, including years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, and the county the educator currently works.

The Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey (based on the original work of Darling-Hammond, 2006) and in a 2018 rendition of a similar study, was categorized into three Sections, Section One to include: Part A curriculum and pedagogy (C), Part B differentiation (D), and Part C assessment (A; McBrayer & Melton, 2018). A 4-point Likert scale was utilized for the *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* with 3 meaning very well-prepared with strong supporting evidence, 2 meaning well-prepared with limited supporting evidence, 1 meaning need more preparation, and 0 meaning not evident. The original survey measured perceptions of teachers in teacher preparation programs across the nation in regard to advancing student learning, understanding learners, teaching critical thinking, developing curriculum, applying differentiation, assessing student learning, and developing professionalism for teacher preparation programs across the nation; this study differed in that it surveyed current educators. First, questions 1-21 made up Part A of the survey and was based on curriculum and pedagogy (C). Second, questions 22-29 made up Part B of the survey and were based on differentiation (D)**.** Third**,** questions 30-37 made up Part C and were based on assessment (A). The total number of questions in this section was thirty-seven questions and this made up Section One of the survey.

The Self-Efficacy section, Part D, was Section Two of the survey and was used to determine the level of self-efficacy of educators in high poverty schools. The questions remained the same from the original survey with the stem "in high poverty schools" added to each question. This section of the survey contained 10 questions about self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools. A 4-point Likert scale was utilized for The General Self-Efficacy Scale with 3 meaning exactly true, 2 meaning moderately true, 1 meaning hardly true, and 0 meaning not at all true in regards to perceptions of their own level of self-efficacy for each question in the section. This section yielded a final composite score with a range from 10 to 40, 40 showing the highest level of self-efficacy and 10 showing the lowest level of self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Additionally, the reliability of the GSE scale was sampled in 23 nations and yielded Cronbach's Alpha scores with a range of 0.76 to 0.90. The validity of the survey was established through correlation studies "where positive coefficients were found with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction while negative coefficients were found with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and health complaints" (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995, p. 1). Section Two contained questions 38-47 for total of 10 questions.

Lastly, Section Three of the survey contained demographic information, which included years of experience, grade level range, the highest level of education, and the county the respondent currently works. This section of the survey contained questions 48-53. Overall, the survey included a total of 53 questions and took approximately 20 minutes total to complete.

Data Collection

The researcher requested a letter of cooperation from each school district to administer surveys and collect data. Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to administering the surveys and collecting data. Once IRB approval

was granted, the researcher distributed letters to the Superintendent of each school district to obtain approval to administer the surveys. Once written approval was received, the researcher requested for the Human Resources Department from each school district to submit an email to all possible participants to complete the *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey*. The email included an informed consent (See Appendix C) request along with the survey link. The informed consent included the introduction to the researcher, purpose of the study, procedures, and discomforts and risks which are no greater than that of everyday life. Additionally, benefits, duration, and time required to complete the survey, which was approximately 20 minutes, future use of the data, right to ask questions, compensation of which none was provided, voluntary participation, penalty, and age requirement to participate were included in the informed consent.

Participants received the first recruitment email (See Appendix D) with a letter to all participants explaining the purpose of the survey. The second recruitment email (See Appendix E) was sent out eight days after the first email and included the survey link. The third email (See Appendix F) was sent 16 days after the first email was sent as a reminder. The fourth and final recruitment email (See Appendix G) was sent 21 days after the first email was sent as an additional reminder to all participants after a four-week period concluded (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, participants had four weeks to complete the survey questions.

Data Analysis

The researcher reported the number of participants in the study once all responses were obtained (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey was administered in Qualtrics© and then uploaded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS©), where data were analyzed through multiple statistical tests.

The *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* was divided into three sections: Section One, educator perceptions of their preparedness for student learning and engagement, Section Two, general self-efficacy of educators in high poverty schools, and Section Three, demographics. The researcher reported the number of participants in the study once all responses had been received as a percentage (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Demographic data were reported using descriptive statistics. The means, standard deviations, and range of scores were provided for each section of the survey. Descriptive statistics were reported for each section of the survey to include: Section One, preparedness of student learning and engagement, where data from questions 1-37 were reported as a group along with questions 1-21 (curriculum and pedagogy), 22-29 (differentiation), and 30-37 (assessment). Section Two, included general self-efficacy where data from questions 38-47 were reported as a group and individually. Lastly, Section Three, included demographics via questions 48-53 where data from each individual question were reported.

The overarching question for this study was: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools? This overarching research question was answered through the overall mean average rating for Section One, of the survey which included questions 1-37 in order to determine the overall perceptions of preparedness of educators.

For research sub-question one: 1. What is the perception of the level of self-efficacy, descriptive statistics were used for aggregate data from questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) and individual question data for questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) in order to determine specific areas of perceptions of preparedness of educators in high-poverty schools.

For research sub-question 2: What is the relationship between the self-efficacy and their perceptions of their own preparedness, descriptive statistics and Pearson's r correlations were

used for data from Section Two, Part D questions 38-47 (self-efficacy) and aggregate data from questions 1-37 to determine if the educator level of self-efficacy aligned with a higher level of preparedness as well as data from each of the varied parts to include Part A: curriculum and pedagogy, Part B: assessment, and Part C: differentiation. Pearson's r or the "Product of Moment of Coefficient of Correlation is a measure of the degree of linear relationship or association between two quantitative variables" which was applicable in this case for comparing self-efficacy to perceptions of preparedness in each part of section one of the survey (Griffin, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, the value of Pearson's r fell between 0.00 and 1.00 with 0.00 indicating no correlation and 1.00 indicating perfect correlation. Furthermore, within the table, the Pearson correlation, significance, and number of participants were included.

For research sub-question 3: What is the relationship between years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught and their level of preparedness, individual data from questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53 (demographics) were analyzed using Pearson's r correlations to determine if years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught were related to perceptions of preparedness for each of the identified parts of the survey (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) of the survey in terms of teaching in high poverty schools. Through Pearson's r correlations, survey questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53, were compared to survey questions 1-21 (curriculum and pedagogy) as aggregate data, 22-29 (differentiation) as aggregate data, and questions 30-37 (assessment) as aggregate data.

For research sub-question 4. What parts do educators' perceive themselves as well prepared or not well prepared, the aggregate data from Part A, curriculum and pedagogy (questions 1-21), aggregate data from Part B, differentiation (22-29), and aggregate data from

Part 3, assessment (30-37) were compared using Pearson's r correlations to determine which area had the greatest strength and which area had the greatest weakness on educator perceptions of preparedness. Descriptive statistics to include the mean and standard deviation were presented in tables along with Pearson's r correlations. Findings were reported in tables and figures as appropriate.

Definition of Key Terms

High Poverty School – A high poverty school is a public school at which the number of pupils enrolled who are eligible for free lunch according to the provisions of the federal "National School Lunch Act", 42 U.S.C. sec. 1751 et seq., is at least equal to or greater than twenty-eight percent of the school's student enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2020).

High Poverty – In alignment with both NCLB and ESSA reauthorizations of ESEA, Georgia LEAs should prioritize funding for high poverty and high minority schools to reduce equity gaps impacting at-risk students. In Georgia, the LEA Equity Action Plan, Title I Schools will be considered high poverty schools and schools with a minority population of 60% and above will be considered high minority. (GADOE, 2016)

Achievement Gap – The difference in the performance between each ESEA subgroup (as defined in this document) within a participating LEA or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA (USDOE, 2020).

High-Needs Students – Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-

minority schools (as defined in the Race to the Top application), who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners (USDOE, 2020).

Low-Performing Schools – Schools that are in the bottom 10 percent of performance in the State, or who have significant achievement gaps, based on student academic performance in reading/language arts and mathematics on the assessments required under the ESEA or graduation rates (USDOE, 2020).

Low-Poverty Schools – Schools defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL; and high poverty schools are those where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2020).

Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL**) –** The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program provides a proxy measure for the concentration of low-income students within a school (USDOE, 2020).

Teacher Attrition – The rate at which new teachers leave the profession (Wang, 2013)

Chapter Summary

Students who live in poverty face many challenges in school, which may include but are not limited to trauma, hunger, frustration, and lack of parent involvement. Teaching in a high poverty school presents challenges for educators and requires them to understand cultural

differences and student needs while addressing academic requirements. Educators are tasked with ensuring students' basic needs are met, which would typically be done in the home.

This study addressed educators' perceptions of being prepared to effectively work with children who live in high poverty. Educators were surveyed and feedback was analyzed to determine educators' perceptions and professional development needs. Educator perceptions were identified and will be shared within the school district in order to make improvements system-wide for overall educator preparation. These educators were provided the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their current role in education and their perceptions of educator preparedness to work with children in poverty. The results of this study may impact educator preparedness and how to best support students who live in high poverty. Educators need to feel prepared in order to make a positive impact on students' learning and achievement.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Educators' perceptions of preparedness to work in high poverty schools are critical for student success. Highly efficacious and well-trained teachers are necessary in high poverty schools. Poverty negatively impacts children in the school setting, as well as in the home. Educators need to be well trained and supported in order to be successful in the high poverty setting.

The following sections are detailed further below as it relates to the high poverty school setting: the theoretical framework (transformational leadership theory coupled with deficit theory), educator self-efficacy, professional learning along with the subsections assessment, differentiation, curriculum and pedagogy, climate in high poverty schools, leadership expectations, types and impact of poverty, student success, and teacher retention. Each section will focus on the literature related to teaching in a high poverty school.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership was described, "as the process of a leader who motivates followers to strive for group versus personal goals through charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" (Bakker et al., 2022, p. 2). Additionally, a transformational leader provided a clear vision and purpose for the organization. Furthermore, this style of leadership encouraged followers to be proactive at work and strengths are identified by the leader. In addition, transformational leadership created an environment where energy levels and enthusiasm are high. "Transformational leadership stimulates changes in teaching practices via professional learning communities and teacher learning" (Luyten & Bazo,

2019, p. 2). Transformational leaders paid close attention to individual needs and encouraged and supported employees' efforts in the workplace (Bellibas et al., 2021). Furthermore, a sense of community was built under this leadership style and a supportive school culture was established to facilitate change and reform. When school principals developed a transformational leadership style, they provide individual support for professional learning (Geijsel et al., 2003). Transformational leadership has been considered the most "influential theory of leadership" in education through influencing educators' level of motivation, commitment, and goals (Usman, 2020, p. 97). Through this study, the goal of the transformational leader is to be able to determine the needs of the organization and provide a plan and actionable steps for educators to become better prepared through ongoing professional learning.

Deficit Theory

While transformational leadership theory could have an impact on teachers' perceptions of preparedness and self-efficacy to teach children who live in poverty, deficit theory could be considered a hindrance to perceptions of preparedness and guided the theoretical framework. How educators think about poverty was important because it influenced how we respond to students and their families (Parrett& Budge, 2020). The deficit perspective defined students by their weaknesses rather than their strengths (Collins, 1988). Additionally, deficit theory suggested that poor people are poor because of their own moral and intellectual deficiencies. According to this theory, some students do poorly in school because the home environment's linguistic, social, and cultural nature did not prepare them for the work they were required to do in school ("What is the Cultural Deficit Theory", 2018). Furthermore, as an example, some students were not read to at home as frequently as other children, which negatively influenced their vocabulary development. Vocabulary development may also be stifled by the amount and

nature of verbal interaction in the home, as a result, some children arrive at school lacking the expected level of vocabulary development needed to be successful.

Deficit theory goes back over a century (Valencia, 2006). Many psychologists, theorists, and researchers have discussed deficit theories over the past several years with updates and changes each time. In the 1960s, there were many deficit theorists or researchers such as Hess, Shipman, Engelmann, Bereiter, and Deutsch (Keller, 2020). Hess and Shipman (1965) indicated that the child's social, cultural, or economic environment was insufficient to withstand academic success (Keller, 2020). Keller also stated that Engelmann and Bereiter (1966), indicated "cultural deprivation" theories also supported the idea that social and emotional deficits negatively impacted student performance within the school setting (p. 2).

The deficit theory in education supported the idea that students who come from high poverty backgrounds and do not fit the norm, were going to be behind in school and it was the responsibility of the school to support these students and help them succeed (Keller, 2020). Deficit theory claimed that children who come from impoverished backgrounds could not learn and were faced with more significant learning gaps than students who came from more affluent families (Collins, 1988).

This study was intended to determine the perceptions of educators in an effort to better understand the importance of being prepared to work with children who live in poverty. Community efforts, to include school systems, can have a positive impact on "creating environments of hope" (Barnett, 2021, p. 7). Additionally, through transformational leadership, these efforts could combat deficit thinking and model how to value children who come from impoverished backgrounds in supporting the idea that these children can thrive and learn when given the opportunity.

Educator Self-Efficacy

According to Albert Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the personal belief that a person is capable of performing in a way to reach goals. Furthermore, teachers who had a high sense of "instructional efficacy" were able to provide high poverty students with the resources and guidance they needed to be successful (p. 241). Moreover, teachers who had a lower sense of efficacy, gave up on students more easily and were not able to meet the diverse needs of the students. Additionally, an educator's belief in their own level of self-efficacy had a major impact on student success. Evidence suggested that educators with a higher level of self-efficacy faced fewer difficulties in working with students who live in poverty (Barni et al., 2019). School leaders who had a high level of self-efficacy led high achieving schools where the expectations were high and teachers were able to improve instruction and had a higher level of self-efficacy (Bandura et at., 1997). "Educators with high sense of efficacy created mastery experiences for their students whereas teachers with low instructional self-efficacy undermined students' cognitive development as well as students' judgments of their own capabilities" (Withy, 2019, p.1).

Woodcock et al. (2022) found in one study of 140 elementary school teachers, that "high efficacious teachers" had a growth mindset, made their classrooms more engaging, and created a safe learning environment (p. 5). In a study conducted by Liu (2022), 3,419 teachers from 61 schools were surveyed to determine teachers' perceptions of professional learning communities where a sub-section consisted of questions related to self-efficacy. From the study it was determined self-efficacy was strengthened by professional learning communities in a supportive and creative climate.

Professional Learning

Professional learning allowed teachers to be up-to-date on the most current research and instructional strategies that may be implemented in the classroom (Oddone et al., 2022). Additionally, professional learning was on-going and teachers were able to make connections with others. Effective professional learning was necessary to support teachers in the classroom in order to have a positive impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this meta-analysis study, Darling-Hammond et al (2017) found that professional learning must be "content focused, incorporate active learning, support collaboration, use models of effective practice, provide coaching and expert support, offer feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration" (p. 7). Additionally, professional learning must be aligned to school and district goals and school improvement plans and must be implemented with fidelity.

Effective professional learning contributed to collective efficacy which had a high effect size on student learning and achievement (Hattie, 2020). Additionally, if educators had a shared vision and believed they positively affect students, they were more successful in the classroom. Educator collective efficacy enhanced relationships, strengthened commitment to the school, and improved student achievement (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Collective efficacy would positively effect students who lived in poverty and could outweigh the negative effects of poverty in a student's life (Hattie, 2020). Stosich (2016) noted that when teachers engaged in quality collaboration with colleagues they could grow the professional capacity of individual teachers and create an environment that improved student learning across classrooms. Additionally, when professional learning included school-based opportunities for collaboration, it enhanced instructional capacity, strengthened the professional community, and created an environment of collective responsibility for reaching shared goals for teaching and learning.

Under ESSA, federal law required implementing research-based evaluation and professional learning that improved teacher and student effectiveness. Schools implemented coaching and training in many different ways, including focusing on instructional needs, providing goal-specific plans of support, modeling practice, and initiating ongoing feedback to promote fidelity (Reddy et al., 2018). Evidence suggested that teachers have the most significant effect on student achievement of any school-based factor (Stosich, 2016). In addition, this effect was especially pronounced for high poverty students who relied on schooling to develop academic skills as opposed to their more affluent peers. Furthermore, schools have the potential to create conditions that foster continuous professional learning, and schools with high poverty and high minority student populations often have the least capacity to do so. Additionally, high poverty schools have low capacity compared to more affluent schools, which indicated teachers were less capable and less prepared and school leadership was underprepared. Stosich (2016) stated, "lower capacity in high poverty schools will continue to result in inequitable outcomes for students unless there are effective interventions to build capacity in these schools" (p. 45). Educators faced barriers in working with high poverty students due to inadequate resources, poor conditions in the home for students, and lack of teacher preparation (Oakes et al., 2021).

In one study by Liu & Hallenger (2018), the researcher showed the relationship between the principal and the teacher having an impact on self-efficacy and professional learning. The researchers collected survey data from 3,313 eighth grade teachers and 186 middle school principals. A 5-point Likert-scale was used to determine the impact principal leadership had on teachers and professional development and it was determined that principal leadership had a significant impact on teacher self-efficacy and professional development pathways. The study

suggested that principals should focus on motivating and sustaining the professional development of the teachers within the organization.

Student Learning and Engagement

Assessment

Teachers must be able to check for understanding in multiple ways in the classroom knowing all students do not learn at the same pace (Kaushik, 2021). Furthermore, mastery of skills and concepts were determined by assessment. Additionally, a variety of assessments could be used to determine mastery such as formative assessments, summative assessments, exit tickets, certification exams, and diagnostic assessments to name a few. Moreover, assessments may be used to support teachers in making decisions on how to best support students based on their level of understanding.

Formative assessment was used to adapt instruction while summative assessment was used to assign grades (Shepard, 2019). Additionally, classroom level assessments were used to monitor learning and support classroom instruction, while state level testing was used to hold schools and districts accountable for student learning. Furthermore, assessments should be directly aligned to teaching and learning. Moreover, assessments should be used to provide feedback and support students along their learning journey. In addition, feedback must be provided in order for students to make progress along with self-reflection. Now more than ever, accountability was of utmost importance and was associated with increased student achievement (Berman et al., 2019). In addition, high quality teachers made the greatest impact of any other indicator in the classroom.

"Formative assessment is a process that engages teachers and students in gathering, interpreting, and using evidence about what and how students are learning in order to facilitate

further student learning during a short period of time" (Klute et al., 2017, p. 3). Klute compiled data from 19 different studies surrounding formative assessment and its impact on student achievement and student success, which included general education and special education students in grades one through six. It was determined that students who participated in formative assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, performed higher academically, particularly in mathematics. Additionally, the review of these studies determined that teachers need to "establish learning targets, determine where students are currently, and decide how to help students improve" through the use of formative assessment (p. 16).

Differentiation

Differentiated instruction ‘‘emphasizes change of teaching procedures by considering the different learning modalities, interests, pace, skills, knowledge and attitudes, of different students’’ (Valiandes, 2015, p. 17). Additionally, in order for teachers to differentiate effectively, teachers must be highly qualified with a deep understanding of the content and curriculum along with knowledge of each individual student's academic and emotional needs. Furthermore, teachers must be able to plan in advance but make changes throughout the lesson as required based on students' needs. Moreover, "differentiated instruction seeks to bring quality in education" (p. 2).

Tomlinson (2022) suggested to develop a successful differentiated classroom, the following must be considered and includes maintaining flexibility, planning for unpredictability, supporting successful inclusion, planning for students as individuals, and planning around commonalities in an instructional cycle. Content, process, and product must be modified for each student in order to best meet their needs while keeping the overall ideas the same (Herner-Patnode & Lee, 2021). Differentiation should influence curriculum and should encourage the

growth of all students (Eysink & Schildkamp, 2021). Furthermore, formative assessment should guide differentiation in the classroom. In addition, formative assessment should encourage the use of goal setting, engaging in data collection, identifying learning needs, implementing changes in the classroom based on the data, and allowing students to be a part of the process. Additionally, once the teacher has determined the learning needs, effective differentiation can be provided for each student. Moreover, the teacher must continuously check for understanding and monitor the needs of each student.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Curriculum is "a plan to systematically engage students with the most important ideas in a content area and to help each student connect those ideas with the world in which the student lives" (Tomlinson 2022, p. 29). Additionally, the curriculum can be made up of resources that may include textbooks, state standards, curriculum guides, and pacing guides. Furthermore, the curriculum should be designed for students to ask questions and be reflective along with very definitive objectives of what the student should be able to know, learn, and do. Moreover, it should be interesting to students and they should be able to make real-world connections and be able to challenge higher achieving students while supporting lower achieving students.

Studies indicated that students from high poverty backgrounds were more likely to start school behind their peers and would be deficient in reading and mathematics (Hirn et al., 2018). Furthermore, poverty has proven to be a significant indicator in identifying early achievement gaps in children. In addition, high poverty schools were challenged with retaining highly qualified teachers and tended to end up hiring teachers with less experiences and fewer credentials. Moreover, teachers had the greatest impact on students in the classroom and must be

credentialed and experienced to make a positive impact. Lastly, student achievement was directly related to "student engagement with the curriculum" (p. 2).

In one study, 22 high poverty elementary school teachers were studied to determine the impact of providing students opportunities to respond with feedback from teachers on student achievement (Hirn et al., 2018). "Increasing instructional interactions is one example of teacher behaviors that represent active instruction" (Hirn et al., 2018, p. 2). Additionally, when teachers provided students the opportunity to respond to the curriculum, student engagement increased and student outcomes improved. Furthermore, positive feedback from the teacher to the student has also been shown to improve student outcomes and increase student engagement. In the study, the schools were sorted by either high performing or low performing schools and by percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. The data for this study were collected through observations conducted in classrooms within each school. The outcome of the study indicated there was a great deal of variance between teacher behaviors across classrooms and there was a noticeable difference between high poverty schools, high performing schools and high poverty, low performing schools. In addition, teachers in the low performing schools gave more negative feedback and made fewer connections to the curriculum. The results of this study indicated a need for professional learning for teachers in high poverty schools.

Climate in High Poverty Schools

The Georgia Department for Excellence in Education was quoted on the Georgia Department of Education website stating, "School climate is the foundation of a successful school and positive educational outcomes for all of our students" (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). Schools are rated on school climate with a School Climate Star Rating each year on a one to five-star rating scale. Additionally, the data to calculate the star rating are

obtained from student, teacher, and parent surveys to include student discipline, safe and substance-free learning environment information, and attendance.

The school climate had a direct impact on teachers' ability to teach and be successful in that 39% of teachers reported students do not come prepared to learn and 21.5% of teachers reported parents struggle to support their students, which makes teaching in high poverty schools challenging. Furthermore, more than one in five teachers (21.8%) reported that their safety has been threatened and one in eight (12.4%) say they have been physically attacked by a student. Additionally, 74.6% of teachers feel they do not have influence over what they teach. Garcia and Weiss (2019) noted that, "school climate is shaped by the voice and influence teachers have in their schools and day-to-day work" (p. 10).

School climate was a strong indicator of school improvement and student success (Charlton et al., 2021). Additionally, teachers who worked in a positive environment were less likely to leave the school and had higher job satisfaction and level of self-efficacy. Furthermore, with a positive learning environment, students were more likely to graduate high school and remain in school despite poverty or other negative factors that may impact their success.

Leadership Expectations

In high-performing, high-poverty schools, effective leaders had learning communities to build leaders for all, structures were in place with processes for improvement, and they had a shared vision for the school that was communicated to all in their schools (Parrett& Budge, 2020). Additionally, in these schools, the principal had a shared leadership style and listened to others to allow individuals to contribute to the shared vision, communication was highly embedded in all aspects of the school, and student success was shared through student voice. Stosich (2016) noted that principals determined whether professional learning led to schoolwide

changes. In addition, principals recognized that they need to be involved in professional learning to be effective schoolwide rather than in a single classroom. Additionally, strong leaders in schools with higher capacity levels can expect teachers to support school-wide improvement often with minimal support; however, schools with lower levels of capacity may require intensive principal support to establish organizational improvement. Furthermore, it was explained that principal leadership rather than teacher leadership had a major influence on teachers' understanding of instructional standards and their implications for practice. As noted, when the principal made learning a priority, it created opportunities for job-embedded professional learning and created supportive conditions for collaborative learning. In turn, teachers then would build capacity and better understand their impact on student learning.

Stosich (2016) also suggested that supporting widespread improvement in teachers' practice in high-poverty schools required attention to challenges posed by weak instructional knowledge among teachers, strongly held norms of autonomy that cause some teachers to repel efforts to build a professional community, and ineffective instructional leadership from principals. Ingersoll et al. (2018) suggested that effective schools must have a shared purpose and vision and develop a climate where everyone is trusted, respected, valued, and work as a team. The researchers also suggested that high academic expectations must be in place for all. Furthermore, teacher leadership and instructional leadership (from the principal) were directly related to higher performing schools with a positive climate. A study by Gordon and Hart (2021) was conducted to determine what leadership looked like in high performing, high poverty schools. The researchers analyzed teacher surveys of principal leadership and compared the results to student outcomes. Case studies were conducted in 12 schools of which six were high performing and making progress and six were low performing and not making progress. The

results of the study indicated that principals in high performing schools shared common goals with the faculty and staff and were supportive of shared ideas as well as learning as an organization. Furthermore, it was suggested that school leadership determined the progress of students and the culture of the workplace. Additionally, strong school leadership was needed even more so in high poverty schools where principals can have an even greater impact on student progress and teacher. Moreover, principals who "establish and convey a vision, facilitate a high quality learning environment, build professional capacity, create a supportive organization, and make connections with stakeholders" were more likely to have a positive impact on student success and created a positive learning experience for students which in turn may encourage teachers to remain in the high poverty school (p. 289). In addition, principals who "engage in instructionally focused interactions with teachers, built a productive school climate, facilitated collaboration and professional learning communities, and managed personnel and resources productively" were also more likely to have a positive impact on students' success and teacher retention (p. 289). Furthermore, strong school leadership was "the driver for change and school improvement" (p. 299).

Types and Impact of Poverty

In the United States, the official poverty thresholds were set by the Office of Management and Budget; people with income less than that deemed sufficient to purchase basic needs—food, shelter, clothing, and other essentials—were designated as poor (Jensen, 2010). In addition, as it relates to education, there were six types of poverty to include: situational poverty, generational poverty, absolute poverty, relative poverty, urban poverty, and rural poverty. Situational poverty is generally caused by a crisis or loss and is often temporary. Events causing situational poverty included environmental disasters, divorce, or severe health problems.

Generational poverty occurred in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty. Families living in this type of poverty were not equipped with the tools to move out of their situations. Absolute poverty, which was rare in the United States, and involved a scarcity of such necessities as shelter, running water, and food. Families who lived in absolute poverty tended to focus on day-to-day survival. Relative poverty referred to the economic status of a family whose income was insufficient to meet its society's average standard of living. Urban poverty occurred in metropolitan areas with populations of at least 50,000 people. The urban poor dealt with a complex aggregate of chronic and acute stressors (including crowding, violence, and noise) and were dependent on often-inadequate large-city services. Rural poverty occurred in nonmetropolitan areas with populations below 50,000. There were more single-guardian households, and families often had less access to services, support for disabilities, and quality education opportunities in rural areas. Programs to encourage the transition from welfare to work were problematic in remote rural areas, where job opportunities were few (Whitener & McGranahan, 2003). Additionally, the rural poverty rate was growing and had exceeded the urban rate every year since data collection began in the 1960s.

Childhood poverty rates were higher in the United States than in any other country, however, this rate had decreased slightly since 2010 (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In addition, as of 2017, 19% of all people who lived in poverty were children. Another 22% of people who lived in poverty reside in families with low incomes. Furthermore between 2010 and 2016, the number of children living in poverty decreased from nearly 17 million to 14 million. Equally startling, “between 60 and 75% of people who live in the United States will live below or near the poverty line for at least one year of their lives” (Parrett & Budge, 2020, p. 49).

Children who started behind in school stayed behind and were rarely able to make up the lost ground (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Furthermore, these trends would not be such a significant concern if our education system compensated for these inequities by helping level the playing field and enabling children to rise above their birth circumstances. The researchers suggested that children's socioeconomic status was considered one of the most significant predictors of educational success. Children between the ages of one and three years old are not exposed to spoken words in language as children from higher income families (Pascoe et al., 2020). In addition, low income families struggled to find adequate resources to best support their children and were not able to promote an educational environment rich in vocabulary and available books. Furthermore, not having access to resources also slowed the development process in young children which widens the gaps between low income students and high income students.

Studies have shown a strong relationship between social class and test scores, educational attainment, and college attendance and completion and families who live in poverty face disadvantages that hinder their children's development in many ways, such as vocabulary, reading and math skills, social emotional learning, peer relationships, motivation, and school attendance. (Duncan & Votruba-Drzal, 2014). Additionally, as families struggle to get by economically, and cope with substandard housing, unsafe neighborhoods, and inadequate schools, low-income families experience more stress in their daily lives than more affluent families do, and face many psychological and developmental consequences. Furthermore, poor families lack the resources to invest in high-quality child care and enriched learning experiences that give more affluent children an advantage (Duncan & Votruba-Drzal, 2014).

Chronic absenteeism occurred at a higher rate in high poverty schools and was closely tied to student achievement (Nauer et al., 2014). Students who experienced long periods of

interrupted schooling faced some of the highest risks of failure (Walsh, 1999). When students came back to school after an extended absence, they were more likely to lack an understanding of basic concepts, content knowledge, and critical thinking skills (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Low-achieving high school students reported a sense of alienation from their schools (Jensen, 2010). Additionally, they believed that no one cared about them, which led to students giving up on academics. Furthermore, children raised in poverty were more likely to lack a caring, dependable adult in their lives, and often looked to teachers for support.

Without knowledge of poverty and disadvantage, teachers are prepared as though all students and communities have equal social advantage (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). Furthermore, teachers with strong communities of practice can resist the idea that they can eradicate poverty on their own, but can teach in equitable, respectful, culturally responsive, and safe ways. There was a socioeconomic status gap between teachers and students, which directly suggested the need for teachers to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Akiba, 2019).

A child's poverty level was said to be the most significant predictor of a student's ability to learn and retain information (Ghent, 2019). Additionally, teachers need to be able to teach students of all different cultures and learning abilities. Furthermore, students who come from low income families need adult mentors in their lives to encourage success and growth. Moreover, it was determined that children who come from low poverty families and children who come from high poverty families need to be exposed to each other in order for these children to model positive behaviors.

Student Success

Inexperienced teachers were often employed in high poverty schools which lead to lower-quality instruction and negatively impacted student success (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2020). Research showed that teachers with a deep understanding of the content and subject matter, and more teaching experience, were more successful in asking higher level questions in class than less experienced teachers (National Research Council, 2000). Teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement which indicated a need for professional learning that provided teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide meaningful instruction (King & Newman, 2000). A well-qualified teacher should be the priority for the classroom to have a positive impact on student achievement (National Science Board, 1999). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) shared that research has proven the teacher-student relationship, and the correlation between teacher preparation and teacher effectiveness had a significant impact on student success in the classroom (AACTE, 2012).

Students who come from low income families were more likely to begin school with wider academic gaps than their more affluent peers and often would drop out of high school (Kainz, 2019). Additionally, African American and Latinx kindergarten students who attended Title 1 (high poverty) schools were examined to determine connections between Title 1 status and learning gaps and it was determined that kindergarten students who entered school in a Title 1 setting made smaller gains in reading and mathematics than students who entered a Non-Title 1 school. It was also determined where Title 1 funds were utilized to provide professional development and reduced class sizes, students made minimal gains. The study also pointed out other research has shown reduced class sizes does have a positive effect on student achievement.

The College and Career Ready Performance Indicator (CCRPI) in Georgia was a comprehensive tool used to measure student achievement, school improvement, and accountability (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). Additionally, CCRPI was an indicator used to measure how "well it's schools, districts, and the state are preparing students for the next educational level" ((Georgia Department of Education, 2022,). Furthermore, helping students succeed and graduate high school ready for college and/or career was the goal of CCRPI. Moreover, data obtained from CCRPI can be used to support schools in the improvement process to better support teachers and students alike. The following areas comprised CCRPI: content mastery on end of grades assessment, progress (growth compared to similar students), closing gaps (subgroups improvements), readiness (activities that prepare students for the next level), and the graduation rate.

Teacher Retention

In the first few years of teaching, teachers were 6.0% more likely to leave high poverty schools than those working in lower poverty schools (Bettini et al., 2021). Student behaviors had a major impact on teacher retention in high poverty schools, which impacted student achievement (Holmes et al., 2019). Additionally, "Teachers leave challenging schools due to a lack of principal effectiveness, weak structures, student behaviors, uncompromising district practices, and poor compensation rates" (p. 27). Furthermore, schools continued to struggle and underperform due to teacher turnover. Teacher retention has proven to be challenging in high poverty schools due to a variety of reasons which include negative perceptions of the students and their achievement levels in these schools (Grillo & Kier, 2021). Furthermore, teachers often transferred to low poverty schools where they had access to more resources and students who

had a higher socioeconomic status which in turn led to higher performing students with fewer behavior concerns.

In one study conducted by Burstfield (2021), four elementary school teachers from a high poverty school were interviewed through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. It was found when a school created a sense of belonging and built relationships with co-workers, teachers were more likely to stay in the high poverty school setting. In another study conducted by Gabriel (2021), the focus was on 21 teachers in six Title 1 schools (high poverty schools) all of which had met or exceeded the expected growth over a three-year period to determine the relationship between teacher retention and high performing Title 1 schools through a survey and one-on-one interviews. Through the study, it was determined that the teachers who remained in the Title 1 schools chose to do so due to intrinsic motivation factors, which included teaching recognition, enjoyment, challenges, and competitiveness. Additionally, it was determined extrinsic factors also played a major role in a teacher's willingness to remain at a high poverty school which included appreciation, administration, and cultural diversity. Furthermore, it was determined providing professional development should be continuous in schools in order to support teacher retention.

Retaining certified teachers with experience and training was a major concern in high poverty schools as opposed to low poverty schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Additionally, with a teacher shortage in high poverty schools, it created a negative culture in the school and provided an even more challenging learning environment for children. Furthermore, from 2015-2016, teachers employed with the proper credentialing decreased nationally from 91.2% to 68.5%. Moreover, with there being a great need for credentialed teachers, teachers have the ability to choose where they would like to teach and are much more likely to choose a low poverty school

over a high poverty school. This further indicated a need to determine the perceptions of preparedness of educators working in high poverty schools and examine what can be done to improve self-efficacy and preparedness. In the state of Georgia, a teacher was considered highly qualified when they met the following requirements: held a bachelor's degree, held a Professional Standards Commission Teaching Certificate, held a core academic major, passed the appropriate core academic content assessment, and were in-field to teach in a K-12 public school (Fenton, 2010).

Chapter Summary

In summary, poverty negatively impacts a child's academic performance in school due to the challenging conditions in the home, school, and community that these children face. One of the most important factors in raising student achievement was a highly qualified teacher who is well trained in their content areas and understands cultural differences. With highly qualified teachers having the greatest impact on student achievement this indicated a need to determine educator perceptions of preparedness to teach in high poverty schools. While there was research readily available in regards to children and poverty, more research needed to be conducted around educator perceptions of preparedness to teach in high poverty schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Research Design

This was a descriptive quantitative study that used a modified version of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (PPS; Darling-Hammond, 2006) coupled with The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The PPS and GSES surveys were modified to gather additional information regarding perceptions of preparedness to work in the K-12 high poverty public school setting and utilized in a new survey the researcher created titled *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* (See Appendix A). Utilizing a survey was an effective way to collect and analyze data from participants because data may be quickly collected and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The overall intent of the researcher was to determine in what areas educators feel who work in high poverty schools felt they were not prepared to work and later to develop professional learning agendas that may support educators in their current roles.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study was: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools?

The following sub-questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools?
2. What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high-poverty school?

3. What is the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for working in high-poverty schools?
4. In what parts (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) do educators perceive themselves as well prepared or not well prepared?

The overarching question determined to what degree educators perceived they were prepared to work in high poverty schools. Research sub-question one measured educators' perceptions of their level of self-efficacy. Research sub-question two measured the perceptions of educators' level of self-efficacy and perceptions of educators' level of preparedness to work in high poverty schools. Research sub-question three measured years of experience, level of college degree, grade level taught, current role and perceptions of preparedness for curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment for teaching in high poverty schools. Research sub-question four measured the perceptions of educators in curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment.

Setting and Participants

Participants in this study included educators currently employed in the Current County School District (CCSD), a pseudonym to include four surrounding counties, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels during the 2022-2023 school year (See Appendix B). Educators included school leaders, teachers, and support personnel all of whom rated their own perceptions of preparedness. The surveys were shared with approximately 235 school leaders, 3,127 school teachers, and 400 support personnel across four school districts in anticipation of achieving at least 938 responses for a 30% participation rate. A recent study found the average response rate for online empirical studies was 34.2% (Poynton et al., 2019). Demographic data collected were

years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, current role in education, content area, and location the educator currently work.

Appendix B contains demographic information for each of the four school districts in the CCSD which includes the number of certified teachers, number of high poverty schools, number of school leaders, numbers of students, mobility rate, College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator (CCRPI), percentage of economically disadvantaged students, and graduation rate (See Appendix B). Appendix B also contains additional demographic information in regard to the ethnicity make-up of each school district in CCSD (See Appendix B).

Instrument

The researcher used an adaptation of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (based on the original work of Darling-Hammond, 2006) and The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The researcher merged the two surveys to create a comprehensive survey titled: *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* in order to gather perceptions of preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy of educators to work in high poverty schools. The question stems on Darling-Hammond's (2006) survey were adapted to reflect the perceptions of preparedness of educators in the high poverty school setting and will be noted as *for high poverty students in an K – 12 setting*. For example, if the question read the teacher is prepared to present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable students to learn, then the adaptation included the educator perceives themselves as prepared to present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable high poverty students to learn in a K – 12 setting. Evidence for survey validity of the original survey was obtained by the author as the questions were created to align with standards of the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and National Board for

Professional Teaching (NBPTS). The survey was divided into three sections which included Section 1) educator perceptions of preparedness to foster student learning and engagement Section 2), educators' general self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools, and Section 3) demographic information, to include years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, the county the educator currently works.

The Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey (based on the original work of Darling-Hammond, 2006) and in a 2018 rendition of a similar study, was categorized into three Sections, Section One to include: Part A curriculum and pedagogy (C), Part B differentiation (D), and Part C assessment (A; McBrayer et al., 2018). A 4-point Likert scale was utilized for the *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* with 3 meaning very well-prepared with strong supporting evidence, 2 meaning well-prepared with limited supporting evidence, 1 meaning need more preparation, and 0 meaning not evident. First, questions 1-21 made up Section One, Part A of the survey and were based on curriculum and pedagogy (C). Second, questions 22-29 made up Part B of the survey and were based on differentiation (D)**.** Third**,** questions 30-37 made up Part C and were based on assessment (A). The total number of questions in this section was thirty-seven questions and this made up Section One of the survey.

The Self-Efficacy section, Part D, was Section Two of the survey and was used to determine the level of self-efficacy of educators in high poverty schools. The questions remained the same from the original survey with the stem *in high poverty schools* added to each question. This Section of the survey contained 10 questions about self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools. A 4-point Likert scale was utilized for The General Self-Efficacy Scale with 3 meaning exactly true, 2 meaning moderately true, 1 meaning hardly true, and 0 meaning not at all true in

regards to perceptions of their own level of self-efficacy for each question in the section. This Section required approximately four minutes on average to complete and yielded a final composite score with a range from 10 to 40, 40 showing the highest level of self-efficacy and 10 showing the lowest level of self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Additionally, the reliability of the GSE scale was sampled in 23 nations and yielded Cronbach's Alpha scores with a range of 0.76 to 0.90. The validity of the survey was established through correlation studies "where positive coefficients were found with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction while negative coefficients were found with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and health complaints" (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995, p. 1). Section Two contained questions 38-47 for total of ten questions.

Lastly, Section Three of the survey contained demographic information, which included years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, and the county the respondent currently works. This Section of the survey contained questions 48-53 for a total of six questions. Overall, the survey included a total of 53 questions and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Data Collection

The researcher requested a letter of cooperation from each school of the four school districts to administer surveys and collect data. Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to administering the surveys and collecting data. Once IRB approval was granted, the researcher distributed letters to the Superintendent of each school district and obtained approval to administer the surveys. Once written approval was received, the researcher requested for the Human Resources Department from each school district to submit an email to all possible participants to complete the *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-*

Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey. The email included an informed consent (Appendix C) request along with the survey link. The informed consent included the introduction to the researcher, purpose of the study, procedures, and discomforts and risks which are no greater than that of everyday life. Additionally, benefits, duration and time required to complete the survey which was approximately 20 minutes, future use of the data, right to ask questions, compensation of which none was provided, voluntary participation, penalty, and age requirement to participate were included in the informed consent.

Participants received the first recruitment email (Appendix D) with a letter to all participants explaining the purpose of the survey. The second email (Appendix E) was sent out eight days after the first email and included the survey questions link and encouraged participation. The third email (Appendix F) was sent 16 days after the first email was sent as a reminder along with the survey link again and encouraged participation. The fourth and final recruitment email (Appendix G) was sent 21 days after the first email was sent as an additional reminder to all participants after a four-week period concluded along with the survey link and encouraged participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, participants had four weeks to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

The researcher reported the number of participants in the study once all responses were obtained (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey was administered in Qualtrics© and then uploaded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS©) where data were analyzed through multiple statistical tests. Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation were reported for each section of the survey. For Section One of the survey, the results were reported as a whole as well as for each subsection (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and

assessment) and for Section Two, the mean was reported for the entirety of the section. For Section Three, the mean for individual questions was reported for the demographics.

The overarching question for this study was: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools? This question was answered through the overall mean average rating for Section One of the survey which including Section One, Part A questions 1-37 in order to determine the overall perceptions of preparedness of educators.

For research sub-question 1, what is the perception of the level of self-efficacy, descriptive statistics were used for aggregate data from Section Two, Part D from questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) and individual question data for questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) in order to determine specific areas of perceptions of preparedness of educators in high-poverty schools.

For research sub-question 2, what is the relationship between the self-efficacy and their perceptions of their own preparedness, descriptive statistics and Pearson's r correlations were used for data from Section Two, Part D questions 38-47 (self-efficacy) and aggregate data from Section One Part A questions 1-37 to determine if the educator level of self-efficacy aligned with a higher level of preparedness as well as data from each of the varied parts to include Part A: curriculum and pedagogy, Part B: assessment, and Part C: differentiation. Pearson's r or the "Product of Moment of Coefficient of Correlation is a measure of the degree of linear relationship or association between two quantitative variables" which was applicable in this case for comparing self-efficacy to perceptions of preparedness in each part of section one of the survey (Griffin, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, the value of Pearson's r fell between 0.00 and 1.00 with 0.00 indicating no correlation and 1.00 indicating perfect correlation. Furthermore, within

the table, the Pearson correlation, significance, and number of participants were included in the data analyses.

For research sub-question 3: what is the relationship between years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught and their level of preparedness, individual data from Section Three questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53 (demographics) were analyzed using Pearson's r correlations to determine if years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught were related to perceptions of preparedness for each subsection (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) of the survey in terms of teaching in high poverty schools. Through Pearson's r correlations, survey questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53, were compared to survey questions in Section One, Part A, B, and C, 1-21 (curriculum and pedagogy) as aggregate data, 22-29 (differentiation) as aggregate data, and questions 30-37 (assessment) as aggregate data.

For research sub-question 4, what parts do educators perceive themselves as well prepared or not well prepared, the aggregate data from Section On, Part A, curriculum and pedagogy (questions 1-21), aggregate data from Part B, differentiation (22-29), and aggregate data from Part C, assessment (30-37) were compared using Pearson's r correlations to determine which area had the greatest strength and which area had the greatest weakness on educator perceptions of preparedness. Descriptive statistics to include the mean and standard deviation were presented in tables along with Pearson's r correlations, which included the significance and number of participants. Findings were reported in tables and figures as appropriate.

Appendix H contains the research questions, statistical measure used during data analysis, the survey question numbers for each research question, along with the purpose of each

research question. This Appendix was created to organize the research questions and easily determine the statistical methods used and the purpose of each research question (See Appendix H).

Chapter Summary

This study was intended to determine educator perceptions of preparedness to work in high poverty schools. A modified survey titled *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* was administered to collect participant responses using a 4-point Likert scale. The survey was divided into three Sections which included 1) educators' preparedness of student learning and engagement 2) educators' general self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools, and 3) demographic information, to include years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, the county the educator currently works. Overall, the survey included a total of 53 questions and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Descriptive statistics to include the mean and standard deviation were used to provide information in regards to demographic data and to answer the research questions. Pearson's r correlational data was also utilized to determine the relationships between student engagement preparedness, demographic data, and self-efficacy of educators. The data obtained from the survey aimed to answer the overarching research question guiding this study to what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools? In addition, the following sub-questions were answered: 1. What is the level of self-efficacy of educators in high poverty schools; 2. What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high-poverty school; 3. What is the relationship between educators years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for working in high-poverty schools; and 4. In what parts

(curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) do educators perceive themselves as well prepared?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study aimed to answer the following overarching question: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools?

The following sub-questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools?
2. What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high-poverty school?
3. What is the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for working in high-poverty schools?
4. In what parts (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) do educators perceive themselves as well prepared?

This study was a descriptive quantitative study which utilized a modified version of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (PPS; Darling-Hammond, 2006) coupled with The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jeresalem, 1995). The PPS and GSES surveys were modified to gather additional information regarding perceptions of preparedness to work in a K-12 high poverty public school setting and utilized in a new survey titled *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey* created by the researcher. The overall intent of the research was to determine in what areas educators who work in high poverty schools feel they were prepared to work in this specified arena and later to develop professional learning agendas that may support educators in their current roles.

Three hundred and two participants completed the survey in its entirety for a 14.77% response rate. Of the four counties surveyed, County A had a response rate of 22.2%, County B

had a response rate of 26.87%, County C had a response rate of 2.1%, and County D had a response rate of 15%. Section Three of the survey included demographic information, which can be found in Table 1. Of these, 16 participants were school leaders (5.05%), 237 were teachers (79.29%), and 47 were support personnel (15.66%), which included speech language pathologists, special education specialists, instructional specialists, behavior specialists, media specialists, guidance counselors, parent liaisons, and sign language interpreters. Additionally, 226 participants worked at the elementary school level (75.33%), 54 participants worked at the middle school level (18.00%), and 20 participants worked at the high school level (6.67%). Out of the 302 responses received, 300 responded to this question, 35 participants had 1-3 years of experience (11.37%), 46 participants had 4-9 years of experience (15.33%), 120 participants had10-19 years of experience (40.00%), and 99 participants had 20 or more years of experience (33.00%). Additionally, 65 participants held a bachelor's degree (21.67%), 115 participants held a master's degree (38.33%), 99 participants held a Specialist degree (33.99%), and 14 participants held a Doctoral degree (4.67%) out of the 302 participants; 293 responded to this question. See Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Questions

Variable	N	%
School Level (Q49)		
Elementary	226	75.33
Middle	54	18.00
High	20	6.67
Current Role (Q50)		
School Leader	16	5.05
Teacher (Gifted, Gen Ed, SPED, PE, Music, Art)	237	79.00
Support Personnel (Speech Language Pathologist, Special Education Specialist, Instructional Specialist, Behavior Specialist, Media Specialist, Guidance Counselor, Parent Liaison, Sign Language Interpreter)	47	15.66
Years of Experience in Education (Q51)		
1-3	35	11.37
4-9	46	15.33
10-19	120	40.00
20+	99	33.00
Highest Degree Held (Q52)		
Bachelor's Degree	65	21.67
Master's Degree	115	38.33
Specialist Degree	99	33.00
Doctoral Degree	14	4.67

Note. n = 302

Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were reported for each Section of the survey. As seen in Table 4, the results of Section One and Section Two of the survey were reported as a whole and for each subsection (curriculum and pedagogy [part A], differentiation [Part B], and assessment [Part C]). The data collected addressed perceptions of preparedness of student learning and engagement as well as the level of self-efficacy in the high poverty school setting. The mean response for Section One, preparedness of student learning and engagement was 2.04 (*SD* = .605) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt well prepared with limited supporting evidence. The mean response for Section One, Part A. curriculum and pedagogy, was 2.04 (*SD* = .612) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt well prepared with

limited supporting evidence, which means overall educators felt well prepared but were unable to provide detailed evidence to support their feelings of preparedness. The mean response for the Part B, differentiation was 2.00 (*SD* =.680) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt well prepared with limited supporting evidence. The mean response for the Part C, assessment was 2.06 (*SD* =.675) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt well prepared with limited supporting evidence. Additionally, Section Two, self-efficacy, the mean average was 2.16 (*SD* =.548) out of 4.0, which indicated educators felt they had a moderate level of self-efficacy.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Perceptions of Preparedness by Survey Section

Variable	M	SD
Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement (Q1-37)	2.04	.605
Curriculum & Pedagogy (Q1-21)	2.04	.612
Differentiation (Q22-29)	2.00	.680
Assessment (Q30-37)	2.06	.675
Self-efficacy (Q38-47)	2.16	.548

Note. $n = 302$

Descriptive statistics to include the means and standard deviations for each survey question in Section One to include parts A, B, and C along with Section Two are found in Table 5. While the overall mean averages of parts A, B, and C answered research sub-question 4, it was necessary to look at each individual question to determine the highest and lowest rated questions of each part to best target needed areas for support. The lowest rated question in the Section One, Part A, curriculum and pedagogy had a mean of 1.48 (*SD* =.827) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt they needed more preparation to effectively be able to teach English Speakers of Other Languages in a K-12 setting for high poverty students. The highest rated question in the curriculum and pedagogy had a mean of 2.26 (*SD* =.757) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt they were well prepared with limited supporting evidence to present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable high poverty students to learn in a K-12 setting. The lowest rated question in the survey based on the identified parts in Part B were differentiation with a mean of 1.74 (*SD* =.852) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt they needed more preparation to create an interdisciplinary curriculum in a K-12 setting for high poverty students. The highest rated question in the part differentiation had a mean of 2.23 (*SD* =.762) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt they were well prepared with limited supporting evidence to use instructional strategies that promote active student learning in a K-12 setting for

high poverty students. The lowest rated question in the Part C, assessment had a mean of 1.91 (*SD* =.905) out of 3.0, which indicated educators needed more preparation to assume leadership responsibilities in the school in a K-12 setting for high poverty students. The highest rated question in the subsection assessment had a mean of 2.22 (*SD* =.818) out of 3.0, which indicated educators felt well prepared with limited supporting evidence to plan and solve problems with colleagues in a K-12 setting for high poverty students.

With 0 = not evident and 3 = very-well prepared with strong supporting evidence, the means for each category fell in between these scaled scores. The standard deviation notes the spread of the numbers around the mean which showed that the numbers expand over 0 - 3, thus the mean is fairly consistent with the responses of all respondents. See Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Rating Scale Percentages of Perceptions of Preparedness by Survey Question

Variable	0=not evident	1=need more preparation	2=well prepared	3=very-well prepared	M	SD
Section 1: Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement Curriculum & Pedagogy						
1.The educator perceives themselves as prepared to present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable high poverty students to learn in a K – 12 setting.	0.58%	12.83%	44.02%	42.57%	2.26	.757
2. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how different high poverty students are learning in an K – 12 setting.	0.29%	16.08%	47.08%	36.55%	2.18	.757
3. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to set challenging and appropriate expectations of learning and performance for high poverty students in an K – 12 setting.	0.59%	17.06%	44.12%	38.24%	2.14	.807
4. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students achieve academic high standards in a K – 12 setting.	0.59%	16.47%	47.06%	35.89%	2.13	.780
5. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to relate classroom learning to the real world in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.29%	17.11%	41.30%	41.30%	2.20	.796
6. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development influence learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.90%	23.65%	39.82%	35.63%	2.04	.860

7. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to identify and address special learning needs and/or difficulties in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	1.19%	27.89%	37.39%	33.53%	1.99	.870
8. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to teach in ways that support English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	4.44%	53.55%	26.63%	15.38%	1.48	.827
9. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students become self-motivated and self- directed in a K – 12 setting.	1.18%	31.07%	42.90%	24.85%	1.89	.820
10. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use effective verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to guide student learning and behavior in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.30%	21.30%	44.97%	33.43%	2.06	.807
11. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use questions to stimulate different kinds of student learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.60%	16.37%	48.81%	34.23%	2.10	.790
12. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop a classroom environment that promotes social development and group responsibility in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.89%	16.32%	44.81%	37.98%	2.13	.814
13. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop student's questioning and discussion skills in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.59%	18.48%	51.03%	39.97%	2.07	.757
14. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to engage high poverty students in cooperative work as well as independent learning in a K – 12 setting.	0.29%	19.12%	49.12%	31.47%	2.09	.764

15. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students learn to think critically and solve problems in a K – 12 setting.	0.59%	21.60%	50.89%	26.92%	1.97	.779
16. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to encour**a**ge high poverty students to see, question, and interpret ideas from diverse perspectives in a K – 12 setting.	0.59%	28.24%	45.29%	25.88%	1.93	.799
17. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how factors in the students' environment outside of school may influence their life and learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.59%	17.80%	43.62%	37.98%	2.14	.818
18. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to give productive feedback to high poverty students to guide their learning in a K – 12 setting.	1.18%	14.12%	48.53%	36.18%	2.15	.787
19. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students learn how to assess their own learning in a K – 12 setting.	0.59%	24.33%	45.99%	29.08%	1.97	.831
20. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to evaluate the effects of their actions and modify plans accordingly in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.59%	17.40%	46.61%	35.40%	2.12	.800
21. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to conduct inquiry or research to inform their decisions in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	2.64%	28.45%	43.70%	25.22%	1.87	.843
Differentiation						
22. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop a curriculum that builds on high poverty students' experiences, interests, and abilities in a K – 12 setting.	2.89%	32.15%	39.87%	25.08	1.86	.854

23. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness and appropriateness for high poverty students in a K – 12 setting.	1.60%	20.83%	48.08%	29.49%	2.02	.796
24. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to create an interdisciplinary curriculum in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	4.17%	36.22%	38.46%	21.15%	1.74	.852
25. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use instructional strategies that promote active student learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty.	0.64%	11.90%	47.27%	40.19%	2.23	.762
26. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to choose teaching strategies for different instructional purposes and to meet high poverty student needs in a K – 12 setting.	0.97%	14.52%	44.84%	39.68%	2.17	.809
27. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to integrate instructional technology into the classroom curriculum and pedagogy in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	1.29%	21.86%	39.87%	63.98%	2.07	.846
28. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to present curriculum and pedagogy to high poverty students from a multicultural vantage point in a K – 12 setting.	1.30%	36.04%	36.36%	26.30%	1.83	.862
29. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use knowledge of learning, subject matter, curriculum, and student development to plan instruction in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.64%	15.06%	48.72%	35.58%	2.16	.757
Assessment						
30. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to provide a rationale for teaching decisions	1.68%	15.77%	50.00%	32.55%	2.05	.830

to high poverty students, parents, and colleagues in a K – 12 setting.						
31. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to work with parents and families to better understand high poverty students and to support their learning in a K – 12 setting.	0.33%	19.21%	44.70%	35.76%	2.10	.809
32. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use a variety of assessments (e.g., observation, portfolios, tests, performance tasks, anecdotal records) to determine student strengths, needs, and progress in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.99%	14.57%	41.39%	43.05%	2.19	.821
33. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to resolve interpersonal conflict in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	0.66%	26.64%	40.79%	31.91%	1.99	.835
34. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to maintain discipline and an orderly, purposeful learning environment in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	1.00%	20.60%	38.21%	40.20%	2.11	.865
35. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to plan and solve problems with colleagues in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	1.33%	11.63%	43.52%	43.52%	2.22	.818
36. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to assume leadership responsibilities in the school in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.	3.96%	27.39%	37.29%	31.35%	1.91	.905
37. Overall, how would you rate the preparation you received to be successful in a K – 12 setting in working with high poverty students?	0.98%	24.26%	45.90%	28.85%	1.98	.801

Note. $n = 302$

Reliability analysis was conducted to determine whether the called perceptions of preparedness of student learning and engagement, specifically, perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy, perceptions of preparedness in differentiation, perceptions of preparedness in assessment, and perceptions of self-efficacy had good internal validity and reliability. The results showed that all scales had excellent internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha >.093), based on the range 0.0 to 1.0 with 0.0 meaning lower internal consistency and 1.0 meaning a greater internal consistency. See Table 4.

Table 4

Reliability Analysis Results

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement	37	.977
Curriculum & Pedagogy	21	.964
Differentiation	8	.937
Assessment	8	.924
Self-efficacy	10	.923

Overarching Question: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools?

To determine the degree to which educators felt prepared to work in high poverty schools, descriptive statistics were shared in Table 5 to include the mean and standard deviation. The results indicated an overall perception that educators felt well-prepared with limited supporting evidence to work in high poverty schools in the K12 setting with an average rating of 2.04 (*SD* =.605). (See Table 5)

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics Perceptions of Overall Preparedness

Variable	M	SD
Preparedness of Student Learning and Engagement (Q1-37)	2.04	.605

Note. N = 302

Research Sub-Question 1: What is the level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools?

For research sub-question one, descriptive statistics were used for aggregate data from Section Two, Part D questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) and individual question data for questions 38-47 (general self-efficacy) in order to determine specific areas of perceptions of preparedness of educators in high-poverty schools. Table 8 shows educators rated themselves at the moderately true level for self-efficacy with a mean rating of 2.16/4.0 (*SD* =.548) indicating the overall level of self-efficacy of educators who work in a high poverty school is moderate. The highest rated question mean average was 2.32/4.0 (*SD* =.677) indicating educators' perception of being able to think of a solution when in trouble in the high poverty school setting is at a moderate level. The lowest rated question mean average was 1.67/4.0 (*SD* =.787) indicating educators' perception of being able to find the means and ways to get what they want when opposed in the high poverty setting is hardly true. See Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Scale Ratings for Perceptions of Level of Self-Efficacy

Level of Self-Efficacy	1=not at all true	2=hardly true	3= moderately true	4=exactly true	M	SD
Self-efficacy (Q38-47)					2.16	.548
Q38 I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough in the high poverty school setting.	1.66%	6.98%	64.90%	26.49%	2.13	.680
Q39 If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want in the high poverty school setting.	5.69%	29.10%	53.18%	12.04%	1.67	.787
Q40 It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals in the high poverty school setting.	1.33%	12.67%	66.33%	19.67%	2.00	.684
Q41 I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events in the high poverty school setting.	0.33%	7.36%	56.86%	35.45%	2.20	.712
Q42 Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations in the high poverty school setting.	0.34%	5.37%	58.39%	35.91%	2.22	.705
Q43 I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort in the high poverty school setting.	1.00%	7.36%	50.84%	40.82%	2.25	.751
Q44 I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities in the high poverty school setting.	0.68%	3.72%	52.70%	42.91%	2.28	.741
Q45 When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions in the high poverty school setting.	0.33%	7.33%	50.33%	42.00%	2.27	.725
Q46 If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution in the high poverty school setting.	0.34%	2.01%	55.70%	41.95%	2.32	.677
Q47 I can usually handle whatever comes my way in the high poverty school setting.	0.33%	3.99%	58.80%	36.88%	2.27	.660

Note. $n = 302$

Research Sub-Question 2: What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high-poverty school?

For research sub-question two, descriptive statistics and Pearson's r correlation were used for data from Section Two, Part D questions 38-47 (self-efficacy) and aggregate data from questions 1-37 to determine if the educator level of self-efficacy aligns with a higher level of preparedness as well as data from each sub-section to include the parts curriculum and pedagogy, assessment, and differentiation. The larger the value of r, the stronger the positive correlation between self-efficacy and the three parts. Additionally, the value of Pearson's r fell between .531 and .974 indicating a positive correlation. See Table 7.

The results indicated there is a strong correlation (r = .616) between educator perceptions of preparedness of student learning and engagement and perceptions of self-efficacy. The results indicated there is a strong correlation (r = .572) between educator perceptions of preparedness in terms of curriculum and pedagogy and self-efficacy. There results indicated there is a strong correlation (r = .531) educator perceptions of preparedness in terms of differentiation and self-efficacy. The results indicated there is a strong correlation (r = .653) educator perceptions of preparedness in terms of assessment and self-efficacy. Therefore, it is concluded that educators' perceptions of preparedness are directly correlated to educators' perceptions of self-efficacy.

Table 7

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of Overall Perception of Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement to Perception of Self-Efficacy

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement (Q1-37)	---				
2. Self-Efficacy (Q38-47)	.616**	---			
3. Curriculum & Pedagogy (Q1-21)	.974**	.572**	---		
4. Differentiation (Q22-29)	.899**	.531**	.808**	---	
5. Assessment (Q30-37)	.915**	.653**	.837**	.789**	---
M	2.04	2.16	2.04	2.00	2.06
SD	.605	.548	6.12	.680	.675

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Note. $n = 302$

Research Sub-Question 3: What is the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for working in high-poverty schools?

For research sub-question 3, correlation between years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught and their level of preparedness were analyzed using Pearson's r correlation to determine if these areas are related to perceptions of preparedness for each subsection (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) of the survey in terms of working in high poverty schools. Through Pearson's r correlations, survey Section Three questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53, were compared to survey Section One, Part A, B, and C questions 1-21 (curriculum and pedagogy) as aggregate data, 22-29 (differentiation) as aggregate data, and questions 30-37 (assessment) as aggregate data.

Correlations among variables are presented in Table 8. Correlations were significant at the 0.01 level. Positive correlations existed between school level, position, number of years in education, degree level and content area taught and perceptions of preparedness in the parts of Section One of curriculum and pedagogy (Part A), differentiation (Part B), and assessment (Part

C). The correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, with -1.0 being low and 1.0 being high. The correlation between the school level (elementary, middle and high) and perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy had a weak correlation (r = .078). The correlation between the school level and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation had a weak correlation (r = .079) The correlation between the school level and perceptions of preparedness in assessment had a weak correlation (r = .084). The correlation between position held (school leader, teacher, or support staff) and perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy had a weak correlation (r = .076). The correlation between position held and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation had a weak correlation (r = .005), The correlation between position held and perceptions of preparedness in assessment had a weak correlation (r = .075). The correlation between number of years in education and perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy was weak (r = .214). The correlation between number of years in education and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation was weak (r = .189). The correlation between number of years in education and perceptions of preparedness in assessment was weak (r = .254). The correlation between the highest degree held (bachelors, masters, specialist, doctorate) and perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy was weak (r = .223). The correlation between the highest degree held and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation was weak (r = .184). The correlation between the highest degree held and perceptions of preparedness in assessment was weak (r = .289). The correlation between content area taught and perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy was significant (r = .064). The correlation between content area taught and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation was weak (r = .048). The correlation between content area taught and perceptions of preparedness in assessment was weak (r = .066). The degree level had the highest positive correlation with

perceptions of preparedness in assessment (r = .289) followed by number of years in education (r = .254). The lowest correlation was between the position held and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation (r = .005) which indicated the correlation was weak. See Table 8.

Table 8

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Data and Survey Subsection Data

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Curriculum & Pedagogy (Q1-21)	---							
2. Differentiation (Q22-29)	.808**	---						
3. Assessment (Q30-37)	.837**	.789**	---					
4. Elementary, middle, high school (Q49)	.078**	.079**	.084**	---				
5. School leader, teacher, support staff (Q50)	.076**	.005	.075**	.045**	---			
6. Number of years in education (Q51)	.214**	.189**	.254**	.052**	.286**	---		
7. Highest degree: Bachelors, Masters, Specialist, Doctoral (Q52)	.223**	.184**	.289**	.056**	.222**	.490**	---	
8. Content area (Q53)	.064**	.048**	.066**	.266**	-.306	-.005	-.006	---
M	2.04	2.00	2.06	1.27	1.28	2.86	2.11	1.71
SD	.612	.680	.675	.609	.802	1.068	.945	1.375
Scale Min/Max Values	0 to 3	0 to 3	0 to 3	1 to 3	1 to 3	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 5

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

Note. n = 302

Research Sub-Question 4: In what parts (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment) do educators perceive themselves as well prepared?

For research sub-question 4 the aggregate data from Section One curriculum and pedagogy (, Part A, questions 1-21), aggregate data from differentiation (Part B, 22-29), and aggregate data from assessment (Part C30-37) were descriptive statistics to determine which area had the greatest strength and which area had the greatest weakness on educator perceptions of preparedness. The results show educators' level of perception of preparedness to work in high

poverty schools as well-prepared with an overall mean of 2.04/3.0 (*SD* =.605). Furthermore, Sections curriculum and pedagogy had a mean of 2.04/3.0 (*SD* =.612), differentiation had a mean of 2.00/3.0 (*SD* =.680), and assessment had a mean of 2.06/3.0 (*SD* =.675). The perceptions of self-efficacy had a mean rating of 2.16/3.0 (*SD* =.548) which indicated a moderate level of preparedness. See Table 9.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics Perceptions of Preparedness by Survey Section

Variable	M	SD
Preparedness of Student Learning & Engagement (Q1-37)	2.04	.605
Curriculum & Pedagogy (Q1-21)	2.04	.612
Differentiation (Q22-29)	2.00	.680
Assessment (Q30-37)	2.06	.675
Self-efficacy (Q38-47)	2.16	.548

Note. n = 302

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree educators felt prepared to work in high poverty schools. Data were collected from educators in four school districts in the Current County School Area, which included school leaders, teachers, and school support personnel, by participants completing the *Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey*. The survey was administered in Qualtrics© and then uploaded into SPSS©, where data were analyzed through multiple statistical tests. Pearson Correlations were performed to show the relationships between variables. Additional statistical tests consisted of descriptive statistics and reliability analysis.

The overarching question was answered by the mean average of Section One of the survey which indicated educators felt well-prepared. The first research sub-question analysis showed educators rated themselves at the moderately true level for self-efficacy indicating the

overall level of self-efficacy. The second research sub-question analysis indicated there was a significant correlation between educator perceptions of preparedness of student learning and engagement and perceptions of self-efficacy. The third research sub-question analysis showed positive correlations existed between school level, position, number of years in education, degree level, and content area taught and perceptions of preparedness in the subsections of curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment. The degree level had the most significant positive correlation with perceptions of preparedness in assessment followed by number of years in education. The lowest correlation was between the position held and perceptions of preparedness in differentiation. Research sub-question four analysis showed educators perception of preparedness to work in high poverty schools as well-prepared. The perceptions of self-efficacy indicated a moderate level of preparedness in terms of working in a high poverty school.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Educators faced barriers in working with high poverty students due to inadequate resources, conditions in the home for students, and lack of teacher preparation (Oakes et al., 2021). Moreover, teachers tend to leave high poverty schools at a higher rate, which leaves behind inexperienced teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy and negative perceptions of preparedness. In the first few years of teaching, teachers were 6.0% more likely to leave high poverty schools and either leave education all together or transfer to a lower poverty school than those working in lower poverty schools (Bettini et al., 2021).

Research has demonstrated that children's social class was one of the most significant predictors of their educational success and performance gaps by social class take root in the earliest years of children's lives and failed to narrow in the years that follow (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). How educators think about poverty is important because it influenced how teachers respond to students and their families who lived in poverty (Parrett & Budge, 2020). Educators who work in high poverty schools typically face challenges as teachers feel inadequate to teach students who come from impoverished backgrounds (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019).

Teachers had the greatest impact on student achievement, which indicates a need for professional learning that provides teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver meaningful instruction (King & Newman, 2000). Continuous improvement should be the goal of every educator where student needs are addressed, instructional strategies are shared, meaningful lessons are developed, and professional learning is job-embedded (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009). Effective professional learning was necessary to support teachers in the classroom in order to have a positive impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Stosich

(2016) stated, “lower capacity in high poverty schools will continue to result in inequitable outcomes for students unless there are effective interventions to build capacity in these schools” and this is important because educator capacity impacts student success (p. 45).

Students from high poverty backgrounds were more likely to start school behind their peers and were deficient in reading and mathematics (Hirn et al., 2018). Furthermore, poverty has proven to be a significant indicator in identifying early achievement gaps in children. In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, when teachers provide students the opportunity to respond to the curriculum, student engagement increases, and student outcomes may improve.

In terms of educator preparedness in differentiation, Tomlinson (2022) suggested for developing a successful differentiated classroom, it is important to maintain flexibility, plan for unpredictability, maintain successful inclusion, plan for students as individuals, and plan around commonalities in an instructional cycle. Content, process, and product must be modified for each student to best meet their needs while keeping the overall skills and concepts the same (Herner-Patnode & Lee, 2021). Teachers must be able to check for understanding in multiple ways in the classroom knowing all students do not learn at the same pace (Kaushik, 2021). Formative assessments are utilized by teachers to determine skills and concepts students have mastered for teachers to adjust instruction (Klute, 2017).

Educators with a high level of self-efficacy had a positive influence on student motivation and success and were able to provide more opportunities for students to be successful (Withy, 2019). School leaders had the greatest impact on teacher efficacy and teachers’ work performance (Hartinah et al., 2020). When school principals developed a transformational leadership style, they provided individual support for professional learning (Geijsel et al., 2003). Furthermore, this leadership style provided a positive impact on teachers’ sense of competence

and self-efficacy. Deficit theory claimed children who came from impoverished backgrounds could not learn and were faced with more significant learning gaps than students who came from more affluent families (Collins, 1988). Community efforts, to include school systems, can have a positive impact on developing all classroom environments that are conducive for learning (Barnett, 2021). Additionally, through transformational leadership, these efforts could combat deficit thinking and model how to value children who come from impoverished backgrounds in supporting the idea that these children can thrive and learn when given the opportunity.

Discussion

This study focused on educator perceptions of preparedness and self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools. The overall intent of the researcher was to determine in what areas educators who work in high poverty schools feel they are not prepared and later to develop professional learning agendas to foster student learning and engagement (i.e., curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment). Additional questions were posed to determine relationships between levels of self-efficacy and preparedness and student learning and engagement as well as demographic questions: years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, and the county the educator currently works.

The participants in this research study were educators from the Current County School District, a pseudonym, which consisted of four surrounding school districts comprised of public high poverty elementary, middle, and high schools. The participants included school leaders, teachers, and support personnel.

The researcher used an adaptation of the Perceptions of Preparedness Survey (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jeresalem, 1995). The researcher merged the two surveys to create a comprehensive survey titled: *“Educators of*

Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey" in order to gather perceptions of preparedness and perceptions of self-efficacy of educators to work in high poverty schools. The question stems on Darling-Hammond's (2006) survey were adapted to reflect the perceptions of preparedness of educators in the high poverty school setting and were noted as for high poverty students in a K – 12 setting. The survey was divided into three sections, which included Section One, educator perceptions of preparedness of student learning and engagement, Section Two, educators' general self-efficacy to work in high poverty schools, and Section Three, demographic information, to include years of experience, grade level range, highest level of education, and the county the educator currently works.

The overarching research question for the study was to what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to work in high poverty schools, which was determined by descriptive statistical analysis which resulted in a mean of 2.04 /3.0 (*SD* = .605). Considering the rating scale was 0-3, this indicated the majority of educators felt well-prepared to work in high poverty schools in a K-12 setting. High poverty schools often struggle with teacher turnover more so than more affluent schools (Podosky et al., 2019). Furthermore, highly competent teachers are needed in order to improve the level of success for students in high poverty schools which indicates a need to provide professional development for teachers who do not feel very well prepared for today's classrooms. Additionally, teachers who feel better prepared are more likely to remain teaching in a high poverty school than those who feel less prepared.

In order to determine the overall level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools, descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean which was 2.16 /3.0 (*SD* =.548), which indicated educators have a moderate level of self-efficacy. The lowest rated mean question mean average was 1.67 /3.0 (*SD* =.787) which indicated educators found it very

unlikely to find ways to get what they need when opposed in the high poverty setting. This could indicate a need to support educators in finding resources that are applicable to their field. Teachers need to be involved in continuous improvement where student needs are addressed, instructional strategies are shared, impact is determined through data analysis, meaningful lessons are developed, and professional learning is job-embedded (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

This could indicate a need to evaluate the leadership of the school and determine if the school leader has a transformational leadership style or is less involved with the educators. Transformational leaders have a clear sense of purpose are able to lead an organization towards change. (Northouse, 2018). The results indicated educators do not feel they can manage problems or accomplish goals. The results also indicated educators felt they were not able to deal with unexpected events, be resourceful, solve problems, remain calm when faced with difficulty, or handle whatever may come their way in the high poverty setting. Educators may feel a higher level of self-efficacy when they are supported and encouraged to do what works best for students and when provided with opportunities for collaboration with others (Podolsky et al., 2018). These are attributes of transformational leaders, the type of leaders who have the greatest impact on teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Geijsel et al., 2003).

Descriptive statistics and Pearson's r correlations were used to determine the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to work in a high poverty school. It was determined there is a moderately strong correlation ($r = .616$) between self-efficacy and perceptions of preparedness. Educator self-efficacy is described as Bandura's social cognitive theory and is related to the ability of an educator to encourage and motivate students to learn (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). Furthermore, self-efficacy has a direct

correlation to instructional practices in the classroom along with educators wanting to remain in the profession.

In order to determine the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught, and their perceived level of preparedness to work in high poverty schools, Pearson's r correlations were utilized. Low correlations existed between each area.

To determine the parts, which include curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment, in which educators perceived themselves as well prepared, descriptive statistics analyses were utilized. The results showed educators perceptions of preparedness to work in high poverty schools as well-prepared with an overall mean of 2.04 (*SD* =.605). Additionally, curriculum and pedagogy resulted in a mean of 2.04 (*SD* =.612), differentiation resulted in a mean of 2.00 (*SD* =.680), and assessment resulted in a mean of 2.06 (*SD* =.675). Evidence suggested that teachers have the most significant effect on student achievement of any school-based factor (Stosich, 2016). In addition, this effect was especially pronounced for high poverty students who relied on schooling for developing academic skills as opposed to their more affluent peers. Assessments may be used to support teachers in making decisions on how to best support students based on their level of understanding (Kaushik, 2021). Professional learning must be tailored to the needs of each teacher and must provide opportunities for teachers to reflect and implement change in the classroom over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The perceptions of self-efficacy had a mean rating of 2.16 (*SD* =.548) which indicated a moderate level of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the personal belief that a person is capable of performing in a way to reach goals. Teachers who had a high sense of self-efficacy were able to provide challenging students with the resources and guidance they

needed to be successful. Professional learning is needed to help educators hold higher levels of self-efficacy to increase educator preparedness in high poverty schools. Educators who have a strong preparation program and have supports in place while teaching are more likely to remain in the teaching profession and have a higher level of self-efficacy (Podolsky et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that educators with a higher level of self-efficacy face fewer difficulties in working with students who live in poverty (Barni et al., 2019). Additionally, higher levels of self-efficacy amongst educators improves job satisfaction and student success in the classroom.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study indicate a need for educators to increase their level of self-efficacy. In order for educators to be successful in high poverty schools, they need to have a high level of self-efficacy and a perception of being well-prepared to have a positive impact on student success (Podolsky et al., 2018). Additionally, for educators to effectively teach in high poverty schools, educators must understand the importance of differentiating lessons and finding ways to meet the needs of all students (Podolsky et al., 2018). Furthermore, educators who are early in their career are more likely to be faced with challenges such as being able to assess student needs, provide differentiated instruction, and understand the emotional and social needs in the classroom indicating a need for strong professional development options (Podolsky et al., 2018) and this is evident in the findings as respondents noted they felt well-prepared in curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment. Additionally, new teacher induction programs must be high level and well-designed to encourage teachers to remain in the profession and have a positive impact on student performance and this is evident in the findings as respondents noted a moderate level of self-efficacy. Moreover, attrition rates are higher in high poverty schools due to a lack of administrative support, poor facilities, and less access to quality

resources which is evident in the findings as educators noted they felt well-prepared with limited supportive evidence in terms of preparedness of student learning and engagement.

The implications of this study indicate a need to ensure educators' perceptions of preparedness to work in a high poverty school are at a high level and educators have a high level of self-efficacy to have a positive impact on student success. In order to establish professional development that is meaningful and on-going, it is important to focus on the areas of weakness as indicated in the survey results. Educators need meaningful professional development in working with English for Speakers of Other Languages in the high poverty setting as indicated by the results from the survey questions. Professional development needs to be provided for educators in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment in order for educators to feel very well-prepared with strong supporting evidence. Specifically, when addressing educator's ability to help students become self-motivated and self-directed learners as well as helping students think critically and solve problems in the high poverty setting in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Educators need support in helping students conduct inquiry to inform their decision. Educators also need support in addressing students who have special learning needs in the high poverty setting. Educators with fewer years of experience need well-designed induction programs with mentors who have a high level of self-efficacy and are well-prepared to work in high poverty schools. One way to identify effective mentors, would be to administer the survey to find out their level of self-efficacy and perceptions of the mentor's own preparedness to work in a high poverty school.

School leadership plays a major role in teacher and student success and determines how long a teacher may remain at a given school and their level of success (Luyten & Bazo, 2019) Transformational leadership should be considered, in this study, a key factor to implementing

effective professional development and supporting educators. Transformational leaders encourage educators to change within an organization and to work together to build a community of learning (Luyten & Bazo, 2019). Transformational leadership has been considered the most "influential theory of leadership" in education through influencing educators' level of motivation, commitment, and goals (Usman, 2020, p. 97). With deficit theory thinking being prevalent in many high poverty schools, transformational leaders have the ability to change the mindset from thinking children are not able to perform to having high expectations for all students. The deficit perspective does not define students by their strengths; however, it defines students by their weaknesses (Collins, 1988). The way educators think about poverty is critical to student success and it influences how they respond to students and their families (Parrett& Budge, 2020).

Recommendations for Future Research

While the perceptions of educator preparedness to work in high poverty schools indicated an overall perception of being well-prepared, when drilling down to each question in the survey it was evident there were areas of in need of improvement for educators within student learning and engagement. Future research should be conducted to pinpoint specific areas of need within student learning and engagement to determine how to best develop professional learning courses around curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment as well. It would also be beneficial to gather data from a larger range of educators. For this particular survey, the majority of the responses came from elementary teachers. It would be beneficial to obtain more responses from middle and high school teachers as well as school leaders and support personnel.

Leadership styles should be considered when determining levels of self-efficacy and perceptions of preparedness of educators. Additional research should be conducted to determine

if teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy and perceptions of preparedness are correlated to the leadership style of the school leader in place. Further research should also be conducted to determine what specifically makes the educator feel a higher level of self-efficacy in the high poverty setting. It may also be beneficial to research educators in high achieving, high poverty school to determine what makes them so successful and willing to continue teaching in the high poverty school.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

A limitation for this study was that the majority of educators who participated were elementary school teachers. Only 5% of the respondents were school leaders. Another limitation was the length of the time to complete the survey and collect the data was limited to four weeks as a result may have been lower at a response rate of 14%. It could be assumed that the level of responsibility and lack of time that comes with working in a high poverty school could have impacted the participation rate. Additionally, it could be assumed that the educators who responded may be more motivated to check and respond to emails than the educators who did not participate.

A delimitation was that the study was limited to educators in four counties in the Current County School District. Additionally, a delimitation was that the criteria for selecting participants was limited to neighboring school districts to the researcher's current place of employment. An assumption was that the participants in this study would provide honest answers and feedback accurately reflecting their current perceptions of the questions posed.

Conclusion

Poverty impacts children’s academic success in negative ways which indicated a need for educators who have a high level of self-efficacy and positive perceptions of preparedness to

work with children in high poverty schools. Furthermore, transformational leadership is key to helping educators become more successful in the education setting. Providing professional learning that is well-designed and meaningful may prove to be critical to the success of educators and students. Professional learning for educators in the high poverty setting need to be designed with student learning and engagement in mind to include curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment. Professional learning should be on-going throughout the school year and build on previous sessions. Educators need professional learning to address the needs of students with learning disability and for English for Speakers of Other Languages, as an example. Additionally, professional learning needs to be in place to better prepare teachers help students become self-motivated and think critically to solve problems. In order to change the perceptions of educators to feeling well-prepared with strong supporting evidence, educators should have opportunities for collaboration and professional learning that is tailored to their needs.

Educators often come to the education platform with their own norms and expectations of how students should perform and behave in school. Many educators had very little exposure or knowledge of teaching children of poverty and had very little knowledge of how to work through the many barriers children who live in poverty face. Children who live in poverty must have their basic needs met before being successful academically. Without proper training, such as in teacher preparation programs and on-going professional learning, a teacher may not be able to meet the needs of children who live in poverty. Educators' perceptions of preparedness to work with children who live in poverty are critical to a student’s academic success.

The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree educators felt prepared to work in high poverty schools. One of the critical factors in raising student achievement was a

highly-qualified teacher, who was well-trained in their content areas support be an effective school leader. Highly-qualified teachers have a significant impact on student achievement, and this indicated a need to determine perceptions of preparedness to work in high poverty schools. This study also aimed to determine the type of professional learning educators need to prepare them to support students who live in poverty. The results of this study indicated educators feel well-prepared in some areas but not in others.

Educators need to feel prepared to make a positive impact on students' learning and achievement. The information obtained from this research may be utilized in school systems to prepare all educators better and determine what types of professional learning needs should be provided by the district and individual schools. Educator preparedness was peremptory to student and teacher success. Educators must be prepared for the challenges they face in high poverty schools to retain the best workforce possible and positively impact the classroom.

Without proper training, such as in teacher preparation programs and on-going professional learning, a teacher would not be able to meet the needs of children who live in poverty. Educators' perceptions of preparedness to work with children who live in poverty are critical to a student's academic success which indicates a need for a transformational leader to lead the charge for change in high poverty schools. If better training programs are implemented, then educators' perceptions of preparedness in student learning and engagement and self-efficacy would increase.

Impact Statement

The research showed educators with a moderate level of self-efficacy also had a very-well perception of preparedness. Self-efficacious educators have the greatest impact on student success as well as personal success. There is a growing need to find educators who are willing to

work in high poverty schools and provide meaningful instruction for students. With school leaders in place who have a transformational leadership style, teachers will become better prepared to work in high poverty schools, be void of a deficit mindset, and will be willing to stay!

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Educator Perceptions of Preparedness and Self-Efficacy in High Poverty Schools Survey

(Darling-Hammond, 2006; Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

The purpose of this survey is to answer the following overarching research question: To what degree do educators perceive they are prepared to teach in high poverty schools? The Survey of Preparedness was created by Linda Darling-Hammond in 2006 and the original version can be found in Powerful Teacher Education by Linda Darling-Hammond (2006). The stems of the questions were modified for the purposes of this study to reflect preparedness in high poverty schools. The sub-section titles were retrieved from a study which focused on the transferability and alignment of program exemplars in alternative teacher preparation by (McBrayer & Melton, 2018). The educator efficacy section of the survey is retrieved from The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Section One: Preparedness of Student Learning and Engagement

The following items have been found to be evidence-based practices indicative of successfully preparing highly effective teachers for K – 12 classrooms when working with high poverty students. Please indicate the degree to which you feel your preparation as either a educator reflects these evidence-based practices in regards to working with high poverty students. If you believe that these practices are not transferable to the classroom, please indicate not evident.

3 = Very well-prepared with strong supporting evidence

2 = Well-prepared with limited supporting evidence

1 = Need more preparation

0 = Not Evident

Based on your experience as an educator in a K – 12 school setting in working with high poverty students, how well prepared are you in each of the following areas:

Part A: Curriculum and Pedagogy

1. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to present the concepts, knowledge, and skills of the discipline in ways that enable high poverty students to learn in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

2. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how different high poverty students are learning in an K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

3. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to set challenging and appropriate expectations of learning and performance for high poverty students in an K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

4. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students achieve academic high standards in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

5. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to relate classroom learning to the real world in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

6. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development influence learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

7. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to identify and address special learning needs and/or difficulties in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

8. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to teach in ways that support English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

9. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students become self-motivated and self- directed in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

10. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use effective verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to guide student learning and behavior in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

11. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use questions to stimulate different kinds of student learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

12. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop a classroom environment that promotes social development and group responsibility in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

13. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop student's questioning and discussion skills in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

14. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to engage high poverty students in cooperative work as well as independent learning in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

15. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students learn to think critically and solve problems in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

16. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to encour**a**ge high poverty students to see, question, and interpret ideas from diverse perspectives in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

17. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to understand how factors in the students' environment outside of school may influence their life and learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

18. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to give productive feedback to high poverty students to guide their learning in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

19. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to help high poverty students learn how to assess their own learning in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

20. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to evaluate the effects of their actions and modify plans accordingly in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

21. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to conduct inquiry or research to inform their decisions in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

Part B: Differentiation

22. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to develop a curriculum that builds on high poverty students' experiences, interests, and abilities in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

23. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to evaluate curriculum materials for their usefulness and appropriateness for high poverty students in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

24. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to create an interdisciplinary curriculum in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

25. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use instructional strategies that promote active student learning in a K – 12 setting for high poverty.

3	2	1	0

26. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to choose teaching strategies for different instructional purposes and to meet high poverty student needs in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

27. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to integrate instructional technology into the classroom curriculum and pedagogy in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

28. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to present curriculum and pedagogy to high poverty students from a multicultural vantage point in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

29. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use knowledge of learning, subject matter, curriculum, and student development to plan instruction in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

Part C: Assessment

30. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to provide a rationale for teaching decisions to high poverty students, parents, and colleagues in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

31. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to work with parents and families to better understand high poverty students and to support their learning in a K – 12 setting.

3	2	1	0

32. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to use a variety of assessments (e.g., observation, portfolios, tests, performance tasks, anecdotal records) to determine student strengths, needs, and progress in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

33. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to resolve interpersonal conflict in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

34. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to maintain discipline and an orderly, purposeful learning environment in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

35. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to plan and solve problems with colleagues in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

36. The educator perceives themselves as prepared to assume leadership responsibilities in the school in a K – 12 setting for high poverty students.

3	2	1	0

37. Overall, how would you rate the preparation you received to be successful in a K – 12 setting in working with high poverty students?

3	2	1	0

Section Two: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)

In this section, please rate yourself on the following scale as it relates to teaching in a K-12 setting and working with high poverty students.

3 = Exactly true

2 = Moderately true

1 = Hardly true

0 = Not at all true

Self-Efficacy

38. In the high poverty school setting, I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

3	2	1	0

39. In the high poverty school setting, if someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

3	2	1	0

40. In the high poverty school setting, it is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals in the high poverty school setting.

3	2	1	0

41. In the high poverty school setting, I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

3	2	1	0

42. In the high poverty school setting, thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

3	2	1	0

43. In the high poverty school setting, I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

3	2	1	0

44. In the high poverty school setting, I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

3	2	1	0

45. In the high poverty school setting, when I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

3	2	1	0

46. In the high poverty school setting, if I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

3	2	1	0

47. In the high poverty school setting, I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

3	2	1	0

Section Three: Demographic Information

48. In which county do you currently serve as an educator?

____Columbia

____Richmond

____Burke

____Warren

____Lincoln

____McDuffie

49. At what level do you currently serve as an educator?

____Elementary ____Middle ____High

50. What is your current role? Check all that apply.

____School Leader _____Teacher ____Support Staff (School Psychologist, Specialist Education Specialist, Instructional Specialist, Counselor, or other)

51. How many total years do you have in education?

____1-3 ____4-9 ____10-19 ____20+

52. What is the highest degree you currently hold?

____BA/BS Degree

____Masters Degree

____Specialist Degree

____Doctoral Degree

53.If you are a teacher, what content area do you currently teach?

____ELA ____Math ____Science ____Social Studies ____Art/Music

____Physical Education ____Other

APPENDIX B

Demographic Information for School Systems Participating in the Study

All information in this section was collected from The Governor's Office of Student of Achievement (2022).

Table 1 *Demographic Information for School Systems Participating in the Study*

School System	Number of Certified Teachers	Number of high poverty schools	Number of School Leaders	Number of Students	Mobility Rate	CCRPI Score	Economically Disadvantaged	Graduation Rate
County A	292	5/5	33	4,192	12.40%	68.1	100%	91.55%
County B	3,800	10/31	78	29,218	11.50%	81.2	19.6%	92%
County C	1908	54/54	202	29,093	29.20%	59.3	68.9%	77.20%
County D	48	3/3	5	595	10.80%	69.5	100%	85.70%

Table 2 *Ethnicity Information for School Systems Participating in the Study*

School System	White	Black	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	Asian/Pacific Islander
County A	29%	63%	4%	4%	0%
County B	57%	21%	11%	7%	4%
County C	16%	75%	5%	3%	0%
County D	7%	90%	0%	3%	0%

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

For

EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS AND SELF-EFFICACY IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

Introduction of Researcher: My name is Kristen Carroll and I am currently enrolled as a student in the Doctoral Program at Georgia Southern University in the College of Education. I currently serve as an elementary school principal in a high poverty school and I am a certified teacher in Elementary Education in the state of Georgia. I am completing a research project as a requirement for my degree program on educator perceptions of preparedness to teach in high poverty schools.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to survey educators currently employed in a school district regarding their perceptions of preparedness for working in a high poverty setting.

Procedures: Participation in this research will include completion of a 53-question survey which consists of three sections: preparedness for student learning and engagement, self-efficacy, and demographics.

Discomforts and Risks: The risks in regards to participating in the survey should be considered minimal in that they will be no more invasive than those risks encountered in everyday work.

Benefits: The benefits to participants include providing valuable feedback that will aid in providing professional development for educators in working in high poverty schools.

Duration/Time required from the participant: The completion of the survey will take approximately 20 minutes.

Future Use of Data: The data will be maintained in a secure location for a minimum of five years following completion of the study. Since the survey is anonymous, you will not be identified by name in the data set or any reports using information obtained from this study, and your confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In addition, your IP address will not be recorded. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies that protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If questions arise about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact the Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-5465 or irb@georgiasouthern.edu.

Compensation: There is no incentive or compensation to participate in this study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or you may refuse to answer any question(s) on the survey.

Penalty: There is also no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study and you may withdraw without penalty or retribution.

Age Requirement to Participate: You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please continue to the survey (see link below). Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent for the researcher to use your responses in the research report. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and participating in this study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the GS Institutional Review Board under tracking number HH23150.

Title of Project: Educator perceptions of preparedness and self-efficacy in high poverty schools

Principal Investigator: Kristen Carroll, kc22988@georgiasouthernuniversity.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Juliann Sergi McBrayer, jmcbrayer@georgiasouthern.edu

If you agree to complete the survey, click the link below, which will indicate passive consent. However, this is voluntary, and you can opt-out at any time. Thank you for your participation.

Survey Link:

https://georgiasouthern.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1H5GQkoL1kG7QA6

APPENDIX D

INITIAL RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Educator,

I am leading a research project and quantitative study on educator perceptions of preparedness in high poverty schools. This project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements set forth by Georgia Southern University to complete a Doctorate in Educational Administration. I invite you to participate in this survey.

This online survey, using Qualtrics™, will be kept anonymous, and you will be asked questions related leader and teacher perceptions of preparedness in high poverty schools. Your participation is completely voluntary. Participants have the opportunity to ask questions about the survey, skip over survey questions, or opt out of the survey. If you choose to participate, please complete the survey with the understanding that your completion of the survey serves as your informed consent. The survey should take you approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey has minimum risks, no more than those associated with daily life experiences. All data collected is anonymous and will remain confidential. Information is only shared with my research committee (Georgia Southern University College of Education Dissertation Committee). All results will be compiled and presented as generalizable findings. If you decide to complete the survey via the link below, implied consent will be applied.

To complete the survey, please use this link

The survey window is January 5, 2023 – February 5, 2023.

As a participant in this survey, you have the right to ask questions and to have each question answered. If you have any concerns, questions, and/or comments regarding this study, please contact me, Kristen Carroll at kc22988@georgiasouthern.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Juliann Sergi McBrayer, at jmcbrayer@georgiasouthern.edu. If the survey or a question or a portion of the survey causes any discomfort, please contact Dr. McBrayer or me at the information above. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Georgia Southern University Office of Research Integrity at irb@georgiasouthern.edu. Regardless of your participation of the survey, please email me if you would like a summary of the findings.

Thank you in advance for participating in this research.

Kristen Carroll
Student
Georgia Southern University
College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear Educator,

Approximately one week ago, an invitation to participate in a survey regarding research on educator perceptions of preparedness in high poverty schools was shared. This email serves only as a reminder of the invitation seen below.

Thank you in advance for participating in this research.

If you have already participated in the survey, I appreciate your participation.

Kristen Carroll
Student
Georgia Southern University
College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX F

REMINDER FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear Educator,

Approximately two weeks ago, an invitation to participate in a survey regarding research on educator perceptions of preparedness in high poverty schools was shared. This email serves only as a reminder of the invitation seen below.

Thank you in advance for participating in this research.

If you have already participated in the survey, I appreciate your participation.

Kristen Carroll
Student
Georgia Southern University
College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX G

LAST REMINDER AND FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear Educator,

Approximately three weeks ago, an invitation to participate in a survey regarding research on educator perceptions of preparedness in high poverty schools was shared. If you have already participated in the survey, I appreciate your participation. If you have not completed the survey, I wanted to follow up and remind you of the invitation and request your participation. This email serves only as a reminder of the invitation.

Thank you in advance for participating in this research.

Kristen Carroll
Student
Georgia Southern University
College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX H

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question	**Statistical Measure**	**Survey Questions**	**Purpose**
RQ1 What is the level of self-efficacy of educators who work in high poverty schools?	Descriptive statistics o Mean o Standard Deviation	Survey questions 38-47.	Determined specific areas of perceptions of preparedness of educators in high-poverty schools in terms of self-efficacy.
RQ2 What is the relationship between the self-efficacy of educators and their perceptions of their own preparedness to teach in a high-poverty school?	Descriptive statistics o Mean o Standard Deviation Pearson's r Correlation	Survey questions 1-37 correlated to survey questions 38-47.	Determined if the educator's level of self-efficacy aligned with level of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy, assessment, and differentiation.
RQ3 What is the relationship between educators' years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, content area taught and their perceived level of preparedness for teaching in high-poverty schools?	Pearson's r Correlation	Survey questions 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53 correlated to survey questions 1-21, 22-29, and 30-37.	Determined if years of experience, role in education, highest degree level, grade level assignment, and content area taught were related to perceptions of preparedness in curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment.
RQ4 How well-prepared do educators perceive themselves in each part (curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment)?	Descriptive statistics o Mean o Standard Deviation	Survey questions 1-21, 22-29, and 30-37.	Determined how well-prepared educator perceptions felt in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, differentiation, and assessment.