

CHAPTER 1

Maximising Self & Collective Efficacy



What do you think of when you see the words: *'Flourishing School'*? In my mind a *'Flourishing School'* conjures up images of students both enjoying and excelling in their learning among cohesive, friendly and supportive classmates overseen by very bright, caring and enthusiastic teachers who are both experts on their subjects and wise mentors guiding their students on the journey of learning.

This beautiful vision of the ideal school (for which I have devoted so much of my career as a researcher and consultant) is almost diametrically opposite to my own childhood experiences in the school system.

My own experiences were not reflective of a Flourishing School. My classmates and I neither enjoyed nor excelled in any of our subjects but rather sat in passively disengaged warring cliques of nerds, cool kids, and outcasts overseen by teachers who were tired and angry – disinterested in all but the brightest students and preoccupied with gripes about their poor working conditions.

As you will see shortly, whilst there are indeed a myriad of factors that contribute to the extent to which students and staff flourish within a school, there is one factor that stands out head and shoulders above all the others – one factor for which school leaders have enormous influence and control (even though they may or may not realise this).

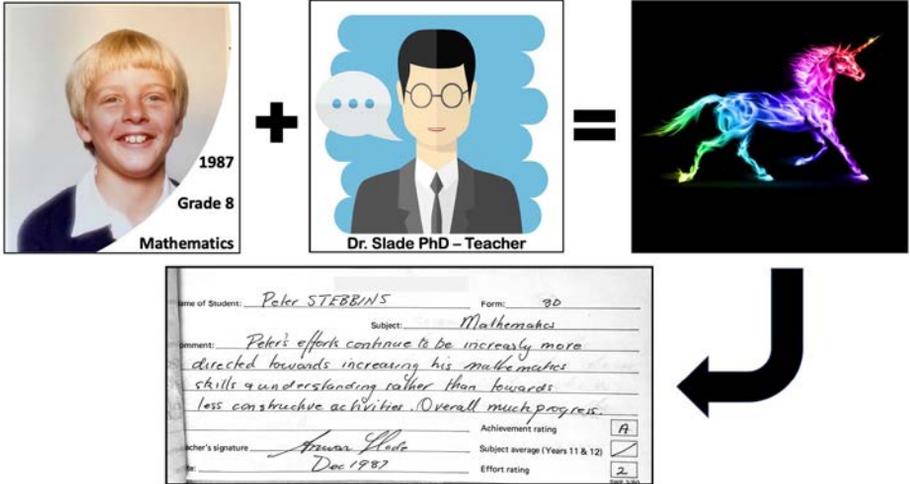
That factor is CAPACITY! CAPACITY is the lead measure of any subsequent positive outcomes in staff and students. Their CAPACITY to engage in teaching and learning is infinitely more important than their capability on any specific task. The crux of the matter for 'Flourishing Schools' hinges entirely on the extent to which the school environment increases the CAPACITY of staff and students.

“The crux of the matter for Flourishing Schools is the extent to which their school culture increases the CAPACITY of staff and students.”

For staff, this may be reflected in a teacher's CAPACITY to create engaging and differentiated learning experiences for their students whilst working with their peers to: (a) deliver a consistent cycle of assessment and grading appropriate to wider academic standards and (b) stay on top of advances in research within their subject areas and evolve curriculum accordingly. For students, their CAPACITY is reflected in their motivation and confidence to learn and grow in both academic subjects and in peer relationships among classmates.

On a personal level I am a firsthand witness to the transformative power that a teacher with HIGH CAPACITY can bring to a struggling student. My Year 8 maths teacher, Dr Slade, was a rare blazing ray of light in my education who, despite the wider culture was able to completely engage with me and work around my learning difficulties and poor behaviour – 'boot camping' me all the way to an 'A' grade – a high point in my entire school journey. His CAPACITY to focus on my needs (and the needs of the other students) gave me a sense of confidence in my own ability to learn – lifting my CAPACITY as a student to work at a deeper level and try harder than ever!

My encounter with Dr Slade in Year 8 Math is what our research team now calls 'The Unicorn Teacher Effect' and we regularly hear similar stories from adults all over the world who have benefited from a HIGH CAPACITY teacher who specifically took the time to focus deeply on helping them to learn and grow.



Unpacking The Unicorn Teacher Effect

As you can see in the diagram on Page 13, when we dig into the psychodynamics of these Unicorn Teacher stories that describe profoundly helpful interactions between specific teachers and specific students there are some universal truths common to all of these experiences.

At the teacher level, there is the identification of individual talents and strengths within the student that exist as latent potential (or perhaps potential only realised to a minor extent). Teachers who have a HIGHER CAPACITY to focus intently on the needs of their students are more likely to identify such latent potential.

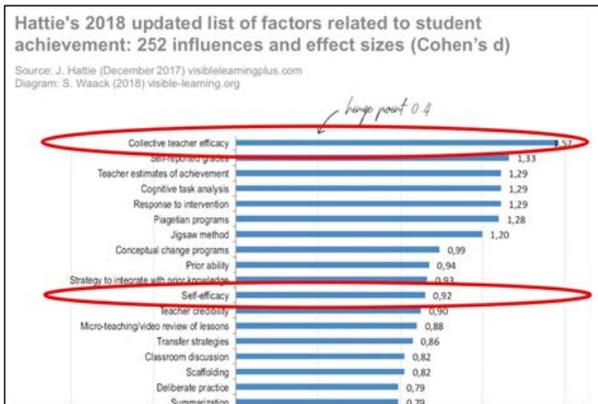
At the student level, there is the increased self-confidence and determination that emerges through interactions with their teacher. The result on this interaction increases the student's Self-Efficacy which in turn creates a HIGHER CAPACITY for them to learn and grow.

UNPACKING THE UNICORN TEACHER EFFECT



The Link Between Capacity & Efficacy

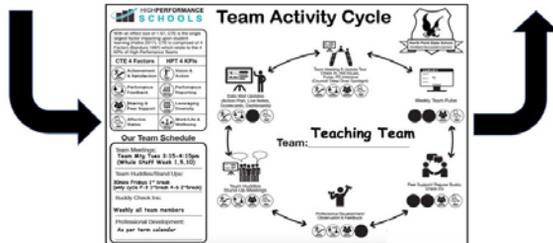
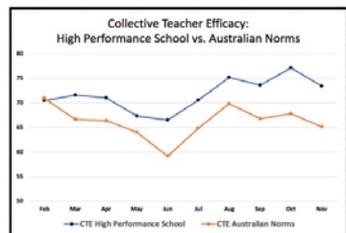
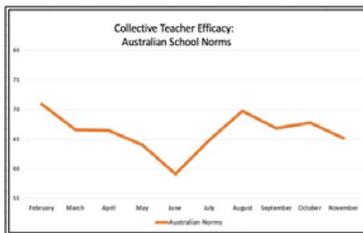
In educational research terms, this quest for boosting the capacity of teachers and students is more readily described as the goal of improving the efficacy of teachers and students – and indeed the definition of efficacy (*‘The capacity for producing a desired result or effect.’*) highlights the interconnection with ‘capacity’. The goal of improving efficacy in schools is typically focused on two distinct populations: (1) improving the collective efficacy of teachers and (2) improving the self-efficacy of students. Research shows that both collective teacher efficacy and student self-efficacy have a significant impact on learning outcomes (see diagram below).



Improving Collective Teacher Efficacy

Collective teacher efficacy as defined by social psychologist Albert Bandura is: *“the collective belief of teachers in their ability to positively impact upon student learning”* and is made up of four distinct factors (1) Mastery Experience, (2) Social Persuasion, (3) Vicarious Experience and (4) Affective States.

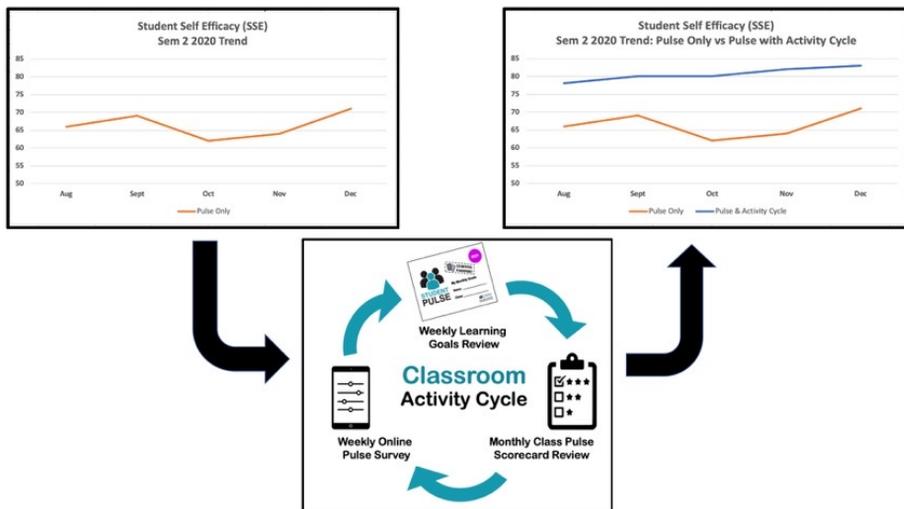
Given collective beliefs are prone to fluctuate over time, using a repeated measures/pulse design to assess these four factors in teaching teams enables both teaching teams and school leaders to collaboratively optimise team activity cycles which in turn lifts collective efficacy above and beyond baseline norms (see diagram below). *Note: You can learn more about our long-term work in building High Performance Teaching Teams and the results of Optimising Teaching Team Activity Cycles in the Appendix case study on Page 69.*



Improving Student Self-Efficacy

Student self-efficacy is also well defined by social psychologist Albert Bandura as: *“the self-belief of a student in their ability to successfully complete their school work and improve in their learning”* and is also comprised of four factors: (1) Self Regulated Learning (Work Completion), (2) Academic Achievement (Level of Achievement), (3) Enlisting Social Resources (Help Seeking) and (4) Self Regulatory Efficacy (Staying Motivated).

Self-beliefs (akin to collective beliefs) are also prone to fluctuate over time and in our more recent work we've used a similar repeated measures approach to assessing these four factors in students who, when they engage in quality reflection and goal setting cycles, lifts self-efficacy above and beyond baseline norms (see diagram below).



Bringing It Together:

Increasing Efficacy = Higher Capacity

Flourishing Schools are schools where both students and teachers engage together in the important work of teaching and learning in a state of HIGH CAPACITY. As a child I bore witness to this in my Year 8 Math class – an isolated episode in my otherwise difficult school journey.

Now as an adult some 30 years later, after working with hundreds of schools and thousands of school leaders, staff and students our team has been able to test and re-test the ideas, strategies and tools that schools can use to boost self and collective efficacy which in turn creates higher capacity. For teachers, this is their CAPACITY to be able to effectively reach and teach ALL of their students. For students, this is their CAPACITY to learn at their maximum potential.

How does your school measure and maximise the efficacy of students and staff? What's working well right now and what needs to improve so that you can build a Higher Capacity School Culture where all staff and students can flourish?

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Chapter 1: Maximising Self & Collective Efficacy - Chapter Summary -

- When a Teacher-Student relationship is optimised it creates a 'Unicorn Effect' enabling extraordinary levels of growth and development.
- For the unicorn effect to occur both the Teacher and Student need to have high levels of Capacity in order to engage effectively together.
- Capacity is easily diminished in both teachers and students by competing priorities, peer pressure and poor communication all of which can be prevented if leaders focus on building high quality support systems within their schools
- Capacity is the precursor to efficacy and collective teacher efficacy and student self-efficacy are powerful predictors of quality teaching and learning.
- Individual efficacy levels fluctuate so teachers and students must measure and manage this systemically to maintain optimal levels necessary for the Unicorn Effect to occur.

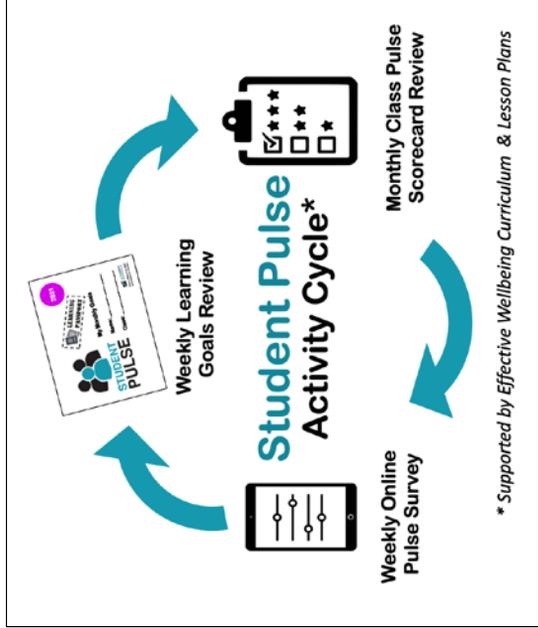


SYSTEMS SNAPSHOT

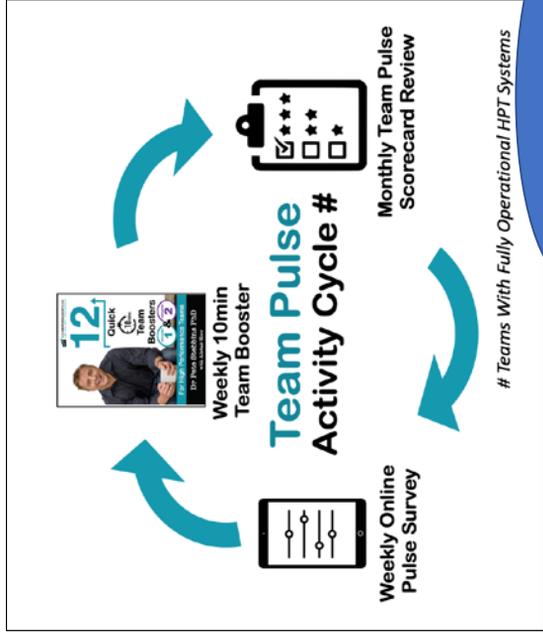
Self & Collective Efficacy As A School Wide System



Students x Class



Teaching & Support Teams



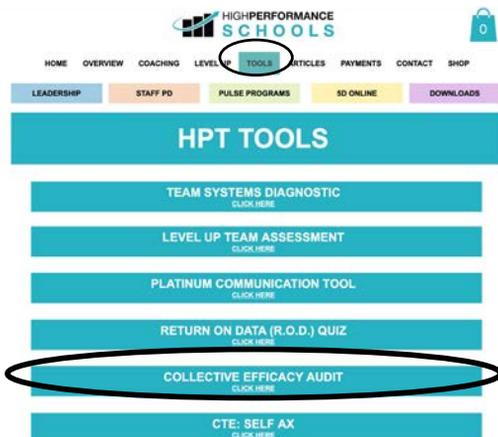
Tools & Templates
at: HPTschools.com

Maximising Self & Collective Efficacy

Next Steps: Toolkit

What's the level of collective efficacy in your school right now?

Go to hptschools.com/tools and complete the Collective Efficacy Audit to identify current levels of performance, as well as steps to boost collective efficacy across your school.



SAMPLE Collective Efficacy Audit Report

Collective Efficacy Audit Tool – REPORT				
Collective Efficacy Factors	Mastery Experience	Social Persuasion	Vicarious Experience	Affective States
Know: How our team develops a shared understanding...	LOW	MEDIUM	VERY HIGH	HIGH
Do: The tools and strategies we use to improve this...	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW
Review: The outcome measures we use to track our progress...	HIGH	VERY LOW	HIGH	VERY LOW

Collective Efficacy Audit Tool –ACTION PLAN				
Collective Efficacy Factors	Mastery Experience	Social Persuasion	Vicarious Experience	Affective States
Know: How our team develops a shared understanding...				
Do: The tools and strategies we use to improve this...				
Review: The outcome measures we use to track our progress...				

Next Steps: Quickstart Video

Channel: HPT Level Up!
Playlist: Leading Flourishing Schools
Title: Maximising Efficacy – High Capacity School Culture (4.53)

