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Special Education Instruction and its Effect on Student Efficacy

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Completing this master's program was a very challenging task for me. I never thought I would write a research paper to this extent and be successful at it. I would like to acknowledge all of the wonderful teachers I have had in this program. They shared their knowledge and teaching experiences with me which helped me to continue my journey as a student. I would like to specifically thank Dr. Philip Boudreau. The passion he has for special education is contagious and has made me want to be the best special education teacher that I can be. He is very knowledgeable and shares that knowledge with his students. He is always willing to help and offer advice.

I would like to thank my parents who have always pushed me to do my best in school. They always taught me to never give up and I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. I would like to thank my husband, Jason, for being supportive and helping out in any way I asked while I have been busy with my school work. Thank you to my sister for watching Mason when I needed it so I could go to class and not have to take a semester off to complete my Masters.
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Special Education Instruction and its Effect on Student Efficacy

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Prepared in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Masters of Arts degree in
Multicategorical Special Education
Governors State University
Spring 2016
Abstract

The key ideas that is studied for this research is self-efficacy among special education students. The purpose of this study to look at the relationship of self-efficacy and special education students in both the general education classroom and the instructional classroom. There were a total of 28 special education students who participated in the study. They completed a survey on self-efficacy. The results found that special education students in the instructional classroom had slightly higher self-efficacy than the special education students in the general education classroom. Discussion and implication regarding education and further research is provided.

Keywords: self-efficacy, special education, survey
Chapter I

Introduction

Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Yell, 2016).

Special education programs are designed for those students who are mentally, physically, socially and/or emotionally delayed.

This aspect of "delay," broadly categorized as a developmental delay, signifies an aspect of the child's overall development (physical, cognitive, scholastic skills) which places them behind their peers. Due to these special requirements, students' needs cannot be met within the traditional classroom environment (Vaughn & Swanson, 2015).

Special Education programs and services adapt content, teaching methodology and delivery instruction to meet the appropriate needs of each child. There are a variety of special education settings for students from birth to the day before their 22nd birthday (Yell, 2016). Any student who is in special education should be put in the least restrictive environment that is suitable for that individual. Special Education broadly identifies the academic, physical, cognitive and social-emotional instruction offered to children who are faced with one or more disabilities (Vaughn & Swanson, 2015).

Legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) state to provide a free and appropriate public education to ensure equal opportunities for all students. IDEA provides the legal framework for a "free and appropriate public education" to students with disabilities (Yell, 2016). Yell also states that federal statute, along with related state statutes and
regulations, ensures that children with disabilities receive the same education as their non-disabled peers.

**Statement of the Problem**

While the law protects students with a label found in special education, the law does not consider a student’s self-efficacy when given particular labels. Under the special education umbrella, there are thirteen different labels that can be given to students. These students are then placed in their least restrictive environment which can vary from student to student (Vaughn & Swanson, 2015). The least restrictive environment is based on the individual student and their particular needs. The least restrictive environment can have an effect on the student’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982)

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to look at different special education settings. After looking at the different special education settings, the study determined if different special education settings in the school environment have an effect on student’s self-efficacy. This study explores students in the general education classroom with resource support and the instructional special education classroom.

**Questions of Study**

This study focused on special education students in the third through fifth grade setting. The students were given a survey of self-efficacy. From the survey, this study was able to answer which least restrictive environment do students have a higher self-efficacy, the general education classroom or the instructional classroom setting. The survey examined at social self-efficacy as well as academic self-efficacy.
Assumptions and Limitations

This study is being done in one school district. There will be ten special students surveyed in the general education classroom setting and ten special education students surveyed in the instructional classroom settings. The student’s ages range from nine to eleven years old. It is assumed that all students have access to either reading the survey or having the survey read to them. It is also assumed that students can point, verbally identify, or circle their answer choice. A limitation is the time frame in which the survey needs to be completed. The study must be completed within the seventeen-week time period of the course.

Significance of the Study

It is important to consider the classroom environment when placing a special education student. Where the student is placed will play a role in how successful they are educationally. Educators want the student to grow academically. However, a student’s self-efficacy also plays a role in how well they will perform academically. It is important to keep this mind when placing a student for special education services.
STUDENT EFFICACY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Definition of Terms

IDEA. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Prior to IDEA, over 4 million children with disabilities were denied appropriate access to public education. Many children were denied entry into public school altogether, while others were placed in segregated classrooms, or in regular classrooms without adequate support for their special needs (Katsiyannis, Yell, Bradley, 2001; Martin, Martin, Terman, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

IEP. An individualized education plan is a plan that is put in place for any students who has a disability that falls under the special education window. The IEP is to help ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services. The IEP is updated annually and the student is re-evaluated every three years to make sure the student still qualifies for special education (Yell, 2016). IEP’s are often established to allow children with disability to receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment possible.

FAPE. Free and Appropriate public education is the terms used to describe the educational rights of children with disabilities in the United States. A free appropriate public education is provided at no cost to parents. School districts must allow parents to review and examine records, participate in IEP meetings and have access to complaint procedures. Parents must be given notice of any proposed changes to their child’s placement or program (Yell, 2016).
FERPA. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that is administered by the Family Policy Compliance Office (Office) in the U.S. Department of Education (Department). FERPA applies to all educational agencies and institutions (e.g., schools) that receive funding under any program administered by the department. Parochial and private schools at the elementary and secondary levels generally do not receive such funding and are, therefore, not subject to FERPA. It protects the privacy of students' personally identifiable information (PII) (Yell, 2016).

General Education Classroom. The general education classroom is the least restrictive environment in the educational field (Yell, 2016).

Instructional Classroom. The instructional classroom is formally known as the self-contained classroom. The instructional classroom is a special education setting in which all students have a disability that falls under IDEA (Yell, 216).

Least Restrictive Environment. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the requirement in federal law that students with disabilities receive their education, to the maximum extent appropriate, with nondisabled peers and that special education students are not removed from regular classes unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Yell, 2016). The least restrictive environment varies from one student to the other. Yell states the least restrictive environment must be what is best for the student educationally.

NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is the most recent iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This major federal law authorizes federal spending on programs to support K-12 schooling. ESEA is the largest source of federal spending on elementary and secondary education (Yell, 2016).
Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977; 1986; 1997). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment. One's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges.

The Placement Continuum. When referring to least restrictive environment, one must know all of the placement options for students in special education. They are as follows: (a) General education classroom, (b) Special education with supplementary aids or services, (c) Resource support (placed within a special education classroom less than 40% of school day, (d) self-contained classroom (placed in special education classroom more than 40% of school day, (e) separate special education day school, (f) Residential placement, (g) Home or hospital placement (Katsiyannis et al., 2001)

Chapter Summary

Special education is one aspect of education. Within special education, ranges all different types of students with different disabilities. These disabilities need to be addressed in different ways. Students who have disabilities are required by law to have special education services that can include academics, speech services and social work services. Depending on the student’s disability, the student is placed in a variety of academic settings depending on their least restrictive environment. These placements are reviewed in placement continuum. Student’s self-efficacy can be affected based on their least restrictive environment. The research paper will explore student’s self-efficacy based on their least restrictive environment in the general education classroom with resource support and a self-contained classroom. This research will help to identify if student’s self-efficacy is affected by their classroom placement.
Chapter II
Review of Literature

This study focuses on special education students and their classroom placements. It looks at how their classroom placement affects their self-efficacy. It is important to understand how special education student's classroom placement is decided before we can look at the student's self-efficacy. The research discussed in this section will serve as a foundation to better understand how placement is determined and how self-efficacy has an impact on students with disabilities.

Special Education Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shows that each child with a disability has the right to receive a free appropriate public education, or FAPE (Yell, 2006).

Table 1

*Categories of disability under IDEA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Disability</th>
<th>Term</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning disability (LD)</td>
<td>A disorder related to processing information that leads to difficulties in reading, writing, and computing; the most common disability, accounting for half of all students receiving special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech or language impairment</td>
<td>A disorder related to accurately producing the sounds of language or meaningfully using language to communicate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Categories of disability under IDEA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Disability</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Significant limitations in intellectual ability and adaptive behavior; this disability occurs in a range of severity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Significant problems in the social-emotional area to a degree that learning is negatively affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td></td>
<td>A disorder characterized by extraordinary difficulty in social responsiveness; this disability occurs in many different forms and may be mild or significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairment</td>
<td></td>
<td>A partial or complete loss of hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual impairment, including blindness</td>
<td></td>
<td>A partial or complete loss of vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf-blindness</td>
<td></td>
<td>A simultaneous significant hearing loss and significant vision loss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic impairment</td>
<td></td>
<td>A significant physical limitation that impairs the ability to move or complete motor activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Traumatic brain injury (TBI)           |                     | A medical condition denoting a serious brain injury that occurs as a result of accident or
Table 1 (Continued)

Categories of disability under IDEA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Disability</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other health impairment (OHI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A disease or health disorder so significant that it negatively affects learning; examples include cancer, sickle-cell anemia, and diabetes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>The simultaneous presence of two or more disabilities such that none can be identified as the primary disability; the most common example is the occurrence of mental retardation and physical disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness</td>
<td></td>
<td>A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Yell, “the Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, process develops and formalizes the FAPE for students with disabilities” (2006, p. 211).
STUDENT EFFICACY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Once a disability is recognized IEP can be created. There are many aspects involved in creating an IEP. One aspect of a student's IEP is their placement. All students are to be placed in their Least Restrictive Environment or LRE (Yell, 2006). A student's LRE is based on their disability, behavior, and educational goals. The LRE varies from student to student. The LRE is determined by the IEP team.

When writing an IEP, it is important to write measurable goals that are attainable by the student. It is also important to place a student's in his/her LRE to be successful (Yell, 2006). Yell states, “The goals must be written to reflect what a student needs to become involved in and to make progress in the general education curriculum and in other areas related to the disability (p. 223).

**What is Self-efficacy?**

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a belief in one’s own personal capabilities. Bandura (1997) goes on to say that there are four major ways in which one’s perceived self-efficacy can affect their life. The first thing self-efficacy has an affect on is his cognitive ability. People with high self-efficacy are more likely to have high aspirations, take long views, think soundly, set themselves with difficult challenges, and commit themselves firmly to meeting those challenges. They guide their actions by visualizing successful outcomes instead of dwelling on personal deficiencies or ways in which things might go wrong.

When we look at self-efficacy, we should also look at self-regulation. Self-regulation is a complex system of skills that promotes the successful completion of academic tasks for students throughout the school age (Dignath, Buettner, & Langfeldt, 2008). If students can self-regulate their behavior during a complex process, they may have a greater sense of confidence or self-efficacy in their abilities (Schunk & Swartz, 1993). A research study found that if a student
is taught self-regulation strategies, there will be an increase in self-efficacy (Greham, 2001). If a student believes in his/her ability to do well, they are more likely to try more challenging things, which in turn advances them academically. Danielsen, et. al. (2009) agree that “scholastic competence can indicate student’s; self-perceptions of their capacity to be successful in the academic domain, which may play an important role in shaping achievement outcomes” (p. 304).

Self-efficacy has an effect on the level of motivation a person can have. Bandura (1997) adds that,

People motivate themselves by forming beliefs about what they can do, anticipating likely outcomes, setting goals, and planning courses of action. Their motivation will be stronger if they believe they can attain their goals and adjust them based on their progress. (p.3)

Overall, it makes sense that the more confident a person feels in his/her ability to do something, the more likely they would at least attempt that skill.

The third and fourth thing that self-efficacy can have an effect on is Mood and Affect. Bandura (1997) explains that:

How much stress or depression people experience in threatening or difficult situations depends largely on how well they think they can cope. Efficacy beliefs regulate emotional states in several ways: (1) people who believe they can manage threats are less distressed by them; those who lack self-efficacy are more likely to magnify risks. (2) People with high self-efficacy lower their stress and anxiety by acting in ways that make the environment less threatening. (3) People with high coping capacities have better control over disturbing thoughts. Research shows that what causes distress is not the sheer frequency of the thoughts but the inability to turn them off. People with high self-
efficacy are able to relax, divert their attention, calm themselves, and seek support from friends, family, and others. For someone who is confident of getting relief in these ways, anxiety and sadness are easier to tolerate. (p. 3)

Factors that Determine Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) indicates there are four factors that can contribute to a student's self-efficacy. These four factors include: (1) performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious experiences (observing others perform), (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) emotional arousal.

Performance Accomplishments. Performance accomplishments represent the strongest basis for self-efficacy because they are based upon personal mastery experiences (Gresham, 2001). If students have been successful with a particular skill in the past, they will have confidence in the skill with future performances (Gresham, 2001). Repeated success in any setting or situation heightens self-efficacy, whereas repeated failures, particularly early on, lower efficacy. Many mainstream classrooms are not structured in such a way that handicapped children will experience repeated success (Gresham, 1984).

Regular education teachers in conjunction with special education teachers can enhance the personal efficacy of students with a mild disability (Gresham, 2001). Teachers can use techniques to enhance students' performance. The key to using performance-based techniques is to select tasks (academic or social) on which students with mild disabilities will be successful (Gresham, 2001).

Vicarious Experiences. The second factor that will have an effect on student efficacy is vicarious experiences. These are experiences that students have in which they witness another peer accomplish a task that they themselves have to accomplish. By observing others like themselves complete as task, the students can then judge their own capabilities to complete the
same task (Gresham, 2001). Vicarious learning experiences serve as a basis for self-efficacy, although they are typically weaker than performance accomplishments. In order to learn through vicarious learning experiences, the learner must attend, retain, reproduce, and be motivated to perform the desired behavior (Bandura, 1986).

**Verbal Persuasion.** The next factor that can affect student's self-efficacy is verbal persuasion, using verbal reinforcement to give students confidence. When other people encourage and convince you to perform a task, you tend to believe that you are more capable of performing the task. Constructive feedback is important in maintaining a sense of efficacy as it may help overcome self-doubt (Schunk, 1993).

**Physiological Cues.** The last factor that can affect student self-efficacy is emotional arousal or physiological cues. Physiological cues are how they feel before a task is given. Moods, emotions, physical reactions, and stress levels may influence how you feel about your personal abilities. If you are extremely nervous, you may begin to doubt and develop a weak sense of self-efficacy. If you are confident and feel no anxiety or nervousness at all, you may experience a sense of excitement that fosters a great sense of self-efficacy (Schunk, 1993). It is the way people interpret and evaluate emotional states that is important for how they develop self-efficacy beliefs. For this reason, being able to diminish or control anxiety may have positive impact on self-efficacy beliefs.

**Role of Self-Efficacy on Individuals with Disabilities**

Personal competence, a sense of mastery over one's environment, functions as a primary motivator of human behavior (Gresham, 2011). Bandura (1977, 1982) conceptualized this idea of competence or mastery and suggests that persons develop a sense of efficacy based primarily upon past performance and accomplishments in specific situations and settings in which they
function. The self-efficacy theory would predict that handicapped children would have a low sense of self-efficacy in the regular education classroom setting because of past history of failure experiences. Gresham, Evans, and Elliot (1988) completed a study that looked at the differences in students' self-efficacy between mildly handicapped, gifted, and non-handicapped students. This study found that mainstreamed mildly handicapped students reported a lower academic and social self-efficacy than their non-handicapped and gifted peers.

Sometimes, in students with disabilities, it can be said that the first problem is that there is not enough effort put in on the part of the student. Lackaye & Margalit (2006) conducted a study that examine effort, self-perceptions and achievement in students with learning disabilities. According to Lackaye & Margalit (2006, p. 432), "effort and achievement are often related" and too often, students with learning disabilities are perceived by adults as never putting in a great deal of effort. The results of Lackaye and Margalit were "for students with learning disabilities, academic achievement, academic self-efficacy, and negative mood contributed significantly to the prediction of effort" (2006, p. 440). In this study done by Lackaye and Margalit (2006), there was a significant relationship between the amount of effort being put in by students with disabilities and their level of self-efficacy.

Margolis and McCabe (2004) discuss that struggling learners usually have a low academic self-efficacy, which allows them to give up easily and avoid similar tasks in the future. Having a poor self-efficacy, makes it very difficult for students with disabilities to complete any task, especially academic ones.

A study completed by Lackaye and Margalit (2008) shows academic self-efficacy in students with learning disabilities was examined. "Not surprisingly, when compared to peers, students with learning disabilities have reported lower academic self-efficacy as well as
decreased academic competence” (Lackaye & Margalit, 2008, p. 443). Students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to do better academically and those who have a lower self-efficacy are more likely to do poorly academically. Self-efficacy has a major effect on students with disabilities according to research.

**Promoting student’s self-efficacy**

Now that we have a clear understanding as to what student efficacy is, let’s look at the factors that can promote self-efficacy in the academic fields of reading and writing. Self-efficacy for reading refers to individuals’ assessment of how well they think they can accomplish a particular reading task, which is influenced by how well they have done on similar tasks, including any accompanying feedback and encouragement they received (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Schunk and Rice (1993) examined reading self-efficacy and found that young students who received training to help with their reading self-efficacy and strategy use were better readers. It is found that promoting reader self-efficacy to students will improve their overall self-efficacy (Ferrara, 2005).

Ferrara (2005) also states:

One method used that was found beneficial to student reader self-efficacy is providing appropriate-level reading material. This does not mean each student receives that same reading level material even though they are in the same grade. It falls on the teacher to know their students reading level and differentiate materials based on reading levels. When students feel they can comprehend the reading material given to them, their self-efficacy will also improve. Students should also be given a choice of reading materials, through conversations or interest inventories, the teacher should discover what the reader’s interests are, and then provide an appropriate selection of reading materials.
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The teacher should also take the time to activate prior knowledge.

According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2002), a reader’s background knowledge influences the amount and type of information that is recalled or comprehended, and activation of prior knowledge. Using these and other reading strategies will help in promoting a reader’s self-efficacy.

Reading competence develops over time. According to Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), students are more apt to engage in a task (such as reading a given passage) if they believe they can accomplish the task with some effort. Teachers should also help students set goals. Goals are important aspects of learning and motivation. Students need to set goals that they can accomplish and that are not out of their reach. When they can compare their goals they can see the accomplishments that they have made. This can be very motivating and can raise self-efficacy for reading and for any academic subject.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher efficacy can be defined as teachers’ beliefs in their abilities to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Burl, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer looked at general education teachers’ efficacy and special education teachers’ efficacy when working with students with special needs. Results of a survey given showed that general education teachers’ self-efficacy was lower than special education teachers’ efficacy when working with special education students. General education teachers reported that they did not receive as much professional development and training as the special education teachers. This is an issue because there are special education students in general education classrooms. Burl et. al. also explored the needs for in-service training based on teacher type. It was found that general education teachers
requested and needed more training than the special education teachers. The last thing that was
looked at was success in teaching students with special needs, understanding inclusion, and
getting through to the student. Special education teachers had a higher success rate than the
general education students.

Teachers’ self-efficacy has been linked to student outcomes and to his or her behavior
(Leyser, 2011). Tschan nen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) reported that teachers’ efficacy
beliefs were related to students’ achievement, motivation and students’ own sense of efficacy.
Teachers’ self-efficacy was associated with their classroom behavior, such as the efforts they
invested in teaching and their goals. Teachers with a high sense of efficacy were more open to
new ideas and were more willing to experiment with new methods to meet the needs of their
students (Leyser, 2011). Greater efficacy enabled teachers to be less critical of student errors
and persevere with students who were having difficulties. Teachers with a greater sense of
efficacy were more inclined to perceive placement of students with disabilities in regular
classrooms as appropriate and were less likely to refer these students to special education
(Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998). They were more confident that they could successfully
instruct and manage students with special needs who were included in their classes (Brownell &
Pajares, 1999).

Brady and Woolfson (2008) explored the relationship between teacher’s role, self-
efficacy, attitudes towards disabled people, teaching experience, and training, on teachers’
attributions for children’s difficulties in learning. Teachers participated in teacher training or
coursework that addressed topics such as characteristics of students with disabilities, inclusion,
curricular adaptations, behavior management, and assistive technology has been found to be
associated with higher self-efficacy scores for perceived capability to work with students.
STUDENT EFFICACY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

(Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Buell et al., 1999; Lancaster & Bain, 2007). However, Freytag (2001) reported that, regardless of the number of inclusion courses completed at the undergraduate level, these courses did not have a significant impact on teacher self-efficacy scores. From this study, findings were revealed that, compared with general education candidates, special education candidates had a significantly higher score in all five areas. These can all be factors that relate to a special education students’ self-efficacy in the general education classroom and the special education classroom.

How comfortable a teacher feels around people with disabilities in general is also likely to have some impact on his/her attitude toward teaching children with learning support needs. Studies by Leyser et al. (1994) and Parasuraman (2006) have both suggested there may be a relationship between experience of disabled people and teachers’ attitudes. The ability for teachers to successfully facilitate learning has been found to be related to student outcomes such as achievement (Ross, 1992), and to motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). Stein and Wang (1988) reported that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy when more willing to modify teaching methods to accommodate student needs. Soodak and Podell (1993) found that regular and special educators with a high sense of efficacy were most likely to be supportive of inclusive placements. Moreover, teachers evidencing high efficacy were found to be more willing to take responsibility for meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties in their own classrooms.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory offers a useful conceptual framework for examining teachers’ beliefs about children’s difficulties in learning. Bar-Tal (1978) defined attributions as the inferences that observers make about the causes of behavior, either their own or those of other people.
Attributions that teachers make about their pupils could have important consequences in the classroom for teachers' behaviors and pupil outcomes. For example, a teacher who attributes a pupil's failure in a test to external factors may modify teaching practices. A teacher giving help to a child on an easy task may negatively impact on the child's self-perception as he/she might interpret the help as a low ability cue. Teachers expressed less anger and more pity towards the children with learning difficulties and held lower expectations of their future success (Brady & Woolfson, 2008). Teacher efficacy needs to be looked at when looking at special education students' self-efficacy.

**Parental Support for Self-Efficacy**

A child's self-efficacy can be supported at home from the child's family. However, in order for this to occur, the family must feel empowered. Van Haren and Fiedler (2008) explain that once a family has a good sense on their own self-efficacy to solve problems for the student, they are more willing to try again. Van Haren and Fidler give this example:

One special education professional showed a parent how to incorporate letter recognition into the family's daily routine with their first grade son, who was struggling with beginning reading skills. When the student started to see marked improvement in their son's reading ability, their confidence rose and they became more motivated to tackle other problems. (2008, p. 233)

This is one example that shows what a family can do when they feel empowered and how they can help their child.

A parent's influence can play a strong role in their child's self-efficacy (Bandura, et. al., 2001). Praising and encouraging children is a very likely way to get them to strive to attain higher goals. "Self-appraisal of capabilities determines goal aspirations. Indeed, the stronger the
perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal aspirations people adopt and the firmer is their commitment to them” (Bandura, et. al., 2001, p. 189). The more a family believes in their child, the more likely they will reach for higher goals and accomplishments.

Peer Support for Self-Efficacy

Another support that is not often thought about is the support of the classmates. Peers can have a profound effect on each other. Danielsen et. al. (2009) states that:

Positive student interaction may nurture student’s’ needs for competence and autonomy through a shared focus of learning activities. By sharing ways of problem solving, giving and receiving positive responses on tasks, providing positive attitudes towards school work, and encouraging student dialogue and cooperation, social support from classmates can represent effective support of learning and contribute to constructing a prolearning culture in the academic domain (p. 305).

Students feed off of each other and the sense of fitting in (Bandura, 1997). If student’s classmates are setting high goals, it is more likely that they will try to achieve the same goals, in order to fit in.

Determining Placement for Students with Disabilities

When placement is determined for a special education student, the IEP team looks at the student’s least restrictive environment. Yell (2016) states:

Least restrictive environment refers to the mandate within IDEA that students with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with their peers who do not have disabilities. LRE is not a particular setting (Yell, 2016). IDEA requires mainstreaming or inclusion when the general education setting can provide an appropriate education. Alternate placements for special education students include a special
STUDENT EFFICACY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

education classroom, a special education school and institution according to the continuum of placements table.

The IEP team determines the placement along the continuum that is the least restrictive setting in which a student will receive an appropriate education. Restrictiveness is defined, for purpose of the continuum by proximity to the general education classroom. Education in the general education classroom is the preferred option so long as it is consistent with an appropriate education (Yell, 2016). Champagne (1993) asserted that school districts should adopt a sequential model when making placement decisions. The sequential model is an organized way of applying LRE requirement to whatever facts a particular student's situation requires. According to the model, the IEP team should go through the following steps: (1) The team determines that a student is eligible for services, (2) The team defines what constitutes what constitutes appropriate educational services for student, (3) The team ask if appropriate educational services can be delivered in the general education classroom in its current form, (4) The team asks whether these appropriate educational services can be delivered in the general education classroom if the settings are modified through the addition of supplementary aids and services. (5) If the team determines that the general education setting, even with supplementary aids and services, is not appropriate, the team should determine placement by moving along the continuum of alternative placements one step at a time, from least restrictive settings to more restrictive one. Ask whether services called for in the IEP can be met at each of the settings until one is agreed upon. (6) In the context of the primary placement chosen, ask if there are additional opportunities for integration for some portion of the student's school day. If yes those opportunities should be met (Champagne, 1993).
A general education classroom with resource support contains general education students and special education students. There is a general education teacher and a special education teacher who spends a portion or all of their day in the general education classroom. The two teachers work together to co-teach the classroom. Co-teaching is defined as at least two appropriately credentialed professionals that have equivalent credentials and employment status. They can truly be partners in their instructional endeavors on behalf of the students. Also the co-teachers should bring different types of expertise to their practice (Friend & Cook 2013 pg. 163).

Having two teachers in the room offers extra support, services and aids for the students with disabilities. The general education students also benefit from having two teachers in the room. Friend and Cook (2013) explain that:

The co-teaching method should ensure high-quality education for students who have disabilities or other unique needs. Students who are academically gifted will also benefit from the co-teaching model. They will have more opportunities in a co-taught classroom to complete alternative assignments and participate in enrichment activities. Average students receive more adult interaction in teacher led, small group activities. Students who are at risk for failure but do not qualify for special education, also benefit from a co-taught room (p.54).

In the general education classroom with resource support, students with disabilities have the chance to interact with their non-disabled peers all day long. They are in the same setting all day and students with disabilities can be seen as equals.
The self-contained classroom is a classroom that serves all special education students. The classroom teacher is a special education teacher. There are less students in the self-contained classroom than the general education classroom. Students in the self-contained classroom vary in disabilities and may be at different levels within the classroom. It is the special education teacher’s job to individualize the student’s educational programs based on their IEP. These students may have interaction with their general education peers during lunch and specials but they spend at least half of their day with peers with disabilities only. The self-contained classroom offers less time for students with disabilities to socialize with their non-disabled peers.

Students in the self-contained classroom receive more support from their classroom teacher because there are less students in the classroom. There is also a classroom paraprofessional that is there for support for the students. The students receive a more intense instruction that is individualized to their needs.

**Chapter Summary**

All students, under current legislation, have the right to a FAPE. The founding document to ensure that a student with a disability receives a FAPE, is an IEP. Within the IEP document, a student’s LRE is determined and educational placement is determined. The LRE is an important role in the student’s educational plan. It determines how students will be educated and who their peers will be. The LRE can affect the student’s self-efficacy.
The current research focuses on how self-efficacy affects the learning of students with disabilities. It was found that students would be much more inclined to give up on tasks, if they had a low self-efficacy. Also, the trait of giving up on things easily will carry over to other areas of the students with disabilities' lives (Konrad, et al., 2007). There was also a great deal of research stating that students without disabilities have a higher self-efficacy than students with disabilities. When students are with their non-disabled peers for the majority of their school day, they tend to have a lower self-efficacy. Overall, it is important to realize, through the literature, that self-efficacy has an extreme effect on the lives of individuals with disabilities (Chambers, et al., 2008 and Nota, et al., 2007).
Chapter III
Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine students' self-efficacy in different special education settings. Data was collected from fourth and fifth grade students who receive special education services in an instructional classroom or a general education classroom with resource support. This study focused on students' academic and social self-efficacy.

Participants

A total of twenty-eight special education students were surveyed on their self-efficacy. All fourth and fifth grade students tested were enrolled in the special education system and had at least one label on their IEP. They learn their core academics in either a general education classroom with resource support or an instructional special education classroom. The school is located in a suburb of Chicago, IL. These students come from a low income household based on the free and reduced lunch program. All of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Instrumentation

There was one instrument used to collect data for this study. The instrument used was the Social Competence Rating Scale for Children (SCRSC). This survey collects data on a student’s self-efficacy. The School Competence section (3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) has an alpha reliability coefficient of .77. The other social Competence section (questions 11, 12 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19) has an alpha reliability coefficient of .84. The Good Peer Relations section (questions 4, 12, 16, and 20) has an alpha reliability coefficient of .84. The SCRSC can be found in appendix B. The validity for this instrument was not provided.
Procedures

All selected participants were given a permission slip that was taken home and signed by legal guardians. They were given one week to turn in their permission slip. Each teacher received copies of the survey to pass out to students once permission slip was returned. Each teacher was also given a letter with instructions on how to give the survey and told they were allowed to answer questions that the students may have. The teachers are asked to read through the directions with their students and then have students completed the survey quietly. Students tuned in their surveys to their teacher. The teacher then returned the surveys back to the researcher to be analyzed.

Data Collection

Students that were selected to participate in this study were given a permission slip, but their names were kept anonymous. Each student was given the self-efficacy survey and directions were read aloud to them. They completed their survey with their teacher. All pertinent demographic data was placed on the surveys by the students. Students answered questions all questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered from the SCRC survey. The survey was scored and each student was given a SCRC score. This score along with demographic information was placed in an excel worksheet. The mean score for each question on the SCRC survey was found. A graph was created from the data collected.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the students who will be surveyed and their background history. The students will complete the All About Me survey and submit it to be reviewed and analyzed.
The data will be collected in order to answer the question: Who has a higher self-efficacy, special education students in an instructional classroom or special education students in a general education classroom with resource support?

Permission slips will be sent out in January 2016 to students who will be asked to participate in the survey. After permission slips are collected, the survey will be given to students to complete in sections so they will not be overwhelmed. There will be three parts to the survey and they will complete the survey on three separate days. After surveys are completed, they will be analyzed to determine where students have higher self-efficacy.
Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the surveys administered to determine which special education students tend to have a higher self-efficacy. There was a total of twenty-eight students surveyed and scores were given. The data was put into an excel spreadsheet and analyzed. The results of this analysis will be presented in this chapter.

Demographics

Twenty-eight students were surveyed. Each student was given a self-efficacy survey. The demographic information that was gathered and relevant to the study consisted of gender, grade, and educational placement. The results showed thirteen out of twenty-eight or forty-six percent of the student's surveyed were females and fifteen out of twenty-eight or fifty-four percent of the students surveyed were males. Fifty-four percent of the students who were surveyed were in fifth grade while forty-six percent were in fourth grade. Finally, fourteen out of twenty-eight or fifty percent of special education students surveyed spent their educational day in the general education classroom while the other fourteen students spent their educational day in an instructional classroom.

Self-Efficacy

A survey on self-efficacy was given to twenty-eight students. When surveys were scored, three areas were looked at and averages were determined to compare self-efficacy between the special education students in the instructional classroom and the general education classroom. The areas of self-efficacy that were looked at were school competence, social competence, and peer relation.
Table 2

*Self-Efficacy Survey Mean Scores of Special Education Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Setting</th>
<th>Social Competence</th>
<th>School Competence</th>
<th>Peer Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. Ed.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information in Table 2 shows the mean or average scores for self-efficacy of students in school competence, social competence, and peer relation.

**School Competence**

In the area of school competence, the special education students in the general education classroom had a mean score of 2.56 while the special education students in the instructional classroom have a mean score of 2.98. This study shows that special education students in the instructional classroom have a higher self-efficacy in school competence.

**Social Competence**

The next area examined is social competence where the special education students in the general education classroom had a mean score of 2.33 while the special education students in the instructional classroom have a mean score of 2.65. This study also shows a higher self-efficacy for students in the instructional classroom in the area of social competence.
Peer Relation

The last area examined was peer relation. The special education students in the general education classroom had a mean score of 2.7 while the special education students in the instructional classroom have a mean score of 3.07. Again, special education students in the instructional classroom have a higher self-efficacy than the special education students in the general education classroom.

*Figure 1.* Comparison of special education (SE) and Gen. Ed. (GE) scale score averages across efficacy domains

In general, when looking at the bar graph comparison, special education students in the general education classroom have a lower self-efficacy in all three areas than the special education students in the instructional classroom. These findings follow what the current literature says about special education students and self-efficacy. The students compare themselves to the other students in their class. The students in the instructional classroom
do not see a difference in abilities where the students in the general education classroom can see the difference in abilities.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on finding the results of the survey. The question of this study was which least restrictive environment do students have a higher self-efficacy, the general education classroom or the instructional classroom setting? The survey used looked at self-efficacy as it pertains to school competence, social competence, and peer relation. When looking at the mean scores, special education students in the self-contained classroom had a higher self-efficacy in all three areas. The chart used looked at each of the questions of the survey and show while the special education students in the instructional classroom have a higher self-efficacy, the special education students in the general education classroom had many areas of overlap with the instructional classroom students. In conclusion, the question of this study was answered.
Discussion and Conclusions

This study was done in order to find the relationship between special education students' educational placement and their self-efficacy. Twenty-eight students participated by taking a survey on self-efficacy. After looking at the results, this chapter will summarize and discuss the findings from chapter four. This chapter will also discuss any educational implications this research may have. Finally, this chapter is going to make suggestions for further research on this particular topic.

Discussion

There is an extensive amount of research on self-efficacy. However, there is less research about special education students' self-efficacy who receive their education in the general education classroom. When research is done on self-efficacy and special education, it mostly refers to students who are taught in a more restrictive classroom than the general education classroom. Research shows a lot of factors can aide in determining a student's self-efficacy. Bandura, et. al. (2001) believe strongly that a parent's influence can play a strong role in their child's self-efficacy. Other factors that play a role in student self-efficacy include teachers, peers, and educational placement.

The results of this study on self-efficacy make sense. The students in the instructional classroom show a higher self-efficacy because they are in a homogeneous classroom. There is no social comparison in the instructional classroom. All students in the instructional classroom have a disability and perform lower educationally. Because of this, no student in the instructional classroom is comparing themselves to another and thinking that they are performing lower. Whereas the special education students in the general education classroom see their non-
disabled peers performing at a much higher rate. This can cause a lower self-efficacy. This also shows true on the social side. Special education students in the general education classroom are not exactly like their peers and therefore have less confidence socially which makes their self-efficacy lower. Special education students in the instructional classroom do not feel ashamed about their abilities because each student in the classroom struggles in one academic area or another. Since these students recognize this, they can be social with each other without thinking one is better than the other.

**Conclusion**

There are many things that attributed to the results of this study. The first thing that affected this study was the sample size. If there was a larger sample size, there would have been a variety of different special education labels. Also, if the sample size would have come from multiple school districts, the students' self-efficacy could have been different as well. This study's sample size came from a low income school district, perhaps if other school districts would have been involved from higher income levels, their self-efficacy could have been higher. Also, with a much larger sample size, the results become more reliable. In this study, there was a small sample size, which led to a relationship between classroom placement and self-efficacy.

Another thing that may have affected the study was student's ability to fully and honestly answer all questions from the survey. Although students were allowed to ask questions and stay anonymous, students may have not taken as much time as they should have and therefore did not answer as honestly as possible. It is difficult to tell if students are being honest or just filling in a paper with answers they think they should be saying. For example, when taking the self-efficacy survey, a question asked if the student seeks out help from a teacher when needed. Students know they are supposed to ask for help even though they do not always do so. The students
could have been dishonest while answering this question. Self-efficacy is something that needs to be self-assessed, so it is difficult to be sure of the accuracy of answers given.

Finally, there was research that shows academic achievement and IQ scores impact one’s self-efficacy. IQ scores could be a variable that affected the results of this study.

**Educational Implications**

The findings of this study, show that there is a relationship between educational classroom placement and a student’s self-efficacy. The more restrictive the environment, the higher the student’s self-efficacy will be. This is important to understand when determining a student’s placement. The research from this study is educationally useful. Through researching self-efficacy, it is important to understand what affects a student’s self-efficacy. Self-efficacy plays a significant role in the student’s educational career as well as post-school life. It is vital to teach students the skills necessary to have a high self-efficacy. It is an important skill that students will need for the future.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study had a good base and a great deal of research to support it. There was however, very little research on special needs students in the general education classroom and their self-efficacy. When researching self-efficacy, there was research on nondisabled students. If there were to be a replication of this study, there are few things that should be changed. The first thing is the sample size. There should be at least one hundred participants in the survey. This would make the study more reliable. Also, these participants should come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, so that there are a variety of participants. There should be an effort made to get participants from each category of special education. Lastly, the survey could be given as a computer base survey so results would be easier to collect.
Also, because there are many variables that play a role to self-efficacy, researching the students home lives could become an important part of this study.

Summary

This study was very informative. Students with disabilities from different educational placements took a survey of self-efficacy. It was shown that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and the least restrictive environment. The students in the instructional classroom have a higher self-efficacy because they compare themselves to the other students in the classroom and do not see a difference in ability. The special education students in the general education classroom also compare themselves to the students in the classroom and see their abilities are lower and therefore have a lower self-efficacy. This study will hopefully be a tool for people to base further studies.
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References


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Appendices

Appendix A: CITI Training
Appendix B: IRB Form
Appendix C: Information Letter and Permission
Appendix D: Self-Efficacy Survey
Appendix A
Appendix B

On File
Dear Parents or Guardian,

My name is Melissa Bonavia and I am the 4th/5th grade resource teacher at Nathan Hale Intermediate School. I am working on my final project in the Multicategorical Special Education Program. I am going to be giving your child a survey that assesses their self-efficacy.

By signing this consent form, you agree to allow me to use the information from your child’s survey as data in my study. This form also ensures that your child participated at their own free will. All students will stay anonymous in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child completing the survey, please feel free to contact me at [contact information removed].

Sincerely,

Melissa Bonavia

PERMISSION FORM

____________ My child has permission to participate in the survey on self-efficacy

Student’s Name: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________
Appendix D
## ALL ABOUT ME

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I can handle it when things don't go the way I want them to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I can stand up for myself when other kids put pressure on me to think the way they do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I finish my schoolwork.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I have many friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I can ignore it when someone teases me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I like to be a leader.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I am well organized.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I am friendly towards other kids.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I can accept it when I'm told not to do things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### ALL ABOUT ME

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. I can work well even when other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things are going on around me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I make friends easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I can handle it well when I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall at something.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I like to talk about my ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I can work well even when there are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no adults around to help me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kids like to sit next to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I can handle frustration.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I ask questions when rules seem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unfair or unclear.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I can get started on things by myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The kids in my class like me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>