

# An ethnographic case study in a British primary (elementary) school classroom of academic self-efficacy

2011

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY IN A BRITISH PRIMARY  
(ELEMENTARY) SCHOOL CLASSROOM OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

by

Kelly Iliff

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education  
in the College of Education  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Gillian Eriksson

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## **ABSTRACT**

An ethnographic case study of a Year 6 (5<sup>th</sup> grade) classroom in Southwest England was conducted in order to explore factors that contribute to academic self-efficacy in British education, specifically in this classroom. Data was collected through qualitative observations, a teacher interview, and student questionnaires to determine the level of academic self-efficacy in the classroom. The class consisted of 14 female students and 9 male students, ranging from ten to eleven years old. Of the total number of students, parental consent was received to allow 9 boys and 7 girls to complete questionnaires. Data was analyzed by examining critical issues and comparing anecdotal records to a teacher interview and student questionnaires. Recurrent themes that materialized were: bullying, uniforms, discipline, competition, assessment, and exceptional students. Results showed that these core issues contributed to positive academic self-efficacy among students in this classroom in the context of the British educational system.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this research was to investigate academic self-efficacy in a British primary (elementary) school classroom. Understanding the factors attributing to academic self-efficacy may help guide instructional behavior in the future. Similarly, noting the differences in curriculum and ideology between British and American schools and their effects on self-efficacy factors may subsequently assist with future curriculum design and instruction. Immense discrepancies exist between these two systems, and exploring variations through a British primary school classroom case study may help American educators create an ideal environment to promote positive academic self-efficacy in their students.

The researcher visited a Year 6 classroom in Southwest England, which is equivalent to a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in the United States, and completed three full school days of observation during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. A qualitative account of the experience was recorded, as detailed in Chapter 4. In order to measure academic self-efficacy, the researcher distributed a modified Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES) and the 25-item short form of the My Class Inventory (MCI) to Year 6 students in the class. Other information regarding curriculum and classroom structure was collected through teacher interview questions developed by the researcher.

The vast differences in curriculum and ideology between American and British elementary schools may greatly influence academic self-efficacy in students. The researcher aimed to isolate recurrent themes observed and compare them to background research, the teacher interview, and student questionnaires in order to explore sources of academic self-efficacy in the case study classroom.

## **Study Background**

The researcher came to focus on this case study classroom after completing five days of service learning at the school through a summer study abroad program in 2010. The university's United Kingdom education study abroad lasted just over two weeks, including one week of lectures on the British education system and one school week (Monday through Friday) of service learning at a local primary school. The students went on educational excursions around Southwest England and learned about the structure, ideology, and curriculum of the British education system before entering the schools.

Upon completion of the program and return to the United States, the researcher wrote a paper titled "The Impact of Poverty on Behavior in UK Schools" (Ilf, 2010), which focused on the impact of poverty on the behavioral differences between younger and older students at the school. The researcher took particular interest in assessment methods observed at the school, as "paper and pencil" tests commonly seen in American classrooms were absent. This curiosity sparked the desire to use this school for further observation and research.

The researcher developed a close relationship with a Year 6 teacher during the service learning experience and contacted her to return to the class for this study. She also serves as the Assistant Headteacher (Assistant Principal) at the school, which made obtaining administrative approval very straightforward.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Self-Efficacy

*Self-efficacy* refers to learners' perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels (Bandura, 1977). It is hypothesized that self-efficacy influences one's choice of activities, effort expended, perseverance when difficulties are encountered, and skillful performance (Schunk, 2001). People fear and tend to avoid threatening situations when they do not believe they can handle them, while they get involved in activities and act confidently when they believe they can do well (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura (1977) states that a person's expectations of self-efficacy are based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. *Performance accomplishments* are based on previous personal experience, where successes raise expectations while failures lower them. *Vicarious experiences* occur when people see others perform activities. Modeling produces these experiences, where seeing another complete a task successfully can make the observer believe he or she will be able to accomplish the activity as well. *Verbal persuasions* transpire when suggestions lead people to believe that they can cope successfully with what has previously overwhelmed them. *Emotional arousal* takes place when feelings of stress or anxiety create high physiological arousal. Fear reactions can generate further fear and debilitate performance.

### *Academic Self-Efficacy*

Academic self-efficacy concerns students' beliefs that they have control over their performance in a specific subject (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Jinks (1999) concluded that educational success often relies on high academic self-efficacy; as such, pinpointing the factors

affecting it can help educators design the most effective curriculum and activities. Many sources contribute to the development of academic self-efficacy, and studies have found that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic performance (Pajares, 1995). Bandura's (1977) theory can also be applied to academic self-efficacy, as the four sources of information (*performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states*) contribute to students' self-efficacy in the classroom setting.

Usher and Pajares (2008) applied the four sources to school settings and demonstrated how they develop academic self-efficacy. When students experience failure after having put forth great effort, their self-efficacy may decrease. On many occasions, students compare their graded work to others. Seeing that most peers have scored lower than them will likely increase academic self-efficacy, while observing that most peers have received higher scores will likely decrease academic self-efficacy. Parent, teacher, and peer encouragement can help build students' self-efficacy, as they often rely on the opinions of others in regards to their academic performance. Also, "strong emotional reactions to school-related tasks can provide cues to expected success or failure", as "students learn to interpret their physiological arousal as an indicator of personal competence by evaluating their own performances under differing conditions" (Usher and Pajares, 2008).

Many factors contribute to academic self-efficacy in the classroom, and exploring the sources is essential, as children's academic self-efficacy may better indicate the quality of their school experiences than objective assessments, such as exams or grades (Baker, 1998).

### *Socioeconomic Status and Self-Efficacy*

Many studies have analyzed the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and self-efficacy and determined that they are positively correlated (Hughes and Demo 1989; Staples, Schwalbe, & Gecas, 1984). Hughes and Demo (1989) found that socioeconomic status was the most important predictor of self-efficacy. Their findings indicated that higher SES was related to a greater sense of personal efficacy. Staples et al. (1984) analyzed occupational status and efficacy based self-esteem and found a relationship between social class and occupational conditions that constrained or enabled the experience of self-efficacy and self-esteem. They concluded the experience of efficacy underlies the relationship between social class and self-esteem. Previous study outcomes suggest low socioeconomic status develops low self-efficacy.

In addition to individual socioeconomic status, researchers have determined that neighborhood SES plays a role in the development of self-efficacy. Boardman and Robert (2000) studied both individual and neighborhood socioeconomic status to determine which had a greater impact on self-efficacy. They concluded that low neighborhood socioeconomic status is more associated with low levels of self-efficacy than individual-level socioeconomic status. Caldas and Bankston (1997) studied the relationship between student socioeconomic status and academic achievement and determined that peer family SES, in addition to individual family social status, have a substantial effect on academic achievement.

### **British Education System**

#### *Primary Education in the United Kingdom*

The educational structure in the United Kingdom is much different than that in the United States. Elementary schools are called primary schools, and the term year is used rather than

grade. Two key stages exist in primary school, and students are formally tested at the end of each. At age five, children enter Year 1 which is comparable to kindergarten in the United States. The table below displays the key stage and year structure in greater detail, along with a description of any assessments in each year (National Curriculum, 2010b).

**TABLE 1: NATIONAL CURRICULUM KEY STAGES AND ASSESSMENTS**

<b>NATIONAL CURRICULUM KEY STAGES AND ASSESSMENTS</b>			
<b>AGE</b>	<b>YEAR (GRADE)</b>	<b>KEY STAGE (KS)</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT</b>
5 to 6	1	1	
6 to 7	2	1	Teacher assessments in English, math, and science
7 to 8	3	2	
8 to 9	4	2	
9 to 10	5	2	
10 to 11	6	2	National tests and teacher assessments in English, math, and science
11 to 12	7	3	Ongoing teacher assessments
12 to 13	8	3	Ongoing teacher assessments
13 to 14	9	3	Teacher assessments in English, math, and science and the other foundation subjects
14 to 15	10	4	Some children take GCSEs
15 to 16	11	4	Most children take GCSEs or other national qualifications

The National Curriculum in the United Kingdom designates that the subjects all pupils must study in primary school are art and design, design and technology, English, geography, history, information and communication technology, mathematics, music, physical education, science, and religious education. The following section lists the subjects, along with a brief

description of National Curriculum expectations for key stage 2, as detailed in the subjects component of the official website (National Curriculum, 2010c).

### *Art and Design*

“During Key Stage 2, pupils develop their creativity and imagination through more complex activities. These help to build on their skills and improve their control of materials, tools and techniques. They increase their critical awareness of the roles and purposes of art, craft and design in different times and cultures. They become more confident in using visual and tactile elements and materials and processes to communicate what they see, feel and think.”

### *Design and Technology*

“During key stage 2 pupils work on their own and as part of a team on a range of designing and making activities. They think about what products are used for and the needs of the people who use them. They plan what has to be done and identify what works well and what could be improved in their own and other people’s designs. They draw on knowledge and understanding from other areas of the curriculum and use computers in a range of ways.”

### *English*

“In English, during key stage 2 pupils learn to change the way they speak and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences. They read a range of texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them. They explore the use of language in literary and non-literary texts and learn how language works.” The National Curriculum details three different skills to be developed in English: speaking and listening, reading, and writing.

“Speaking and listening: during key stage 2 pupils learn how to speak in a range of contexts, adapting what they say and how they say it to the purpose and the audience. Taking

varied roles in groups gives them opportunities to contribute to situations with different demands. They also learn to respond appropriately to others, thinking about what has been said and the language used.”

“Reading: during key stage 2 pupils read enthusiastically a range of materials and use their knowledge of words, sentences and texts to understand and respond to the meaning. They increase their ability to read challenging and lengthy texts independently. They reflect on the meaning of texts, analysing and discussing them with others.”

“Writing: during key stage 2 pupils develop understanding that writing is both essential to thinking and learning, and enjoyable in its own right. They learn the main rules and conventions of written English and start to explore how the English language can be used to express meaning in different ways. They use the planning, drafting and editing process to improve their work and to sustain their fiction and non-fiction writing.”

### *Geography*

“During key stage 2 pupils investigate a variety of people, places and environments at different scales in the United Kingdom and abroad, and start to make links between different places in the world. They find out how people affect the environment and how they are affected by it. They carry out geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom. In doing this they ask geographical questions, and use geographical skills and resources such as maps, atlases, aerial photographs and ICT (information and communication technology).”

### *History*

“During key stage 2 pupils learn about significant people, events and places from both the recent and more distant past. They learn about change and continuity in their own area, in

Britain and in other parts of the world. They look at history in a variety of ways, for example from political, economic, technological and scientific, social, religious, cultural or aesthetic perspectives. They use different sources of information to help them investigate the past both in depth and in overview, using dates and historical vocabulary to describe events, people and developments. They also learn that the past can be represented and interpreted in different ways.”

#### *Information and Communication Technology*

“During key stage 2 pupils use a wider range of ICT tools and information sources to support their work in other subjects. They develop their research skills and decide what information is appropriate for their work. They begin to question the plausibility and quality of information. They learn how to amend their work and present it in a way that suits its audience.”

#### *Mathematics*

The National Curriculum details four different skills to be developed in mathematics: number and algebra, shape, space and measures, and handling data. “During key stage 2 pupils use the number system more confidently. They move from counting reliably to calculating fluently with all four number operations. They always try to tackle a problem with mental methods before using any other approach. Pupils explore features of shape and space and develop their measuring skills in a range of contexts. They discuss and present their methods and reasoning using a wider range of mathematical language, diagrams and charts.”

#### *Music*

“During key stage 2 pupils sing songs and play instruments with increasing confidence, skill, expression and awareness of their own contribution to a group or class performance. They improvise, and develop their own musical compositions, in response to a variety of different

stimuli with increasing personal involvement, independence and creativity. They explore their thoughts and feelings through responding physically, intellectually and emotionally to a variety of music from different times and cultures.”

### *Physical Education*

“During key stage 2 pupils enjoy being active and using their creativity and imagination in physical activity. They learn new skills, find out how to use them in different ways, and link them to make actions, phrases and sequences of movement. They enjoy communicating, collaborating and competing with each other. They develop an understanding of how to succeed in different activities and learn how to evaluate and recognise their own success.”

### *Science*

The National Curriculum requires scientific enquiry to be taught through three sections: life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. “During key stage 2 pupils learn about a wider range of living things, materials and phenomena. They begin to make links between ideas and to explain things using simple models and theories. They apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas to familiar phenomena, everyday things and their personal health. They begin to think about the positive and negative effects of scientific and technological developments on the environment and in other contexts. They carry out more systematic investigations, working on their own and with others. They use a range of reference sources in their work. They talk about their work and its significance, and communicate ideas using a wide range of scientific language, conventional diagrams, charts and graphs.”

### *Religious Education*

“Throughout key stage 2, pupils learn about Christianity and at least two of the other principal religions, recognising the impact of religion and belief locally, nationally and globally. They make connections between differing aspects of religion and consider the different forms of religious expression. They consider the beliefs, teachings, practices and ways of life central to religion. They learn about sacred texts and other sources and consider their meanings. They begin to recognise diversity in religion, learning about similarities and differences both within and between religions and beliefs and the importance of dialogue between them. They extend the range and use of specialist vocabulary. They recognise the challenges involved in distinguishing between ideas of right and wrong, and valuing what is good and true. They communicate their ideas, recognising other people's viewpoints. They consider their own beliefs and values and those of others in the light of their learning in religious education.”

### *Assessment*

Subject levels, or grades, are not entirely determined by formal assessments. They are typically only formally determined at the end of each key stage, and teachers use personal judgment and collections of students' work to determine which level best fits their overall performances in each subject. They utilize the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) approach to assessment as a guide to making judgments on students' progress. The APP approach “helps teachers to fine-tune their understanding of pupils' needs and tailor their planning and teaching accordingly, by enabling them to track pupils' progress, use diagnostic information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to improve teaching, learning and pupils' progress, and make reliable judgments related to national standards drawing on a wide range of evidence” (National

Curriculum, 2010a). Teachers draw from a wide range of evidence to determine what students understand and can do independently. Approaches which may be used include “extended or shorter focused pieces of writing in a variety of different forms for a range of purposes, information from different curriculum areas, text annotation or visual organizers such as thought mapping, storyboards or timelines, oral work such as pupil presentations to the class, contributions to class discussions, drama activities or discussions with teachers, observing pupils’ behaviour and interactions, pupils’ self-assessment” (National Curriculum, 2010a).

At the end of each key stage, teachers use formal assessments to measure students’ progress. At the end of key stage 1 when students are seven years old, teacher assessments cover reading, writing, speaking and listening, math, and science. The local government moderates the assessments, which can be taken at a time the school chooses and last less than three hours altogether. At the end of key stage 2 when students are eleven years old, they take national tests which cover English (reading, writing, handwriting, and spelling), math (including mental arithmetic), and science. The tests are taken on set days in mid-May and last less than five-and-a-half hours altogether. They are used to compare student performance nationally and show if students are performing at the target level for their age.

The official website for the British National Curriculum (2010b) states, “The school curriculum should aim to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life”. Rather than focus solely on academics, the British National Curriculum seeks to educate the person as a whole. The school curriculum aims to develop moral principles, promote equality, and encourage

self-esteem and emotional well-being. British schools desire to educate the “whole person” and prepare students to become positive, contributing members of society.

Overall, understanding factors contributing to self-efficacy, specifically academic self-efficacy, will help the researcher locate attributes in the classroom in order to compare the classroom environment to student questionnaires and a teacher interview. Also, differences between the British and American education systems are vast, and detailing the British National Curriculum structure and assessments is essential in analyzing which aspects may influence academic self-efficacy.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Subjects

All students in the study were between the ages of ten and eleven and part of a Year 6 (5<sup>th</sup> grade) classroom, which is the end of key stage 2 and the final grade level in primary school. Studying and surveying this group was important because it represents children who have gone through and reached the end of the primary school system experience. The class chosen was from a British state school, which is comparable to an American public school. The United Kingdom Cabinet Office's (2010c) Directgov website describes state schools as those which "receive funding from local authorities. They all follow the National Curriculum and are regularly inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education)."

### *Local Statistics*

The school was located in an impoverished suburban community in Southwest England. Out of people aged 16 and over in the community, 18% were classified with the social grade E: on state benefit, unemployed, or lowest grade workers. 37.5% of households with dependent children were single parent, and of those lone parents, 33.5% only worked part time to support their families (Office for National Statistics, 2010).

### *School Background*

Most families lived within walking distance of the school, and many parents walked students to and from school each day. The community around the school was socioeconomically deprived, and a 26.4% of students received free school meals. To be eligible for free lunch, parents must receive support payments from the government (Department for Education, 2010). The school had 14 total classrooms with two classes per year (grade level). There was also one

Reception (Preschool) and one Nursery class. Reception and Nursery shared a fenced in play area, while the rest of the school had access to two large fields, a basketball court, and a covered court which was typically used to play soccer. According to Department of Education (2010) statistics, the student to teacher ratio at the school was 20.8, and the national average for England was 21.3. The average class size in the area was 26.4, which is exactly the same as the national average. Funding per student in the area was £4,700 (about \$7665), in comparison to England's national average of £4,990 (about \$8242).

### *Students*

The British primary school class selected was a sample of convenience. The Year 6 class was comprised of 14 male and 9 female students. Parents consented for 9 boys and 7 girls to take part in the questionnaires. Many students came from single-parent homes or families with at least one unemployed parent and had a troubled family life. The only physical disability was a student with a severe visual impairment, and full-time support was available to him. All students were born in England and used English as a first language.

### **Instrumentation**

The subjects were surveyed using a modified version of the Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES), as shown in Appendix A. The MJSES contains 30 questions about how the student feels he or she performs at school. The researcher edited the original MJSES form to remove questions regarding evaluations and modified questions to include more familiar terminology for British children. Students were also surveyed with a modified 25-item short form of My Class Inventory (MCI), as shown in Appendix B, which includes 25 questions inquiring how the student feels about his or her classroom environment. Both instruments have

been tested for reliability and validity (Fisher, 1981; Jinks, 1999). The researcher also interviewed the classroom teacher using the eight “Teacher Interview Questions” listed in Appendix C.

## **Procedures**

During Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, the researcher spent three full school days (from 8:55am to 3:15pm, with lunch from 12:15-1:15pm) observing the classroom and taking detailed notes. The classroom teacher served a dual role as a school administrator, wherein she was able to give the researcher permission to observe her class and survey the students who received parent consent. After receiving approval from the University of Central Florida’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), a parent information letter that described the research study and requested consent was distributed to all Year 6 students in the class. The researcher gave detailed instructions and administered the Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES) and My Class Inventory (MCI) questionnaires to students who received parental permission to complete them. Then, the instruments were collected and kept anonymous. At the end of the observations, the researcher interviewed the teacher in person using the “Teacher Interview Questions” located in Appendix C and typed her responses as they were given.

## CHAPTER IV: OBSERVATIONS

### School Facilities

Although the primary school was located in an impoverished area, its facilities and atmosphere resembled an elite private school in the United States. The school relocated to a new building over the summer, and every aspect appeared to be state of the art. The school's security measures were obvious upon arrival. Visitors were required to buzz the front desk to unlock the door and immediately check in with the secretary. Once this was done, a member of staff had to escort the guest through another locked door with a key code to enter classroom areas.

The library was the first area upon entering the school's main building. Vivid colors highlighted the room, as did the sun shining through skylights. Colorful carpets and pillows scattered throughout the room created a friendly, fun atmosphere, and a platform seating area in the middle of the room provided a special place students could climb up into to enjoy books. Artwork created by students hung from the ceiling and showed that the school took pride in its students' creativity.

Technological advances at the school were remarkable. Every classroom had smart board technology that teachers took advantage of during nearly all lessons. Teachers and students were able to write on the board with a special pen and save documents in a digital format for later reference. Each Year 5 and 6 (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade) student had his or her own laptop to be kept at school. The students knew how to navigate both their computers and the internet with ease, and it was evident that technology was a staple in the classroom.

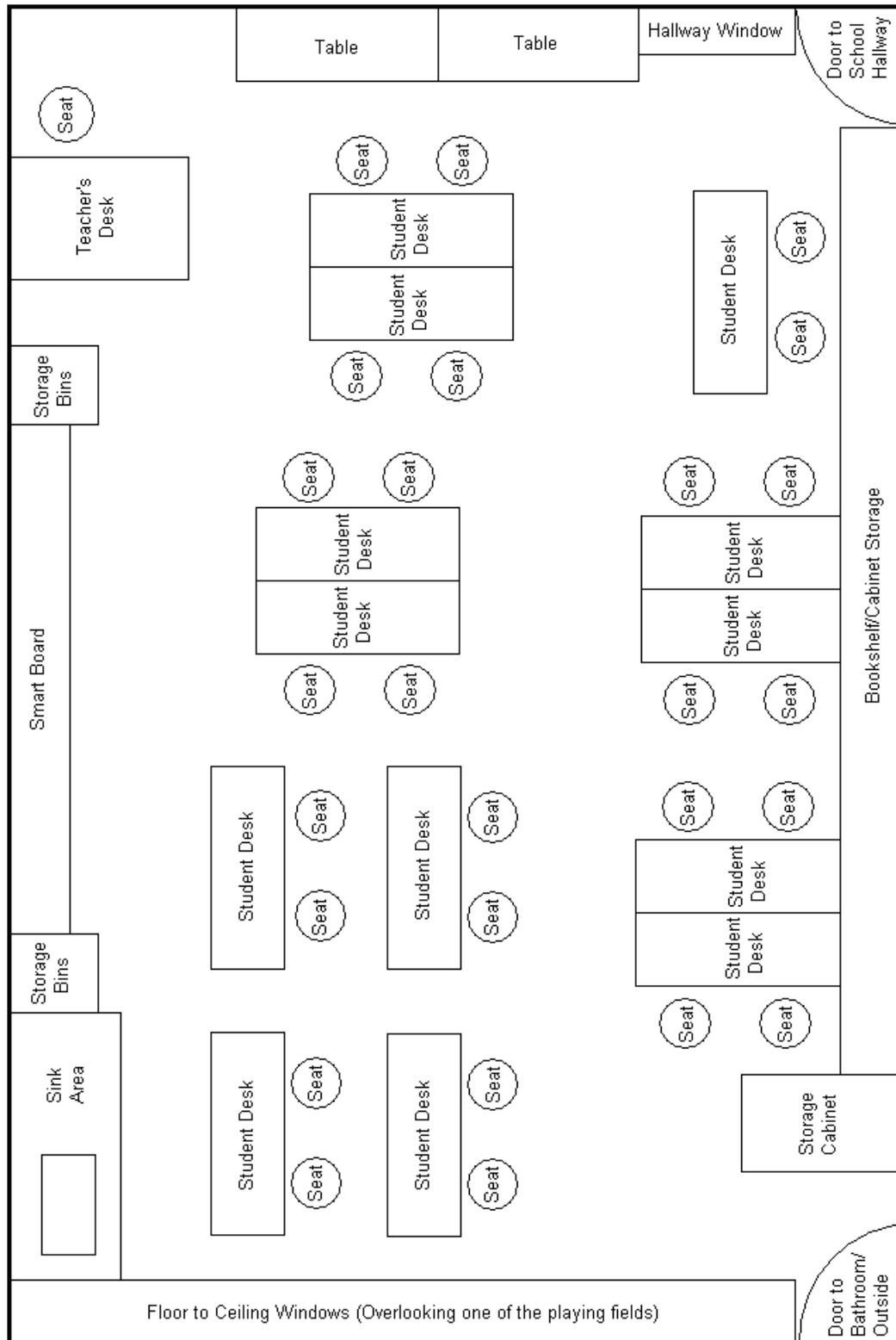
Students followed British state school standards by wearing uniforms, and their appearance helped maintain the tidy overall atmosphere of the school. The only trace of poverty observed was the number of students with financial hardships who received free lunch.

### **Classroom Environment**

The Year 6 classroom was arranged in a very neat and organized manner. The students sat two or four children each at rectangular tables with a school supply bucket in the middle. At tables with four children, two students sat on either side and faced each other to encourage interaction. Ample room between the tables existed, so the students were able to walk freely around the room. A bookshelf covered the entire back wall and stored nearly all the classroom materials needed. The student writing journals and books for each subject were tucked neatly in labeled bins, which made them easily accessible.

The walls were painted a bright white, and nothing around the room looked cluttered. Many matching posters decorated the walls, and a few bulletin boards displayed student work in an organized fashion. A large window took up the whole outer wall of the classroom and faced out onto one of the outdoor activity fields. The bathroom was located at the back of the room and connected to another class. The area contained hooks for students to hang backpacks and coats, and the space was kept very tidy. Figure 1 on the following page displays a diagram of the classroom layout.

**FIGURE 1: CLASSROOM DIAGRAM**



## **Instruction**

Many lessons observed were student led, and the teachers trusted the students to work cooperatively and stay on task. One geography lesson served as an example, as it was almost entirely directed by the students. The teacher divided them into groups with the task of researching different types of regions, creating a PowerPoint, and presenting to the rest of the class. Students used their personal laptops provided by the school to search the internet and create presentations. The lesson required group interaction, participation, and cooperation. Each group delegated tasks, such as designing the PowerPoint or researching a certain aspect of the region, without any direction from the teacher. The students acted responsibly and worked well together.

Lessons that did not involve group work still encouraged frequent participation from students. They raised their hands to ask questions often and without fear of sounding unintelligent or getting in trouble. The class focused on a particular novel during literacy (reading), and many students asked the teacher questions as she read a few chapters out loud for the class. Rather than tell them to wait until she was finished, the teacher stopped and discussed the students' questions with the whole class before moving on. The environment encouraged students to ask questions without any apprehension, and they were not afraid to inquire about unknown words.

Another literacy lesson involved creating booklets to document events in the novel. The teacher demonstrated how to fold and cut the paper as they followed along, and then they were asked to design a cover. The activity utilized the students' creativity, and provided a relaxed

environment where the children could enjoy drawing and coloring. The finished products resulted in booklets that students were proud of and looked forward to write in.

During math, referred to as “maths” in British schools, the Year 6 classes were split into two groups by ability. The higher level or average students went next door, and the lower level math students stayed in the room. Though designated below average, the students in that group did not appear frustrated or upset at any point during the lesson. They all followed along well and were given individual help as the teacher walked around the room during class work after instruction. The teacher mentioned how much she enjoyed teaching that particular group and seeing them move up to the advanced group. She revealed that students in her group were not discouraged by the lower group label; they were motivated to improve and move next door.

The teacher did not use any worksheets and relatively few loose papers. Students recorded their class work into their own notebooks for each subject. The teacher explained the objectives at the beginning of each lesson and made sure the students understood what was expected. They copied the objectives into that subject’s notebook, along with two square boxes at the end. The first box represented how the student felt he or she understood the objective, and the second symbolized the teacher’s assessment of the student. After the lesson, students either wrote a check mark for “I understood the objective” or a dot for “I need more help.” Later on, the teacher read each student’s notebook and assessed his or her understanding with a check mark or dot in the second box. These objective boxes gave students responsibility for their own learning without putting pressure on them to excel.

The researcher did not observe any formal assessments, but the teacher demonstrated how informal assessments were used to determine their levels (grades). Each subject had a

journal that contained students' daily work and their assessment of understanding objectives. The teacher looked through the journals every day to check students' progress and "graded" their understanding with a check mark or dot, as explained above. At the end of the term, she used a rubric, journals, and personal judgment to place students on a particular level for each subject. This grading method eliminated fear and anxiety associated with testing, which remains very prevalent in American schools.

Year 6 students take one series of formal assessments at the end of the year called National Curriculum Tests which covers English, math, and science. Teachers and students typically refer to the tests as SATS (Standard Assessment Tests), and the researcher observed one SATS strategy lesson during literacy (Satsguide, 2011). The workbook used was very attractive and colorful, appearing more similar to a magazine or comic book than a practice workbook. Students read fictional stories and completed various corresponding activities, such as short answer questions and illustrations. No student groaned when the teacher introduced the lesson, and they seemed to enjoy answering the questions. The teacher never put pressure on the students to answer questions exactly the same way, and the whole class discussed possible answers. The researcher did not observe any multiple choice questions in the practice workbook.

Throughout instruction, the researcher observed that students rarely sat in one place for an extended period of time. They were able to move freely around the room during activities after initial teacher instruction and did so responsibly. Students had breaks every day for playtime and lunch, and a special, unusual event was witnessed on a Friday. As the class practiced for a play in the multi-purpose room, the loud speakers turned on and a popular song began playing. The students all stopped what they were doing and started dancing, singing, and

laughing along to the music. They seemed to be having so much fun, and as soon as the song ended, the students went right back to practicing, as though the impromptu dance session never happened. As they had plenty of time throughout the day to move around, students were rarely restless and unfocused during instruction in the classroom.

## **Playtime**

Each morning, the children had a playtime break outside from 10:15 to 10:45am to run around, socialize, and eat a snack. They were also given an hour for lunch to eat and have recess out on the fields. During this time, the researcher observed many social interactions between students. Numerous incidents of teasing and bullying by both boys and girls were witnessed. Some students were excluded from activities by a group, while others physically assaulted classmates during games. The atmosphere outside felt much different than that of the classroom, as students became competitive and bullied others.

One girl sat alone on a bench crying after a group of girls teased and excluded her. The group came back around and a girl, who appeared to be the leader, said very nastily, "I can't wait until I get to secondary (middle/high) school so I never have to go to the same school as *you* again!" She made her entourage follow her back to the fields, smiling. No similar behavior was ever witnessed in the classroom. The girls in that particular group seemed to completely change their personalities once they left sight of teachers, and no teacher assistants stood close enough to witness the situation.

Boys from the class had an informal game of soccer after lunch and suddenly became very competitive and rude. They yelled, pushed, and hit each other as fights broke out during the game. Some boys teased others, called them names, and said they were terrible. The boys in the

class were not able to play a friendly, argument-free game on any of the three observation days. They continued fighting verbally, sometimes physically, all the way up to the classroom door but settled down within a few minutes once they went inside and teacher spoke to them about being respectful.

### **Physical Education**

During physical education (P.E.), the class had an instructor come to administer a lesson out on the activity field. The teacher was not present, but a teacher assistant went outside along with the researcher to supervise. The students behaved very disrespectfully and the instructor could barely give instructions without students speaking over him and causing disruptions. The boys became so competitive during a relay race that a physical fight broke out. Boys on one team deliberately harassed another student to his breaking point when he attacked them. The instructor had to break them up, but the boy kept running back to kick the boys until he was sent back to the classroom.

During the next activity, the girls continued following directions while the boys' behavior became even worse. Many boys yelled at the instructor, told him the activity was boring, and refused to participate. The instructor made several boys sit out, and it was clear the competitive nature of the last game made it impossible for many boys to behave the rest of the lesson.

### **Enrichment**

On Friday afternoon, all teachers had group planning time and the teacher assistants led the classes. Each classroom had at least one teacher assistant, sometimes more if required for students with disabilities. This time was designated every week for teachers to collaborate on and finalize lesson plans for the next week. It included the rest of the day after lunch, and fun

activities were scheduled for the students in every grade. Students used their “Golden Time” during enrichment, which was free time earned for good behavior. Most students played games on their laptops, listened to music, and socialized. They did not get too loud or act out during this time, and it seemed as though they appreciated the opportunity.

After “Golden Time” ended, the teacher assistants led a few activities. Cooking was one activity for the class, and most children behaved very well. One student in particular teased others, yelled, and cried throughout the entire activity. He was upset that a certain topping he wanted ran out and took his anger out on boys at the table. He called them names, like “stupid” and “ugly”, and made fun of them before ending the activity sitting silently in tears. Everyone else enjoyed him or herself and helped clean up nicely.

The researcher also observed an art activity. Students designed program covers for the school’s nativity play or created Christmas cards for their families. Since it was close to the end of the school day on a Friday, the students became restless and began acting out. The room was extremely loud, and they would not listen to the teacher assistant. Students were walking around to other desks, yelling, and not working on their cards. The teacher assistant was not able to calm them down, and the class could be heard from all the way down the hall. When the teacher returned at the end of the day, her presence was felt immediately. She scolded the students for their behavior and they became silent instantly. The class clearly respected her authority and looked disappointed in itself for poor behavior.

## **Assembly**

Every morning, the entire school of 365 students gathered in the multi-purpose room for assembly. Either the head teacher or assistant head teacher (principal or vice principal) led the

gathering, and the whole school attended. The students sat in silence as each class trickled in and sat youngest to oldest from the front of the room. They sang a song or two, learned about qualities of a good citizen, and heard about special events around the school. A special assembly on Fridays recognized and gave awards to many students. At the end of every week during that special assembly, students were given awards for behavior and performance in certain subjects. It was also a time for students to showcase awards and trophies earned outside of school for activities like soccer. During the observation, one student even performed a dance in front of the whole school. Morning assemblies provided a time for the whole school to bond and form a sense of community among the students.

### **Sources of Self-Efficacy**

The following section compares observations to the four major sources of information which develop expectations of self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1977).

#### *Performance Accomplishments*

Previous personal experiences factor into the development of self-efficacy, whereas successes raise expectations and failures lower them. The methods of instruction and assessment did not provide many opportunities for students to experience failure. No instances of multiple choice assessments, which often leave children with a sense of failure, were witnessed. Students were not given a percentage or letter grade for every activity, as is common in American schools, so they rarely encountered failures. The researcher observed many successes, as students were constantly praised for their work and given time to share their ideas and feelings.

### *Vicarious Experiences*

Modeling produces these experiences, where seeing another complete a task successfully can make the observer believe he or she will be able to accomplish the activity as well. The researcher observed many vicarious experiences during individual schoolwork. As students worked on their own, they were never silenced completely; rather, they were free to ask questions and compare work with classmates. Modeling occurred frequently during math lessons, as students who understood the material well could finish their work and then help others. Seeing others successfully complete activities built academic self-efficacy, which was reinforced as students helped each other and worked items out together.

### *Verbal Persuasions*

Verbal persuasions influence self-efficacy, as suggestions lead people into believing that they can cope successfully with what has previously overwhelmed them. The teacher provided positive encouragement for students throughout every lesson. While students designed book covers during a reading lesson, she spent time walking around and complimenting students' artwork and encouraging those who needed a confidence boost. During a math lesson, she explained how much she enjoyed teaching the lower level math group and giving them the confidence necessary to excel and move up to the advanced group. As a result, the teacher's attitude and encouragement was essential to building academic self-efficacy in her students.

### *Emotional Arousal*

Emotional arousal takes place when feelings of stress or anxiety create high physiological arousal. Fear reactions can generate further fear and debilitate performance. Fear seemed absent in the classroom, as students readily participated and asked questions. Answering incorrectly and

taking tests causes much of the stress and anxiety in American classrooms, and it seemed as though students in the Year 6 class did not have any fears of academic failure. Students appeared very comfortable during instruction and rarely experienced failure throughout the day.

## CHAPTER V: DATA

### Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES) Results

**TABLE 2: MORGAN-JINKS SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (MJSES) RESULTS**

<b>Morgan-Jinks Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES) Results</b>	
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
1. I work hard in school.	1.5625
2. I could get the best marks in class if I tried enough.	1.375
3. Most of my classmates like to do maths because it is easy.	2.25
4. I would get better marks if my teacher liked me better.	3.8
5. Most of my classmates work harder on their homework than I do.	2.4375
6. I am a good science student.	2.1875
7. I will graduate from secondary school.	1.5
8. I go to a good school.	1.333333
9. I always get good marks when I try hard.	1.3125
10. Sometimes I think an assignment is easy when the other pupils in my class think it is hard.	2.5
11. I am a good social studies student.	2.1875
12. Adults who have good jobs probably were good students when they were children.	1.266667
13. When I am old enough, I will go to university.	1.875
14. I am one of the best students in my class.	2.1875
15. No one cares if I do well in school.	3.666667
16. My teacher thinks I am clever.	1.6
17. It is important to go to secondary school.	1.4375
18. I am a good maths student.	1.625
19. My classmates usually get better marks than I do.	2.6875
20. What I learn in school is not important.	3.5
21. I usually understand my homework assignments.	1.666667
22. I usually do not get good marks in maths because it is too hard.	3.5
23. It does not matter if I do well in school.	3.6875
24. Pupils who get better marks than I do get more help from the teacher than I do.	2.785714
25. I am a good literacy student.	1.9375
26. It is not hard for me to get good marks in school.	2.3125
27. I am clever.	1.75
28. I will leave school as soon as I can.	2.5625
29. Teachers like pupils even if they do not always make good marks.	1.5
30. When the teacher asks a question I usually know the answer even if the other pupils don't.	2.0625

Students completed the MJSES surveys by answering each question with a number, 1-4.

Table 2 above shows the average score for each corresponding item.

### *Analysis*

These scores suggest overall high academic self-efficacy in the class. Many items received mean scores between 1 and 2 (really agree and kind of agree). Statements 1, 2, 9, 16, 18, 21, 25, and 27 all received scores in this range and directly relate to students' perceived academic success. These averages indicate a high sense of academic self-efficacy. In addition, items 7, 12, 13, and 17 received scores in the same range and all related to their future academic careers.

On the opposite end of the scale, four statements had mean scores between 3 and 4 (kind of disagree and really disagree). Items 4, 15, 20, 22, and 23 all received averages between 3.5 and 4. These responses also indicate high academic self-efficacy in the class, as they pertain to statements such as, "No one cares if I do well in school," which most students "really disagreed" with.

## My Class Inventory Results

**TABLE 3: MY CLASS INVENTORY (MCI) RESULTS**

<b>My Class Inventory (MCI) Results</b>	
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
1. Students enjoy their schoolwork in my class.	0.8125
2. Students are always fighting with each other.	0.3125
3. Students often race to see who can finish first.	0.375
4. In our class the work is hard to do.	0.28125
5. In my class everyone is my friend.	0.1875
6. Some students are not happy in class.	0.5625
7. Some of the students in our class are mean.	0.875
8. Most students want their work to be better than their friends' work.	0.625
9. Most students can do their schoolwork without help.	1
10. Some people in my class are not my friends.	0.875
11. Students seem to like the class.	1
12. Many students in our class like to fight.	0.46875
13. Some students feel bad when they don't do as well as the others.	0.71875
14. Only the smarter students can do their work.	0
15. All students in my class are close friends.	0.21875
16. Some of the students do not like the class.	0.6875
17. Certain students always want to have their way.	0.65625
18. Some students always try to do their work better than the others.	0.625
19. Schoolwork is hard to do.	0.0625
20. All of the students in my class like each other.	0.25
21. This class is fun.	0.875
22. Students in our class fight a lot.	0.3125
23. A few students in my class want to be first all the time.	0.8125
24. Most of the students in my class know how to do their work.	1
25. Students in our class like each other as friends.	0.75

Students completed the My Class Inventory surveys by circling yes or no. When calculating averages, the researcher designated 1 point to yes, 0 points to no, and 0.5 in the event

that a student circled both yes and no as a response. Table 3 above shows the average score for each corresponding item.

### *Analysis*

These scores suggest overall high academic self-efficacy in the class. Four statements received the same response from every student. Items 9, 11, and 24 all received a “yes”. Statement 9: “Most students can do their schoolwork without help,” and 24: “Most of the students in my class know how to do their work,” are very similar and indicate a high sense of academic self-efficacy among students, as students who feel like they can do the work are more likely to engage in the learning process (McMahon, Wernsman, & Rose, 2009). Item 11 states, “Students seem to like the class,” and suggests that students enjoy going to school, which also leads to academic self-efficacy.

Every student responded with “no” to item 14: “Only the smarter students can do their work.” This also indicates very high academic self-efficacy among the students, as they feel every child can complete assignments.

### **Teacher Interview**

Interview questions are in bold, teacher responses are quoted and italicized, and the researcher’s comparative analysis in relation to American schools is included after each response.

#### **1. How often do you give tests? What kind and in what subjects?**

*“We give assessments every half term (six weeks) in English, maths, and mental maths, and in the spring it changes to every three weeks. They’re a combination of what we’re teaching and what will be on the SATS.”*

This assessment method differs greatly from those of American schools. American schools typically give at least three “paper and pencil” tests per week, whereas British schools use different types of tests much less frequently.

## **2. How does your grading work? What is the grading scale?**

*“We use formative assessment, which is gathered in class with assessing answers and class work. Summative assessment is paper based, but a lot of it is ongoing assessment. Students are graded against expected levels of progress chosen by the national curriculum, and they are decided by the teacher every six weeks in literacy and math. We use a rubric for each level and determine where to place each student based on their written and verbal class work during the half term.”*

American schools use grade books and percentages on assignments to determine grades. British schools use formative assessment, which proves much more subjective than American methods. Percentages are not given for assignments, and scores are not averaged in British schools. The grade selection process is completely different between the two school systems, with American schools relying on numbers and formal assessments and British schools relying on class work and participation.

## **3. How do you choose where the students sit? How often are they moved?**

*“There isn’t just one way I decide. It’s based on many things like academic progress, friend groups, gender, or behaviour. The students aren’t static; they’re moved around constantly.”*

Students in American schools typically have a name tag taped to their desks. Each desk has a bin underneath for students’ materials and books, and they are typically only moved every few

months. At this school, only flat tables were used, and writing materials were placed in a bucket on the middle of each table. Books and journals were stored on a bookshelf in the back of the classroom. This allowed students to be moved freely and frequently, as they were not attached to a specific desk by a name tag or materials.

#### **4. How do you enforce rules and discipline your students?**

*“We highlight the positive by giving team points, golden time, lucky lotto tickets, and table beads, and by pointing out children doing well. The school has golden rules and whole school rules. If students misbehave, sanctions like golden time are taken away in ten minute chunks. The school has a hierarchical triangle: step one is to remove the child from class. If they continue misbehaving, they are sent to the team leader, then the assistant head, then the head teacher, and finally suspended if they can’t behave.”*

These methods appear very similar to those used at American schools. Team points were the only different approach mentioned. Similar to the first day at Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997), many British primary schools sort students into houses. It promotes a sense of school belonging, and students of different ages and classes are able to bond. The school was divided into four houses, and every class had students in each house. Each house was named for an area and was designated blue, red, green, or yellow. Students had the opportunity to earn points for their houses throughout the day by demonstrating good behavior or producing quality school work. Similarly, points could be taken away from the houses as a punishment.

#### **5. How often do you give homework? What is it, typically? How long do you expect students to spend on it each night?**

*“I give homework twice a week. On Monday, it is English, maths, or science. Friday is topic based, which is maybe a short written task like improving a text. It should never take more than 30 minutes. It’s usually about 15. The assignments are achievable on their own without support. If for some reason they do need help and don’t have support at home, they may always come in early for help.”*

These homework assignments are much different than those for typical American students.

American 5<sup>th</sup> grade students can usually be expected to spend about up to an hour on homework each night, while this school does not expect students to work on homework for more than an hour the entire week.

#### **6. How do you begin lesson planning and forming objectives?**

*“We have a long term planning curriculum map over two years. All of the topics are mapped out, and medium term plans in are decided in teams paced out over the weeks. There are some short term weekly plans. There are English and maths objectives listed in primary frameworks. We don’t have to use them, but most do.”*

This method for planning differs greatly from that in Florida, where the researcher resides. The state decides American school objectives and provides its own formal assessment of them. The British National Curriculum releases objectives that the teachers at this school do not necessarily follow. Objectives for classroom use are written with familiar terminology for students so they may understand exactly what is expected of them.

The Florida Department of Education’s Sunshine State Standards are not written in terms for children to understand easily and are typically lengthy. These state standards are much different than teacher-created objectives that students use to help measure understanding at this

particular British primary school. An example observed in this British classroom was “Can I use personification?” The students wrote the objective at the top their papers and then created their own examples of personification after reading about it in a novel. A comparable Florida Sunshine State Standard Benchmark would be “LA.5.2.1.7: The student will identify and explain an author's use of descriptive, idiomatic, and figurative language (e.g., personification, similes, metaphors, symbolism), and examine how it is used to describe people, feelings, and objects” (Florida Department of Education, 2010).

Florida standards clearly differ from those observed in the British classroom which were designed to guide both teacher instruction and student understanding.

#### **7. How do you motivate students to do well?**

*“We praise them, give lots of encouragement, and award them with treats like stickers, stamps, lucky lotto tickets, and team points. We may have them read their work to the whole class, put their work on display, or even send them to other classes or the head teacher to show special work.”*

These methods were very similar to those in American schools, with the exception of team points.

#### **8. If a student does not understand a concept, what steps do you take to help him or her?**

*“We would use immediate intervention. I would talk to them one to one, put them in a group supported by a teacher assistant (TA), and then have them work one to one with a TA and talk to me after to revisit the objective. If there is really an issue, then we may get a special needs coordinator involved.”*

These steps are comparable to those used in American schools. The only notable difference is that every class at this school had at least one teacher assistant, while most American classrooms do not have that extra support. This classroom had 23 students and at least two adults in the room at all times.

## **CHAPTER VI: RECURRENT THEMES**

### **Bullying**

The researcher observed bullying and fighting numerous times throughout the observation. Though most occurred outside of the classroom during playtime or lunch, they were frequent and notable. Interestingly, students' answers on the MCI conflicted with the researcher's observations. Items 2, 12, and 22 all referred to students in the class fighting, and the mean scores were closer to "no" at around 0.3. The researcher saw bullying as a major issue, while students in the class did not seem to notice it.

### **Uniforms**

One obvious difference between British and American public schools appears in the dress code. British state schools require students to wear uniforms. As the children all wore variations of the same outfit, it was impossible to assume the socioeconomic status of each student based on appearances. The researcher found it apparent that students took pride in their appearance and looked well put together.

This solidarity allowed students to focus on school without being distracted by what others wore or did not wear. Even so, they did not lose all sense of individuality. Girls especially had many options, such as skirts, dresses, or pants, and were still able to accessorize. It eliminated any teasing or alienation based on financial limits with clothing, and the uniforms gave the school a very crisp appearance. The researcher inferred that the presence of school uniforms creates an environment which promotes academic self-efficacy more easily. Table 4 on the following page displays a list of school uniform items found in the school's prospectus.

**TABLE 4: SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS**

<b>SCHOOL UNIFORM ITEMS</b>	
<b>BOYS AND GIRLS</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Colour</b>
Trousers	Plain grey or black
Shorts	Plain grey or black
Socks	Grey
Polo Shirt (Pique)	White
Long Sleeve Shirt or Short Sleeve Shirt (Summer term)	White- worn with tie
Tie (optional)	Navy/Gold
Sweatshirt (v or crew neck)	Navy Blue with School Logo
V-neck jumper	Navy Blue with School Logo
PE Shirt	Plain White
PE Shorts	Navy Blue
PE Shoe Bag	
Full PE kit and bag is available as a single, discounted item from schools	
Sun Hat – Baseball style (optional)	Navy Blue with Federation Logo
Sun Hat – “Fishing” style (optional)	Navy Blue with Federation Logo
Shoes	Black
Book Bags	Navy Blue with School Logo
Waterproof Jackets (optional)	Navy Blue with School Logo
Water Bottle	Sports type cap
<b>OPTIONAL ITEMS FOR GIRLS</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Colour</b>
Pinafore Dress	Plain grey or black
Skirt	Plain grey or black
Summer Dress	Blue & White check or stripe or Yellow & White check or stripe
Long Sleeve Blouse	White
Short Sleeve Blouse	White
Sweatshirt Cardigan	Navy Blue with School Logo
Knitted cardigan	Navy Blue with School Logo
Tights	Grey
Socks	White

## **Discipline**

Students in the Year 6 class clearly respected their teacher. They listened to her directions carefully and always followed the rules. However, when she left and any other authority figure conducted lessons, most of the class acted very differently. They went from well behaved

students to disrespectful, unruly children. The researcher found it interesting that students' behavior changed so drastically with the teacher's absence.

Similarly to bullying incidents, students' answers on the MCI conflicted with the researcher's observations in regards to discipline. As noted previously, students' mean scores for questions related to classmates fighting were closer to "no" at around 0.3. When the teacher was absent, students constantly fought and acted disrespectfully towards each other. It seems as though they did not view time spent away from the teacher as "real" school and misbehaved accordingly without concern.

Discipline for physical violence in this classroom was much different than punishments typical of "zero tolerance" policies in American schools. It appeared as though fights or poor behavior outside of the classroom during playtime, lunch, or PE did not translate to punishments in the classroom setting. Discipline for actions outside of instruction was not severe, and it seemed as though conflicts were forgotten as soon as students walked back in through the door.

## **Competition**

The sense of academic competition so prevalent in American schools was absent in this British classroom. As referenced in Table 3, students do not often "race to see who can finish first". The students did not treat assignments as a competition, and the classroom environment served as a buffer for the intense sporting rivalries out on the school fields.

As soon as the boys walked through the classroom door and out onto the field, their competitive natures took over. The researcher witnessed many fights and arguments on the field, all originating from the boys' aggression. The children clearly had a competitive nature in

regards to sport, but that hostility was absent from the classroom and allowed them to focus on learning rather than beating others.

## **Assessment**

The most notable differences between this British classroom and typical American classes were visible in regards to assessment. American elementary school teachers typically administer at least two to three formal assessments per week. British schools rarely utilize paper and pencil testing and rely on formative assessment to assign levels, or grades, to students.

Throughout the three days of observation, the researcher never witnessed any multiple choice activities. Even while practicing for the national assessment, only short answer or essay questions were presented. The students were rarely ever told there was only one answer to a question, with the exception of math lessons. Getting answers wrong decreases academic self-efficacy in students, and children in the classroom rarely experienced a sense of failure. If

As displayed in Table 2, all students surveyed felt they were good students in each subject. They did not have the stress of grades and formal tests to let them think otherwise, and the lack of paper and pencil testing and percentage grades allowed their academic self-efficacy to flourish. Pajares (2006) developed a list of implication for parents and teachers in relation to self-efficacy during childhood and adolescence. He suggested fostering and modeling self-reflection, which students participated in daily as they graded their ability to complete lesson objectives. As a result of self-assessment methods in the classroom, students constantly developed metacognition throughout the day and increased academic self-efficacy. Bingham, Holbrook, & Meyers (2010) assert that as children develop metacognition, they are likely to develop increased self-efficacy and motivation, which help improve academic success. Self-assessment practices,

such as the activities observed in the case study classroom, can help students' development as "critical and reflective thinkers".

### **Exceptional Students**

Only one student in the classroom had a disability specifically noted by the teacher. The student had an extreme visual impairment which required him to wear special glasses and have most school materials blown up in larger font so he could see it. She mentioned that some students had behavioral issues but never referred to them as disabilities. The researcher found this interesting, as American teachers would typically suggest the students may have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and could possibly benefit from medication. This was a notable difference between the cultures, as numerous studies on American children with ADHD can be located, yet relatively few on British children are available.

Accommodations were made for gifted and talented learners in the classroom, but they were never referred to in relation to the "gifted" label. A special gifted program did not exist at the school; teachers modified their own lesson plans to challenge those students throughout the day.

Inclusion of the term "talented" is an interesting difference between British and American gifted classification. American schools do not use the expression to describe students, which classifies "learners who have practical skills in areas like sports, music, design, or creative and performing arts" (Cabinet Office, 2010b). The term further demonstrates that British schools aim to educate the "whole person".

## **CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION**

The researcher determined that, based on observations and student questionnaire results, students in the classroom demonstrated positive academic self-efficacy. These results imply that academic self-efficacy was promoted through the British National Curriculum structure and assessment methods used, and it did not appear impacted by the low socioeconomic status of the school neighborhood.

### **Educational Implications**

#### *Assessment Methods*

Assessment methods were undoubtedly an extreme difference between British and American schools. Students in the classroom were provided with many opportunities to build academic self-efficacy, and they rarely experienced failure in academic settings. The lack of disappointments experienced and subsequent high academic self-efficacy may be attributed to the different methods of assessment used in British schools. American students constantly receive grades for schoolwork produced and tests taken. Nearly every activity they complete receives a label and is judged against others in the class. Students are not free to have their own feelings about their work, as teachers must give them a letter grade for most assignments.

The frequent formal assessments and grading system in American schools may deter the development of academic self-efficacy in students. While students in the case study classroom enhanced metacognition through self-assessment, American children are rarely asked how they feel about their academic abilities. Instead, they are tested and labeled with grades A-F which are often an unreliable indicator of understanding and progress. Once students receive a low letter grade, their academic self-efficacy may drop regardless of subject knowledge or ability. Many

external factors contribute to test results, and formal assessments do not always demonstrate students' capabilities. The British National Curriculum's Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) approach to ongoing assessment enables teachers to measure students' progress over time without the need to grade every activity. Ongoing and self-assessment practices observed in the case study classroom may have played a substantial role in developing high academic self-efficacy in students. Bingham and Holbrook (2010) detail the advantages of using self-assessment in elementary classrooms and assert that "self-assessment can play a powerful role in the relationship between a child's motivation and academic achievement." The frequent use of self-assessments and lack of formal assessments may contribute to high academic self-efficacy among students.

### *School Funding*

As academic self-efficacy in the classroom was positive despite the school's location in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, the study's findings contradict previous research on the relationship between socioeconomic status and self-efficacy. The main difference between the case study school and others described in previous research is funding. Author Jonathan Kozol has spent decades in low-income, public elementary schools in the United States and written numerous books about his experiences. In *Savage Inequalities*, he details the disparity between funding for high and low income public schools. Schools in low socioeconomic areas received much less funding, which resulted in very poor conditions and a lack of proper resources.

The case study classroom's school was similarly located in a low-income area, yet the children had access to a safe learning environment with beautiful facilities, updated resources, and supportive teachers. Upon researching the Department for Education (2010) statistics in

relation to local area, regional, and national averages, the same funding discrepancies do not exist in this area of Southwest England. Schools are given fairly equal funding and resources, which are essential to creating a positive, nurturing learning environment for students. Results from this study indicate that, given proper funding and resources, lower income American schools may produce students with high academic self-efficacy and a positive learning experience.

### **Study Limitations**

The researcher conducted this case study in a very short amount of time. While three full observation days supplied the critical information required, more time in the classroom would have provided more insight into the classroom environment and assessments.

This school's facilities and resources were not typical for primary schools in impoverished areas, as a brand new building had just been constructed and filled with new supplies. The new school provided outstanding opportunities for students, such as a personal laptop for all Year 5 and 6 students, and the facilities offered a safe, clean place to learn. Most schools would not have the same degree of opportunities for students.

In addition to exceptional resources, the classroom had an extraordinary and well-respected teacher. Such qualified and dedicated teachers are not typical, especially in impoverished areas, and her positive impact on the students was clear.

### **Future Research**

One viable option for further study is to locate a similar student population at an American elementary school and survey those students using the same questionnaires. If factors

such as socioeconomic status and ethnic diversity are matched, the clear discrepancy between populations would appear in the curriculum and structure of the school systems.

Comparing matching populations in each country can help researchers determine what educational factors affect academic self-efficacy in students. These revelations may help educators design instruction to better promote academic self-efficacy in their students.

Another option for further study is to explore the conditions of British primary schools in relation to low socioeconomic areas. The positive correlation between poverty and low academic self-efficacy in American students, as noted in the literature review, may result from a lack of adequate school funding more than from social or home life factors. As the case study classroom was located in a school with ample government funding and resources, it would be relevant to study other schools in low socioeconomic areas to compare funding and academic self-efficacy.

## **APPENDIX A: MORGAN-JINKS SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (MJSES)**

## APPENDIX A: MORGAN-JINKS SELF-EFFICACY SCALE (MJSES)

<b>Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES)</b>				
Statement	Really Agree	Kind of agree	Kind of disagree	Really Disagree
1. I work hard in school.	1	2	3	4
2. I could get the best marks in class if I tried enough.	1	2	3	4
3. Most of my classmates like to do maths because it is easy.	1	2	3	4
4. I would get better marks if my teacher liked me better.	1	2	3	4
5. Most of my classmates work harder on their homework than I do.	1	2	3	4
6. I am a good science student.	1	2	3	4
7. I will graduate from secondary school.	1	2	3	4
8. I go to a good school.	1	2	3	4
9. I always get good marks when I try hard.	1	2	3	4
10. Sometimes I think an assignment is easy when the other pupils in my class think it is hard.	1	2	3	4
11. I am a good social studies student.	1	2	3	4
12. Adults who have good jobs probably were good students when they were children.	1	2	3	4
13. When I am old enough, I will go to university.	1	2	3	4
14. I am one of the best students in my class.	1	2	3	4
15. No one cares if I do well in school.	1	2	3	4
16. My teacher thinks I am clever.	1	2	3	4
17. It is important to go to secondary school.	1	2	3	4
18. I am a good maths student.	1	2	3	4
19. My classmates usually get better marks than I do.	1	2	3	4
20. What I learn in school is not important.	1	2	3	4
21. I usually understand my homework assignments.	1	2	3	4
22. I usually do not get good marks in maths because it is too hard.	1	2	3	4
23. It does not matter if I do well in school.	1	2	3	4
24. Pupils who get better marks than I do get more help from the teacher than I do.	1	2	3	4
25. I am a good literacy student.	1	2	3	4
26. It is not hard for me to get good marks in school.	1	2	3	4
27. I am clever.	1	2	3	4
28. I will leave school as soon as I can.	1	2	3	4
29. Teachers like pupils even if they do not always make good marks.	1	2	3	4
30. When the teacher asks a question I usually know the answer even if the other pupils don't.	1	2	3	4

## **APPENDIX B: MY CLASS INVENTORY (MCI)**

## APPENDIX B: MY CLASS INVENTORY (MCI)

<b>My Class Inventory (MCI)</b>		
Directions: This is not a test. This is to find out about your class. Draw a circle around YES if you agree with the sentence or NO if you DON'T AGREE with the sentence.		
<b>This Is How I Think About My Classroom</b>	Circle Your Answer	Teacher Use Only
1. Students enjoy their schoolwork in my class.	YES NO	_____
2. Students are always fighting with each other.	YES NO	_____
3. Students often race to see who can finish first.	YES NO	_____
4. In our class the work is hard to do.	YES NO	_____
5. In my class everyone is my friend.	YES NO	_____
6. Some students are not happy in class.	YES NO	R_____
7. Some of the students in our class are mean.	YES NO	_____
8. Most students want their work to be better than their friends' work.	YES NO	_____
9. Most students can do their schoolwork without help.	YES NO	R_____
10. Some people in my class are not my friends.	YES NO	R_____
11. Students seem to like the class.	YES NO	_____
12. Many students in our class like to fight.	YES NO	_____
13. Some students feel bad when they don't do as well as the others.	YES NO	_____
14. Only the smarter students can do their work.	YES NO	_____
15. All students in my class are close friends.	YES NO	_____
16. Some of the students do not like the class.	YES NO	R_____
17. Certain students always want to have their way.	YES NO	_____
18. Some students always try to do their work better than the others.	YES NO	_____
19. Schoolwork is hard to do.	YES NO	_____
20. All of the students in my class like each other.	YES NO	_____
21. This class is fun.	YES NO	_____
22. Students in our class fight a lot.	YES NO	_____
23. A few students in my class want to be first all the time.	YES NO	_____
24. Most of the students in my class know how to do their work.	YES NO	R_____
25. Students in our class like each other as friends.	YES NO	_____
S _____ F _____ Cm _____ D _____ Ch _____		

## **APPENDIX C: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## APPENDIX C: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How often do you give tests? What kind and in what subjects?
2. How do you evaluate your students? What is the grading scale?
3. How are your desks arranged? How do you choose where the students sit and how often are they moved?
4. Can you describe your disciplinary system? How do you manage behavior?
5. How often do you give homework? What is it, typically? How long do you expect students to spend on it each night?
6. How do you begin lesson planning in relation to the curriculum? How do you form general objectives?
7. How do you motivate students to do well?
8. If a student does not understand the material, what steps do you take to help him or her?

## **APPENDIX D: PARENT CONSENT LETTER**

## APPENDIX D: PARENT CONSENT LETTER

### **An Ethnographic Case Study in a British Primary (Elementary) School Classroom of Academic Self-Efficacy Informed Consent**

Principal Investigator: Kelly Iliff

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Gillian Eriksson  
Dr. Sherron Roberts  
Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan

Investigational Sites: Beechwood Primary School

**How to Return this Consent Form:** Sign the last page and return it to your child's teacher.

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being asked to allow your child to take part in a research study which will include about 20 people internationally. Your child is being invited to take part in this research study because he or she is a student at Beechwood Primary School.

The person doing this research is Kelly Iliff, an undergraduate student in the College of Education at UCF. Because the researcher is an undergraduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Gillian Eriksson (isluti@mail.ucf.edu), Dr. Sherron Roberts (skrobert@mail.ucf.edu), and Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan (jkaplan@mail.ucf.edu), UCF College of Education faculty supervisors in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership.

#### **What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should allow your child to take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you or your child.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to observe academic self-efficacy in a British classroom and compare recorded data to student questionnaires.

**What your child will be asked to do in the study:** The researcher will observe self-efficacy factors in your child's classroom over the course of three days and distribute two brief surveys for students to complete. Your child does not have to answer every question or complete every task. You or your child will not lose any benefits if your child skips questions or tasks.

**Location:** Your child's classroom at Beechwood Elementary School

**Time required:** We expect that your child will be in this research study for one school day.

**Risks:** There are no expected risks for taking part in this study. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study.

**Benefits:** Your child will not benefit directly for taking part in this research, besides learning more about how research is conducted.

**Alternatives:** Instead of being in this research study, your child may read or work on an alternate assignment.

**Compensation or payment:** There is no compensation, payment or extra credit for your child's part in this study.

**Anonymous research:** This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information your child gave came from him or her.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt your child talk to Kelly Iliff, Undergraduate Student, Elementary Education Program, College of Education at: [k.iliff@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:k.iliff@knights.ucf.edu) or Dr. Eriksson, Faculty Supervisor, School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at: [isluti@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:isluti@mail.ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about you and your child's rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature indicates your permission for the child named below to take part in Kelly Iliff's research for "An Ethnographic Case Study in a British Primary (Elementary) School Classroom of Academic Self-Efficacy". Please send this signed form to school with your child tomorrow.

---

Name of Participant

---

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

---

Signature of Parent or Guardian

---

Date

## **APPENDIX E: TEACHER CONSENT LETTER**

## APPENDIX E: TEACHER CONSENT LETTER

### **An Ethnographic Case Study in a British Primary (Elementary) School Classroom of Academic Self-Efficacy Informed Consent**

Principal Investigator: Kelly Iliff

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Gillian Eriksson  
Dr. Sherron Roberts  
Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan

Investigational Sites: Beechwood Primary School

**How to Return this Consent Form:** Sign the last page and return it to the researcher.

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being asked to take part in a research study which will include about 20 people internationally. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a Year 6 teacher at Beechwood Primary School.

The person doing this research is Kelly Iliff, an undergraduate student in the College of Education at UCF. Because the researcher is an undergraduate student, she is being guided by Dr. Gillian Eriksson (isluti@mail.ucf.edu), Dr. Sherron Roberts (skrobert@mail.ucf.edu), and Dr. Jeffrey Kaplan (jkaplan@mail.ucf.edu), UCF College of Education faculty supervisors in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership.

#### **What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should allow your child to take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you or your child.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to observe academic self-efficacy in a British classroom and compare recorded data to student questionnaires.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** The researcher will observe self-efficacy factors in your classroom over the course of three days, and the researcher will distribute a brief survey at the end of the last day for students to complete once parents have consented.

**Location:** Your classroom at Beechwood Primary School

**Time required:** We expect that you will be in this research study for three school days.

**Risks:** There are no expected risks for taking part in this study. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study.

**Benefits:** You will not benefit directly for taking part in this research, besides learning more about how research is conducted.

**Compensation or payment:** There is no compensation, payment or extra credit for your child's part in this study.

**Anonymous research:** This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information each student gave came from him or her.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt your child talk to Kelly Iliff, Undergraduate Student, Elementary Education Program, College of Education at: [k.iliff@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:k.iliff@knights.ucf.edu) or Dr. Eriksson, Faculty Supervisor, School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at: [isluti@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:isluti@mail.ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about you and your child's rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature indicates your permission to take part in Kelly Iliff's research for "An Ethnographic Case Study in a British Primary (Elementary) School Classroom of Academic Self-Efficacy". Please return this signed form the researcher as soon as possible.

---

Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

**APPENDIX F: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL**

## APPENDIX F: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Sherron E. Roberts** and Co-PI: **Kelly P. Iliff**

Date: **April 04, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 4/4/2011, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 4/3/2012 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form  
Project Title: An Ethnographic Case Study in a British Primary (Elementary)  
Classroom of Academic Self-Efficacy  
Investigator: Sherron E Roberts  
IRB Number: SBE-11-07381  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 4/3/2012, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Kendra Dimond Campbell, MA, JD, UCF IRB Interim Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 04/04/2011 04:29:17 PM EDT

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator

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