

Starting Strong: Building Self-Efficacy in Your First Year (and Beyond)!

OSU Motivation in Classrooms Lab – Motivation Minute. September 2023

What is teaching self-efficacy?

A teacher’s sense of efficacy is one’s belief in their ability to bring about student engagement and learning outcomes. New teachers have many experiences during their first year that can impact beliefs in their teaching ability.

Why is it important?

- If a high sense of efficacy can be established and developed during the first year, the teacher will have a strong start to their career.
- A teacher with a high sense of efficacy is more likely to have a stronger commitment to teaching.
- High teaching self-efficacy is also associated with several student outcomes, including motivation, achievement, and students who believe they are capable of learning.

How does it develop?

Self-efficacy can develop over time, and self-efficacy beliefs can change as the result of several sources of information we take in or by the experiences we gain. Four sources have been described by psychologist Albert Bandura: Enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective (emotion) states.

The table below shows how self-efficacy develops from four sources and how you can increase your self-efficacy in each source.

Definition	How it develops:	What you can do:
Mastery experiences: <i>Direct experience with a particular task.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying a new teaching technique to increase student engagement may increase one’s teaching self-efficacy if the class responds positively. • Conversely, teaching self-efficacy may decrease if the new technique was a flop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal about your teaching experiences consistently. Ask yourself: What did I do that worked (or did not work)? Why did it work (or not work)? What could I do in the future to further improve instruction? • Seek professional development to continue developing your teaching skills with other educators. Such PD could connect you with other educators, give new ideas for your classroom, or give resources for new activities.
Vicarious experiences: <i>Gaining understanding from observing others.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing other teachers in their successful techniques can increase one’s own teaching self-efficacy. • These experiences can be particularly impactful if we believe we are like the one we observe or if we observe them successfully navigate challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a participating or passive observer in a competent veteran teacher’s classroom. Watching them model successful skills and strategies could increase your self-efficacy. • Participate in a mentoring program or find a veteran teacher to mentor you. Find teachers who have mentored before, teach a similar content area, and have adequate time to devote to being a mentor.
Verbal persuasion: <i>Feedback from others.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback that comes from a trusted mentor, is detailed, and allows us to make attributions to our skills rather than circumstances can be particularly helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek those with reputations as strong teachers to provide feedback on your teacher or lesson plans. Ask them to focus on helping you develop skills. • Seek out collaborations with more-experienced colleagues with strong teaching recommendations. Note the feedback you receive regarding your skills.
Physiological and affective states: <i>Making inferences about our abilities depending on our emotions or mood.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We often look to the level of our stress and anxiety in making inferences about our abilities. We tend to interpret anxiety as a sign that we are not up to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider forming a support ground with other first-year teachers. Emphasize that the purpose of the group is to support one another at becoming awesome at what you do! • Remind yourself to have realistic expectations and to celebrate the progress you have made.

References:

Ashton, P. (1984). Teacher Efficacy: A motivational paradigm for effective teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(5), 28-32.
 Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman.
 Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68, 202-248.