AN EXAMINATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER EFFICACY AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers in Massachusetts. A sample of 168 of current special education teachers from across the state of Massachusetts participated in the web-based survey. The findings indicated that no significant correlation exists between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers in Massachusetts. Yet, the data showed a positive correlation between one’s personal teaching efficacy and one’s continuance commitment and a negative correlation between one’s personal teaching efficacy and one’s normative commitment. These findings also indicated that one’s personal teaching efficacy beliefs have diverse effects on one’s commitment to an organization. These mixed findings further validate the complexity of the efficacy-commitment constructs and support the ongoing challenge of creating effective interventions in teacher retention. Furthermore, these findings indicate a need for additional research in order to understand how special education teachers define their commitment, as it not only relates to the organization, but also to other domains of commitment; profession and teaching.

Keywords: teacher efficacy, organizational commitment, special education
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.........................................................................................................................ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT........................................................................................................iii

LIST OF TABLES..................................................................................................................viii

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION..............................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem....................................................................................................1

Significance of the Problem................................................................................................2

Practical and Intellectual Goals..........................................................................................3

Research Questions...........................................................................................................4

Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................................4

Social Cognitive Theory....................................................................................................4

Self Efficacy Theory..........................................................................................................7

Definition of Terms...........................................................................................................14

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW..................................................................................16

Introduction......................................................................................................................16

Teacher Efficacy...............................................................................................................16

Organizational Commitment.............................................................................................19

A Measure of Efficacy........................................................................................................22

A Measure of Commitment...............................................................................................24

Commitment, Retention, and Turnover ............................................................................29

Job Satisfaction with Special Education Teachers..........................................................32

Burnout and Special Education Teachers.........................................................................33
Organizational Commitment and Retention in Special Education........................................36
Organizational Commitment of Special Education Teacher in Private, District or Collaborative School Type..............................................................37
Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment in Special Education..........................39
Summary..................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY...........................................................................43
Research Question..................................................................................................43
Null Hypothesis......................................................................................................44
Methodology...........................................................................................................45
  Site and Participants............................................................................................45
  Data Collection....................................................................................................47
  Data Screening and Cleaning..............................................................................52
Protection of Human Subjects..................................................................................56
Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability.................................................................57
Summary................................................................................................................58

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS.................................................................60
Survey Administration............................................................................................60
Respondents’ Demographic Profile.........................................................................60
  Sample Characteristics........................................................................................60
Descriptive Statistics..............................................................................................62
Assumptions of Analysis.........................................................................................63
  Assumptions of Approximate Normality ..............................................................63
  Assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity....................................................64
Hypothesis Testing ........................................................................................................... 65
Summary .......................................................................................................................... 68
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .......................................................... 69
Results and Discussion of the Research Question ....................................................... 69
Hypothesis 1 .................................................................................................................... 70
Hypothesis 2 .................................................................................................................... 71
Hypothesis 3 .................................................................................................................... 72
Hypothesis 4 .................................................................................................................... 75
Implications .................................................................................................................... 76
Implications for Practice ................................................................................................. 77
Implications for Future Research .................................................................................... 79
Organizational Commitment and the Contrasting Correlation with
Personal Teacher Efficacy and General Teaching Efficacy ........................................ 79
The Sub-constructs of Teacher Efficacy and Organizational
Commitment ..................................................................................................................... 80
The Negative Correlation Between Normative Commitment and Personal
Teaching Efficacy ............................................................................................................. 80
The relationship between affective commitment and personal teaching
efficacy ............................................................................................................................... 81
The Differentiation Between One’s Commitment to Teaching and One’s
to the Profession .............................................................................................................. 81
Continuance Commitment and the Antecedent Factors Correlating with
Personal Teaching Efficacy ............................................................................................. 82
LIST OF FIGURES

1  Distribution of Teacher Efficacy Total.................................109
2  Distribution of General Teacher Efficacy..............................110
3  Distribution of Personal Teaching Efficacy...........................111
4  Distribution of Organizational Commitment..........................112
5  Distribution of Normative Commitment...............................113
6  Distribution of Continuance Commitment.............................114
7  Distribution of Affective Commitment.................................115
8  Scatterplot of Organizational Commitment Total and Teacher Efficacy Total........116
9  Scatterplot of Affective Commitment and General Teaching Efficacy..............117
10 Scatterplot of Normative Commitment and General Teaching Efficacy..............118
11 Scatterplot of Continuance Commitment and General Teaching Efficacy............119
12 Scatterplot of Affective Commitment and Personal Teaching Efficacy...............120
13 Scatterplot of Normative Commitment and Personal Teaching Efficacy...............121
14 Scatterplot of Continuance Commitment and Personal Teaching Efficacy............122
An Examination into the Relationship Between Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment of Special Education Teachers

Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The need for special education teachers, across the country, to remain committed to their organization has never been greater. The gap in special education teachers is at a critical level as schools fail to meet the overwhelming increase of students with special needs (Nance, 2009). The current education system sees twenty-five percent of teachers leaving their organization within the first year and fifty percent leave within five years (Ingersoll, 2001). Current research indicates that this trend is not going away anytime soon as twenty percent of special education teachers leave their position each year (Johnson & Birkeland, 2010). This issue is compounded, as there are not enough special education teachers to meet the increasing number of students requiring special education within the public schools. One in every seven children is diagnosed with a disability and there has been a 63 percent increase in students receiving special education services since the onset of the federal programs in 1976 (Green, 2009).

Several studies in the educational literature have combatted these issues by examining the contributing factors related to a teacher’s commitment, whether that commitment is to the teaching profession (Evens and Tribble, 1986) or to the organization (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Recent research concludes that demands in caseload, student needs, paperwork, duties, and policies contribute to special education teachers feeling increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased commitment (Billingsley, 2004). Hulpia and Devos (2010) state that personal variables, such as self-efficacy, may be a contributing factor to a teacher’s
organizational commitment. Furthermore, research by Hoy and Spero (2005) contributes to evidence supporting the important impact that efficacy beliefs have on a teacher’s commitment. Coladarci (1992) adds to this by stating that promoting “a teacher's sense of efficacy may, in turn, promote that teacher's commitment to the organization and, therefore, to teaching” (p. 334).

Among these factors that impact the organizational commitment of special education teachers, teacher efficacy appears to be the most critical, yet least studied. Although there are limited studies that look at self-efficacy among new teachers and little is known about the context variables that affect efficacy, Hoy and Spero (2005) note that it seems that efficacy beliefs of first-year special education teachers are related to their commitment. Since national data indicates a majority of teachers, who leave, will depart within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2001), it is important to examine this relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.

I propose to address this problem of practice through a quantitative correlational study that investigates the relationship between a special education teacher’s self-efficacy and their organizational commitment. Through this study I hope to contribute to the retention research and add recommendations to solve the challenge of retaining qualified special education teachers.

**Significance of the Problem**

Reducing attrition and maintaining a committed special education workforce is necessary because teacher shortages are expected to increase in the future (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). A lack of teacher commitment directly undermines program stability and the quality of education, locally and nationally (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). The retention of special education teachers is directly impacting student achievement, school success, and school improvement (France,
2008). The problem with struggling to maintain a committed teacher workforce is compounded by the ongoing increase of students requiring special services.

The students receiving special services because of autism or a related disorder have increased 25% percent since the 1990’s (Carey, 2004). A report from Children’s Hospital, in Boston, indicates that due to the medical advances in neonatal care a growing percentage of premature babies are surviving (Riley, 2012). Many of them often have medical complications and neurological disabilities requiring more intensive educational and medical services as compared to special needs children in the 1980s.

The high attrition rate within education has received growing interest since the 1980s as policy makers continue to look at management, organizational, and personal factors to improve teacher recruitment and retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 1995). Even though efforts have been made in various districts and states to support, foster, develop, and retain certified teachers, the direct and indirect costs continue to be significant. Many states like Texas lose between $8,231 and $13,122, per teacher, when that teacher needs to be replaced (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seonjin, 2004). This data indicates the importance of pinpointing key issues in attrition in order to develop relevant and effective interventions. Gaining a greater understanding of the processes related to organizational commitment has positive implications for schools, employees, organizations, and society as a whole (Mathieu & Zajak, 1990).

Practical and Intellectual Goals

The practical goal of this study is to identify the possible relationship between teacher efficacy and organization. The purpose of examining this relationship is to improve the retention of special education teachers. Through this study a greater understanding can be developed into the relationship between two important constructs that impact teacher retention. Since special
education teachers continue to be the most at risk of leaving, practitioners need to have a better understanding of the important cognitive factors contributing to job satisfaction and commitment (Billingsley, 2004). Because of this ongoing challenge in education, Billingsley (2004) notes that future research should examine the teachers' perspectives and important contributions to commitment. Therefore, an important practical goal is to provide a summary of why special educators remain involved in their profession and remain committed to their role, and what impact teacher efficacy has on one’s commitment. Another practical goal for this study is to provide recommendations of antecedent strategies to school leaders and education professionals toward improving one’s feelings of efficacy, and making a positive impact on teacher commitment. An important intellectual goal of this study is to provide an improved understanding into the complex relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment, within the field of special education. By developing a better understanding, I hope to improve my capacity in educational leadership as well as contribute results that will benefit other researchers.

Research Question

The primary question in this research study is: What is the relationship between the measure of a teacher’s sense of efficacy (personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy) and the measure of a teacher’s organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) of special education teachers?

Theoretical Framework

Social cognitive theory. Theorists of social cognition believe that behavior is a cognitive process where one uses the mind to engage in the decision making process in order to determine the likely outcome of a behavior. Bandura’s self-efficacy theory originates from social cognitive
theory (Bandura, 1977). Social cognitive theory was not well received in the field of behavior science until cognitive and behavioral theorists took into account the conscious involvement of the responder within the stimuli-response process. It presented a contrast to theories of human functioning that emphasize external factors, at the exclusion of internal factors, in the process of the human response (Pajares, 2002). When theorists began to accept the notion that a mental process must be engaged prior to any behavior, there was a shift in research from the typical stimulus-response process, to a more cognitive-based process where the mind is actively engaged in order to evaluate the potential consequences of a behavior.

The way someone evaluated the potential consequences of their behavior informs and alters their setting and their self-beliefs, which then impacts subsequent performances. This is what Pajares (1996) describes as the foundation of Bandura’s concept of reciprocal determinism, or what later became called triadic reciprocality. This is a view that personal factors, behavior factors, and environmental factors interact in a triadic manner. This three-way interaction defines how a person perceives situations and explains how personal feelings result in certain outcomes.

Within the element of expectations, Bandura (1977) differentiates between two kinds of expectations that impact motivation and therefore, one’s behavior. Outcome expectation, a prominent concept used to explain human functioning, is a person’s self-assessment of the possible consequences of acting out a specific behavior at the required level of skill or competence. The outcome question is one that states ‘if I accomplish the task at that level, what are the likely consequences?’ Consequences are subjective to the individual and can come in the form of physical rewards, social rewards, punishments, criticisms, or self-evaluations (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).
The other element of Bandura’s (1977) expectations is efficacy expectation. This is the belief that a person can successfully produce the required behavior needed to get a specific outcome. In this construct, the strength or degree of one’s belief or conviction, and level of motivation, affects the level of perseverance required to make it through the challenging situations and cope with stressful or unwanted circumstances. This means that social cognitive theorists evaluate one’s degree of perceived self-efficacy in order to understand their level of coping, perseverance, and subsequent choice of behaviors. From an empirical standpoint, the efficacy question these theorists ask is, “do I have the ability to organize and execute the actions necessary to accomplish a specific task or attain a desired outcome” (Bandura, 1999, p. 288)? From a cognitive perspective, efficacy expectations precede and help form outcome expectations.

The different patterns of efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations have varying cognitive effects, both psychosocial and/or emotional. A person with high efficacy expectation and low outcome expectations will tend to protest and rebel against the systems in an effort to change their environment or pursue change. Self-efficacious people who suffer from low outcome expectations will strive to regain control over the outcome and attempt to control the social system that dictates what the consequence would be for a given event (Bandura, 1997). When people have a low sense of personal efficacy, they can become apathetic and detached from the pursuit of life’s challenges. Even with a high degree of outcome expectancy, low efficacious people will give up more quickly when a task requires effort or that effort produces failure. They are more likely to turn to feelings of powerlessness, self-devaluation and despondency.

Not only can self-efficacy influence the choice of one’s activities and settings, it can also, through the expectation of eventual success, affect one’s choice of coping strategies. Efficacy
expectations determine how much effort people will put forth and how long they will persist in
the face of obstacles and adverse experiences. The greater degree of self-efficacy the more
actively engaged and motivated that person is toward their desired outcome. Motivation
becomes an important construct within social cognitive theory. The ability to process and think
about future consequences provides the necessary antecedent to initiate and maintain a state of
motivation (Bandura, 1977).

Because the outcome people expect is contingent largely on their judgment of how well they
will perform in the given task and performance determines outcome, then the outcome expected
for a given performance makes little to no independent contribution to predicting the behavior
without the direct influence of efficacy beliefs. This does not negate the role outcome
expectancy plays in the attainment of a desired outcome. People will take action when their
efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations make the effort worthwhile. They not only expect that
their actions will produce the desired outcome (outcome expectancy), but they also believe that
they can perform those actions (efficacy beliefs).

**Self-efficacy theory.** Bandura’s self-efficacy theory evolved when he became aware that
there was a missing element in social learning theory and theory of behavioral change.
According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy beliefs are fundamental to human functioning. A
person must possess the requisite knowledge and skills, as well as the motivation and perception,
that s/he can successfully exhibit the required behavior under difficult circumstances (Artino,
2006). Bandura theorized that perceived self-efficacy makes a difference in how people think,
feel, and behave (1977). His theory states that people faced with constant rejection must possess
high self-efficacy, or self-worth, in order to persist. His theory also states that self-efficacy is
based on one’s judgment of one’s capacity to execute on a given responsibility (Skaalvik &
Since self-efficacy pertains to a sense of control over one's environment and behavior, it is important, for the purpose of this study, to understand how one’s sense of control over the environment and behavior relates to one’s commitment to an organization. Bandura (1977) notes that teachers who possess a strong locus-of-control have been more likely to maintain a higher sense of self-efficacy. This means they are more likely to put forth the required effort in order to change behavior, commit to challenges, and persistence despite obstacles and setbacks that may undermine motivation. However, does this mean that those with high efficacious behavior, or behavior that commits one to overcoming challenges and teaching the most challenging students, will also feel a strong sense of organizational commitment? Although one’s degree of self-efficacy affects the challenges that one takes on as well as how high they set their goals, does it also mean that teachers with high personal and/or general teaching efficacy are more committed to the organization? Furthermore, it is important to note that people’s beliefs in their efficacy can have diverse effects. These “beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding” (Johnson, 2010, p. 11).

Research on teacher efficacy, grounded mostly within social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), is widely used in education and is dominated by quantitative methodologies exploring antecedents and consequences of efficacy. Using social cognitive theory as a framework for education research helps educators improve student emotional states and helps to correct self-defeating beliefs and habits of thought (Pajares, 2002). With this framework, educational research has examined the truth in this correlation where one’s efficacy beliefs dictate
performance and performance determines outcome (Bandura, 1997). Tschannen-Moran et al.
(1998) notes that Bandura's self-efficacy theory is one of the few conceptualizations of human
control that describe a distinction between competence (I can execute the actions) and
contingency (the actions will attain certain outcomes).

These theoretical connection between one’s perception of teacher efficacy and one’s
organizational commitment are relevant in investigating the problem of practice since they
highlight a cognitive link in what Hom and Kinicki (2001) describe as the “dissatisfaction-quit
sequence” (p. 975). Because a teacher’s affective reaction to work and subsequent feelings of
commitment are major theme in attrition (Billingsley, 2004), and the dissatisfaction-quit
sequence (Hom & Kinicki, 2001), developing practice insight into the thought process preceding
actions, such as resignation, quitting, lack of commitment, can support the development of
effective teacher retention interventions.

The reason this study is grounded in Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy is based on the
principle assumption that people's beliefs in their efficacy have diverse effects on behavior such
as job satisfaction and commitment. A person's efficacy beliefs influence their course of action,
efforts toward a given goal, how long they will persevere through adverse situations, levels of
stress and depression in coping with certain external demands, and the level of success they are
able to attain. This "perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and
execute the course of action required to produce given attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Once
someone develops a perception of a given situation, his or her expectation of that situation is
processed into a given behavior that leads to an outcome. Bandura (1997) notes an outcome
expectation is defined as one’s estimate that a given action (behavior) will lead to a desired
outcome. This means that how a person feels (efficacy) about a circumstance will determine not
only the behavior, but also the outcome, once a person evaluates what kind of outcome to expect. One’s perceived self-efficacy and the subsequent expectations about a given situation determine how much effort to put forth and how long to persist in challenging situations. Bandura (1999) notes that one’s perceived self-efficacy, or one’s sense of control of an environment and behavior, will determine the amount of effort, if any, to put forth and how long to persist through challenges and negative experiences. Figure 1.1 shows a diagram of Bandura’s self-efficacy theory as it relates to efficacy and outcome expectations.

Figure 1.1. Bandura’s (1977) diagram depicting the difference between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations

The efficacy model evolved with the work done by Ashton, Webb, and Doda (1983) using Bandura's (1977) conceptualization of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977, 1999) proposed that one's behavior is determined by both outcome expectancy (belief that behavior will lead to desirable outcomes) and efficacy expectations (belief in one’s skills to produce desired outcome). Ashton et al. (1983) believes that teacher efficacy offers educators a powerful organizing construct for directing future educational improvement and offers significant value in understanding teachers’
role, attitude, and interactions. This construct shows promise as an important indicator for guiding and implementing organizational and classroom change, as well as understanding teacher motivation.

Later research by Guskey and Passaro (1994) started to see behavior as a result of outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. Within the teacher efficacy research outcome expectations are the beliefs or thoughts a teacher has about the potential consequences of specific behaviors in a particular situation or context, also referred to as general teaching efficacy. Outcome expectations are the beliefs that a given behavior will lead to certain outcome. For example, a teacher that feels that skillful teaching can offset the socio-economic challenges of the home environment is a belief based on one’s outcome expectations (Coladarci, 1992). Efficacy expectations, on the other hand, are personal beliefs about one’s own abilities to positively impact a given situation, problem or context (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). This is also referred to as personal teaching efficacy. Efficacy expectation is a belief that one already possesses the necessary skills needed to execute the appropriate behavior in order to positively impacts a given situation (Coladarci, 1992). Efficacy expectations, for example, would be reflected through a teacher’s confidence that they possess the necessary skills to positively impact student learning, regardless of socio-economic factors in the home. Figure 1.2 shows the evolution of Bandura’s (1977) expectations model of self-efficacy as it relates to teacher efficacy and behavior, and the potential relationship to organizational commitment.
Figure 1.2. Bandura’s (1977) diagram within teacher efficacy and commitment research depicting the role one’s efficacy and outcome beliefs have on one’s behavior.

This cognitive-based belief system is fundamental to human functioning since a person’s feelings of self-efficacy affect almost everything he or she does. Yet, it is important to note that “teacher efficacy refers to one's beliefs rather than to observable behaviors” (Coladarci, 1992, p. 323). Regardless of the observable limitation of such constructs, it has still been studied extensively within various disciplines. Bandura’s (1977) theory has been applied to a variety of domains like teaching performance (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), teacher training, special education (McDaniel & McCarthy, 1989), first year teachers (Hoy & Spero, 2005), organizational health of schools (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), and commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992). A recent review of the literature generated over 1,400 self-efficacy articles in ten different content areas (Romano, 1996).

These studies align with the notion that self-efficacy beliefs affect one’s thoughts, motivations, feelings, and behaviors (Bandura, 1997). If one believes that they lack the power and control to influence change, then they will refrain from action. Bandura’s (1997)
expectations of efficacy are originated from four sources of information. These four sources are performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state. Performance accomplishment is based on personal mastery experience. Vicarious experience is the process of observing others performing threatening tasks without failure and expecting to achieve the same level of success when applying a level of effort and persistence. Verbal persuasion is the process where people are led into believing, through suggestion, that they can persevere and overcome something that was overwhelming in the past. Physiological state is the emotional arousal of fear or anxiety that can positively or negatively impact efficacy expectations. Individuals can evoke thoughts of success or ineptitude regarding an impending situation that can support or jeopardize one’s ability to exhibit the behavior needed to achieve a desired outcome.

Self-efficacy theorists (Ashton, 1982; Ashton, Webb, & Doda., 1983; Bandura, 1977; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Pajares, 1996) describe four main types of information that are used to formulate efficacy beliefs that are relevant within education. The first source of information is through prior experience or previous attempts (enactive mastery). The second source is through vicarious experiences watching others succeed or fail. A third area is through verbal persuasion and the fourth area is information that comes through psychological or affective states (arousal, stress, anxiety, heart rate, fatigue). Of the four sources of information, research has shown that enactive mastery experiences are the most influential sources of efficacy information. This is because they provide the most direct and authentic information needed to evaluate and create corresponding feelings as they relate to success or failure in a given situation (Artino, 2006). In the classroom, if the enactive mastery experiences are perceived as positive then there is an increased feeling of personal competence and self-efficacy, and vice versa. It is the level of self-
efficacy that determines whether they can persevere in the classroom or feel like a failure and quit (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Through the lens of self-efficacy theory, overcoming these self-defeating feelings requires a higher level of self-efficacy. The level of self-efficacy can be determined by how much effort and how long a person will persevere when confronting challenges (Bandura, 1977; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Depending on prior knowledge, experience and perception, educators will formulate thoughts, feelings, and corresponding behaviors that support or undermine their level of self-confidence and corresponding feelings of self-efficacy.

**Definition of Terms**

1. Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

2. Teacher Efficacy is defined as the responsibility for student success and failure as measured in the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993)

3. Personal Teaching Efficacy is defined by posing to oneself, “if I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student” (Ashton, et al., 1993, p. 10) and is measured by the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993)

4. General Teaching Efficacy is defined by posing to oneself, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of the student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” (Ashton, et al, 1993, p. 10) and is measured by the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993)

5. Organizational Commitment is defined as an “individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization.” (Douglas, 2010, p. 3).
6. Affective Commitment is defined as “positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in, the work organization” (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010, p. 138), and is measured using Organizational Commitment Survey (Meyer and Allen, 2004).

7. Continuance Commitment is defined as “the extent to which employees feel committed to their organizations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving” (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010, p. 138), and is measured using the Organizational Commitment Survey (Meyer & Allen, 2004).

8. Normative Commitment is defined as an “employee’s feeling of obligation to remain with the organization” (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010, p. 138), and is measured using the Organizational Commitment Survey (Meyer & Allen, 2004).

9. Turnover is defined as “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 500).

10. Retention is defined as "teachers who remained in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year" (Billingsley, 2004, p. 51).

11. Attrition or exit attrition is defined as leaving teaching altogether (Billingsley, 2004).
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to account for the efficacy and commitment studies conducted within recent years, comment on the findings, and note how those findings have guided this current research project. This chapter is organized based on the themes within the literature and delves into the problem of practice within teacher efficacy, organizational commitment, and special education. This chapter examines the research on measures of efficacy and commitment and examines the parallel research on teacher retention and teacher turnover.

Figure 2.0. Theoretical perspective of Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy has become a powerful organizing construct for guiding and directing research and educational change. This construct, which is interchangeable in the research with
teaching efficacy, has been studied and referenced extensively within public education, particularly with regards to regular education teachers (Ashton, 1982, 1984; Ashton & Webb, 1987; Ashton, et al., 1983; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik, & Proller, 1988; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). Teacher efficacy, which is defined as one’s responsibility for student success and failure (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), has proven to be beneficial in helping to understand teachers’ definition of their role, their attitudes toward their work, their interactions with students (Ashton, et al., 1983), and commitment to teaching (Hoy & Spero, 2005). There is clear evidence in the research linking self-efficacy beliefs to improved teaching and learning, but more research is needed in order to provide interventions to promote self-efficacy beliefs in the classroom (McDaniel & McCarthy, 1989).

Figure 2.1 represents a multidimensional model of the conception of teachers' sense of efficacy. Ashton, et al. (1983) notes, as illustrated in the figure, that teaching efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about the relationship between teaching and learning. A teacher’s degree of efficacy is impacted based on personal expectations for specific students or situations, as well from general feelings of students’ ability. What Ashton et al. found in their study is that a teacher’s belief in the educability of students (Rand question 1) was significantly related to the academic performance of their students on achievement tests. She also found that a teacher's sense of personal teaching efficacy (Rand question 2) was significantly related to a secure and accepting classroom, supportive of student initiative, and a concern for meeting all the diverse needs of the students.
Varying models of the teacher efficacy construct emerged in the research from work done by Rotter (1966) and Bandura (1977, 1999). Rotter’s (1966) model used a psychological construct as the theoretical base with the assumption that teachers, with a high degree of efficacy, could control student achievement and motivation. A second conceptual model of teacher efficacy theory evolved from the works of Bandura (1977) as he defined teacher efficacy as a type of self-efficacy. Bandura (1999) describes this self-efficacy as a cognitive process in which a teacher forms perceptions or beliefs about one's capacity to perform a given task in order to attain a desired outcome.

From Bandura’s (1977) first notion of this construct to the development of various surveys and questionnaires, the theory of self-efficacy in education has been connected to public school teacher burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000), organizational health of schools (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), supervision of resource room teachers (Coladarci & Breton, 1997), and special educators’ commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992).

The difference between Bandura’s (1977) model of self-efficacy and Rotter's (1966) internal-external locus of control model was clarified in Bandura's (1997) recent book. He proves that the beliefs in one’s action (perceived self-efficacy) are not the same as beliefs about whether actions affect outcomes (locus of control). Bandura tested the correlation between these two constructs and discovered that perceived self-efficacy and locus of control show little or no empirical relationship to one another. Self-efficacy was shown to be a strong predictor of behavior and locus of control was shown to be a weaker predictor. Rotter's internal-external
locus of control is centered on the "causal belief about the relationship between action and outcome" (Bandura, 1997, p. 19). A teacher may perceive that a particular outcome is within their control, but lack the confidence to believe that they can perform the necessary actions. The existence of Bandura’s constructs and Rotter’s construct within one theoretical frame has added to a lack of clarity about the nature of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998) and will not be resolved as long there continues to be disagreement regarding the role one’s locus of control (internal and external) plays on one’s behavior.

Ashton (1984) notes the significance of perception in defining one’s feelings of self-efficacy. Ashton researched motivation, student achievement, and teacher efficacy and discovered principles that she described as the eight dimensions to the development of teacher efficacy: a sense of accomplishment; positive expectations for student behavior and achievement; ownership for student learning; clear strategies for achieving objectives; positive affect; sense of control; sense of common teacher/student goals; democratic decision making.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined and categorized in various ways throughout the research. A common similarity within the various definitions is that organizational commitment is viewed as a bond between the individual and the organization, and differ in regards to the development of this connection (Mathieu & Zajak, 1990). Researchers Gemlik, Sisman & Signri (2010) state that organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct in which an individual feels psychologically bound to an organization. Organizational commitment can also be defined using what Douglas (2010) describes as an “individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization.” (p. 3). This commitment can be characterized by
a strong personal belief in and acceptance of the organizational goals and values, a desire to exert oneself for the betterment of the organization, and a strong will to remain with the organization.

Hodge and Orag (2007) also note that organizational commitment is an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. They go on to add that if this association is positive then it fosters "levels of personal and professional satisfaction and increased productivity" (p.128). This increased productivity and involvement improves one’s organizational commitment and decreases rates of turnover (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010). Since teacher turnover is an important construct in the study of teacher commitment, it is important to see the connection between organizational commitment and turnover. Gemlik et al. (2010) goes on to note, within their research of health sector staff in Turkey, that “organizational commitment may be the mediating variable in the link that has been found between burnout and both turnover and job withdrawal” (p. 137).

Mathieu and Zajak (1990) indicate in their meta-analysis of the organizational commitment literature additional factors such as personal characteristics (age, tenure), job characteristics, and affective responses (motivation, job satisfaction) that impact one’s organizational commitment. Affective responses, such as job satisfaction, describe an individuals' psychological reaction to the work environment. How efficacious one feels about their work environments impacts one’s organizational commitment. Within education, teachers who joined the profession certain about their career choice were more likely to persist and remain teaching (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006). This means that teachers who felt like they chose to become a teacher were more likely to also feel a greater degree of commitment to their job and persist through the daily challenges of their role.
Coladarci (1992), in his study into the commitment of special education teachers in Maine, analyzed teacher efficacy and commitment to teaching. He defines commitment to teaching similar to organizational commitment. He says that a special education teacher’s commitment to teaching is an indicator of their psychological attachment to the teaching profession. He further defined one’s commitment to teaching as the degree to which one has a positive and affective attachment to one’s work. This affective attachment is critical in education, since special education teachers with a positive and strong commitment to their work are more dedicated to their students (Eginli, 2009).

Research on commitment notes the difference between one's commitment to the profession of teaching and one's commitment to the organization. Billingsley and Cross (1992) highlight this difference since a “teacher may be committed to the profession of teaching, but not to his or her employing school division” (p. 454).

Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) and Allen and Meyer (1990) discuss three dimensions in the organizational commitment construct. The first dimension, affective commitment, is defined as “positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in, the work organization”. The second dimension, continuance commitment, is defined as “the extent to which employees feel committed to their organizations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving (e.g., investments or lack of attractive alternatives)”. The third dimension, normative commitment, is defined as an “employees feeling of obligation to remain with the organization” (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010, p. 138). Since the construct of organizational commitment is closely linked with attrition and retention, it is important to highlight the attrition and retention research as it relates to teacher commitment to the profession or school.
A Measure of Efficacy

In 1976, a Rand study (Ashton, et al., 1983) was published based on the Rotter’s (1966) theoretical perspective that examined the success of various reading programs in education. Their study included two questions to measure a teacher’s sense of efficacy and student performance. Question one defines a teacher’s general teaching efficacy by asking, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of the student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” (p. 10). Teachers that strongly agree with this statement feel that external controls, such as class, race, and gender are more powerful than any influence any one teacher can make. Rotter (1966) refers to these external controls as uncontrollable and unpredictable forces that extend beyond the individual capabilities of the particular teacher but to teachers, collectively (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). This notion of external control and teachers' beliefs about the influence of external variables has been described by researchers using various terms. These terms are interchangeable throughout the research and can be seen as efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1999), teaching efficacy (Ashton, et al., 1983; Gibson & Dembo, 1984), general teaching efficacy (Evans & Tribble, 1986; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990), and general efficacy (Coladarci & Breton, 1997).

The second question in the Rand study (Ashton, et al., 1983), which correlates with personal teaching efficacy states, "If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student" (p. 10). Teachers who agreed with this question resonate a confidence in their ability as teachers to persevere and teach the most challenging students. Through Rotter's (1966) theoretical perspective, a teacher's internal control refers to the perception one has that events are contingent upon one's behavior or consistency of habits. In this question, Rotter is concerned with one's beliefs about the relationship between action and outcome. With an
internal locus of control, teachers believe that a particular outcome is caused by their own actions. This aspect of efficacy has been labeled, within the research, as personal teaching efficacy (Ashton, et al., 1983; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990), and personal efficacy (Coladarci & Breton, 1997). As researchers realized the strong correlation that teacher efficacy shares with student achievement, additional studies were conducted exploring additional relationships such as a teacher’s ability to manage student behavior, stress level, and professional and organizational commitment.

In the Rand studies, the total score obtained from two questions measured a teachers’ sense of efficacy. Figure 2.3 shows the questions that appeared in the RAND Study.

1. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of the student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.
2. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.

Figure 2.3. Questions written in the original RAND study (Ashton, et al., 1983)

Several efficacy measures evolved from the work of Bandura (1997). Some of these measures include the Teacher Efficacy Scale, the Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument, the Ashton Vignettes, and the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). The Teacher Efficacy Scale is the most widely used measurement for teacher efficacy, but not without its criticism. As the teacher efficacy construct evolved researchers began to challenge the efficacy and outcome expectancy construct as they relate to teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Items used in the teacher efficacy scale to measure the second factor of
teacher efficacy, general teaching efficacy, cannot be considered outcome expectancy. Guskey and Passaro (1994) found, after performing a factor analysis on the teacher efficacy scale, that there was no evidence correlating outcome expectancy to general teaching efficacy. Instead, they postulated a simpler internal versus external dichotomy within the scale. Nevertheless, Gibson and Dembo (1984) and Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) defend the teacher efficacy construct by noting that the meaning of the two RAND items and the personal and general dimensions of the Teacher Efficacy Scale accurately reflect the two expectancies of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy expectation and outcome expectancies.

However, researchers have found that perception of one’s own personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy does not necessarily co-vary (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) and often relate to predictors and outcomes in distinctly different ways (Deemer & Minke, 1999). Findings like these challenge the original construct developed by Bandura (1977) and has required some researchers to develop a better understanding of the teacher efficacy construct and seek more reliable questionnaires and models that can accurately depict and assess the correlation between personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy.

A Measure of Commitment

The three-component model of organization commitment (Meyers & Allen, 2004) has dominated recent research on organizational commitment (Jaros, 2007). Organizational commitment, as used in the three-component model, is defined by Jaros as a mindset where an employee has an emotional connection to the organization. In Jaros’s critical analysis of the three-component model, he criticizes the model by stating that additional research analyzing this three-component model is sparse and inconclusive. However, he compliments the model for its predictive value in regards to turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness.
Meyer and Allen (1991) state that although there are various definitions of commitment in the research they all appear to encompass at least three main ideas or concepts within the definition. These concepts are an affective attachment to the organization, perceived cost associated with leaving, and obligation to remain with the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) label these concepts as 'affective', 'continuance' and 'normative' commitment, respectively. They note that the collective interest of these approaches can help decrease the likelihood of staff turnover, but it is also important to respect each subset in isolation. “Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they want to, those with strong continuance commitment because they need to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they ought to do so.” (p. 3). Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal (2011) define affective commitment is an emotional attachment where teachers believe in the organizational goals and values, and are willing to help the school achieve them. This affective attachment is critical in education, since individuals with a positive and strong commitment to their work are more dedicated to their students (Eginli, 2009). Continuance commitment is the willingness to remain in an organization because of the investments, like rank, retirement, and certifications. Normative commitment is the commitment that a person believes they have to the organization or their feeling of obligation to their school. Furthermore, continuance commitment, as evident in the research, typically does not stand-apart from affective commitment. Affective commitment, not continuance commitment, has the stronger correlation to feelings of efficacy (Meyer et al., 2002). Qualitative research, by Prather-Jones (2011), supports this notion by concluding that special education teachers show no favorable relationship between professional qualifications and increased rewards, and their feelings of commitment or decision to stay. What she did uncover was that special education
teachers are "primarily focused on their personal factors, specifically cognitive or affective ones, and how those factors affected their career decisions" (p. 187).

Hodge and Ozag (2007) describe the organizational commitment three-component model as it relates to teachers. Teachers who exhibit a strong belief in the values of their school and a desire to maintain their position is known as affective commitment. Teachers who remain because they have no job alternatives or have too much invested in the school to leave are known as continuance commitment. These investments can include tenure, retirement, status, and benefits. This final component in the commitment model, normative commitment, is evident in a teacher who does not develop a strong emotional attachment to the school like those with affective commitment, but rather is committed due to cultural, familial, or organizational ethics. They work because they feel obligated.

Additional research indicates that organizational commitment has been shown to correlate with teacher efficacy, specifically personal teaching efficacy. The strongest correlates within organizational commitment were noted in work done by Meyer et al (2002). Results from analyses show that affective commitment and overall job satisfaction, job involvement, and occupational commitment were all quite strong. Further analysis indicates that these correlations are much stronger than the correlations with continuance and normative commitment. The strongest correlation involving affective commitment was with overall job satisfaction ($\rho = .65$).

Affective commitment attempts to capture a universal set of needs and values that teachers want from the school they work in (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer et al (2002) continues to note in their research that teacher efficacy, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are variables that have an affective tone and possible correlates of affective commitment. However,
researchers argue about the correlational relationship between affective commitment and occupational commitment and job satisfaction.

Allen and Meyer (1990) propose that the continuance commitment encompasses two factors: the magnitude of investments in the organization and/or the number of investments or side bets the employee makes and the perceived lack of alternatives. Side-bets are actions taken to improve oneself within a given organization and these actions can be seen as job skills that may not be transferable, but may improve one’s stake in the organization. “Winning the bet, however, requires continued employment in the organization” (p. 5). Similar to these investments, a lack of employment alternatives also increases the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. Therefore, the fewer viable alternatives employees believe are available, the stronger their continuance commitment to their current employer will be.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) state that the two most common types of organizational commitment studies conducted are attitudinal and behavior/calculated. The attitudinal and behavioral view of commitment has been defined through contrasting perspectives. The attitudinal view conceptualizes commitment into three factors: a strong belief in the profession's/organization's goals; a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of profession/organization; a strong desire to remain with the organization/profession. In contrast, the behavioral view considers factors such as job specific skills, age, combined with attachment to specific rewards in the present organization/profession. Nevertheless, regardless of these competing views, there is an important relationship between these constructs and defining one's commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) use behavioral commitment interchangeably with calculated commitment in their analysis into the nature of commitment. They discuss the distinction
between attitudinal commitment and behavioral commitment by saying that "attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization" (p. 62). Behavior commitment, in contrast, "relates to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and how they deal with the problem" (p. 62). Meyer and Allen challenge the current organizational commitment research for treating various aspects of organizational commitment in isolation. They argue that the psychological state of organizational commitment should not only encompass values and goals as cited in previous organizational commitment research, but also reflect desires, needs and/or obligations. Unlike previous measurements in the field of organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model takes into consideration the reasonable expectation that "an employee can experience all three forms of commitment to varying degrees" and they are not mutually exclusive (p. 68). Figure 2.4 depicts the complexity of the three-component of the organizational commitment model and what variables correlate with each component.
Commitment, Retention, and Turnover

When analyzing the organizational commitment construct it is necessary to look at the relationships between the organizational commitment literature and the research on teacher retention and turnover. Ingersoll (2001) defines turnover as “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (p. 500). Her findings indicate that turnover and commitment correlate with similar antecedents. She notes that turnover and commitment have been found to collocate with compensation, administrative support, years of teaching, and degrees of stress. Meyer et al. (2002) in their meta-analysis note that each component of the three-component model of organizational commitment correlates negatively with turnover. Their study showed that affective commitment correlated most strongly ($p = -.17$), followed by normative ($p = -.16$) and continuance ($p = -.10$) commitment. This data means that the higher one’s organizational
commitment, the lower one’s turnover intention. Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989), in their study of food service managers, examining the relationship between performance and affective commitment. The results of their study indicated that affective commitment significantly correlated with job performance and continuance commitment negatively correlated with job performance. The findings note that the value of commitment to the organization is likely to depend on the nature of that commitment: commitment based on desire (affective commitment) or commitment based on need (continuance commitment). They used affective commitment in the survey since prior research correlated affective commitment with levels of performance. Research showed that those with high levels of affective commitment to the organization tend to perform better and are more willing to "exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization" (p. 152). Furthermore, those with high affective commitment had a negative relationship to turnover. This willingness to persevere and overcome challenges mirrors the efficacy research because a person's efficacy beliefs influence their course of action, efforts toward a given goal, and how long they will persevere through adverse situations.

In Billingsley’s (2004) research into teacher retention and attrition, she notes the importance of establishing a clear definition of these terms. She defines retention as "teachers who remained in the same teaching assignment and the same school as the previous year" (p. 51). However, she notes that a broader definition of retention is needed, one that encompasses a corresponding commitment to teaching. Embedded in the retention research is the term called transfer. This refers to special education teachers who transfer to regular education. Understanding the impact of special education teachers transferring to regular education positions is important since this change is a direct loss to the special education teaching force. Exit attrition or attrition refers to those who leave teaching altogether. This can be due to retirement, returning to school, staying
home with young children, or those who took non-teaching positions. In terms of connecting retention and attrition to organizational commitment, Billingsley notes “several special education studies suggest that teachers with higher levels of professional and organizational commitment are more likely to stay” (p. 50) and retain their current position. Mathieu and Zajak (1990) in their meta-analysis of organizational commitment literature state that as an antecedent, organizational commitment has been used to predict employees' absenteeism and turnover.

There have been thirty-five studies, between 1982 and 2005, in regular education investigating teacher attrition and retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Within the wealth of studies many results have come out pointing to factors impacting retention, turnover, and commitment. General education researchers like Ingersoll (1995, 2001), published extensively in the 1990s and early twenty-first century helping to further understand the multidimensional factors impacting regular education teacher retention. Other researchers examined these multidimensional factors combining special education teachers and general education teachers (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Weber, 1995; Boe, et al., 1997). Their findings conclude that attrition and retention can be influenced by a number of personal and professional factors and further research is needed (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Researchers have found important organizational conditions in staff retention (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll conducted a national study analyzing workplace characteristics and teacher retention. He compared factors of compensation, levels of administrative support, degree of conflict and strife within the organization, and the degree of employee input over policy development. Results from the study indicate that schools should improve the organizational conditions by increasing support from the school administration, reduce student discipline problems, and increase staff input into school decision-making and increased salaries.
Additional research by Ingersoll et al. (1997) examines the relationship between a set of characteristics traditionally related to one’s profession and one’s commitment to their teaching career. Their research uncovered that teacher classroom autonomy, staff involvement in policy development, teacher assistance and support, and teachers’ maximum end-of-career salaries were all associated with high degrees of commitment. In contrast, use of professional criteria for hiring candidates, financial support for continuing education, and participation in activities sponsored by professional teaching organizations were not linked to staff retention or commitment to teaching.

**Job Satisfaction with Special Education Teachers**

Job satisfaction for special educators continues to be a challenge, especially compared to regular education, as it is more difficult to retain special educators than regular educators (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997). Research indicates that this is due to the fact that teachers, in general, need to feel a sense of job satisfaction to remain in their field. Teachers are not satisfied because the tasks they are expected to perform are more difficult than anticipated. Excessive paperwork, high caseloads, and frequent meetings cause many special education teachers to feel stressed and less committed to their workplace (Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2002; France, 2008). Job dissatisfaction leads to high stress that accounts for many new teachers quitting within the first five years. Furthermore, schools with a high population of minorities, poor students, and students with behavioral problems experience higher levels of teacher attrition due to the stressful nature of the job and the daily challenges of working with challenging students. Even though a majority of special education teachers who left their job took positions that were still education related, dissatisfied special
education teachers made up the majority of leavers. These teachers left because they felt a lack of support, unprepared, and overwhelmed by student needs (Brownell, et al., 1997).

Research points to a number of factors contributing to teachers’ attrition and job dissatisfaction, as well as need to further investigate factors contributing to teachers staying motivated and persevering through challenging situations (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; France, 2008). France (2008) surveyed 115 teachers, examining the motivating factors fostering job satisfaction, such as responsibilities, advancement, and recognition. The results reveal that there is a positive correlation between job dissatisfaction and the intent to leave the profession. Other research has found that job satisfaction and commitment are associated with leadership support, role conflict, role ambiguity, and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Nevertheless, it is important that special education retention and attrition research uncover the factors that contribute to creating a positive and motivating work environment in order to reduce attrition behavior and to help maintain special educators’ involvement in and commitment to their work (Billingsley, 2004).

**Burnout and Special Education Teachers**

Burnout refers to the feelings of emotional overextension and exhaustion of emotional resources and is a critical construct impacting special educators (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). The burnout of special education teachers is having a devastating impact on maintaining high quality programs in schools. This is due to the challenges of maintaining and implementing a consistent philosophy within classrooms as newly hired teachers are trained and developed (Brownell, et al., 1997). The concept of burnout is just one of many significant factors contributing to teacher attrition. Special education teachers are burning out and quitting as a result of what Brownell et al. broadly describes as teacher characteristics, workplace conditions, and affective responses to
teaching. Two additional reasons, noted by Cooley and Yovanoff (1996), are job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. They examined the relationship between stress management/burnout prevention programs and peer collaboration programs and their impact on factors that cause special-education teachers to quit, transfer, or move into general education. Their study of 92 special educators and related-services personnel revealed that many teachers suffer from a lack of job satisfaction, threat of burnout, and a lack of commitment to the organization. In a similar study, Kaff (2004) examined reasons special-education teachers leave the field stating that administrative issues, student factors, paperwork, resources, and classroom management issues were key reasons.

Another important factor contributing to burnout of special education teachers is managing student behaviors. It is hard to fill and retain qualified teachers when dealing with students who have behavior challenges. Special education teachers who work with students with emotional or behavioral disabilities are not only leaving their positions, but they are leaving the profession at an alarming rate (Mitchell & Arnold, 2004). Mitchell and Arnold note that many special education teachers struggle to persevere through the challenges associated with student behaviors. Aside from the difficulty of managing challenging behaviors, they discovered that these teachers also felt a lack of commitment to their job and an inability to cope with the stress. Additional burnout research by Sloan Nichols and Sosnowsky (2002) examined special education teachers in self-contained cross-categorical classrooms and noted that teacher dissatisfaction also came from a lack of professional development opportunities and a lack of preparation at the university programs. Lack of preparation, support, and training contributed to emotional exhaustion and greater incidents of attrition.
Within this construct of teacher burnout, it is the novice teachers who are most impacted. New special education teachers were found to be especially susceptible to attrition as 33% of new teachers leave within the first years (France, 2008) and 50% of all educators leave within five years (Ingersoll, 2001). The highest rates of attrition among newer special education teachers were those who struggle with managing student behavior (Mitchell & Arnold, 2004). In contrast, special education teachers are more likely to stay in teaching if they feel a high level of administrative support and feel validated in their role. Retention strategies used to support these novice teachers include alternate licensure or routes to teaching, high-quality teacher preparation programs, financial incentives, supportive administrators, and strong mentoring programs (Brownell, et al., 1997).

Unfortunately, it is a common expectation in education for beginning teachers, in both regular and special education, to perform at the same level as veteran teachers as soon as they enter the profession. For example, they are expected to manage student behaviors, collaborate with peers, engage effectively with parents, and complete paperwork. These challenges are greater for new teachers because they have not yet developed basic classroom routines or conceptualized basic pedagogy within teaching and learning (Brownell, et al., 2002). This tends to lead to undesirable working conditions that impact commitment to teaching, satisfaction with the job, and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Novice special education teachers face the same challenges of regular teachers, but with the added responsibilities of IEP development and implementation, managing demanding parents and students with complex service needs, tracking student progress on IEP goals and objectives, and added caseload and paperwork responsibilities. They typically are expected to respond to these demands with fewer curricular and technology resources (Brownell, et al., 2002).
Organizational Commitment and Retention in Special Education

Within the field of special education teacher retention and attrition, there are twenty-three studies between 1992 and 2004 that analyze variables associated with retaining special educators in public school classrooms (Billingsley, 2004). Of these studies, a few key researchers stand out as leaders in this discipline. Billingsley (2004), Billingsley and Cross (1992), Cross and Billingsley (1994), and Singh and Billingsley (1996) examined retention and attrition variables like leadership, support, role conflict, role ambiguity, and stress across both regular and special education. Their research has helped increase knowledge on how these variables are predictors of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. From the extensive research over the past 20 years "several special education studies suggest that teachers with higher levels of professional and organizational commitment are more likely to stay” and remain committed to their organization (Billingsley, 2004, p. 50). Billingsley’s research has focused on retention efforts to determine the extent to which work-related variables, teaching assignments, and personal characteristics explain intent to stay in teaching. Her work has helped develop a better understanding of the antecedents to organizational commitment and what types of teachers remain in the classroom.

Other prominent researchers in the field conducted qualitative and/or quantitative studies examining variables impacting staff desire to stay, leave, or transfer from special education within public schools (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Lenk, 1995; Brownell, et al., 1997; Miller, et al., 1999; Morvant, et al., 1995). Their survey research has brought to light workplace variables that are significant predictors of teachers’ decisions to leave or transfer from special education. Miller, Brownell, and Smith (1999), in particular, examine affective responses to the workplace such as job satisfaction, teacher commitment, and stress. Their study indicates that
affective variables like, job satisfaction, and commitment, are not the most significant variables differentiating which special education teachers will stay, leave, or transfer. They did not find affective variables to be the best predictors of one's intention, but did find that environmental factors like certification, perceived stress, school climate, and age are the better predictors of who would stay in the classroom, leave, or transfer. These results challenge the findings of other researchers (Boe, et al., 1997) in that environmental variables are a more powerful predictor of employment decisions than affective or demographic variables (except certification) (Miller, et al., 1999). This study helps researchers to further understand the intentionality of career decision making of special education teachers, and supports the need for a deeper analysis into the affective factors leading to attrition.

Organizational Commitment of Special Education Teacher in Private, District or Collaborative School Type

The type of school program may have an effect on the challenges faced by special education teachers and subsequently, on teacher retention and commitment (McArthur, 2008). Studies indicate the need to examine commitment concerns not only in public school, but also in other schools that employ special education teachers (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006; Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). From a review of the literature, research shows that special education teachers who work with behavioral students experience a great reaction to commitment to teaching. Since more students with behavioral needs are sent to special education private schools or collaborative schools, there is a need to examine commitment not only in public schools, but also in private and collaborative schools that employ special education teachers. Furthermore, Guarino, Santibañez and Daley (2006) in their study into organizational commitment and professionalism, note that the commitment of private school teachers differs
from the commitment of those who teach in public school. This study helps to support the need to further examine this problem and see how organizational commitment compares across private, public and collaborative school types. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley’s study adds to the gap in the literature and brings attention to the commitment problem in private schools. However, this study does not isolate special education teachers. This raises concerns that no study has yet to examine the relationship between organizational commitment with special education teachers across three separate school types.

Additional studies found that special education teachers who teach in self-contained classrooms had higher attrition and greater feelings of stress than those who taught in more inclusive classrooms. These teachers are more likely to be overwhelmed and unable to cope with the daily challenges, therefore, reducing their commitment to their job (Michell & Arnold, 2004). Aside from these studies there are no studies that compare the commitment of special education teachers across various school settings (Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). Although organizational factors such as administrative support, professional development and school climate were referenced as correlating with teacher burnout and commitment, there are no studies that examine the impact school setting (private school, collaborative school, district school) has on the teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. It has been reported that 71% of special education teachers who quit had taught students with emotional and behavioral disorders (McArthur, 2008). McArthur conducted a study examining teacher retention in special education private schools. She notes that students with emotional and behavioral disorders are more likely placed in more restrictive settings. A restrictive setting can be a self-contained public school classroom, a collaborative school classroom, or a private school.

Additional demographic information included within this study supports the literature and
adds additional factors that may influence the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. An additional question asks participants to include their gender, age, subject, years of teaching, and school type.

**Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment in Special Education**

Although there are many studies examining teacher efficacy in education, research on teacher efficacy is scant within the context of special education. The limited numbers of studies in this area of interest are noteworthy and support the current study of interest (Coladarci & Breton, 1997). Some teacher efficacy researchers examine the self-efficacy construct within the areas of instruction and specific role within the school (Allinder, 1994; McDaniel & McCarthy, 1989; Prather-Jones, 2011) and others examined the relationship of the efficacy construct and organizational commitment construct with special education teachers (Coladarci, 1992; Morvant, et al., 1995; Parkay, et al., 1988). Research by Ross and Gray (2006), in their work on transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values, studied the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy. In this study they note that "teacher efficacy at the individual level predicts broadly defined measures of teacher commitment" (p. 11). Even though his work was not in organizational commitment, his findings make an important connection in the efficacy-commitment research in education. Although collective teacher efficacy was not measured in this current study, it does correlate with personal teacher efficacy and is a powerful mediator of school-community partnership commitment. Ross & Gray note that further research should be done in order to examine the collective special education teacher efficacy as it relates to organizational commitment.

Prather-Jones (2011) found a correlation between the self-efficacy construct and organizational commitment construct in her qualitative research of the role of personality factors
in the careers of special education teachers of students with emotional/behavioral disabilities. Likewise, Morvant et al. (1995), performed a mixed methods study in order to examine attrition and retention factors within a group of inner-city special education teachers and incorporated self-efficacy beliefs and organizational commitment within the results and conclusion sections. There is no study that examines the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment within the field of special education. Coladarci’s (1992) study comes closest in his investigation into whether teacher efficacy predicts commitment to teaching. That is, does a teacher's sense of efficacy relate to whether that teacher expresses reservations about having chosen the teaching profession? Even though this study was not conducted with special education teachers, Coladarci and Breton (1997) note that teacher efficacy has enjoyed a great deal of empirical scrutiny in the past 15 years, yet few researchers have explored the importance of this construct within the field of special education.

Work by Smith, Brownell, and Smith (2009) uncover significant predictors of teachers’ decisions to leave special education. In their conclusion of the affective responses to the workplace such as job satisfaction, teacher commitment, and stress, they point to the need for a deeper analysis into the affective factors leading to attrition. As noted earlier, Coladarci’s (1992) study notes that personal and general efficacy were the two strongest predictors of commitment to teaching. However, his study does not isolate special education teachers from the study.

In a study including regular education and special education teachers, Hoy and Spero (2005) state the importance of learning more about the variables that effect efficacy and seem to believe there is an important connection between efficacy beliefs of teachers and their commitment to teaching. In their research with first-year teachers, Hoy and Spero note that the first year of a teacher's career is a critical time for developing self-efficacy beliefs. Although there are limited
studies that look at self-efficacy among new teachers, Hoy and Spero note that it seems that efficacy beliefs of first-year teachers are related to commitment to teaching. This study adds significant contribution to the research into teacher efficacy and commitment, but more is needed in terms of better understanding the factors impacting one’s commitment to the organization. In order to support the needs of special education teachers, this study would add further value if the special education teachers were compared separately.

Summary

The findings in the literature review note the need for continued research of the problem of retaining special education teachers. Even though research shows a strong correlation between teacher efficacy and commitment within education (Hoy & Spero, 2005), more research should be focused on special education teacher because there is a gap in this area of study. While the efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) and the literature on teacher efficacy and commitment have strongly suggested a positive relationship between teachers’ feelings of efficacy and their feeling of commitment (Coladarci, 1992; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Prather-Jones, 2011; Ross & Gray, 2006), it is still not clear if this relationship exist among special education teachers. There are two studies that examine teacher efficacy and commitment as it relates to all teachers, and both researchers note a need for additional research (Coladarci, 1992; Ross & Gray, 2006). Yet, no research study examines the teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers. The relationship between efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers remains unclear because the available educational research indicates that special education teachers have drastically different roles and responsibilities than regular education teachers (Brownell, et al., 2002), which contributes to drastically different feelings of job satisfaction and commitment. Job satisfaction, a correlate to self-efficacy, continues to be a
challenge for special education teachers and results in a greater difficulty in retaining special educators than regular educators (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997). Furthermore, these differences highlight a possible contrast from the research. For example, special education teachers, who exhibit feelings of teacher efficacy, may not feel committed to their organization.
Chapter III: Methodology

The research strategy for this study is a quantitative correlational study. This descriptive cross-sectional correlational study examines the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers. This study probes this problem of practice, through a one-time survey of special education teachers in Massachusetts, in order to better understand and describe the relationship of one’s self efficacy in relation to one’s organizational commitment to the field of special education.

In developing a research strategy for this study a tailored design model was used following work from Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2009). This design has three fundamental considerations that guide the researcher; focus on reducing the four sources of survey error – coverage, sampling, nonresponse, and measurement; develop a comprehensive set of survey procedures that encourage greater response; develop surveys that consider population, variations, and content. The three considerations addressed throughout this chapter in an effort to clearly outline the procedures to reduce survey error, encourage a greater response from the sample, and discuss the pre-existing survey’s relevance to the study and how it considers population, variation, and content. Survey error and response rate are addressed in the site and participant section and the survey’s development are discussed in the data collection section.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers. Teacher efficacy is one of the variables and is divided into personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. The other variable is organizational commitment, which consists of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The research question under investigation through this
study is: *What is the relationship between the measure of a special education teacher’s sense of
efficacy (personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy) and the measure of a special
education teacher’s organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance
commitment, normative commitment)*

**Null Hypothesis.**

1. No significant correlation exists between teacher efficacy and teacher commitment to the
organization.

2. No significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and teacher’s
organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative
commitment)

   2.1. No significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and teacher’s
       affective commitment.

   2.2. No significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and teacher’s
       continuance commitment.

   2.3. No significant relationship exists between general teaching efficacy and teacher’s
       normative commitment.

3. No significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and organizational
commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment)
of special education teachers

   3.1. No significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and affective
       commitment of special education teachers

   3.2. No significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and continuance
       commitment of special education teachers
3.3. No significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and normative commitment of special education teachers

4. There is no significant difference of special education teachers from different school types and their measures of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.

Methodology

Site and participants. The sample frame for this study are special education teachers currently teaching in Massachusetts. A 2010 report examining state data from 2008-09 notes that there are over eight thousand special education teachers actively registered with the department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Massachusetts.

There is no data found showing the percentage based on gender, years of teaching, or school type. The convenient sample for this study were recruited through the collaborative effort of the Massachusetts Teacher Union (MTA), the Massachusetts chapter of the American Federation of Teacher (AFT-MA), and the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaborative (MOEC). These unions were obtained for this study because they contain potential participants that can be reached via email, the members live and work in Massachusetts, they have access to a majority of Massachusetts’s special education teachers, and they can be surveyed with limited financial commitment. Furthermore, after discovering that the Massachusetts Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE) does not have a database or email lists for special education teachers in the state, working with MTA, AFT, and MOEC directly was a convenient and necessary alternative. In order to reach each potential participant, the Presidents of each organization mentioned above agreed to help the research process and disseminate an email to their respective special education teachers.
There are approximately 4,000 special education teachers within the MTA, 2,000 special education teachers within the Boston Teachers Union and United Teachers of Lowell, and there are about 100 special education teachers in MOEC. These numbers have given this study a sample frame of approximately 6,100 potential participants. Unfortunately, no data was available for a breakdown of gender, school type, or years of experience for special education teachers within the organization. With 6,100 special education teachers in these groups representing 76% of the sample frame, it is a large enough sample frame to provide a significant sample size for this study.

The most effective way to control for sampling error is to increase the sample size. A larger sample size did decrease the standard error, which represents how accurate the completed sample is to overall population. MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996) note the importance of ensuring that the sample size is an appropriate fit of the population because a failure to do so can result in a Type II error which is when the data is not an accurate representation of the true population.

Throughout the survey process, survey error was controlled for by paying attention to reducing nonresponse rate, coverage error, sampling error, and measurement error. Reducing nonresponse rate was important since those that do not respond may have differing opinions from the respondents of the survey questions. Another reason is that more and more people seem uninterested to participate in surveys (Fraenkel, et al., 2012). In order to improve the likelihood of reducing nonresponse rate, three follow-up emails were sent 7 days, 14 days, and 21 days after the original email was sent. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) note that sending follow-up messages to potential web-survey participants can have a thirty-seven-percentage point increase over only sending a survey and no follow-up communication.
Coverage error was controlled through the partnership with multiple districts that represent a diverse profile, as well as partnering with organizations like with MTA, AFT, and MOEC that have members throughout the state. Since the organizations are scattered throughout Massachusetts and represent diverse districts, they represent a similar coverage profile of the larger population in Massachusetts. If the potential sample frame produced a list that was not completely adequate for the purpose of the survey, then a mixed-mode survey would have been utilized (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

In this study measurement error was controlled for by using an existing survey and by piloting this survey with ten special education teachers. Feedback was elicited to make sure the online survey questions were accurately worded and the measurement questions were clearly written and matched the original surveys. Measurement error occurs when a respondent’s answer is inaccurate or not precise. Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2009) note that one way to control for measurement error is to make sure the researcher designs good questions and not poor questions.

Sampling error can “result from surveying only some rather than all members of the population and exists as a part of all sampling surveys” (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009, p. 17). A random sample was not calculated due to the concern of not obtaining enough responses to produce statistically valid analyses. Also, given that this study relied heavily on the partnership of union leaders to willingly forward my ‘request to participate’ emails, it was decided that a random sampling should not be calculated. Furthermore, through the collaborative support of union organizations in Massachusetts with a diverse membership group of over 6,100 members from across the state, it was decided that a random sample was not necessary.

**Data collection.** Data collection was done through an Internet data collection company. Using [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) data was submitted and organized electronically. Once each
participant entered his or her answers, the information was downloaded into an SPSS readable format. The potential advantages of an Internet survey are to keep the unit costs of data collection low, the return rate high, and to provide time for thoughtful answers. The potential disadvantages of Internet survey are that accurate email addresses are needed, emails can be treated as spam, samples are limited to those who have access to the Internet, and recruiting cooperation can be challenging (Field, 2005).

By following Dillon, Smyth, and Christian’s (2009) tailored design method, this survey process was developed with a focus on building trust, increasing benefits of participants, and decreasing cost of participants. In order to establish trust, a partnership was established with each organization leader, and each regional leader within MTA, AFT, and MOEC. The Presidents disseminated the researcher’s email to the district’s special education teachers. This helped build trust between the researcher and the participants and established credibility to the study and the request. Another method used to help establish trust was to design the survey in a manner that appeared important. Furthermore, the confidentiality of each participant was clearly conveyed in the email. To increase the benefit of participation, the introductory letter clearly stated the purpose of the survey, asked for help, and promoted the positive effects of their participation. In an effort to decrease the burden of participation, the questionnaire was short and required only 10 minutes to complete. The survey link (www.surveymonkey.com) was easy to use and quick to access.

The teacher efficacy scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) and the TCM Employee Commitment Survey (Meyer & Allen, 2004) were used for this study. The scale developed by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) was used in prior studies (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey & Passaro, 1994) and measures two variables of teacher efficacy; personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general
teaching efficacy (GTE). The Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) study used the teacher efficacy scale consisting of five personal teaching efficacy questions and five general teaching efficacy questions. The survey is a modified version of the full scale that consists of 22 questions. They revised the scale by only using questions that had higher factor loading, as evidenced in earlier research (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Each question is a six-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The alpha coefficient of reliability was .77 for personal teaching efficacy and .72 for general teaching efficacy (Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993). Validity of the scale was determined in earlier research by Gibson and Dembo (1984) where they conducted “multitrait-multimethod analysis that supported both convergent and discriminant validity of the scale” (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, p. 361).

When creating the survey for this study, each question was entered into an account on www.surveymonkey.com following the exact format used by Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy (1998). This format was used because it included Hoy and Woolfolk’s (1993) survey questions with additional detail into the format of the questions and a description of the Likert scale. Figure 3.0 shows two questions as it appeared when disseminated to participants.
A survey that stood out in the organizational commitment literature was developed by Meyer and Allen (2004) called the TCM Employee Commitment Survey. Even though there are other organizational commitment surveys, Meyer and Allen’s model was the only survey to be based on a theoretical model containing the antecedents and consequences of a three-component model of commitment (Clugston, 2000). This survey is modeled after Meyers and Allen’s (1991) original survey and has received extensive use in research on organizational commitment (Aydin, et al., 2011; Clugston, 2000; Hodge & Ozag, 2007).

The TCM Employee Commitment Survey measures three variables of employee commitment to an organization. The affective commitment measures one’s desire. Continuance commitment measures one’s cost. Normative commitment measures one’s obligation. Within the survey are three individual scales comprised of the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), the Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) and the Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS), which can be scored individually, or collectively to identify the “commitment profile” of employees within an organization (Meyer & Allen, 2004). The TCM Employee Commitment Survey (revised version) is made of 18 questions based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The average reliability coefficient of the TCM Employee Commitment Survey is reported in Meyer and Allen (2004) study to be 0.85 for affective commitment, 0.79 for continuance commitment, and 0.73 for normative commitment. Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) later report that both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses validate the three-factor model and that the factors are stable over time. The reliability coefficients for this survey in their study were 0.85 for affective commitment, 0.88 for continuance commitment, and 0.80
for normative commitment. Later meta-analysis research by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) concluded that the construct validity findings of the three-component model (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment,) generally supported the model and the continued use of the commitment measures. The reliability (coefficient alpha) of the Teacher Efficacy Scale in this sample was .643 which is modest but acceptable. The reliability (coefficient alpha) of the Organizational Commitment Scale in the sample was .782 which is quite good.

When typing up the survey it is recommended by Meyer and Allen (2004) that statements from the three commitment scales be integrated when creating the final questionnaire. This allows respondents to think carefully rather than adapt a pattern of agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. Therefore, the items were copied and pasted into the appropriate fields on www.surveymonkey.com and the computer randomized each item. Utilizing this step helped to divide the items in the survey with minimal bias on the part of the researcher. Figure 3.1 shows two questions as they appeared when disseminated to participants.

![Image of survey questions](image)

_Figure 3.1. Questions on the Organizational Commitment Survey as they appear on the website_
Fowler (2009) notes the importance of conducting a field test of the instrument and procedures in order to confirm that the survey works under normal conditions. Prior to disseminating the survey, five special education teachers and five regular education teachers from a public high school in a southwest school district in Massachusetts were elicited in order to provide feedback on the survey. The ten participants in the pilot study were not included in the formal study. The goal of this self-administered survey was for participants to feel that the survey is self-explanatory, easy to use, and can be completed in less than 10 minutes. The pilot participants were asked to take the survey and provide critical feedback on the process. This feedback was intended to increase the effectiveness of the survey instrument (Fowler, 2009). Appendix A shows the preliminary version of the survey, called the efficacy and organizational commitment teacher survey.

**Data Screening and Cleaning**

In order to provide valid inferences, data was tested for multivariate normality, linearity of relationships between each set of variables, and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Before any statistical analysis was conducted the data was cleaned and assumptions for multivariate analysis were tested. Cleaning the data was done through initial screening looking at frequencies and histograms in order to examine overall distributions (Fowler, 2009). Data that was not 100% completed was removed from the study. The data was then examined using descriptive statistics looking at the distribution of data within the teacher efficacy variables and within the commitment variables. Results from this data did help target specific outliers, incomplete surveys, and sample size.

**Data Analysis**
The research questions under investigation pertain to the relationship between the measure of a teacher’s sense of efficacy (personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy) and the measure of a teacher’s organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) of special education teacher. From this question there are four hypotheses that dictated the analysis of the data:

1. A significant correlation does not exist between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers.

2. A significant correlation does not exist between general teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) or special education teachers.

3. A significant correlation does not exist between personal teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) special education teachers.

4. Do special education teachers from different school types differ significantly in their measures of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment?

In order to provide valid inferences, data was tested for multivariate normality, linearity of relationships between each set of variables, and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Before any statistical analysis was conducted the data was cleaned and assumptions for multivariate analysis were tested. Cleaning the data was done through initial screening looking at frequencies and histograms in order to examine overall distributions (Fowler, 2009). Data that was not 100% completed was removed from the study. The data was then examined using descriptive statistics looking at the distribution of data within the teacher efficacy variables and
within the commitment variables. Results from this data did help target specific outliers, incomplete surveys, and sample size.

In order to provide valid inferences, all data was tested for multivariate normality, linearity of relationships between each set of variables, and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The first assumption check conducted was the test of normality. This test looked to ensure that scores on each variable were normally distributed. This was done by inspecting the histograms of scores on each variable. The second check was the test of linearity, which examines the relationship between two variables to make sure they are linear, not curved. The linear relationship was examined by looking at the scatterplot of scores. The third assumption check was the test of homoscedasticity. This test looks at the variability in scores between the variables in the study. This test examined the variable of teaching efficacy and for the variable of organization commitment to make sure they are similar. If they are similar, the scatterplot graph will depict a fairly even cigar shape along their length. Scatterplot data also indicates if there is normality and linearity within the data. If there is a skewed distribution in the data, then Fields (2005) notes the importance of transforming the data if the researcher intends to compare differences between variables. He further notes that transformation is the best option for managing non-normal distribution since this function transforms all the scores rather than just one.

After the assumptions were tested and results analyzed to make sure the data supported the assumptions, data analyses were conducted within each research question. The first research hypothesis in this study aimed to identify if a relationship exists between special education teachers’ self-efficacy and organizational commitment. A Pearson r correlation analysis was conducted to check the strength of the correlation between scores on the self-efficacy scale and
the organization commitment scale. The primary goal of conducting a Pearson r correlation analysis is to evaluate the strength between two variables by comparing a standardized coefficient (Field, 2005). A positive value indicates that increases in one variable correspond to increases in the other variable. A negative value indicates that increases in one variable are associated with decreases in the other variable. Testing for linearity is important when using a Pearson r correlation since the assumption is that the relationship between variables is linear.

Even though the rating scales for the teacher efficacy measure and organizational commitment measure are different (7 point Likert scale for self-efficacy and 6-point Likert scale for organizational commitment), both are scored based on the average of the original data set.

The second and third hypotheses in this study examine the complex relationship between multiple variables. Since both hypotheses require a similar data analysis this paragraph addresses them both. For the second hypothesis, three correlational tests were conducted in order to examine the correlation between: (1) general teaching efficacy and affective commitment, (2) general teaching efficacy and continuance commitment, and (3) general teaching efficacy and normative commitment. For the third hypothesis, three correlational tests were conducted in order to examine the correlation between: (1) personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment, (2) personal teaching efficacy and commitment, and (3) personal teaching efficacy and normative commitment. A Pearson r correlation was used to evaluate the correlation for the three relationships. By conducting a Pearson r correlation analysis an average of the scores was generated, which transformed the data into continuous data.

The fourth question in the study involves examining the relationship of one independent variable and two dependent variables. Each school type in question was loaded on both teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. This required running a multivariate analysis of
variance (MANOVA). MANOVA is used in research in order to analyze one independent variable - school type, and two dependent variables – teacher efficacy (scale variable) and organizational commitment (scale variable). There are four assumptions that need to be tested before conducting the MANOVA. Two of the assumptions were already addressed above: multivariate normality and homogeneity. Two additional assumption tests examined the independence of the observations and random sampling. “Data should be randomly sampled from the population of interest and measured at an interval level” (Field, 2005, p. 592).

With regard to calculating statistical significance with MANOVA, the F-test was used to calculate the P-value of the rank-order relationships between variables. The F-test was used when hypothesis involved multiple regression coefficients. Rather than testing each variable individually, a F-test is a global test that encompasses all variables and tests the overall hypothesis. This helps to avoid Type I error that may occur if the variables are tested individually. MANOVA is typically used in research when there is an analysis of one independent variable - school type, and two dependent variables – teacher efficacy (scale variable) and organizational commitment (scale variable). In interpreting the results, if you reject the null hypothesis, meaning, "at least one of the predictors is linearly associated to the response; the next step is to conduct individual t-tests on the variables”. The larger the F-statistics then the more useful the model (Carriquiry, 2004, p. 6).

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The real risk and potential costs of participating in a survey research study are minimal. However, there are certain procedures that need to be followed in order to minimize whatever risks there are (Fowler, 2009). Following Fowler’s recommendations, this correlational study adheres to ethical principles of sound survey research. One of these ethical principles is to
clearly inform the participant about the study and be as transparent as possible. Participants in this study were assured that their cooperation was voluntarily. They received email letters that explained what their participation would involve. The letter also stated who the sponsors were, the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the benefits of the study. Since this study can add value to the special education community within each district, the letter to participants addressed this benefit as an added value of their participation. Protecting the respondents is another ethical principal that this study addressed explicitly in the email letter participants received. Since the sample population was generated in partnership with the district Director of Special Education, the research emails were disseminated directly through the Director and no contact information was requested as part of the survey study so participants remained anonymous throughout the study. Appendix B, C, and D are letters that were disseminated to participants.

**Validity, Reliability and Generalizability**

The validity of this study was controlled for by using surveys that were rigorously tested within the educational research. Since validity may be one of the most important aspects of the design of any instrument (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009), it was important to investigate the survey instruments available and choose instruments that accurately measure what they are supposed to measure. The teacher efficacy scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) and the TCM Employee Commitment Survey (Meyer & Allen, 2004) were used for this study. These surveys were chosen because of their extensive construct validity within the educational literature. Both surveys satisfy construct validity since their constructs and sub-constructs are clearly defined and measure what they intend to measure. Furthermore, the validity of scales used by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) was established in earlier research by Gibson and Dembo (1984) where they
conducted “multitrait-multimethod analysis that supported both convergent and discriminant validity of the scale” (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, p. 361).

The internal consistency reliability was established in prior research using an alpha coefficient of reliability. The Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) study was .77 for personal teaching efficacy and .72 for general teaching efficacy. For the Meyer and Allen (2004) commitment survey, the alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.85 for affective commitment, 0.79 for continuance commitment, and 0.73 for normative commitment. In this study, the alpha coefficient tests were established in order to ensure that, with a score of over .7, the measurements were reliable for internal consistency. As noted before, the reliability (coefficient alpha) of the Teacher Efficacy Scale in this sample was .643, which is modest but acceptable. The reliability (coefficient alpha) of the Organizational Commitment Scale in the sample was .782, which is quite good. Since this survey was only distributed once there is no concern in causing repeated measurement reliability (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009).

In regard to generalizability, which is the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized from the specific sample that was studied to a larger group (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009), there are some limiting factors. Given that this study only contains 3% of the total sample, and all the participants are from Massachusetts, the results of this study may be limited in terms of generalizing these findings to a larger group. Because the sample represents only 3% of the target population, there is a need to clearly acknowledge the low population validity (i.e., generalizability) of this study.

**Summary**

The goal of this study was to investigate the impact one’s teacher efficacy has on one’s organizational commitment. This investigation targeted reasons special education teachers are
not remaining committed to their organization in order to help practitioners create effective interventions. Since too many special education teachers are leaving the classroom (Billingsley, 2004; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999) there is a need for deeper analysis into the problem. Research has shown that commitment contributes to a reduction in turnover (Meyer & Allen, 2004). By conducting a quantitative correlational research study using the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) and the TCM Employee Commitment Survey (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), this study is able to perform a detailed analysis among important constructs within the field of special education. Because special education teachers continue to be most at risk of leaving, a more in-depth analysis would provide practitioners with important cognitive factors contributing to job satisfaction and commitment (Billingsley, 2004).

The design of this study allows for an effective analysis of the research question. Controlling for common assumptions like normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity helps to ensure a reliable study where the results are credible and lead to effective solutions in special education teacher retention. Furthermore, by adequately cleaning the data, using valid and reliable survey instruments, and running appropriate data analysis, this researcher can effectively examine the complex interaction between the two independent variables; general and personal teaching efficacy, and the three dependent variables; affective, continuance, and normative commitment.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers in Massachusetts. With the goal of better understanding the relationship between two important constructs impacting teacher retention, an email survey was distributed to special education teachers across Massachusetts, using a convenient sampling strategy. The data was then collected and analyzed. Below is a write-up on the findings as they relate to the research questions.

Survey Administration

Prior to distributing the survey, a pilot study was conducted to provide feedback on the duration of the questionnaire and the ease of use. The survey was then distributed, via email, to special education teachers in Massachusetts through the Union leader of MTA, AFT-MA, and MOEC. Before downloading the data from www.surveymonkey.com, the information was screened. The data was filtered to remove surveys that were incomplete and surveys that were not completed by special education teachers. To screen out non special education teachers, a filter was created that isolated those participants that answered ‘special education teacher’ to the question, ‘what is your role in education?’ Once the data was downloaded from www.surveymonkey.com directly into SPSS, the data was then inspected for errors and omissions, necessary questions transformed, assumptions tested, and data analysis. From the survey results, 261 participants completed the survey and 168 (64%) of the participants were special education teachers. This represents 3% of the sample size in this study.

Respondents Demographic Profile

Sample characteristics. The target population for this study was the 6,100 special education teachers in Massachusetts that are potential members of MTA, AFT-MA, and MOEC.
By collaborating with leaders within these Massachusetts’s organization, this survey was distributed to special education teachers across the state who represent 76% of the total number of special education teachers in Massachusetts. The sample characteristics that follow cannot be compared to the target population because data was not available. There was also no data available indicating a representative distribution of special education teachers based on gender, years of experience, school type, or age.

The data collected represents 3% of the sample size. The survey participants were comprised of 145 (86.3%) females and 23 (13.7%) males. The age distribution included 24 (14.3%) participants aged 21-29, 45 (26.8%) aged 30-39, 42 (25.0%) aged 40-49, 40 (23.8%) aged 50-59, and 17 (10.1%) aged 60 or older. All 168 participants were special education teachers. In terms of experience teaching students with special needs, 5 (3.0%) had taught this population for less than one year, 28 (16.7%) for 1-5 years, 41 (24.4%) for 5-10 years, and 93 (55.4%) for more than 10 years. One hundred and sixty-two participants (96.4%) indicated that they taught in a District School, four (2.4%) in a Collaborative School, and two (1.2%) in another arrangement. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the demographic data.

Table 1

Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Sample %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 21-29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-39</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 40-49</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 50-59</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60-older</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics on the scale scores indicate a range of averages across all variables. Teacher Efficacy Total, which is comprised of the General Teacher Efficacy Subscale and the Personal Teaching Efficacy Subscale, has a mean of 29.65 and standard deviation of 6.14. The Organizational Commitment Total, which is comprised of the Normative Commitment Subscale, Continuance Commitment Subscale, and the Affective Commitment Subscale, has a mean of 81.40 and a standard deviation of 14.81. The mean and standard deviations for the remaining subscales are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (n = 168)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Total</td>
<td>29.65</td>
<td>(6.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Teaching Efficacy Subscale</td>
<td>19.22</td>
<td>(5.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Teaching Efficacy Subscale</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>(3.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational Commitment Total 81.40 (14.81)
Affective Commitment Subscale 32.79 (7.45)
Continuance Commitment Subscale 19.76 (5.77)
Normative Commitment Subscale 28.86 (7.87)

**Assumptions of Analysis**

The main analyses of the present study utilizes Pearson Product Moment Correlations to examine the strength and direction of linear relationships between measures of efficacy and commitment (please recall that there were not enough cases in diverse school types to carry out the proposed MANOVAs examining school type). It is appropriate to utilize the Pearson Product Moment Correlation if the following assumptions about the data are met. The data should be approximately normally distributed, relationships between the variables should be linear, and the variances of the dependent variable should be approximately equal across the values of the independent variable (i.e., homoscedasticity).

**Assumption of approximate normality.** In order to establish whether the measures were approximately normally distributed, skewness and kurtosis values were computed and frequency histograms were examined. Statistics for skewness and kurtosis are presented in Table 2, and the distributions of scores on each measure are shown graphically in Figures 1 to 7. Kendall and Stuart (1958) state that when the skewness statistic is greater than 2 in absolute size, then the size of the correlations between variables will be underestimated. The skewness statistic did not exceed 2 in absolute magnitude for any of the variables. The results of these analyses indicated that the distributions of scores were approximately normal. Therefore, it is not necessary to transform the data.
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (n = 168)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Skewness Statistic</th>
<th>Kurtosis Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Efficacy Total</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Teacher Efficacy Subscale</td>
<td>-.199</td>
<td>-.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Teacher Efficacy Subscale</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment Total</td>
<td>-.754</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment Subscale</td>
<td>-.557</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance Commitment Subscale</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Commitment Subscale</td>
<td>-.520</td>
<td>-.158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Standard error of skew = .187

b Standard error of kurtosis = .373

Assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity. In order to determine whether the relationships between measures of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment followed a linear pattern, and whether variances were equal across levels of each variable, scatter plots were examined (see Appendix G figure 8 to 14). These scatterplots were also employed to assess the assumption of homoscedasticity. None of the scatter plots revealed a curvilinear relationship between variables, nor did the scatterplots show marked increases or decreases in the variability of scores at high or low levels of efficacy and commitment. These findings suggest that
assumptions about linearity and homoscedasticity were met. Cumulatively, the results of these analyses indicate that the assumptions for using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation have been met.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The first hypothesis in this study states that no significant correlation exists between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers. A Pearson r correlation analysis was conducted to exam this relationship. The results of this analysis reveal that there is no statistical significance ($r = .047, p = .549$) between a special education teacher’s organizational commitment and their teacher efficacy. Table 3 shows the analysis of this hypothesis.

Table 3

*Pearson r Correlational Analysis - Teacher Efficacy and Organizational Commitment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Efficacy Total Scale</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hypothesis states that no significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) of special education teachers. A Pearson r correlational analysis was performed within each subsection. Hypothesis 2.1 states that no significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and affective commitment of special education teachers.
Within this analysis, there is no significant correlation between a special education teacher’s general teaching efficacy and their affective commitment to the organization \((r = .109, p = .16)\). Hypothesis 2.2 states that no significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and continuance commitment of special education teachers. Within this analysis, there is no significant correlation between a special education teacher’s general teaching efficacy and their continuance commitment to the organization \((r = .121, p = .12)\). Hypothesis 2.3 states that no significant correlation exists between general teaching efficacy and normative commitment of special education teachers. Within this analysis, there is no significant correlation between a special education teacher’s general teaching efficacy and their normative commitment to the organization \((r = .133, p = .087)\). Table four shows the results of the analysis.

Table 4

*Pearson r Correlational Analysis - General Teaching Efficacy and Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, and Continuance Commitment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Teaching Efficacy Subscale</th>
<th>Affective Commitment Subscale</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment Subscale</th>
<th>Normative Commitment Subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third hypothesis in this study states that no significant correlation exists between personal teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment) of special education teachers. There were three subsections to this hypothesis that depict mixed results. Hypothesis 3.1 states that no significant correlation exists between a special education teacher’s personal teaching efficacy and their...
affective commitment. The results of the Pearson r correlation indicate that there is no significant correlation between personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment \( (r = -0.046, p = 0.557) \).

Hypothesis 3.2 states that no significant correlation exists between a special education teacher’s personal teaching efficacy and their continuance commitment. The results of the analysis indicate that higher levels of personal teaching efficacy relate significantly with higher levels of continuance commitment \( (r = 0.158, p = 0.041) \). Hypothesis 3.3 states that no significant correlation exists between a special education teacher’s personal teaching efficacy and their normative commitment. The results of the analysis indicate that higher levels of personal teaching efficacy related significantly with lower levels of normative commitment \( (r = -0.169, p = 0.028) \). Table 5 shows the results of the Pearson r correlational analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Teaching Efficacy Subscale</th>
<th>Affective Commitment Subscale Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment Subscale Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Normative Commitment Subscale Pearson Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.557</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth hypothesis states that special education teachers from different school types differ significantly in their measures of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment. Testing this hypothesis required running a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). It should be noted, however, that with few exceptions, all of the participants taught in a District School while only four participants taught in a Collaborative School. Thus, the present sample does not provide
enough cases to reliably estimate levels of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment in collaborative schools, public schools, private schools, or other types of schools.

**Summary**

The results of the present study, overall, fail to reject the null hypothesis that their teacher efficacy is not related to teacher commitment to the organization. The results also fail to reject the null hypothesis that general teaching efficacy is related to teacher’s organizational commitment (i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment). The results provide partial support to rejecting the null hypothesis that personal teaching efficacy is not related to teacher’s organizational commitment. While no significant correlation was found between personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment of special education teachers, there were significant correlations between personal teaching efficacy and normative and continuance commitment. However, the direction of the correlation differed between the two types of commitment. The data did not provide enough variation in school types to determine whether special education teachers from different school types differed in terms of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.
Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

The findings from this study differ from the literature and lead to compelling questions regarding the factors causing no correlation between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teacher. Because special education teacher retention continues to impact education today, this study sheds further light into the complex factors impacting the commitment of special education teachers. This section will discuss the results; examine the reasons these results occurred, and propose recommendations for further study.

Results and Discussion of the Research Question

This study is the first of its kind in a number of ways. It is the only study that examines the relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment within special education, and it is the first to examine this relationship with special education teachers in Massachusetts. Furthermore, it is the only study within special education that uses the teacher efficacy survey, developed by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) and the organizational commitment survey, developed by Meyer & Allen, (2004). The findings indicate that no significant correlation exists between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers in Massachusetts. Yet, the data shows a positive correlation between one’s personal teaching efficacy and one’s continuance commitment and a negative correlation between one’s personal teaching efficacy and one’s normative commitment. These findings conclude that one’s personal teaching efficacy beliefs have diverse effects on one’s commitment to an organization. These mixed findings further validate the complexity of the efficacy-commitment constructs and support the ongoing challenge of creating effective interventions in teacher retention. Furthermore, these findings indicate a need for additional research in order to understand how special education teachers define their commitment, as it not only relates to the organization, but also to other domains of
commitment; profession and teaching. Some findings within the results lead to noteworthy conclusions, but other findings are inconclusive given the complexity of the constructs, the contrast with prior research, and the complex role of special education teachers. Follow-up discussions will help to understand the complexity of these findings, what these findings contribute to the field of education, and what implications exist.

**Hypothesis 1.** From past studies that examine efficacy and commitment within education (Hoy & Spiro, 2005; Coladarci, 1992), there is a common conclusion that efficacy beliefs are related to job satisfaction (Billingsley, 2004), commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), and commitment to the teaching profession (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). However, overall results of this study do not universally support this claim. Since $p = .549$ the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis; that is, there is no significant relationship between a special education teacher’s efficacy and their organizational commitment. The results contradict the research by disproving the notion that feelings of organizational commitment can correlate with feelings of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). The null hypothesis makes the claim that special education teachers in Massachusetts, regardless of their perception of one’s ability to impact student learning, do not feel psychologically bound to the organization of which they work. This is an interesting contrast from the research that claims that organizational commitment is when an individual feels psychologically bound to an organization, and therefore, feels an internal or external identification with that particular organization (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010; Douglas, 2010). It is this bond that is needed in order to form a feeling of commitment to the organization (Gemlik, Sisman & Signri, 2010; Douglas, 2010). If feelings of efficacy are not enough in order to develop a bond with the school and stay committed, then maybe school leaders need to examine other means in which to help special education teachers
form a bond with the school. Bonding special education teachers with the school can be a challenge for school leaders since the daily habits of a special education teacher center on providing a service, determined, not by the organization, but by the students Individual Education Program (IEP). Since the Federal Government, not the school district, dictates the rules and process of this program, there is little opportunity to feel a strong identification with the school and build an emotional commitment to the organization. This means that the role of a special education teacher is governed by the needs of the individual student, and not by the organization. Retention efforts, made by school leaders and practitioners, may be more effective if they target individuals and not the organization.

Nevertheless, research also notes the importance of acknowledging that various contributing factors, like years of teaching experience (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) and stress (Michell & Arnold, 2004), can impact teacher behaviors (Billingsley, 1993) and organizational commitment (Douglas, 2010). Since this is the first study of its kind to examine these constructs, not only in Massachusetts, but also within the field of special education, there may be other factors involved.

**Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis, which states that a special education teacher’s general teaching efficacy does not correlate with affective, normative, or continuance commitment, also failed to reject the null hypothesis. Since p = .16, p = .087, and p = .12, there is no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis; that is, there is no significant relationship between general teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective, normative, or continuance) with special education teachers. General teaching efficacy is an outcome expectation that states, “a teacher really can't do much because most of the student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” (Ashton, et al., 1983, p. 10). A special education teacher with a high degree of general teaching efficacy would feel that external factors, such as class, race, and
gender are more influential on student outcomes than any teacher. The findings from this data may suggest that, no matter how they feel about the impact of external factors student learning, it would not impact their feeling of commitment, or their feeling of identification with the organization. It may also not impact whether teachers feel committed (continuance commitment) due to lack of alternatives or lack of investment (tenure, retirement, status, and benefits) (Hodge & Ozag, 2007). Lastly, regardless of how a special education teacher feels about the external factors in teaching, it would not have a significant impact on a teacher’s feelings of obligation to the organization (normative commitment).

This finding is contrary to the efficacy and organizational commitment research, since teachers who lack a feeling of control over student learning are more inclined to feel like quitting or changing carriers, and falter in either their feeling of commitment to teaching and/or their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, organizational commitment research notes a negative correlation between one’s perception external factors have on student learning (general teaching efficacy) and their affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Parkay, 1988). Since this is the first study conducted with special education teachers, unforeseen extraneous factors may be impacting these findings, resulting in the need for further investigation. A meta-analysis into the commitment research has indicated that extraneous variables like personal characteristics, job characteristic, leadership, organizational characteristics, and role states have generally been considered as antecedents of commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Specifically within the education research, factors like stress, leadership support, role ambiguity (Singh & Billingsley, 1996) and years of teaching experience (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) all influenced aspects of teacher commitment, either directly or indirectly.

**Hypothesis 3.** In regards to hypothesis three, the results are mixed in support of the claim
that there is no significant correlation between personal teaching efficacy and affective, normative, or continuance commitment. Since \( p = .557 \), \( p = .028 \), and \( p = .041 \), there is mixed evidence to reject the null hypothesis; that is, there is no significant relationship between personal teaching efficacy and organizational commitment (affective, normative, or continuance). The results state that personal teaching efficacy does not significantly correlate with affective commitment \( (p = .557) \), yet it significantly correlates with normative commitment \( (p = .028) \) and continuance commitment \( (p = .041) \). This finding means that a special education teacher’s feelings about their ability to impact student learning correlates differently depending on whether they feel like remaining with an organization because they want to (affective commitment), because they need to (continuance commitment), or because they feel they ought to (normative commitment). Because each construct requires distinctly different thought processes into why a specific commitment decision is made, it is important to examine the relationship within each subset in isolation and respect the differences that exist.

Personal teaching efficacy, as described in the literature, postulates that if a teacher tries hard, he or she can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated student (Ashton, et al., 1983). Teachers who agree with this statement tend to persevere in teaching the most challenging students and tend to also have higher levels of commitment. Professionals, in general, who feel a sense of control over their success at work, tend to persist through adversity and exhibit greater levels of commitment.

In regards to the relationship between personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment, the findings of this study contradict with existing research that notes the existence of similar predictor variables between affective commitment and teaching efficacy. Research shows that teacher efficacy, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are predictor variables that have
an affective tone and are considered as correlates of affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002, Meyer, et al., 1989). Because personal teaching efficacy also correlates with similar factors of affective commitment, there is a logical assumption that personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment would significantly correlate. However, the results of this study did not validate this claim.

Further analysis into hypothesis three indicates that personal teaching efficacy significantly correlates with continuance commitment. Continuance commitment is the extent to which teachers feel committed to their school by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving (Cohen, 1996). This factor takes into account what a teacher has invested in the school and/or how they feel about attractive alternatives. This means that special education teachers who perceive that they have the ability to impact student learning also maintain feelings of commitment to the organization, as it relates to investments or lack of alternatives. This finding contrast with the research because those who feel compelled to remain only to avoid financial or other costs, may do little more than the minimum required to retain their employment (Meyer et al., 1989), and subsequently experience diminished feelings of efficacy. Furthermore, because continuance commitment and affective commitment typically do not stand apart in the research (Meyer et al., 2002), there should be a similar connection in this study.

Does this finding mean that special education teachers define their feeling of organizational commitment, and their feeling of efficacy on how invested (tenure, job security) they are in the organization? Are the professional requirements for special education teachers, which are viewed as side-bets within the continuance commitment research(Meyer & Allen, 1990), placing teachers in a predicament where there are few alternatives and/or the specializations required for certain positions so specific they are not transferable? This conclusion may be true since teachers
find meaning in earning tenure, increased pay, additional licensure, status, and respect within the organization. Either way, there is something compelling about this.

The final analysis into hypothesis three involves the significant inverse correlation between personal teaching efficacy and normative commitment. Normative commitment is defined based on a teacher’s feeling of obligation to the organization. This feeling of obligation can stem from cultural, familial, or organizational ethics (Hodge & Ozag, 2007). The findings in this study indicate that a special education teacher with a strong sense of personal teaching efficacy also has a diminished sense of obligation to the organization. Because the relationship is negative, a special education teacher who believes they can impact student learning will tend to not feel a sense of obligation to the organization.

This finding is interesting given that it contradicts with the research that states that efficacious teachers are supposed to be more committed (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). This finding means that efficacious special education teachers feel less obligated to the organization, and therefore less committed, even if they have a strong perception of their own ability to impact student learning. This finding reiterates the point that people’s beliefs in their efficacy can have diverse effects (Johnson, 2010). Johnson (2010) indicates that a special education teacher with a high degree of personal teaching efficacy, and who also defines their success through perseverance and overcoming adversity, may still be likely to leave the profession.

**Hypothesis 4.** The fourth and final hypothesis in this study examined the relationship of one independent variable (school type) and two dependent variables (teacher efficacy and organizational commitment). This question sought to better understand whether special education teachers from different school types differ significantly in their measures of teacher
efficacy and organizational commitment. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the participants taught in a district school. Only four participants taught in a collaborative school and none taught in a private school. Thus, the present sample does not provide enough cases to reliably estimate levels of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment in collaborative schools. This realization is disappointing because there continues to be unanswered questions around school type, teacher efficacy and commitment to the organization, as it relates to special education teachers.

**Implications**

The results from this study have mixed implications as they relate to practice, theory, and research. Since no other study of this nature has been conducted, in either Massachusetts or across the county, these findings are unique to the field of special education. Due to the uniqueness of this study, the varying results, and the complexity of the efficacy-commitment constructs, there are limited conclusions from this study that can lead to system change in solving the problem of practice. Furthermore, due to the fact that participants were all still working in the profession, no conclusions could be drawn about outcomes. However, within the inconclusive nature of these findings, educators, educational leaders, and policy makers may better understand the complex of the special education profession, and the complexity of the interaction between efficacy beliefs and one’s commitment to the organization. Below are the findings to this study as they relate to improving the problem of practice within special education and implications for future research. The practical implications of these findings impact both educational leaders and policy makers as they continue to tackle the challenge of retaining special education teachers. School leaders who attempt to create efficacy-centered interventions
as a way of combatting school-wide commitment issues may re-consider this strategy, after understanding the findings in this study.

**Implications for practice.** Since there is no significant correlation between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment, school leaders who develop interventions targeting teacher efficacy, as it relates to problems of special education staff commitment, may discover that the interventions are ineffective. However, given past regular education research that shows correlations between teacher efficacy and commitment with novice teachers (France, 2008) and commitment to teacher (Coladarci, 1992), school leaders may still consider commitment interventions. However, the results may vary depending on teacher’s role, years of experience, and level of efficacy.

Additional implications for practice stem from the finding that special education teachers’ general teaching efficacy does not correlate with affective, continuance, or normative commitment. The implications of this finding center on school leaders’ understanding the complexity of the efficacy construct and seeing how one’s feeling of commitment can be determined based on whether they perceive their sense of teacher efficacy within their own control or outside their control. Efficacy questionnaires can help school leaders discriminate these two types of groups. With this knowledge, school leaders can intervene with programs targeting teachers with general teaching efficacy and supporting their development towards believing that they have control over student learning.

Further implications from this study on solving the retention issues are evident in the dichotomy that exists between continuance commitment and normative commitment, as they relate to personal teaching efficacy. Both feelings of commitment correlate with one’s feeling of personal teaching efficacy, however their correlations are opposite. On a practical level, since
personal teaching efficacy negatively correlated with normative commitment, special education teachers who feel obligated to remain in their position are not going to feel efficacious in their ability to impact student learning. This means that even though a teacher is committed to their organization, they may lack the motivation, perseverance, and dedication needed to teach the most challenging students. Likewise, a special education teacher with a high degree of personal teaching efficacy will also have a low sense of normative commitment. This means that special education teachers who foster feelings of high personal teaching efficacy will also have lower levels of organizational commitment, as that commitment relates to one’s feelings of obligation to remain. Even though they feel capable of teaching the most challenging student they do not feel obligated to remain commitment to the school. From a practical perspective, interventions that target teacher efficacy may have unintended consequences. Even though research shows that teachers with high levels of efficacy are more effective in the classroom, this study indicates that these positive feelings may not result in increases one’s level of commitment.

Additional implications for practice can be found in the correlation between personal teaching efficacy and continuance commitment. This finding indicates that special education teachers who believe that they can positively impact student learning will tend to be the special education teachers who feel that they have to be committed to the organization. School leaders, who seek to improve special education retention rates, may look to provide incentives that make the job more appealing than other jobs, and therefore increase feelings of continuance commitment. Implementing incentive programs for reaching tenure status, promoting opportunities for professional development or obtaining advanced skills, can be attractive offers that would compel teachers to feel more committed to the school.
Implications for future research. Unlike prior research where teacher efficacy correlated with commitment (Hoy & Spiro, 2005; Coladarci, 1992; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Coladarci, 1992) and affective commitment correlates with personal teaching efficacy (Meyer et al., 2002), the data in this study shows that teacher efficacy does not correlate with organizational commitment, and personal teaching efficacy does not correlate with affective commitment. This split from the current research warrants future investigation into the theoretical perspective of the teacher efficacy and commitment constructs in relation to special education teachers. Since this study did not show a significant correlation between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment, researchers must take this new knowledge to further validate the complexity of the retention issues in special education.

Organizational commitment and the contrasting correlation with personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Future research should also examine why personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy correlated differently with the factors of organizational commitment. Even though the finding in this study support the research in that these two factors operate independently of one another (Guskey, 1998), it is compelling to note that general teaching efficacy did not correlate with any factors of organizational commitment. It may indicate a significant difference in how special education teachers perceive the influences and controls of factors outside the classroom (general teaching efficacy), and how that impacts their level of commitment. Why is this the case when prior research indicates a correlation between self-efficacy constructs and organizational commitment (Prather-Jones, 2011) and commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992)? It is apparent that future research will need to isolate the factors of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment in order to delve into reasons why
special education teachers rely more on personal factors of control (personal teaching efficacy) in their connection to their feelings of commitment.

**The sub-constructs of teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.** From a theoretical perspective, the findings in this study validate the complexity of efficacy beliefs. Researchers recognize that efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations have varying cognitive effects, both psychosocial and/or emotional (Bandura, 1997). Since commitment to teaching and organizational commitment are operationally different constructs within the commitment research, it is clear, based on the results of this study, that special education teachers see their commitment to teaching differently from their organizational commitment, specifically as it relates to teacher efficacy. One implication this new knowledge has on theory and future research is that researchers now understand that efficacious special education teachers can have mixed results in terms of their feelings of commitment. Even though Bandura’s efficacy model correlated with teacher retention, the findings in this study will force theorist to re-examine this relationship, at least as it relates to special education teachers in Massachusetts. This finding further validates the complexity of the efficacy – commitment constructs and further validates the need to isolate the efficacy constructs and commitment constructs to better understand how they relate to one another and impact the problem of practice. Furthermore, since personal teaching efficacy was the only efficacy construct to correlate with commitment, future research will need to examine why this is the case.

**The negative correlation between normative commitment and personal teaching efficacy.** Additional implications for future research are evident in the negative correlation between normative commitment and personal teaching efficacy. This negative correlation between normative commitment and personal teaching efficacy means that an efficacious special
education teacher may feel more compelled to leave the organization. This negative correlation poses an interesting challenge for future efficacy and commitment research since this finding points to the need for clearer operational definitions of commitment and teacher efficacy. Due to the apparent complexity and dichotomy of their sub-constructs, future research should focus on these variables in isolation. Since none of the commitment constructs correlated with general teaching efficacy, does this negate the need for future researchers to consider one’s general teaching efficacy as it relates to commitment? Future research into the problem of practice should attempt to better understand the relevance that general teaching efficacy has in supporting the commitment of special education teachers.

The relationship between affective commitment and personal teaching efficacy. Since affective commitment and personal teaching efficacy can both rely on an emotional identification and involvement, there is a need to further investigate not only why special education teachers with a high degree of personal teaching efficacy do not also feel emotionally committed to the organization, but also how the measures of the three component model of commitment differ between special education teachers and general education teachers. Since research indicates a correlation between personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment and this study proved otherwise, there is a need to better understand why.

The differentiation of one’s commitment to teaching and one’s commitment to the profession. This finding has additional implications for future commitment research since this study only examined organizational commitment and did not examine teacher efficacy in relation to other commitment constructs, like commitment to teacher, job satisfaction, or commitment to the special education professional. Within the educational research, personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy correlated with commitment to teaching (Coladurci, 1992) and
commitment to the teaching profession (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006). Future research should examine why this difference exists, not only with special education teachers but also with organizational commitment. Future research examining the commitment constructs can help practitioners to better understand a teacher’s intentions and behaviors in regards to committed to teaching, committed to the organization, and commitment to the profession.

Continuance commitment and the antecedent factors correlating with personal teaching efficacy. Additional implications for future research can be found in the correlation between personal teaching efficacy and continuance commitment. Special education teachers with strong continuance commitment feel limited by other options and therefore are “committed by default” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 77). They feel forced to remain committed to the organization, based on factors like specific job skills, tenure, attractive benefits, credentials, compensation, or lack of attractive alternatives. On a theoretical level, this correlation has mixed implications on improving teacher retention, since there are so many underlying factors leading to one’s feelings of continuance commitment. Future research should examine factors within these domains in order to gain a better understanding of the leading antecedent variables.

Future research should also examine the two factors that exist within the continuance commitment subscale and understand how these factors relate to efficacy. These factors are the magnitude of investments in the organization and/or the number of investments or side bets the employee makes and the perceived lack of alternatives (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Future research that takes a deeper look into this correlation may uncover why this correlation exists within special education teachers in Massachusetts.

Limitations
Limitations to this study are apparent in the limited sampling of Massachusetts’s special education teachers. With over six thousand special education teachers in Massachusetts, more participants in the study would have added great validity to the results. Another apparent limitation to this study is the fact that participants were all still working in the profession, therefore, no clear conclusions could be drawn about outcomes of commitment and special education teacher retention. Because this was an Internet survey that relied on the distribution efforts of leadership staff in MTA, MOEC, and AFT-MA, there is no level of guarantee that three emails made it out to all members of the sample size. A larger sampling of Massachusetts’s special education teachers should be made and additional studies in other states should be conducted to see how these findings generalize into other regions. Another limitation to this study that should be noted is that the sample size was not randomly generated. Due to the nature of the distribution of this survey, it was decided that a random sampling was not possible and could jeopardize obtaining the minimum number or participants needed to validate the study. Since this assumption was not tested, there may be limitations in the findings. Further limitations of this study pertain to the lack of respondents who were from collaborative programs (2.4%) or special education schools (0%), and who were males (13.7%) or where teaching for one year or less (3%). It would have been a more robust and valid study if further analysis could have incorporated collaborative school data and if there was a even distribution of participants across age group and years of teaching.

Additional limitations within this study, and other quantitative studies examining this problem of practice, is the challenge of understanding how significant variables within a study impact individual teachers. This challenge is easier to remedy within a mixed method study or qualitative study. However, there are few of these studies conducted within this problem of
practice. The other challenge in understanding the true impact of teacher attrition on education, is that few studies indicate whether "former special education teachers intend to or actually do return to special education" (Brownell et al., 1997, p. 144)

**Recommendations**

1. Further research is needed into each organizational commitment domain in order to better understand how one’s commitment to the organization differs from one’s commitment to the teaching profession as it relates to special education.

2. Delve into the complex nature of personal teaching efficacy and affective commitment within special education in order to better understand how these important constructs interact with one another and how findings can help to improve teacher retention.

3. Examine the efficacy construct as it relates to normative commitment in order to better understand the complex interaction between personal teaching efficacy and continuance commitment. This finding has compelling implications for future research as it indicates that a special education teacher with high efficacy may feel less committed to their organization. Does this finding also correlate to commitment to teaching or commitment to the profession?

4. Repeat the study focusing solely on hypothesis 4 with attention on getting private school and collaborative school participation.

5. Since rates of attrition and commitment are greater in newer teachers (Hoy and Spero, 2005), it would be interesting to see what the data says about the different age groups and how age impacts teacher efficacy and organizational commitment.

6. The significant correlation between personal teaching efficacy and continuance commitment needs further research. Does this finding mean that special education
teachers define organizational commitment, and their feelings of efficacy, based on the available investments in the organization? Future research will need to isolate the sub-constructs of personal teaching efficacy and continuance commitment in order to better understand the significance of this finding as it relates to other antecedent, correlates, and consequences.

7. Examine Continuance Commitment as it relates to other constructs of commitment within special education.

8. There should be a qualitative analysis using what Caladacri (1992) calls a “thinking out loud methodology” (p. 335). This methodology would allow the researcher into examine the underlying feelings, thoughts, and emotions behind the efficacy-commitment linkage.

Conclusion

This study is the first survey research study done in Massachusetts with the goal of identifying the possible relationship between teacher efficacy and organizational commitment within special education teachers. Even though this study does not prove a significant correlation between special education teacher’s efficacy and organizational commitment, there are factors like administrative support (Billingsley, 2004), years of experience (Billingsley & Cross, 1992), and commitment to teaching (Evens & Tribble, 1986; Caladacri, 1992) that were not investigated in this study, but could have correlated significantly, if examined. Furthermore, it is important to note that the organizational commitment construct, developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), examines sub-components of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, normative) that may be better analyzed in isolation, then collectively. Allen and Meyer state that the collective interest of these approaches can help decrease the likelihood of staff turnover, but it is important
to respect each subset in isolation. The results in this study support this claim since the results for the subsets were mixed.

Researchers must re-examine how special education teachers define commitment. Do special education teachers, as a whole, primarily define their commitment based on the students they teach, or the school system they work for? Since special education teachers are trained to teach to the individual and not to a classroom, and to use an IEP to guide instruction and not the school’s curriculum frameworks, commitment becomes a student-centered belief and not a school-centered belief. This brings up a logical conclusion that maybe efficacious special education teachers are “committed to the profession of teaching, but not to his or her employing school division” (Billingsley & Cross, 1992, p. 454).
References


Eginli, I. (2009). *Principal leadership and teacher commitment to the profession: The mediating role of collective efficacy and teacher efficacy.* Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI 305124556)


doi:10.3102/00028312038003499


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Appendix A – Survey Instrument

The Efficacy and Commitment Teacher Survey
Teacher Efficacy Survey

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of special education teachers concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We are interested only in your frank opinions. Your response did remain confidential.

Instructions: Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response under each statement.

Key:
1. Strongly agree
2. Moderately Agree
3. Agree slightly more than disagree
4. Disagree slightly more than agree
5. Moderately disagree
6. Strongly disagree

1. The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background

2. If students are not disciplined at home, they aren’t likely to accept any discipline

3. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students

4. A teacher is very limited in what he or she can achieve because a student’s home environment is a large influence on his or her achievements.

5. If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.

6. If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his or her retention in the next lesson.
strongly agree  moderately agree  agree slightly more than disagree  disagree slightly more than agree  moderately disagree  strongly disagree

7. If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him or her quickly.

strongly agree  moderately agree  agree slightly more than disagree  disagree slightly more than agree  moderately disagree  strongly disagree

8. When a student gets a better grade than he or she usually gets, it is usually because I found a better way.

strongly agree  moderately agree  agree slightly more than disagree  disagree slightly more than agree  moderately disagree  strongly disagree

9. If I try hard, I can get through to even the difficult and unmotivated students.

strongly agree  moderately agree  agree slightly more than disagree  disagree slightly more than agree  moderately disagree  strongly disagree

10. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s home environment is a large influence on his or her achievement.

strongly agree  moderately agree  agree slightly more than disagree  disagree slightly more than agree  moderately disagree  strongly disagree

---

**TCM Employee Commitment Scales**

Instructions
Listed below is a series of statements that represent feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work. With respect to your own feelings about the particular organization for which you are now working, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 7 using the scale below.

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = slightly disagree
4 = undecided
5 = slightly agree
6 = agree
7 = strongly agree

11. Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now.

strongly disagree  disagree  slightly disagree  undecided  slightly agree  agree  strongly agree
12. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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13. This organization deserves my loyalty.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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14. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (R)
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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15. One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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16. I do not feel any obligation to remain with my current employer. (R)
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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17. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
   
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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18. If I had not already put so much of myself into this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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19. I owe a great deal to my organization.
   
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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20. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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21. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

22. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>
23. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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</table>

24. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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</table>

25. I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

26. I would not leave my organization right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
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</table>

27. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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28. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)

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<th></th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
</table>
# Demographic Information

29. **What is your gender?**
   - Female
   - Male

30. **Which category below includes your age?**
   - 21-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60 or older

31. **What is your role in education?**
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Regular Education Teacher
   - Related Service Provider
   - Other

32. **How many years have you been teaching students with special needs?**
   - Less than one year
   - 1 - 5 years
   - 5 - 10 years
   - More than 10 years

33. **What field do you teach in?**
   - Regular Education Teacher
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Related Service Provider

34. **What type of school do you teach in?**
   - Private School
   - Collaborative School
   - District School
   - Other
Appendix B – Request to Participate in Research Email

Northeastern University, Department of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator: Jennifer Qian
Title of Project: A study to explore the relationship between teaching efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers

Request to Participate in Research

Dear Participant,
We would like to invite you to participate in a web-based online survey. The survey is part of a research study whose purpose is to examine the relationship between one’s teaching efficacy and one’s commitment to their school. This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. We are asking you to participate in this study because you are special education teacher in the Massachusetts. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. Your employment did not be affected if you choose to participate or not. There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the complex factors leading to teacher turnover. You did not be paid for your participation in this study.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researcher. However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey have been capturing those data. Any reports or publications based on this research did use only group data and did not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact David Murphy, the person mainly responsible for the research, at murphy.dav@neu.edu or 781-771-6575. You can also contact Dr. Jennifer Qian, the Principal Investigator, at je.qian@neu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.
Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLQWC8R

Thank you for your time.
David Murphy
Appendix C – Request to Participate in Research Email – Follow-up email #1

Northeastern University, Department of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator: Jennifer Qian
Title of Project: A study to explore the relationship between teaching efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers

Request to Participate in Research

Dear Participant,

We recently sent you an email asking you to respond to a brief survey about your opinion, interests, and experiences. Your response to this survey is important and may help us learn more about the complex factors contributing to the attrition of special education teachers. If you have already completed the survey, we appreciate your participation. If you have not yet responded to the survey, we encourage you to take a few minutes and complete the survey.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. Your employment did not be affected if you choose to participate or not. There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the complex factors leading to teacher turnover. You did not be paid for your participation in this study.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researcher. However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey have been capturing those data. Any reports or publications based on this research did use only group data and did not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact David Murphy, the person mainly responsible for the research, at murphy.dav@neu.edu or 781-771-6575. You can also contact Dr. Jennifer Qian, the Principal Investigator, at je.qian@neu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Survey link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLQWC8R
Appendix D: Request to Participate in Research Email – Follow-up email #2

Northeastern University, Department of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator: Jennifer Qian
Title of Project: A study to explore the relationship between teaching efficacy and organizational commitment of special education teachers
Request to Participate in Research

Dear Participant,
Winter is a busy time for teachers and we understand how valuable your spare time is. We are hoping you may be able to give about 10 minutes of your time before the winter vacation to help us collect important information for the attrition of special education teachers in Massachusetts. If you have already completed the survey, we really appreciate your participation. If you have not yet responded, we would like to urge you to complete the survey. We plan to end this study next week, so we wanted to email everyone who has not yet responded to make sure you had a chance to participate.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. Your employment did not be affected if you choose to participate or not. There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the complex factors leading to teacher turnover. You did not be paid for your participation in this study.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researcher. However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey have been capturing those data. Any reports or publications based on this research did use only group data and did not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security at 617-373-7901 or privacy@neu.edu. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact David Murphy, the person mainly responsible for the research, at murphy.dav@neu.edu or 781-771-6575. You can also contact Dr. Jennifer Qian, the Principal Investigator, at je.qian@neu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University,
Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Survey link: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLQWC8R](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLQWC8R)
Thank you for your time.
David Murphy
Appendix E - Permission Letter

August 9, 2012

Dear Carla Jentz and Board Members,

My name is David Murphy. I am working as a Doctoral student at Northeastern University and am currently gathering data for my research study. I am writing to ask for your permission to survey the special education teachers in your district. Through a survey I have been asking current special education teachers in your districts to reflect on their opinion, interests and experience as a special educator. The survey should take no more than ten minutes to complete and is completely voluntary. You may directly access the survey using this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLOWC8R.

The focus of the research study is to examine the relationship between one’s teaching efficacy and one’s commitment to their school. Since the number of special education students continues to increase, as well as the complexity of their needs, there is a significant need to prevent teacher attrition and create interventions to retain and support veteran and teachers. Participants have been asked if they work in a private school, public school, or collaborative program. But, in order to respect confidentiality, specific schools or districts did not be recorded in this study.

If you are willing to participate then please sign this form and return via email at your earliest convenience. I did then send you an email to disseminate to each Special Education Director. Following this initial email have been two additional emails over the following four weeks to remind teachers who have not had a chance to complete the survey.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (781) 771-6575 or via e-mail at murphy.dav@husky.neu.edu, or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Jennifer Qian at Northeastern University, (802) 505-4008 or je.qian@neu.edu. Or you can contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@husky.neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to receiving your reply email regarding this request for permission.

Sincerely,

David Murphy,
Special Education Teacher, Duxbury High School
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPATION SIGNATURE:</th>
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<td>NAME:__________________</td>
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<td>DISTRICT:________________</td>
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<td>TITLE:__________________</td>
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Appendix F – IRB Approval Letter
Figure 1. Distribution of Teacher Efficacy Total
Figure 2. Distribution of General Teacher Efficacy
Figure 3. Distribution of Personal Teacher Efficacy
Figure 4. Distribution of Organizational Commitment
Figure 5. Distribution of Normative Commitment Subscale
Figure 6. Distribution of Continuance Commitment Subscale
Figure 7. Distribution of Affective Commitment subscale
Figure 8. Scatterplot of Organizational Commitment Total and Teacher Efficacy Total
Figure 9. Scatterplot of Affective Commitment Subscale and General Teacher Commitment Subscale
Figure 10. Scatterplot of Normative Commitment Subscale and General Teacher Efficacy Subscale
Figure 11. Scatterplot of Continuance Commitment Subscale and General Teacher Efficacy
Figure 12. Scatterplot of Affective Commitment Subscale and Personal Teacher Efficacy Subscale
Figure 13. Scatterplot of Normative Commitment Subscale and Personal Teacher Efficacy Subscale
Figure 14. Scatterplot of Continuance Commitment Subscale and Personal Teacher Efficacy Subscale