PREPARATION, TEACHER EFFICACY AND RETENTION:
HOW NOVICE TEACHERS NEGOTIATE URBAN SCHOOLS

A Dissertation in
Educational Theory and Policy
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2011
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This study investigated how novice teachers in urban schools manage the transition from preparation to practice. Through the lens of teacher efficacy, the research presented herein was built around two groups of guiding questions: 1) Do novice teachers in at-risk urban schools feel adequately prepared to effectively perform the task of teaching? Does this impact retention and commitment to teaching? 2) If teachers in at-risk urban schools feel less prepared than others do, why do they feel this way and how do they explain how it impact their teaching? These questions were addressed using a two-phase explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The first, quantitative, phase involved the analysis of nationally representative data from the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), 2007-2008 Common Core of Data (CCD) and the 2008-2009 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) (All NCES data sets). The second, qualitative, phase consisted of interviews with novice teachers working in urban schools. Analysis reveals that, when compared with novice teachers in other school, novice teachers in urban schools are less prepared for teaching (based on measurable qualifications). What is more, when compared with teachers holding similar qualifications, novice teachers in urban schools also feel less prepared (as measured by teacher efficacy).

Novice teachers who feel underprepared for teaching, furthermore, tend to have significantly lower levels of commitment to teaching and first-year teachers who feel underprepared are significantly more likely to leave teaching or switch schools. Teachers explain that feeling underprepared is most likely the result of a collection of urban-specific stressors that they were not exposed or prepared for to during teacher training. This study finds support for teacher-training programs focused on increased exposure to urban students and schools, direct guidance regarding several of the urban-specific stressors and an explicit philosophy of education. These findings, by uncovering the knowledge and experiences that novice urban teachers often lack during the first year, also support the need for high quality, district-specific induction programs.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend warm thanks to the many people who have helped me through the process of writing this dissertation. I owe deepest gratitude to my committee members, colleagues, friends and family members. First, I would like to thank Dr. Dana L. Mitra, my advisor and chair, for her constant encouragement and support, and for reading and re-reading everything I have sent to her over the past few years. I would also like to think Dr. David Gamson for his mentorship, humor and constant support, Dr. Katerina Bodovski for her cheerleading and for re-learning how to understand multi-level models for me, and Dr. Stephanie L. Knight for her wisdom and guidance. I would also like to thank the entire faculty of the Educational Theory and Policy Department for their encouragement and support through all of my graduate work. I would also like to thank Dr. Erica Frankenberg for being my unofficial committee member and for coming into work every day.

Secondly, I would like to thank my writing group, Katie Reed and Saamira Halabi. I extend gratitude to Katie for always asking the right questions at the right time, and Sam for reminding me to look at the big picture. They both tirelessly read sections of my dissertation with critical eyes and gave me wonderful feedback. They can be credited with making my writing stronger than it ever was before. I would also like to thank several of my other colleagues in the department, Emily Crawford, Mary Osif and Tiffanie Lewis for their kindness, support and humor.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family. Anne Eckert, my mother, always a teacher, thank you for listening and for being there for me every second of every day. To Tim Eckert, my father, thank you for always checking in on me and providing distraction when I needed it. To Carolyn Kruk, thank you for being my sister and best friend. To Jonah Kruk, thank you for being born and for making me incredibly happy over the past year. And to Lydia, my other sister, thank you for reminding me of the world outside of graduate school and always listening when I needed to talk.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the current climate of educational accountability, the inequitable distribution of teachers and the “failure” of teacher education programs have become focal points in the discussion of how to provide a quality education to all students (Duncan, 2009). This discussion, furthermore, continues to be especially salient for schools serving poor minority students in urban areas. These teachers in particular, according to rhetoric, are unprepared, ineffective and transitory (Ingersoll 2001; Jacob, 2007; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1990). The research community, crucially, has yet to uncover how best to prepare teachers for the tasks of teaching and staying in these high-needs urban schools, and this study addresses a piece of this challenging question (Levine, 2006). In this study I examine the question of urban teacher training from multiple angles, drawing on theoretical notions of teacher learning and teacher cognition (thinking and beliefs) in order to investigate the perspective of teachers themselves. I rely heavily on the input and opinions of novice teachers as experts, as they not only have experience working and teaching in urban schools, but their preparation experiences are still fresh and salient enough to make the crucial connections between preparation and practice that researchers have yet to understand.

In this chapter, I begin by defining the problem that this study addresses: first, that urban teachers are under-prepared, and second that the research community has yet to uncover effective ways actually to prepare urban teachers. I follow the problem statement with a description of the research questions, and lastly, I close with an overview of the present study and provide of descriptive outline of the entire dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

Concerns regarding educational equity have consistently haunted U.S. education reformers throughout the history of public schooling. Today, educational equity gaps are
discussed in terms of an ‘achievement gap’ between students of different racial, ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Concerning the achievement gap white, upper and middle class, suburban, native English speakers tend to have the best educational outcomes (Chowdursky et al., 2009; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003; Peterson & West, 2003). Schools serving large numbers of students on the failing end of the achievement gap are disproportionately located in large, urban areas and educate a majority of minority and immigrant students (Lankford et al., 2002; Chowdursky et al., 2009). High-needs urban students notoriously score lower on achievement tests and are more likely to fail or drop out than white students in neighboring wealthy suburbs.

Urban students in New York State, for example, were four times more likely than suburban students to perform below basic proficiency, and non-urban students had a 50% greater likelihood than urban students of performing at a basic proficiency level in reading and math, according to one study (Lankford et al., 2002). Based on these outcomes, politicians, academics and media figures, who draw a good deal of attention to individual failing schools and districts, attempt to identify specific causes for the failure of schools or entire districts to educate their students properly (West & Peterson, 2003). A low quality teaching force in high-needs urban schools is one element commonly cited as a major aspect of this inadequate and inequitable education (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Lankford et al, 2002; Talbert, 1990; Horng, 2009).

According to the voices of reformers and other influential actors, high-needs urban schools are burdened by the inequitably distributed teacher force in the U.S. in addition to violent neighborhoods, a lack of funding and student poverty (all factors connected with lowered student achievement) (Achinstein, Ogawa & Speigman, 2004). Many of these influential actors explain that teachers in underperforming urban schools and districts are ‘unqualified’, ‘inexperienced’ and ‘transitory’ (Ingersoll 2001; Jacob, 2007; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). The metrics researchers and politicians use to measure the degree of qualification—commonly blanket requirements including college GPA, standardized test scores or certification status—are intricately linked to elements in the teacher preparation process (Jacob, 2007; Darling-Hammond
The teachers in high-needs urban schools, theoretically, hold the label 'under-prepared for the act of teaching'—yet this label assumes, first, that there is an accurate way to determine whether a teacher is 'well prepared', and second, that this label can apply to a teacher regardless of the teaching context.

Claims regarding an under-qualified teaching force, although not entirely new, have gained political attention recently, becoming one of the focal points of the current administration's education plans. In a speech given at Columbia University's Teachers College, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009), claimed that "by almost any standard, many, if not most of the nation's 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century." He further explained that part of the upcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will include legislation to improve the quality of teacher preparation, especially preparation for teaching in 'high-needs' areas. Despite explaining this piece of his legislative plan and, effectively, demonizing current pre-service teacher training, he actually highlighted an even more critical issue. Citing Arthur Levine (2006), Duncan acknowledged that researchers have yet to uncover what it is that makes teacher education effective or ineffective. Even more recently, Emily Fiestritzer (2011) wrote, "How critical is a teacher-preparation program in determining the future effectiveness of a teacher? Evidence is mounting that the answer is 'not very'" (34). Although Fiestritzer is a staunch supporter of alternative paths to teacher certification, this particular article draws attention to the lack of answers regarding effective teacher preparation.

Despite the growing tendency to place blame on teachers, and especially recently on teacher education, the research community actually has yet to establish a research base that connects the process of teacher training to the experience and action of teaching (Medina, 2009). Inequitable distribution of teacher preparedness and qualification may be one of the reasons for disparities in educational experience, but researchers have yet to create the critical "chain of evidence" (Cochran-Smith, 2005) needed to establish this problem as more than a hypothesis.
Further, they have yet to construct an accurate definition (or definitions) of what well-prepared means. Due to the inadequate research base, reformers cannot fully understand or define the crucial elements of teacher education needed for successful teaching, and more specifically, for successful teaching in urban schools. Understanding what training is needed for successful teaching in urban schools requires a critical examination of teacher training, teacher cognition—understood as teachers' personal perceptions, thinking and beliefs (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002)—and teacher action. It is through making links between these critical processes that I analyze how teacher preparation and teacher induction need to change in order successfully to prepare teachers for urban schools.

This study is situated at the intersection of training and practice, and thus has the power to serve a bidirectional purpose. Although designed with the expressed purpose of informing the policy and practices involved in teacher preparation, I also provide meaningful information for urban schools regarding the experiences of first-year teachers. I have designed the study with the intention of creating an understanding of these teachers that is broad, deep and begins to chip away at the "chain of evidence" that Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2005) and other notable researchers regard as so crucial in understanding the process and effectiveness of teacher education and teacher training.

**Research Questions**

I have chosen to situate this study, first, in an understanding of the disparities in educational experience between students in at-risk urban schools and students in wealthier suburban districts across the country. I, secondly, draw on the lack of critical analysis regarding the preparation of teachers in urban schools. With this in mind, this study addresses the degree to which teachers in at-risk urban schools feel prepared to succeed and remain in these schools, and why they feel as they do. By exploring these issues, I create an understanding of the process behind learning to teach in urban schools, an understanding that includes what those teachers feel
that they needed from their pre-service teacher preparation: what experiences they had, and what was missing.

The study described herein uses an explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), involving the collection of qualitative data to explain and contextualize an analysis of nationally representative quantitative data. I will provide specific descriptions of the variables that I utilize in the methods section, however interpreting the research questions hinges on an understanding of how I chose to measure the concept of perceived preparedness. I measure these perceptions with a concept known as teacher efficacy. In short, teacher efficacy can be understood as “Teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning” (Hoy, 2000). In other words, teacher efficacy measures a teacher's perception of his or her capacity as a teacher, and is a vital part of understanding and studying teacher quality.

Because of the sequential nature of the study, I began with a set of quantitative questions and then developed a set of qualitative questions based on my initial findings. I derived the specific qualitative and quantitative questions from the following sets of guiding questions: 1) Do novice teachers in at-risk urban schools feel adequately prepared to perform the task of teaching effectively? Does this impact retention and commitment to teaching? 2) If teachers in at-risk urban schools feel less prepared than others do, why do they feel this way and how do they feel that it impacts their teaching? From these questions, I constructed with the following specific, quantitative questions.

1) What are the differences in levels of preparation and teacher efficacy between teachers in at-risk urban schools and those in other schools?

2) How do reported preparation experiences and urban teaching impact teacher efficacy, from the perspective of novice teachers?

3) Does the relationship between teacher efficacy and the first years of teaching in at-risk urban schools explain any aspect of a teacher's willingness and decision to remain in the teaching field?
After I addressed these research questions quantitatively, I developed the following questions for the second, qualitative, portion of the study. These questions, notably, provide deeper meaning to how teacher efficacy influences the process of teaching and learning to be an urban teacher.

Based on the results of the first phase of research, these questions make a distinction between the two strands of teacher efficacy: personal teacher efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE). This distinction will be explored further in the review of the literature and theoretical framework.

1) Why do teachers in urban at-risk schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?
2) How and why does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?
3) What are critical elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?
   a. Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?
4) What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE and retention?
   What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?

In this study, I not only use teacher efficacy and retention as measures of program effectiveness in the general population of novice urban teachers, but I also use qualitative data to examine exactly what learning processes and experiences contribute to the creation and maintenance of that teacher efficacy. While, in the quantitative phase, I assume that teacher efficacy and retention accurately measure how effectively prepared a teacher was. In the second, qualitative phase, I question this assumption by creating a more descriptive understanding of what teacher efficacy might actually measure. Using the qualitative data I was able to examine the other experiences and elements that build and sustain high feelings of teaching efficacy, opening myself to the idea that teacher training might not actually build successful teachers.

In designing this study I chose to investigate my own assumption that teaching and learning to teach in an urban school is a different experience and requires a different set of strategies, tools and resources than teaching and learning to teach in a suburban school. Crucially, I will demonstrate that teachers with similar levels of preparation have different levels of teacher
efficacy based on the type of school in which they work. This finding has consequences for school
districts, teacher preparation policy, and continued research on teacher efficacy and teacher
education. This finding also indicates the need for changes in teacher training and induction
programs for urban districts. Although previous studies have begun to unpack the relationship
between preparation and practice, I take this relationship further. In Linda Darling-Hammonds
*Powerful Teacher Education* (2006) she identifies crucial attributes necessary for successful teacher
training; yet, in a charter school created by Linda Darling-Hammond and staffed by ‘powerful
teachers’, she has not able to achieve the results of the schools in her original study (Pogash,
4.15.2010). Although slightly disheartening, her inability to achieve her goals indicates, not that
nothing can be done, but that the research community has yet to figure out what it means to
design effective teacher preparation; through this study, I add to the evolving understanding of
this topic.

**Overview of the Study**

The presentation of this mixed-methods study is divided into eleven chapters. The first
four chapters provide an introduction to the study and methods, the next six chapters present the
results, both quantitative and qualitative, and the final chapter describes policy implications and a
course of future research. More specifically, Chapter 1 (the present chapter) introduces the
problem of inequitable teacher distribution and highlights the narrow understanding of effective
preparation for urban teaching. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature relevant to the
study. In this chapter I focus on relevant research regarding urban teacher quality, teacher
retention, teacher efficacy and specific literature on urban teacher preparation models. Chapter 3
presents the conceptual framework that I have constructed for this study. I use the social-cognitive
framework behind teacher efficacy theory to create a chain of evidence that connects pre-service
experiences to in-service cognitions within the urban environment, which I then connect to
teacher retention. In creating this chain of evidence, I also rely on theories of teacher learning to
understand the crucial links that create these relationships. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the
methods and research design that I used to govern this sequential-explanatory study. More specifically, I began with an analysis of nationally representative quantitative data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Common Core of Data (CCD) and expanded upon my results by conducting qualitative interviews with a number of novice teachers in urban districts.

Chapters 5 through 10 present the results of the study. Chapter 5 contains the results of the quantitative portion of the study, in which I was able to establish significant relationships between urbanicity, preparation, teacher efficacy and retention. In this chapter I systematically address the quantitative research questions outlined previously. Chapters 6 through 10, therefore, provide detailed descriptions of the qualitative data in order to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative results. Chapter 6 provides an introduction to the qualitative data. Chapter 7 addresses why teachers in urban schools have lower feelings of teacher efficacy, Chapter 8 examines how teachers explain the impact of low teacher efficacy on retention and Chapter 9 provides an overview of the essential elements for urban teacher preparation and addresses why teacher preparation can have a differential impact on different components of teacher efficacy. Chapter 10, lastly, concludes the qualitative results by providing summaries to answer each of the research questions. The final chapter, Chapter 11, details the major conclusions and policy implications that I have developed. In this chapter I present specific implications for both teacher preparation programs and school districts and make a case that change needs to occur in both of these arenas. I close this chapter with a discussion of future research concerning novice teacher efficacy in urban schools.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature, namely academic research and government documents, that provide a basis for this research. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the way in which I present the literature. I begin by describing the landscape of urban teacher quality, focusing on several different measurements. I follow that description with an explanation of the complexities involved in studying teacher retention for novice urban teachers and a brief summary of studies related to teacher efficacy, a crucial measure in reimagining how teacher quality can be studied. I close with a summary of current methods common in the preparation of urban teachers. Although previous research has begun to address crucial elements contained in the stated research questions, the research community has yet to examine the specific relationships between urban teacher quality, teacher retention, teacher efficacy and the elements of teacher preparation that are the focus of this study.

Figure 2.1: Narrowing the Research Focus
1) **Urban Teacher Quality**

Politicians, researchers and other influential actors often explain the achievement gap as a direct result of the low quality of teachers in low-achieving schools. Because of the rhetorical connection between teacher quality and student achievement, and the high proportion of low-achievers attending urban schools, researchers have generated a good deal of literature intended to investigate the disparities in teacher quality between urban and non-urban (read suburban) students. Qualified teachers, this research reveals, are not equitably distributed among the students in U.S. public schools, regardless of the way teacher quality is operationalized. Schools primarily serving disadvantaged students, especially ethnic minorities and those in poor urban and rural schools, are therefore less likely to staff highly qualified teachers (Allgood & Rice, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2010). In fact, not only have states been unsuccessful in fulfilling No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) goal of placing a 'highly qualified teacher' (HQT) in every classroom; many who do not meet the credential requirement teach in poor urban and rural schools (Keller, 2007; Eppley, 2009). Although some urban and rural districts are beginning to make some progress to close the distribution gap, it clearly is not enough progress (Keller, 2007).

Urban students also face many obstacles beyond the distribution of qualified teachers. Schools serving poor minority students in large urban areas face a myriad of challenges, challenges that are almost all related to the fact that the students are often living in poverty. The students in these schools come from neighborhoods plagued with gang violence, where students have the highest rates of dropping out and getting pregnant and the lowest scores on standardized achievement tests (Noguera, 2003; Milanowski et al., 2009). Not only do these students come to school with a significant disadvantage, especially when compared with students from wealthy suburban areas, but the schools that these students attend also suffer from a significant disadvantage in terms of elements such as funding and parental involvement (Levin, 2009). Urban schools are said to suffer from a 'lack of resources', an amorphous term that can refer to anything
from textbooks to 'quality teachers' (Noguera, 2003). Due to the numerous hurdles, students continue to fail, drop out, and feel distanced and disconnected from their schooling as the achievement gap between wealthy white students and poor minority students remains stagnant (Desimone & Long, 2010).

The achievement gap, although related simultaneously to many different sources ranging from student poverty to gang violence or lack of parental involvement, is often attributed to the lack of teachers who are dedicated, motivated and qualified to teach urban students (Buddin & Zammaro, 2009; Desimone & Long, 2010). In her book, Urban teaching: The essentials, Lois Weiner (2006) states, “At its best, teaching in city schools is exhausting, exhilarating, frustrating and fulfilling” (3). Despite the hint of optimism Weiner invokes in her book, a volume intended for first-year teachers in urban schools, the teachers of the urban disadvantaged are often unprepared to cope with the specific needs of urban students who live in poverty and possess low levels of human, social and cultural capital (Noguera, 2003; Hallinan, 2008).

Like many issues of concern for educational researchers, No Child Left Behind (2001) and its definition of a 'Highly Qualified Teacher' (HQT) play a significant role in the discourse on teacher education and teacher quality. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a federal education policy, controls a significant amount of Federal funding for schools, specifically those funds tied to Title I status. One goal articulated under NCLB was to place a 'Highly Qualified Teacher' in every classroom of every school by the end of the 2005-2006 school year (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Qualifications for Teachers and Professionals, 2004). In doing this, the text of NCLB designates what makes a teacher highly qualified. According to that definition, “in order to be considered highly qualified under NCLB, teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree, have full state certification, and demonstrate competency in the core academic subjects they teach” (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2006, 1). The report continues by explaining that “ensuring America’s teachers are of the highest quality is a major national priority—they hold the key to student success and our nation’s future” (1). The assumption
behind this measure of incoming teacher quality is that a teacher who holds the credentials outlined in NCLB (2001) will be more effective in the classroom. This teacher, following from this assumption, will better ensure the success of his or her students on tests. Not only must teachers work to satisfy these requirements; states also must measure (and improve) the extent to which highly qualified teachers are instructing students, especially minority and disadvantaged students.

Notably, inequitable distribution of teacher quality has also produced studies that investigate 'teacher tracking', the process by which teachers of uneven quality are distributed among schools of matching uneven levels of achievement (Goldhaber, Gross & Player, 2011). Studying the "sorting and socialization" (557) of novice teachers in two different districts, Achinstein, Ogawa and Speiglman (2004) discovered that a unique interplay between state policy, teacher background (including personal background and preparation) and local context was responsible for sorting teachers into different tracks divided by "social" disparities among both students and teachers (592). The disparities found between groups of teachers included measures of program quality as well as more individualized measures of achievement. The process of teacher sorting is also evident in quantitative research. For example, "nonwhite, poor, and low-performing students, particularly those in urban areas, attend schools with less qualified teachers, [and] the current salary structure for teachers likely does not alleviate the inequitable distribution of teachers and may well make it worse", according to Lankford et al. (2002) (p. 54-55).

Admittedly researchers do need to investigate the quality of teachers and teacher preparation of those serving in at-risk and low-performing urban schools, but, in reality, viewing an individual reform to teacher preparation or the teaching profession as a solution can be problematic. As evidenced by current policy, reformers tend to view quality preparation and training as an automatic precursor to teacher success (NCLB definition of HQT). This assumption defines the problematic nature of teacher reform—whether the reform effort targets teacher preparation or professional development—because little evidence exists to support this assumption (Cochran-Smith, 2005). As previously mentioned, the Federal Definition of a 'highly
qualified teacher’ is based entirely on the completion of an appropriate preparation program—assuming that these programs produce teachers who can ensure student success. In other words, the definition assumes that qualified teacher necessarily means quality teacher. The research community, however, has failed to create a reasonable connection between teacher preparation and teacher or student success, regardless of whether one defines teacher success as 'be effective', 'increase test scores', 'connect with students', 'decrease drop-out rates', 'stick around' or 'engage parents' (Desimone & Long, 2010). Although studies exist connecting ‘teacher preparation’ (usually only distinguishing between traditional and alternative preparation pathways (Boyd et al, 2007a)) with certain measures of success, like raising student test scores, they have failed to establish what Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2005) refers to as a valid “chain of evidence” regarding the production of quality teachers in general, let alone regarding teacher quality in at-risk urban school systems.

The need for a “chain of evidence” (Figure 2.2) creates an imperative for the research community to establish crucial links between the various stages of the teacher education process. This process includes specific elements of individual programs (rather than the broad labels of 'traditional' or 'alternative'), teacher practices, as well as the education process that actually occurs in the field and long-term teacher and student outcomes (Cochran-Smith, 2005 p. 303). One way to begin establishing this ‘chain of evidence’ involves an analysis of the relationship between the information and experiences encountered in the preparation process, how prepared a teacher feels in the classroom, and whether or not he or she chooses to stay in that school (or in teaching altogether). In this study, I extend the literature on urban teacher quality and qualification by challenging the current assumptions concerning the inherent relationship between preparation and practice (and between quality and qualified) through an investigation of the way that the urban context impacts this relationship. By establishing a clearly thought out chain of evidence, I am able to create a broad and deep understanding of the process behind learning to be an urban teacher.
2) **Teacher Retention**

While there are many different outcome measures I could have selected for this study—student test scores, teacher retention, and principal evaluations—I chose to study teacher retention. Arguably, using teacher retention (whether or not teachers remain in schools) as an outcome measure can be problematic, especially for urban schools (Ingersoll, 2001). So, although I do not equate teacher retention with teacher quality, I do rely heavily on evidence that cites the critical role teacher retention does play in understanding the broader teacher quality puzzle (Boyd et al. 2007b; Boyd et al. 2010; Sass, Seal & Martin, 2011). For example, the documented impact of measures such as length of experience and stability of a school highlight the need for a better understanding of novice teacher retention. Research does reveal that teachers with more years of experience tend to have students with higher learning gains, but many studies documenting the number of certified teachers or years of experience fail to fully explore the connection between length of experience and teacher quality (Fetler, 1999; Murname & Phillips, 1981). Studies, for example, examining the possible benefits of teacher retention find that increased teaching experience has a positive impact on student learning, but they also find that this effect levels off after the first three to five years of teaching (Gordon, Kane & Staiger, 2006; Ferguson & Ladd 1996). Furthermore, high rates of teacher turnover, in addition to preventing teachers from improving over time, can also significantly reduce the stability and coherence of instruction in a school and increase costs for districts (Boyd et al., 2010; Watlington et al. 2010). Teacher
retention, while complex and far from an explicit measure of teacher quality, is still a necessary element in understanding the quality of urban schools.

High teacher turnover in at-risk schools, a factor that inevitably leads to a less-experienced teaching force, has sparked a great deal of research concerning how and why teachers choose to leave schools (Quartz et al, 2009). Notably, studies (Horng, 2009) find that teachers are more likely to base their preference to work in a particular school on working conditions, rather than perceptions of student characteristics in these schools. Although schools with poor working conditions tend to house an inordinate number of poor minority students (Cosentino de Cohen et al., 2005), teachers feel that their preference for a particular school is connected to working conditions and not to the characteristics of the students. This perceived preference may be accurate, but these studies do not fully question the impact of student demographics on teacher’s beliefs about their abilities as educators and how those beliefs influence a possible decision to change schools or leave the profession.

Teacher turnover has also been empirically linked to crucial challenges that are especially relevant and difficult for urban schools (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010). Ingersoll (2004) found that schools in an “urban poverty” category had the highest rates of teacher turnover in a study using 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). In order to understand reasons for moving schools or leaving teaching, Ingersoll used categories such as retirement, school staffing action, family or personal reason, pursuit of another job, or job dissatisfaction. Interestingly, although only 22.5 % of movers or leavers cited dissatisfaction as a reason for leaving, Ingersoll specifically broke down the sources of dissatisfaction into individual components. His findings, which include higher indicators from urban teachers such as student discipline problems, poor student motivation, inadequate time, and classroom intrusions, create a vivid description of what it means to teach in an urban at-risk school. The logic follows that teaching in a school plagued by urban poverty is an experience quite different from teaching in a
rural or a wealthy suburban area. I draw this conclusion from the evidence that teachers are more likely to cite reasons such as lack of discipline and poor motivation when they leave a school labeled urban high-poverty. Therefore, either these factors are more severe and problematic in urban schools or (and) teachers in these schools are not prepared to cope with these factors.

Lastly, a good deal of controversy exists concerning the use of teacher retention as an outcome measure, especially in a study that focuses on improving the quality of teachers for urban students, as this one does. As previously mentioned, teachers with more experience do tend to foster learning gains in their students, but this does not necessarily indicate that an increase in retention will immediately increase the quality of the teaching force. Much of this debate focuses on understanding the teachers who actually leave, and more specifically, on discovering whether low or high quality teachers are the ones who actually leave the system (Ingersoll, 2001). Recently, the transitory nature of urban teachers has been brought into the public spotlight. In a study of teachers in a high-needs urban district in Texas, Hanushek and Rivkin (2010) found that, while veteran teachers who chose to leave the district tended to be 'less effective' than their counterparts who chose to stay, first-year teachers who changed schools or moved to another district were often more effective than those first-year teachers who chose to stay.

Retention of first-year and novice teachers, therefore, takes on a slightly different and more complicated meaning than the discussion of teacher retention writ-large, and the topic is worthy of unpacking further. First-year teachers who leave schools actually might be the more effective teachers. Furthermore, according to previously cited research, teacher effectiveness improves over the first few years of teaching; thus it is necessary to understand the preparation experiences and classroom perceptions of those who stay and those who leave. In this study I address the issue of novice teacher retention from the perspective of teacher preparation in order to assess the relationship between perceptions of preparedness (known as teacher efficacy) and the decision to remain in an urban school—a topic that has yet to be studied in this manner.
In the study presented herein I also rely on a measure of commitment to the teaching profession to understand anticipated retention. Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) identified three different types of commitment to teaching: commitment to the profession of teaching, commitment to students and commitment to the individual organization or school. In general, these three forms of commitment, as well as other definitions of teacher commitment, imply a meaningful psychological bond between an individual and an object—either the school, the profession in general or the students (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Commitment to the teaching profession is generally measured using questions regarding planned retention (Weiss, 1999; Guarino, Santibanez, 2006 & Daley). Little research, however, has linked planned retention with actual retention in the teaching profession, although it is commonly used as a proxy measure (Weiss, 1999; Huang & Waxman, 2009). The relationship between planned and actual retention is assumed, rather than empirically tested and planned retention is often used as an outcome measure in lieu of actual retention measures (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Bolger & Somech, 2004). Because of the lack of empirical relationship, teacher commitment cannot serve as a direct proxy for teacher retention, but it can be used to help unpack retention on an abstract level. Also as a result of the lack of empirical connection, I measure both planned and actual retention in order to more fully explore retention.

3) Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy, a concept common in educational psychology literature, measures a teacher's perception of his or her capacity as a teacher (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). In this study I propose to focus on teacher efficacy as a way to examine incoming teacher qualification, in order to construct an even richer understanding of how perceived and actual qualifications are distributed (Achinstein, Ogawa & Spigleman, 2004; Cosentino de Cohen et al., 2005). Teacher efficacy measures a teacher's internal cognitions regarding his or her teaching performance. California teachers of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, for example,
report that they do not feel prepared to teach their own students (Rumberger and Gandara, 2004). This finding demonstrates that these teachers do not feel adequately trained to teach low-income immigrant students, they have low feelings of teacher efficacy related to this population. Research indicates that these confidence levels, therefore, are more critical than Rumberger and Gandara acknowledge. Negative self-perception regarding teaching abilities can lead to a lowered teaching confidence that can prevent teachers from making crucial connections with students. Perceptions of classroom preparedness and confidence are best understood and articulated using the concept of teacher efficacy, which has been connected to positive teaching behaviors, to a willingness to remain in teaching and to student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

In studying these perceptions, researchers have linked various measures of teacher efficacy with stress levels, motivation to implement innovation and remain in the teaching profession, and student achievement (Armor et al, 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Shidler, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Crucially, teacher efficacy impacts teacher behavior in a number of different ways. Gibson and Dembo (1984b), for example, reported that teachers with higher levels of teacher efficacy were less likely to give up on a failing student, more likely to divide students into small groups for instruction, and less likely to criticize incorrect responses. Concerning student outcomes, Ashton & Webb (1986) reported that both general teaching efficacy (GTE) and personal teaching efficacy (PTE) greatly increased the amount of variance explained (24% and 46% respectively) in a regression of student math scores. Research reveals that higher GTE teachers tend to have students who outperform the students of lower GTE teachers on standardized tests (Ross, 1992; Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004; Bruce et al., 2010). Research further shows that the presence of teachers with higher teacher efficacy predicts students with higher self-efficacy (or positive self-

\[1\] GTE and PTE are the two main components of the teacher efficacy and will be explained further in the conceptual framework (chapter 3) of this study.
concept) (Anderson et al., 1988; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). These studies indicate the importance of fostering teacher efficacy, not just for the teacher's well being, but also as a factor influencing how long a teacher is willing to remain in a school as well as for the academic success of students.

Notably, little research has analyzed how teacher efficacy differs in urban teachers as compared with non-urban teachers or how the urban context specifically impacts teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy clearly has an effect on all teachers including those in urban environments, although the extent to which the urban environment influences teacher efficacy is unclear. In a qualitative study on classroom practices and teacher efficacy, Warren (2002) found that “Teachers’ low expectations and lack of efficacy often resulted in lower teaching standards, less teacher effort and watered-down curricula for low-achieving students, especially in poor urban schools” (112). Because teacher efficacy does influence urban teachers, and evidence indicates that it influences their teaching, this cognition clearly impacts urban students. Finally, teacher efficacy is also a critical concept in studying novice teachers, because they are still engaged in learning to negotiate teaching, and teacher efficacy is most malleable during early learning (Bandura, 1997).

The teacher preparation process, research suggests, can influence and shape teacher efficacy (Settlage et al., 2009; Wolf et al., 2009). One study, for example, compared the teacher efficacy levels of those in field-based and campus-based teacher training (Thompson, Bakken & Mau, 2009). Researchers found that, while teacher efficacy increased in the first semester for both groups, these levels only continued to increase for those in the field based program. This study, notably, was addressing a teacher’s sense of efficacy for working with diverse groups of students. The majority of research on teacher efficacy and teacher preparation, markedly, has to do with the teacher efficacy of pre-service teachers and the noticeable decline in teacher efficacy they experience during the first year of teaching (Hoy, 2000). The connection between teacher education and in-service teacher efficacy is currently understudied, but the minimal research does indicate that there is a relationship (see also Rotts & Aelterman, 2009). Teacher efficacy, from this
perspective, ought to be considered in the design of teacher preparation programs. Teacher efficacy, because of the connection between both preparation and practice, has become a critical (if not under used) factor in the study of how teacher qualification is measured.

4) The Preparation of Urban Teachers

As early as the 1960s, reformers believed that teachers in at-risk or high-need urban schools needed something different from their teacher training, and since that time several attempts have been made to integrate various urban-focused models into teacher training programs (Rivlin, 1968; Weiner, 2000). Researchers and reformers, drawing on literature concerning urban teacher quality and retention (but not teacher efficacy), have developed specific models and methods for urban teacher preparation (Grant, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2006). These attempts range from offering courses in multicultural education to simply exposing pre-service teachers to urban students and, finally, to creating urban-specific programs motivated by a mission for social justice and a city-specific context (Hollins & Gunzman, 2005). The following section will provide an overview of some of the more common approaches to preparing teachers for urban schools.

That urban teachers require a different or modified training program is not a new idea. In 1967, for example, Fordham University created a teacher education program specifically designed to prepare teachers for urban schools (Rivlin, 1968). One of the syllabi from this program explains crucial elements of the mission of the program,

> It is important to develop new patterns to prepare teachers and related professional personnel so urgently needed in urban schools…to improve the education of children already in the schools…to invest them with the drive and the ability to help plan new educational programs yet to be developed to meet the needs of a changing society. (p. x)

More recently both the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), two of the major accreditation bodies for teacher preparation programs, have chosen to include some type of diversity training into
their standards. These diversity standards act to ensure that pre-service teachers will, at the very least, have some knowledge of how to interact with students who are socially different from them.

NCATE, for example, lists 'diversity' as the 4th standard necessary for accreditation. The accrediting body's 'Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutions' (2009), states

Standard 4, Diversity: The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates can demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity. Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations, including higher education and P–12 school faculty, candidates, and students in P–12 schools. (p. 12)

The theme of diversity is, furthermore, woven throughout the accreditation standards for overall program design, as well as individual content standards. Although these types of standards exist for national accreditation, and appear in state level certification policies, in practice the decision regarding how those standards are met is still largely up to the institution (Sleeter, 2001). To many reformers, urban-specific preparation requires more than knowledge of diversity, but urban teachers often come out of standard teacher preparation, and courses developed to satisfy these diversity standards are often as close as they get to urban-preparation (Haberman, 2002).

Universities take several different approaches to satisfying these standards and preparing teachers (most of whom are white, middle class and female) for the possibility of working with students who are socially different from them. Three models currently used, according to Hollins & Guzman (2005), are known as prejudice reduction, teaching for social justice (or equity pedagogy), and diverse field experiences. Some preparation programs employ multiple strategies in piecemeal fashion while others select one dominant method. Programs, furthermore, run the spectrum on the level of commitment they display toward crossing the 'demographic divide' between the growing number of white middle class teachers and the nonwhite and non-middle class students they might eventually teach (Banks et al, 2005). Some programs offer a single course; others adopt
preparation for diverse populations as an aspect of their program’s mission; still others construct entire programs designed specifically to prepare students to teach under-served populations.

First, *prejudice reduction* models argue that teachers need to develop a “sociocultural conscience” (Banks et al, 2005, p. 253), in which pre-service teachers build a more positive and ‘affirming’ attitude towards the students in their future classes. Banks et al (2005) explain that these changing attitudes can impact the actions of a teacher in such a way that the teacher will provide more motivational support and meaningful learning opportunities. Breaking pre-service teachers of their assumptions, however, can be difficult, and pre-service teachers often resist the development of a sociocultural conscience in a number of intentional, unintentional, and often contradictory ways (Levine-Rasky, 1998). This finding has crucial implications for this study, most importantly that, throughout my research, I had to be conscious of both the pre-service preparation experiences and the interpretation given to those experiences by the teachers. Furthermore, studies on prejudice reduction models uncover only short-term positive effects on candidate beliefs, but little research has examined the extent to which candidates carry these beliefs past the short-term or whether these are beliefs that actually impact teachers in practice (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Selwyn, 2007).

"Equity pedagogy", the second model explained in the seminal review of the literature by Hollins & Guzman (2005), is commonly referred to as *teaching for social justice* in the literature (Banks et al, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2009); it focuses not only on reducing personal prejudices, but also on teaching pre-service candidates how to advocate for and attend to under-served and oppressed groups. Programs that develop equity pedagogy teach candidates how to employ methods to encourage the learning and development among previously under-served groups (Banks, 2003; Esposito & Swain, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These programs often build on and extend prejudice reduction exercises in order to help candidates develop a practice best known as culturally responsive teaching, which requires not only a set of strategies for working with diverse learners, but also knowledge of personal cultural assumptions and the skills needed to begin
understanding the backgrounds of the students in any classroom (Banks et al., 2005). Previous research indicates that pre-service teachers need to learn to be ‘cultural anthropologists’ (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) and ‘cultural brokers’ (Gay, 1993). They first need to understand how to study the cultures and backgrounds of their students; then they must learn how to bridge the cultural divide that might exist and, finally, to act as change agents (Banks et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2008). Like the research on prejudice reduction, much of the research on the use of equity pedagogy in teacher education programs does little to explore the ways in which candidates carry what they learn into the field (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

Finally, preparation programs rely on urban field placements or observations in order to satisfy diversity standards and prepare students to cross the 'demographic divide'. Hollins and Guzman (2005) explain that “field experiences have long been identified by both teacher educators and experienced teachers as a major, if not the most important part of pre-service teacher preparation”, because this is where pre-service teachers learn to apply theory and coursework to actual practice (493). These programs often provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply the topics covered in multicultural education coursework in the context of a “diverse” field experience. Although researchers maintain that field experiences are crucial to pre-service teacher learning, diverse field experiences can be both positive and negative (Sleeter, 2001). Haberman and Post (1992), for example, studied white female pre-service teachers working with low-income minority students and found that interactions with those students actually served to reinforce stereotypes and preconceptions already held. Alternatively, it is reasonable to conjecture that pre-service teachers with extremely negative field experiences may never actually enter the teaching field (Greer & Greer, 1992; Watlington, Slaton & Partridge, 1998). Because of the known relationship between student teaching and teacher efficacy, I operated under the assumption that those teachers who have had urban field experiences apparently did not have experiences that were stressful or negative enough to cause them to avoid urban schools or abandon teaching all together.
In order to construct ‘diverse’ field experiences, preparation programs send students to other countries, provide field trips into urban areas, or immerse pre-service teachers in an urban or rural community. Generally, however, programs either rely on community-based field experiences or relocation to urban settings. In addition, they often use various pedagogical methods such as critical reflection to elicit emotional reactions to diverse settings (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). These programs allow students to compare various field experiences and often rely heavily on personal narrative as a method of exploration (Cochran-Smith, 2009). Notably, research on diverse field experiences, like the aforementioned studies of equity pedagogy and prejudice reduction, consists of small studies of pre-service teachers and has generally neglected to follow the teachers into their actual teaching experience in order to establish the needed 'chain of evidence' (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Earley, 2005; Sleeter, 2009).

Research on these relationships is largely absent in current literature on urban teacher preparation, but it must be noted that some researchers have undertaken such studies regarding teacher preparation as a whole (Darling-Hammond et al., 2006). In this study, I begin to create the crucial research links needed to understand what makes effective urban teacher preparation. One large-scale study, or set of studies, in particular has captured public and political attention and became one of the foundational elements of Arne Duncan's aforementioned speech at Columbia University's Teachers College (Duncan, 2009). In their study, Powerful Teacher Education: Lessons from Exemplary Programs (2006), Linda Darling-Hammond and others focused on specific programs, large and small, with reputations for producing highly effective teachers. Using case studies, the researchers longitudinally observed both the institutions and the teachers in order to distill the key elements of these exemplary programs. Although Darling-Hammond's study does represent one branch of the research that needs to be done, I approached this issue from a different angle. By constructively unpacking the experiences of teachers from a variety of programs (including the non-exemplary, 'everyday' programs), I have generated a more practical
understanding of how teacher education can be improved, by starting with an understanding of what is actually occurring.

Summary

The body of literature detailed in this chapter demonstrates the need for a chain of evidence between preparation, cognition and retention, a need that undergirds this study. Teachers in urban schools face a wide range of challenges specific to the urban environment and, when compared with teachers in non-urban areas, urban teachers generally have lower levels of preparation (regardless of how preparation is measured). These teachers, furthermore, are more likely to move schools or leave teaching. Although previous research has yet to connect these three phenomena, it is clear that they are crucial factors that must be considered in order to improve the education of urban students. The study presented here uses teacher efficacy (a very specific cognition) to connect urban teaching, teacher preparation and teacher retention. In the next chapter I present the theoretical framework that provides a backbone this study. I begin with a more theoretical approach to understanding teacher efficacy, as an explanation of how the phenomena are connected and follow with a discussion of teacher learning in general.
Chapter 3: Conceptual Frame

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to construct a conceptual model to explain the relationships between teacher preparation, teaching in an at-risk urban school, teacher efficacy and teacher retention (Figure 3.1). Research presented in the previous chapter demonstrates the challenges of urban teaching, the significance of teacher efficacy for student outcomes and the importance of teacher retention in urban districts (which typically suffer from high turnover rates). The relationships between these concepts, made clear in the present chapter, are the backbone of this study.

Broadly, teacher efficacy theory employs a social cognitive approach to understanding how prepared and effective teachers feel in the classroom. The social cognitive perspective implies that people acquire knowledge through interpretations of given observations. These interpretations or perceptions, which are situated in a specific social context, influence both behaviors and actions. In the present study, I examine how perceptions of personal effectiveness (teacher efficacy) influence individual actions regarding remaining in teaching. More specifically, I use the social cognitive lens to create a chain of evidence based on the impact of pre-service training and the urban context on in-service cognitions regarding teacher efficacy and, further, the influence those cognitions have on actions (decisions) regarding staying or leaving the current school. The relationships described, notably, illuminate the process of learning to teach in urban schools, a process that I find occurs both before and during the first years of teaching.

Traditionally, teacher efficacy is often thought to be the result of teacher learning. The data presented throughout this study, however, provide evidence for a teacher efficacy / teacher learning loop (see Figure 3.6). From this perspective, although teacher learning influences teacher efficacy, teacher efficacy also influences teacher learning. This learning occurs through continued exposure to the four sources of teacher efficacy: mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion and psychological and physiological states (detailed in this chapter).
The chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptual model (Figure 3.1), which explains how the urban context and teacher preparation influence the cognition (a thought process theorized to impact behavior) of teacher efficacy, and how teacher efficacy influences teachers and eventually students. I then provide detailed summaries of the two major theories used in constructing the conceptual model: teacher efficacy theory and theories of teacher learning, two intricately related concepts. After a discussion of the major theories that I use, I close the chapter with expanded descriptions of the major research questions outlined in chapter one.

**The Conceptual Model**

There are three central aspects of the conceptual model (Figure 3.1). The first component involves the stressors and supports to teacher efficacy. This study focuses on the stressors specifically involved in teaching in the *urban context* and the supports gleaned in *teacher training*. On the far left of the model I have included additional stressors and supports in order to highlight the complexity of building and maintaining high teacher efficacy. These stressors work to decrease teacher efficacy, while the supports work to increase teacher efficacy and might be able to counteract the negative impact of the urban context.

The second key element of this model concerns the chain linking teacher efficacy to teacher action and behavior (including teacher retention). In this chain of reasoning, the unit of analysis is the teacher, whom encounters a unique set of stressors and supports that impact teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy, influenced by the stressors and supports, has an impact on teacher behaviors and actions. While the quantitative data could only measure the impact of teacher efficacy on teachers in terms of commitment to teaching and teacher retention, the qualitative data was also able to provide evidence for other actions or behaviors related to teacher efficacy such as stress level, teacher effort and the ability to reflect.
Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model—Teaching and Learning to Teach in an Urban Context
Note: Solid arrows represent a negative force and dotted arrows represent a positive force.
The third and final aspect of Figure 3.1 that deserves attention concerns teacher learning (which occurs between the stressors/supports and teacher efficacy and between the positive/negative impacts and the loop back to teacher efficacy). Teacher efficacy is both influenced by and influences teacher learning. Teacher efficacy impacts teacher action and behavior, such as the ability to critically reflect, and both teacher action and behavior influence continued teacher learning. Furthermore, teacher learning in the first few years of teaching continuously influences teacher efficacy and, in turn, continues to impact teacher behavior (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7, later, for the Teacher Learning Loop). Teacher learning relates to teacher efficacy through the four sources of teacher efficacy: mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological and emotional states. These four sources contribute feelings of teacher efficacy and encourage or discourage future learning.

Figure 3.2 represents the conceptual framework as proposed. While many of the focus elements are similar, I originally connected them in slightly different ways. The most striking difference between these two figures is the placement of the urban context. While I originally situated the chain of evidence within the urban context, I found that the urban context is a more distinctive part of this chain. The urban context, data indicates, works at cross purposes with teacher preparation to act as a stressor to teacher efficacy. While preparation can increase teacher efficacy, teaching in an at-risk urban school decreases teacher efficacy. The negative influence of the urban environment, furthermore, is generally stronger than the positive influence of teacher preparation. The second difference emerged from a deeper understanding of teacher learning. My initial goal was to use qualitative data to investigate the learning that takes place during the “links” in the chain of evidence. Having investigated how teachers in urban schools actually learn and maintain teacher efficacy simultaneously, I have chosen to include the four sources of teacher efficacy (explained in a later section) into the model as the means through which teacher learning takes place. In the next section I provide more detailed explanations of the theoretical concepts that undergird both of these models.
Theoretical Perspectives

1) Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory provides the foundation for many of the connections created in the conceptual model. Social cognitive theory has origins in social learning theory, which explores how learning occurs within social contexts. Traditionally, social learning theory posits that individuals learn and imitate behaviors through observations of positive outcomes (Rotter, 1945).
Social cognitive theory diverges from social learning theory in that it highlights the importance of human cognition as a filtering device. Bandura (1986) explains that “human functioning is explained in terms of a model of triadic reciprocality in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other” (18). In this sense, behaviors are not simply learned through observations and applied; observations are filtered through human cognition and applied based on those perceptions. The idea of triadic reciprocality, in short, implies that behaviors, cognitions and personal factors, and environmental factors are mutually reinforcing.

Figure 3.3: A Model of Triadic Reciprocal

In the case of this study, the idea of triadic reciprocality (Figure 3.3) was helpful, but limiting. Bandura (1986) included both personal factors and cognitions as one corner of the triad (Figure 3.6). I have found, however, that personal factors (such as previous experiences in teacher training) influence cognitions and behaviors to a similar degree that environmental factors do. I feel that, therefore, both cognitions and personal factors deserve individual attention. For the study in question, I constructed a model of quadratic reciprocality (Figure 3.4) involving interactions between the urban context (environmental factors), teacher efficacy (cognition), teacher preparation (personal factors) and teacher action and behavior (behaviors). In this model,
again, bidirectional arrows represent the way in which the four factors mutually determine each other.

Figure 3.4: A Model of Quadratic Reciprocity

Learning, notably, takes place during every interaction—on every bidirectional arrow in the model. Social cognitive theory is a general learning theory that, with a few changes, can easily be applied to first-year teacher learning. Because of the focus on environmental factors, furthermore, these theories are useful for the present study because I focus specifically on the urban environment. From the perspective of social-cognitive theory, teacher behaviors are not simply learned through observation and applied in practice. The slight change I have made to the original model, I base on the finding that first-year teacher learning combines knowledge gained both before and during practice. Preparation experiences are, according to this theory, mediated through individual cognitions and applied based on individual perceptions of observations, experiences and environmental factors. Preparation experiences (which can be understood as previous learning) and environmental factors also influence individual cognitions and these cognitions influence behaviors and continued learning.
2) **Teacher Efficacy, Revisited**

In the following section, relying on previously examined literature on teacher efficacy, I explore the social cognitive approach to teacher efficacy from a more theoretical perspective. I also detail the way that I use the concept of teacher efficacy in this study. The concept of teacher efficacy was originally constructed for a study by the RAND Corporation (Armor et al, 1976), which initially grounded teacher efficacy in social learning theory. Social learning theory, as previously discussed, holds that people learn behaviors from either direct observation or from overt rewards or punishments. To that end, self-efficacy motivates behavior insofar that individuals will engage in activities that they empirically see will have the most successful outcomes and, on the other hand, will disengage from those behaviors where they have proof of negative consequences. Empirical proof for positive outcomes translates into high feelings of teacher efficacy while proof of negative consequences translates into feelings of low teacher efficacy. Feelings of teacher efficacy, according to social learning theory, directly influence behavior through experiential evidence. More recent conceptions of teacher efficacy, however, are drawn from a more evolved theoretical strand, Bandura's (1977) social cognitive learning theory.

According to social cognitive theory, cognitive mechanisms, rather than the presence of consequences, regulate behaviors and future learning. These cognitive mechanisms filter observations of rewards and punishments in order to influence behavior. The main distinction between social cognitive theory and social learning theory, again, is that under social cognitive theory self-efficacy is based on perceptions of rewards and punishments and not on what is or is not empirically true. Bandura, in explaining this, states, "People's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively the case" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Because it is based on perception, Bandura's social-cognitive frame also asserts that self-efficacy is a "situation-specific determinant of behavior, not a global personality trait" (Ashton & Webb, 1986, p. 9). Teacher efficacy, for the purpose of this study, is a specific
cognitive mechanism that is influenced both by individual background traits (like preparation experience) and a given situation (the urban context). This situation-specific cognition, therefore, influences teacher behaviors.

Bandura's theory describes self-efficacy as a future-oriented belief in which an individual, in this case a teacher, expresses the "conviction that he or she can orchestrate the necessary actions to perform a given task" and/or influence outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). While Bandura's conception of self-efficacy was not originally intended to apply to teaching behaviors, researchers, such as Gibson & Dembo (1984), were able to apply the cognitive theory to teacher efficacy. Previous studies (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998, Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993), notably, have demonstrated that this social cognitive definition of teacher efficacy, which situates the beliefs and behaviors of individuals within a specific social context, is statistically more related to concrete teaching behaviors than the social learning conception of teacher efficacy. While the theoretical understanding of teacher efficacy continues to evolve, the research community has, at this time, firmly concluded that teacher efficacy needs to be measured as two distinct sets of beliefs: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy (as explained in the seminal review of the literature by Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

I group the two types of teacher efficacy together in Figure 3.1, but there are some crucial differences between the two concepts (Figure 3.5). Personal teaching efficacy (PTE) measures how prepared a teacher feels to engage in and construct learning for his or her students. In other words, a teacher with high PTE has a high level of confidence in her ability to plan and execute lessons, to construct and follow a successful management plan and engage in all other day-to-day tasks involved in teaching. General teacher efficacy (GTE), on the other hand, represents a type of outcome expectancy—a teacher's confidence in his or her ability to encourage tangible success from his or her teaching. GTE, in other words, measures a teacher's confidence that his or her ability to construct learning that will lead to positive student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy &
Hoy, 1998). Outcomes, notably, can cover a broad range of results such as teacher evaluations, student test scores, school attendance, homework completion, or college attendance.

Figure 3.5: Key Differences Between PTE and GTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTE: &quot;I can do it!&quot;</th>
<th>GTE: &quot;What I do matters&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures the level of confidence a teacher has in her abilities to successfully perform the teaching task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to plan and execute lessons, follow a management plan, and perform other day-to-day teaching tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns only the specific teacher and his or her individual abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not indicate confidence in student outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures outcome expectancies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implies confidence in the ability to produce tangible, successful outcomes from students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with high GTE feel that they have a high degree of control over, for example, student test scores or ability to complete homework and his or her own teacher evaluations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Bandura (1997) explains that outcome expectancy (articulated in teacher efficacy theories as GTE), an element in his social cognitive frame, is technically separate from self-efficacy, previous literature has defined it as a key aspect in understanding teacher efficacy, thus I have included here (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). While data reveal that different elements of the urban environment act as stressors to PTE and GTE, different preparation elements influence self-efficacies. PTE and GTE, furthermore, produce distinct behaviors and outcomes. I have grouped PTE and GTE together in the conceptual model because the urban environment and preparation influence both cognitions and both cognitions impact teachers' behavior and learning, although in slightly different ways.

Questions regarding perceived efficacy are specifically necessary for research on novice teachers (who are still actively engaged in learning) because, at its core, teacher efficacy is situated in theories of learning (both social and social cognitive). Novice teachers, in many cases, have
recently completed pre-service learning and are involved in the beginning stages of in-service learning. Because novice teachers can be situated as learners, and teacher efficacy is part of a learning theory, questions regarding teacher efficacy are especially salient to novice teachers. Understanding these complex learning processes is crucial to improving and analyzing teacher training. Teacher efficacy also is a critical topic for research on novice teachers because previous research has provided evidence of significant decline in teacher efficacy for all teachers during the first year of teaching, regardless of context (Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

Although teacher efficacy tends to stabilize after the first few years of teaching, the initial drop can have behavioral consequences (such as leaving the teaching profession), and teacher efficacy of in-service teachers remains lower than teacher efficacy of pre-service teachers (Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). The goal of this study, therefore, is to understand a small sample of the stressors and supports to teacher efficacy during these crucial years.

When using a self-reported concept such as teacher efficacy, one of the major challenges lies in determining what implications this cognition has for actual practice. This challenge is often known as the Mrs. Oublier question (Cohen, 1990). Mrs. Oublier was a teacher who, despite a conviction that she was effectively implementing a mathematics reform, was actually teaching in a manner contradictory to that reform. Simply because teachers feel prepared for the task of teaching (PTE) does not mean that they are actually prepared, and that teachers believe that their teaching will produce favorable outcomes (GTE) does not mean that it actually will. For this reason teacher efficacy cannot effectively measure teacher quality, but it is important nonetheless.

As stated in the literature review, teacher efficacy is not only related to student test scores, teacher retention and ability to innovate, but it also informs the researcher about the teacher's psychological state (Bruce et al., 2010; Shidler, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). A teacher with a lower level of teacher efficacy is more likely to feel stress and, therefore, feel uncomfortable in the classroom. The qualitative results presented as part of this study demonstrate the impact that these negative feelings can have on teacher behaviors. Further, rather than assume that teacher
efficacy is independently important, the quantitative and qualitative portions of this study both address the relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher retention—another measure with a demonstrated link to student success (Gordon, Kane & Staiger, 2006; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010).

3) **Teacher efficacy and Teacher Preparation**

Teachers develop teacher efficacy through observing and interpreting a given environment. This particular cognition grows and changes prior to and during teaching; therefore, researchers need to better understand the processes involved in creating and maintaining teacher efficacy. In explaining these processes Bandura (1995) postulates that self-efficacy emanates from four sources:

- **Mastery Experiences**, which involve gaining hands-on practice (and experiences of success or failure) with a specific behavior in a given social situation, are arguably the most vital source of teacher efficacy.

- **Vicarious Experiences** involve observing others and learning from their success or failure. When an individual observes and interprets another’s actions as successful, his or her teacher efficacy will rise.

- **Social Persuasion** is most commonly understood as encouragement (or discouragement) from a significant other. When a trusted source informs an individual that he is experiencing success, teacher efficacy is likely to increase.

- **Physiological and Emotional States**: If, during an experience, a person experiences stress, anxiety or another negative emotional or physiological state her teacher efficacy is likely to decrease. The assumption is that she will equate those negative states with her own capabilities.

Through the lens of these sources, researchers have begun to understand the relationship between teacher efficacy and pre-service teacher preparation. Student teaching, observations, feedback and coursework can all be situated within this framework. For example, student teaching and
observations can provide both mastery experiences (successfully teaching a lesson) and vicarious experiences (watching a cooperating teacher diffuse a student argument). Coursework, on the other hand, might provide a form of social persuasion. For example, professors reward pre-service teachers with high grades that provide pre-service teachers with encouragement about their abilities. Bandura explains that if mastery experiences, vicarious experiences and social persuasion occur in the context of a positive (non-stressful) physiological and emotional state, they generally create a higher sense of perceived efficacy related to teaching.

This study brings light to the complex relationship between specific contexts and these four sources of teacher efficacy, a relationship that has yet to be fully addressed in literature (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). In the conceptual model (Figure 3.1), I present the relationship between teacher preparation and the urban context as tense. In relation to teacher efficacy, teacher preparation is a resource while the urban context works as a stressor. The following chapters, especially the qualitative results section, examine these four sources of teacher efficacy to create an understanding of how teacher efficacy is learned and then maintained in particularly challenging urban environments (Housego, 1992; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990; Chester & Beaudin, 1996). The four sources of teacher efficacy act as spaces for and types of learning, which occur not simply during pre-service preparation experiences, but also through in-service experience and, crucially, the teachers' perceptions of those experiences.

4) Teacher Learning

Figure 3.4 presents a model of quadratic reciprocity that is at the heart of this type of the social cognitive learning process. Learning, from this perspective, occurs as a result of interactions between previous experiences, cognitions, behaviors and environmental factors. In this frame, teacher efficacy, a very specific cognition, shares an intricate relationship with teacher learning. Although a good deal of research has explored how learning might influence teacher efficacy, the
conceptual model (Figure 3.1) and the model of quadratic reciprocity (Figure 3.4) hold that teacher efficacy also impacts continued learning.

Figure 3.6: The Teacher Efficacy / Teacher Learning Loop

![Teacher Efficacy / Teacher Learning Loop](image)

The bidirectional relationship between teacher efficacy and learning exists with the assumption that teacher learning is an ongoing process and that teacher efficacy is not static, and acts in a loop (figure 3.6). Figure 3.7 demonstrates the way that the teacher efficacy / learning loop actually occurs in the lives of teachers—as constantly growing. Rather than a simple loop, teachers begin teaching after encountering specific experiences designed to promote teacher learning. The pre-service learning experience is finite, and teachers enter the profession and develop a sense of teacher efficacy. That sense of teacher efficacy, then, influences teacher learning. Teacher efficacy constantly changes and evolves—beginning with the very moment that one begins to think about entering the teaching field. Perceptions of efficacy exist prior to student teaching and before the first teacher education class. Teacher learning, according to Feiman-Nemser (2008), is also an ongoing process of learning to know, feel, think and act like a teacher. This process begins before teaching and extends well beyond the first year. Placing this model into the situation-specific model of teacher efficacy, learning to teach in urban schools involves learning how to know, think, feel and act like an urban teacher.
Summary

Using a social cognitive lens, I argue that teacher efficacy is influenced by both the urban context and teacher preparation. The urban context acts as a stressor while teacher preparation (earlier learning) can act as a resource. Teacher efficacy, a contextually driven cognition that involves perceptions of past learning and both present and predicted abilities, impacts teacher behaviors. Teacher attitudes and behaviors (such as leaving teaching or feeling stress), when influenced by low teacher efficacy, can have a negative impact on students and continued teacher learning. The influence on teacher learning is important to note, because learning to teach is often thought of as a lifelong process. This study begins by empirically testing the relationships between teacher efficacy and the urban context and teacher efficacy and preparation in the urban context. Then, I quantitatively address the relationship between teacher efficacy and commitment to teaching / teacher retention in the urban context. In the quantitative phase of this study teacher retention serves as a proxy for teacher action and behavior. The qualitative portion of the study, however, expands on the impact that teacher efficacy can have on teacher action and
behavior. It is through the qualitative portion of the study that I address the link between teacher learning and teacher efficacy, teacher behavior and teacher preparation in the urban context. In the next chapter I provide a detailed overview of the research methods.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methods that I used to collect, analyze and synthesize various data for this study. I begin with an overview of the sequential explanatory research design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006), followed by more detailed descriptions of both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. Because of the sequential nature of the research design, in which the qualitative methods were driven by the quantitative results, I also work to provide enough of the context to explain the design of the second phase of research. In sequential explanatory research much of the synthesis is built into the design of the second phase of research, therefore a discussion of the brief intermediary phase provides details on how I connected the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study (Ivankova et al., 2006). I conclude with a discussion of the various threats to validity and reliability and the various measures I included in order to account for these threats.

Design of the Study

I designed this study to address the following broad groups of questions: 1) Do novice teachers in at-risk urban schools feel adequately prepared to effectively perform the task of teaching? Do these feelings impact retention and commitment to teaching? 2) If teachers in at-risk urban schools feel less prepared than others do, why do they feel this way and how do they explain how it impacts their teaching? In order to address these guiding questions, I conducted a mixed method, sequential explanatory study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006). Mixed methods research, in a very general sense, involves the collection and integration of multiple forms of data, with the understanding that the combined data provide a comprehensive, and more accurate, picture of the scope and depth of a given phenomenon (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Creswell & Plano-Clark (2006) explain that, although there is growing number of mixed method research designs, the sequential explanatory paradigm is
among the top six most commonly used. This popularity is most likely due to the ease with which researchers can synthesize data. Sequential explanatory research involves the collection and analysis of one type of data, usually quantitative, followed by the collection of a second type of data, usually qualitative, aimed at specifically answering questions generated by the first empirical analysis. This research takes place in two distinct, consecutive phases, and generally includes an intermediate stage designed to link the two phases.

Figure 4.1: Design of the Study

A successful research design is almost always defined by the questions guiding the particular study. In the case of this research, the simple presence of the word “if” linking the aforementioned questions necessitates a multistage design. The first question clearly speaks to broader trends, requiring large-scale quantitative analysis, while the second question follows naturally from the first and concerns specific details. The second question, because of the attention to detail and teacher explanations, requires the collection and analysis of detailed qualitative data. With an awareness of these questions, I conducted this research in two distinct, but related, phases in which the results of the first, quantitative, phase drove the specific questions
and approaches of the second, qualitative, phase (see figure 4.1). I conducted phase one using nationally representative survey data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Using questions derived from quantitative analysis, I conducted qualitative interviews with novice teachers who were currently or previously teaching in at-risk urban schools. In general the quantitative analysis defined the relationships between preparation, teacher efficacy and retention in urban schools, whereas the qualitative data illuminated why those relationships exist and how they function.

In sequential explanatory research one of the more challenging elements involves deciding which phase, if any, ought to be given priority (Ivankova et al., 2006). In most cases, according to Ivankova et al. (2006), the quantitative is usually given priority, but I have chosen to give both phases equal priority (although the qualitative section is longer). I made this decision because I am equally concerned with trends and details, and I was not constricted by time or length limitations. The following sections provide a more detailed description of the procedures that I employed in each phase of research.

**Phase One: Quantitative Methods**

**Hypotheses**

I constructed five specific quantitative hypotheses to address the first set of guiding questions: Do novice teachers in at-risk urban schools feel adequately prepared to effectively perform the task of teaching (see figures 4.2 and 4.3)? How do these feelings impact teacher retention (see figure 4.4)?

![Figure 4.2](image1)

![Figure 4.3](image2)
The hypotheses are:

H1: Teaching in an at-risk urban school has a significant negative effect on both personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE).

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between preparation and both PTE and GTE in the novice teaching population.

H3: Preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school on the teacher efficacy of novice teachers.

H4: For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between teacher efficacy and a strong commitment to teaching.

H5: For first-year teachers, there is a significant negative relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher attrition after one year.

Data

To test these hypotheses I analyzed secondary data from the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which is conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). In 1987 NCES began collecting survey data from teachers and principals on school conditions, teacher shortages and teacher and principal characteristics, among other things. Since that time, NCES has been through six cycles of the SASS and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS), which they administer one year after SASS to a sample of teachers who participated in SASS. Notably,
TFS survey data was administered to all first-year SASS teachers in this wave as part of the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BLTS). Although the surveys have gone through changes, many items remain consistent throughout the cycles of the survey. Currently the 2007-2008 SASS and 2008-2009 TFS are not available for public use, therefore I had to use restricted access data. I was also able to link SASS data to NCES' Common Core of Data (CCD), in which the U.S. Department of Education annually gathers demographic and fiscal data from all public school districts and state education agencies, in order to accurately measure school-level variables (Chen, 2008).

All SASS waves have four main elements: the School Questionnaire, the Teacher Questionnaire, the Principal Questionnaire and the School District Questionnaire. SASS is administered to representative samples of public, private, tribal, and charter schools drawn from the CCD and the Private School Universe Survey (PSS), which include all elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Because of this sampling frame, where teachers are drawn from a representative sample of schools, these data technically represent nested data (teachers are nested within schools), which became relevant during analysis (see figure 4.5) (Tourkin et al., 2010).

Figure 4.5: The Nested Structure of the Data

This study focused on public (including charter) schools, and data were mostly drawn from the Teacher Questionnaire, which examines preparation, attitudes, teaching methods and experiences. Many school-level variables used in these analyses were drawn from the CCD, rather
than the SASS School survey, because CCD data tend to provide more accurate measures of school demographics such as racial composition and poverty level. Lastly, I used the TFS to build a longitudinal outcome measure to address the issue of teacher retention and attrition among first-year teachers.

Researchers have previously used SASS data to measure teacher efficacy, but never like this. Ware & Kitsantas (2007), for example, developed three factors of teacher efficacy (efficacy to enlist administrative decisions, collective efficacy and efficacy for classroom management) using seventeen survey items on SASS 1999-2000. The focus of their study, however, deals with how efficacious teachers feel within the school as an organization. The present study focused, instead, on how efficacious teachers feel in relation to the students in his or her classroom or school context, and I rely on a different set of items that are more focused on teacher attitudes and beliefs in relation to his or her classroom. SASS, notably, has often been used to examine reasons for teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2004), distribution of teacher quality (Ingersoll, 1999; Jerald, 2002), and workplace satisfaction (Weiss, 1999). The SASS is also often used to study change over time, because SASS data are collected every four years from different teachers. This study is different from previous research because of the focus on at-risk schools and classroom level teacher efficacy.

Sample

Because of my focus on novice teachers I chose to restrict the sample to those teachers who began teaching after the 2003-2004 school year (those with less than four full years of full-time teaching). The data set was especially well-suited for this research, because several of the questions I used were only asked of this novice population (full sample: \( n = 37709 \), novice sample: \( n = 9134 \)).

Descriptive statistics (Table 4.1) reveal that there are some noticeable differences between the novice and full samples. Notably, only 80% of novice teachers are "Highly Qualified," as compared with 88% in the full sample and 15% teach in at-risk schools, as compared with 11% of
the full sample. The novice sample, furthermore, is 70% female, 83% white and has a mean age of 31.5 years. Many of these teachers have masters' degrees, and many of them have entered the teaching profession later in life.

For the longitudinal retention analysis I elected to only use first-year teachers. I made this decision because TFS data was collected for all first-year teachers (and only a subsample of other teachers), and because those teachers in their second and third years of teaching have already passed the first-year threshold. Teachers who began teaching in 2005 and 2006 but left after the first year of teaching are not captured, so as an accurate measure of one-year retention I chose to only use first-year teachers (n = 1759).

Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics for Variables used in analysis of the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey and 2008-2009 Teacher Follow-Up Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Entire Sample</th>
<th>Novice Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (n = 37709)</td>
<td>Mean (n = 9134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.69 (.46)</td>
<td>.70 (.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>.87 (.34)</td>
<td>.83 (.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree</td>
<td>2.58 (.65)</td>
<td>2.33 (.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>42.74 (11.68)</td>
<td>31.49 (8.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Teaching Experience</td>
<td>12.98 (10.48)</td>
<td>1.67 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>.14 (.35)</td>
<td>.13 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>.26 (.44)</td>
<td>.24 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>.25 (.43)</td>
<td>.26 (.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>.34 (.47)</td>
<td>.37 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>.36 (.48)</td>
<td>.35 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>.52 (.50)</td>
<td>.52 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>.12 (.33)</td>
<td>.12 (.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQT</td>
<td>.88 (.32)</td>
<td>.80 (.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>.00 (.39)</td>
<td>-.09 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>.11 (.32)</td>
<td>.15 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTE</td>
<td>-- --</td>
<td>.00 (.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTE</td>
<td>.00 (.80)</td>
<td>-.02 (.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.75 (.25)</td>
<td>.68 (.47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 3826 n = 1759

Stays | .57 (.50) | .74 (.44)
Variables

1. Teacher Efficacy

Measuring teacher efficacy is currently a topic of debate among educational researchers; thus, creating an accurate operationalization of this concept originally posed a challenge to this study (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Teacher efficacy, however, is a situated phenomenon (Bandura, 1997). This means that the definition of teacher efficacy varies by context. The key to accurate measurement of teacher efficacy, therefore, is to ensure that variables are explicitly defined in a given context. In the case of this study the context in question is 'the classroom' as opposed to, for example, 'the school as organization'. The most critical relationship involved in teacher efficacy at the classroom level, therefore, is the relationship between teacher and student. Measures used to gauge teacher efficacy in this study center around how the teacher feels in her classroom with her students.

Despite disagreement regarding the specific measurement of teacher efficacy, there is agreement that research must distinguish between personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE). As previously described, the former specifically measures a teacher’s perceptions of his or her abilities orchestrate the necessary actions to encourage learning, whereas the latter measures a teacher’s perceived ability to impact outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). The social cognitive framework of teacher efficacy concerns how strongly teachers believe that they are able to successfully perform the act of teaching (personal) and influence educational outcomes of students (general) in a given social situation, such as the school or the classroom, and I have designed variables to represented situated, classroom-level, versions of PTE and GTE.

In this study I measure teacher efficacy using two factors (thus two variables), one that captures the perceptions of personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and one that captures perceptions of general teacher efficacy (GTE). I created these variables after a close examination of the relationship between the numerous questions asked concerning teachers' attitudes and previously
referenced literature documenting the specific elements of PTE and GTE. PTE is a factor that I created from seven survey items concerning how prepared a teacher felt to coordinate the teaching in his or her own classroom (See Table 4.2 for factor ladings). On the survey these items were numbered 37a through 37f and contained questions such as "In your FIRST year of teaching how well prepared were you to handle a range of classroom management or discipline systems?" (Schools and Staffing Survey). Low scores on PTE indicate that a teacher felt less prepared to organize and run successful lessons. To measure GTE, on the other hand, I created a factor that combines three survey items that, essentially, gauge whether or not a teacher has confidence in his or her ability to produce certain outcomes related to teaching, such as student test scores or positive teacher evaluations. These items asked participants to agree or disagree with statements like: "students come to school unprepared to learn" (Schools and Staffing Survey), and were numbered 56f, 56i, and 57a on the survey. A low score on the measure of GTE indicates that a teacher has a low expectation regarding his or her capability to produce student outcomes. Using the statistical software STATA, I generated both of these variables using confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 4.2 for factor loadings), and had relatively high eigenvalues and factor scores. While factor scores generally have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1, items measuring PTE were only asked of the novice pool; thus the GTE has slightly different means and standard deviations in the novice pool, both are continuous variables (see Table 4.1 for descriptive statistics).

Research has documented that, upon entry into the teaching field, all teachers experience an initial drop in teacher efficacy. This initial drop-off usually rises slightly and eventually levels off in the first three years of teaching (Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Because I was unable to monitor change in teacher efficacy across years, I must acknowledge that differing levels of teacher efficacy might be attributable to many things. If at-risk teachers do have lower levels of PTE or GTE, this could indicate that these teachers entered the profession with lower levels of teacher efficacy. It could also be attributed to a sharper decline in teacher efficacy among urban teachers. Finally, the difference could be attributed to the significantly younger at-risk
teaching population. By including years of experience in the quantitative analysis I attempt to account for this issue in some way, but qualitative analysis illuminates the possible reasons for lower teacher efficacy among at-risk teachers.

Table 4.2
Factor Loadings for Major Variables
Rotated Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 1: Reported Preparation Level</th>
<th>Eigenvalue = 1.123</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice Teaching</td>
<td>.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Courses</td>
<td>.717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 2: PTE</th>
<th>Eigenvalue = 3.504</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my first year, I felt prepared to…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach a Variety of Subjects</td>
<td>.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers and Technology</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess Students</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Materials</td>
<td>.780</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 3: GTE</th>
<th>Eigenvalue = 1.797</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Apathy</td>
<td>.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprepared to Learn</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Worth my Time</td>
<td>.603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

2. **Level of Preparation**

Preparation level is measured using two variables. The first is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not the teacher meets the federal requirements for a Highly Qualified Teacher (1 = Highly Qualified, 0 = Not Highly Qualified). This question was asked directly on the survey and defined for the teachers as “Generally, to be Highly Qualified, teachers must meet requirements related to 1) a bachelor’s degree, 2) full state certification, and 3) demonstrated
competency in the subject area(s) taught. The HQT requirement is a provision under NCLB” (Schools and Staffing Survey). The second variable is a factor that combines two survey items: the number of weeks spent in practice teaching (0 weeks – more than 12 weeks) and the number of courses taken in teaching methods (0 courses – 10 or more courses) (see Table 4.2 for factor loadings). High scores on this variable, which has a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 in the novice population, indicate a greater number of courses and a longer student teaching experience and therefore a greater 'amount of preparation'.

3. **Urban At-Risk**

Another methodological issue concerns the use of the term urban; although the survey designers classify urbanicity based purely on the number and concentration of residents in a given city, the actual term has a societal connotation that is separate from a simplistic measure of population (Jacob, 2007). Because of this challenge, rather than use only urbanicity as an independent variable, I combined urbanicity with elements often associated with urban schools: low socioeconomic status and a high percentage of minority students. I feel that combining these three variables reveals a more accurate picture of the teachers in 'urban schools.' I created a variable (at-risk) to measure this concept that combines urbanicity, percentage of minority students in the school and the percentage of students receiving free and reduced priced lunches (a very basic measure of poverty). In this case, I label a school as at-risk if it is located in or on the outskirts of a large or mid-sized city, if it has more than 50% minority enrollment, and if more than 50% of students receive free or reduced price lunch. Referred to as "at-risk," when this variable has a value of 1, this indicates that the school in question is "at-risk," while a value of 0 indicates a “not at-risk" school. Descriptive statistics (see Table 4.1) reveal that approximately 15% of novice teachers are in at-risk schools².

---

² Note that occasionally teachers in at-risk schools will be referred to as "at-risk teachers" for the sake of brevity.
4. **Commitment and Retention**

I measured one-year retention using the TFS. I created a simple dichotomous variable in which a value of 1 indicates that the teacher remained in the same school, a value of 0 indicates that the teacher moved to another school or left teaching altogether.

The Teacher Follow-Up Survey collected following SASS only reveals teacher retention one-year after the survey. To account for this challenge, I actually began analysis of retention by examining a measure of commitment to teaching. Commitment to teaching is defined as a meaningful psychological attachment to the teaching profession, but this variable does not reveal commitment to an individual school or actual retention (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). The SASS teacher survey asks participants to indicate how long they planned to remain in teaching. While they were able select one of eight options ranging from “as long as I am able” to “definitely plan to leave as soon as I can”, I have condensed this into two different categories: A value of 1 indicates “fairly committed” and value of 0 indicates “not committed.” Teachers who fell into the “fairly committed” category gave the following responses: “as long as I am able”, “until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job”, “until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job” and “until I am eligible for social security benefits.” Teachers who fell into the “not committed” category expressed either a definite desire to leave teaching or indicated that their commitment was contingent on something, they gave the following responses: “until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)”, “until a more desirable job opportunity comes along”, “definitely plan to leave as soon as I can” and “undecided at this time.”

5. **Control Variables**

I also chose to control for several teacher-level and school-level characteristics. For individual teachers, I controlled for gender (1=female, 0=male), race (1=white, 0=nonwhite), age, years of experience and highest degree earned (1=bachelor’s, 2="some graduate work", 3="master's degree" and 4="PhD or above", treated as continuous). At the school level I controlled for grade level (elementary, secondary or combined) and region of the country (Northeast, Midwest, West
and South).

Analytic Methods

1. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

In order to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, concerning apparent differences between novice teachers in at-risk and not at-risk schools and the impact of preparation, I began by running descriptive statistics including basic correlations and a number of t-tests to compare group means. Restricting my sample to only the novice pool, I compared levels of PTE, GTE and preparation factors between teachers in at-risk schools and those in other schools. After using stepwise regression to confirm the possibility of significant results (See Appendix A), I constructed a multilevel model to account for the variance between schools (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Because SASS collects data on teachers from a representative sample of schools, the data are hierarchically structured and the teachers are, essentially, nested in individual schools (see figure 4.5). Because there was a school level effect on several of the variables (the variance between schools was significant regarding, for example, preparation), a multilevel model allowed me to account for the school level variation. In the following description of each model, level one (L1) equations represent individual teachers, and level two (L2) equations represent school level effects for teacher \(i\) in school \(j\).

Null Model:

\[(L1) \text{Teacher efficacy}_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + r_{ij}\]

\[(L2) \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}\]

Conditional Model:

\[(L1) \text{Teacher efficacy}_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{Female}_{ij} + \beta_{2j}\text{White}_{ij} + \beta_{3j}\text{Age}_{ij} + \beta_{4j}\text{HiDegree}_{ij} + \beta_{5j}\text{TotExp}_{ij} + \beta_{6j}\text{PreparationLevel}_{ij} + \beta_{7j}\text{HQT}_{ij} + r_{ij}\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{At-Risk}) + \gamma_{02}(\text{Grade Level}) + \gamma_{03}(\text{Region}) + \epsilon_{0j} \\
\beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} + \epsilon_{1j} \\
\beta_{2j} &= \gamma_{20} + \epsilon_{2j} \\
\beta_{3j} &= \gamma_{30} + \epsilon_{3j} \\
\beta_{4j} &= \gamma_{40} + \epsilon_{4j} \\
\beta_{5j} &= \gamma_{50} + \epsilon_{5j} \\
\beta_{6j} &= \gamma_{60} + \epsilon_{6j} \\
\beta_{7j} &= \gamma_{70} + \epsilon_{7j}
\end{align*}
\]

Where:

\(\beta_{0j}, \beta_{1j}, \ldots, \beta_{7j}\) represent the effects of individual teachers' characteristics; \(r_{ij}\) represents the residual error term for the individual; \(\gamma_{00}, \gamma_{10}, \ldots, \gamma_{70}\) represent the intercepts that denote how school characteristics affect the stated relationships; \(\epsilon_{0j}, \epsilon_{1j}, \ldots, \epsilon_{7j}\) represent the residual error terms that indicate a unique effect associated with school \(j\). These error terms capture any variance not explained by school level predictors.

To run all analyses, I used the `xtmixed` command in the statistical software STATA, which estimates multilevel mixed-effects linear regression models, and outlines how much variance in the dependent variables is explained by the independent variables. By performing stepwise analysis, I was able to test all three hypotheses using modified versions of the same equation. In order to test H1, I removed individual-level preparation factors from the equation, in order to test H2, I removed the at-risk variable, and I tested H3 using the full combined equation.

To understand the variation between schools, I calculated the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) and reported model fit statistics AIC and BIC. The ICC demonstrates how strongly units in the same group (teachers in the same school) resemble each other. The ICC (or \(\rho\)) is calculated as follows:

\[
\rho = \frac{\tau_{00}}{\tau_{00} + \sigma^2}
\]

Where \(\sigma^2\) refers to the variance of \(r_{ij}\) (the error term of the fixed-effects) and \(\tau_{00}\) refers to the variance of \(u_{0j}\) (the error term of the random effects).
2. **Hypotheses 4 and 5**

To test hypotheses 4 and 5 I followed a similar progression of analyses. I began by running basic correlations and t-tests to compare teachers in at-risk and not at-risk schools regarding willingness to remain and retention and followed with logistic regression (see appendix B). Because the data are nested and the outcome is dichotomous, I had to use a multilevel logit design to more accurately assess the models. The major difference between these analytic methods and those outlined previously concerns the nature of the outcome variable. While the outcome variables used in the first analyses are continuous, the commitment and retention outcomes are dichotomous. Because of dichotomous outcomes, I based my multilevel multinomial logit model on the following equation for teacher \(i\) in school \(j\) giving response \(s\),

\[
\log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0^{(s)} + \beta_1^{(s)}\text{Female}_{ij} + \beta_2^{(s)}\text{White}_{ij} + \beta_3^{(s)}\text{Age}_{ij} + \beta_4^{(s)}\text{HiDegree}_{ij} + \\
\beta_5^{(s)}\text{TotExp}_{ij} + \beta_6^{(s)}\text{PrepLevel}_{ij} + \beta_7^{(s)}\text{HQT}_{ij} + \beta_8^{(s)}\text{PTE}_{ij} + \beta_9^{(s)}\text{GTE}_{ij} + r_j^{(s)}
\]

\(s = 1, \ldots, t - 1\)

\[
\beta_0^{(s)} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{(At-Risk)} + \gamma_{02}\text{(Level)} + \gamma_{03}\text{(Region)} + u_{oj}
\]

\[
\beta_1^{(s)} = \gamma_{10} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_2^{(s)} = \gamma_{20} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_3^{(s)} = \gamma_{30} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_4^{(s)} = \gamma_{40} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_5^{(s)} = \gamma_{50} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_6^{(s)} = \gamma_{60} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_7^{(s)} = \gamma_{70} + u_{ij}
\]

\[
\beta_8^{(s)} = \gamma_{70}
\]

\[
\beta_9^{(s)} = \gamma_{70}
\]
Where:

\[ \beta_0(s), \beta_1(s), \text{ etc. are regression coefficients for the effects of individual teacher characteristics; } u_{0j}, u_{1j}, \text{ etc. represent residual error terms at the school level; } \gamma_{00}, \gamma_{10} \text{ etc. represent the intercepts concerning the school-level effect; and } \pi_{ij}^{(s)} \text{ is the expected likelihood of the response } s \text{ for individual } i \text{ in } j \text{ school (Goldstein, 2011). Please note the combined model is not displayed.} \]

I ran these models in STATA using the glamm command (Rabe-Hesketh et al., 2005), which estimates generalized linear latent and mixed models. Results of logit models are typically interpreted in terms of likelihood when compared with a reference group. For commitment and retention I chose “fairly committed”, and “stayer”, as the reference groups. A significant positive result for leaving, therefore, indicates that a teacher with a given characteristic is more likely to leave teaching / move schools than to remain in his or her original school. Again, using the multilevel design, I was also able to examine and take into account the school-level variation.

**Qualitative Methods**

**Intermediate Phase: Integration**

Arguably, the most critical element of the sequential explanatory research design is the intermediate phase, the phase in which the researcher merges the quantitative and qualitative data into a cohesive unit (Ivankova et al, 2006; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006). In order to successfully bridge the two phases, I took a number of steps. First, I constructed the specific research questions for the second phase of this study from the findings of the first phase. Second, I took steps to understand how my qualitative sample compared with the general sample represented by SASS. In order to fully explain these steps, I will begin by providing a brief overview of the main quantitative findings, followed with an explanation of how I constructed the qualitative research questions. Secondly, I will explain the specific procedures I followed to connect the qualitative and quantitative samples. Lastly I will describe the data collection and analyses techniques used for the qualitative phase of the study.
Research Questions

The main goal of the qualitative arm of this study was to address 'why' questions. After I investigated the initial hypotheses using quantitative analysis, and was able to support or discredit predictions, I collected qualitative data to explore how novice teachers in at-risk schools teachers interpreted those results. The major findings, discussed in detail in the following chapter were:

- Novice teachers in at-risk schools reported significantly lower levels of preparation, PTE and GTE than did teachers in not at-risk schools. Teaching in an at-risk school, therefore, had a negative influence on these variables.
- Both amount of preparation and HQT status had significant positive influence on PTE. HQT status had no significant effect on GTE, and preparation had a small, positive, effect on GTE.
- Although significant, amount of preparation and HQT status did not mediate the effect of teaching in an at-risk school on PTE.
- Roughly 35% of the variation in GTE scores can be attributed to school characteristics, while only 4% of the variation in PTE scores can be attributed to unobserved school characteristics.
- Amount of preparation and HQT status each had a significant impact on commitment to teaching, in addition to the significant effect of both PTE and GTE.
- Regarding one-year retention, teachers with low levels of GTE are more likely to leave or move schools than they are to remain in the same school. Neither HQT status nor amount of preparation had a significant effect on retention.

Drawing on these findings, I addressed the following questions in the qualitative portion of the study:

Q1: Why do teachers in at-risk urban schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?
Q2: How and why does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?
Q3: What are essential elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?
Q3A: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?

Q4: What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in both GTE and retention? What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?

**Sampling Strategy and Participants**

In order to address these research questions, I conducted interviews with novice urban teachers over the phone and in person. The majority of the teachers were working in the School District of Philadelphia, while one teacher interviewed had previously taught in the New Orleans Recovery School District. In order to understand how these teachers compared to the SASS sample, 25 teachers participated in an online survey containing specific items from the SASS teacher questionnaire (See appendix C for survey items). I created the online survey using the "form" function in GoogleDocs. Because I was unable to create factor scores for the survey items I administered, I created composite scores for measures of preparation level, PTE and GTE for the data I collected as well as for the SASS data (see table 4.3 for descriptive statistics comparing the Novice At-Risk SASS sample and Qualitative sample).

| Table 4.3: Mean Scores for Qualitative Sample and Novice SASS Sample in At-Risk schools |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Mean Score for Qualitative Sample | At-Risk Novice Teachers in SASS Sample |
| Preparation | .96 | .78 |
| HQT | .86 | .78 |
| PTE | 2.70 | 2.82 |
| GTE | 2.70 | 2.45 |
| Age | 25.71 | 31.8 |
| Years Experience | 1.98 | 1.62 |
| White | .81 | .62 |
| Female | .71 | .72 |

To locate participants, I used both convenience and snowball sampling methods (Maxwell, 2005). I also relied on social media such as Facebook, personal contacts and alumni offices for teacher education programs in urban, suburban and rural areas of Pennsylvania (see appendix C for recruitment materials). While I initially proposed to select teachers with one year or less of teaching experience, I chose, instead, to expand my sample to include teachers with three years or
less of teaching experience. I made this decision for convenience as well as to better tie the qualitative sample to the sample from SASS.

Figure 4.6: Sampling Strategy

From the 23 teachers from the online survey who agreed to participate in follow-up interviews, I selected 14 teachers for initial phone interviews. For the 14 phone interviews, I stratified participants based on scores for PTE and GTE as well as age, gender, preparation type and school level. Because the majority of respondents were white, all non-white teachers were contacted and participated in phone interviews. These teachers had varying levels of preparation, PTE and GTE and with different student teaching experiences (urban and non-urban placements) (see figure 4.6 for a visual representation of the sampling strategy). Table 4.4 outlines the characteristics of the 14 teachers participating in interviews. The highlighted scores indicate that the teacher is below the average score on a given measure for the SASS sample. From the 14 teachers, I chose five teachers for in-person follow-up interviews. I selected these teachers for diversity of experience and perspective as well as responsiveness during the initial interview. The five teachers who I selected as key informants, therefore, were not only stratified on the previous
factors but also qualitatively for diversity of experiences and openness to discussion. In Table 4.4
the five teachers selected for intensive interviews are marked with asterisks. I chose not to restrict
the sample to a specific grade level or subject area, again to better connect qualitative data with
SASS data.

Table 4.4: Participant Scores on Prep, GTE and PTE measures

Highlighted scores indicate that the participant scored above the average in the novice population, asterisks
identify key informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade Level/ Subject</th>
<th>Prep</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>GTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Nell</td>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>9th Grade English</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Brad</td>
<td>High School Spanish/Social Studies</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>High School, Special Education Math</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Laura</td>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>High School Physics</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie</td>
<td>4th Grade</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Noelle</td>
<td>High School English</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Rhea</td>
<td>4th and 5th Grade Science and Social Studies</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>High School Math</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>9th Grade English</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

Because I conducted a mixed-methods study, I utilized analytic tools for the second phase of
research from three qualitative traditions. It is important to stress that this research is situated
within the sequential-explanatory paradigm, yet the specific methods that I use are from various
qualitative research designs. In the sequential-explanatory paradigm it is common to mix quantitative analyses with case study research, but this research necessitated a different approach (Ivankova et al, 2006; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2006). Mixed-methods research, it should be noted, is based on an ethos of pragmatism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004); therefore the general idea is to practically employ the methods that best capture the phenomenon in question. I based participant selection on the idea of the key informant, in which a small number of individuals are interviewed extensively to speak to the pattern of a culture, which is a common ethnographic technique (Burgess, 1982). While this methodological strategy is borrowed from ethnography, researchers have used key informant research in other qualitative and quantitative traditions, as I have done (Burgess, 1983; Tremblay, 1957). I designed the interviews based on the case-study method (Yin, 2005). In this way, the quantitative findings functioned as propositions that I chose to address using interviews. Lastly, I analyzed interviews using the constant comparative method, a method known as an integral part of grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006). Because of the nature of my research design, I was able to combine and modify techniques from several traditions in order to more accurately answer questions that arose in the quantitative analysis.

As previously stated, in order to identify key informants, I began by surveying a number of teachers in at-risk schools. From the 23 survey participants who agreed to follow-up interviews I selected 14 teachers to participate in brief initial interviews lasting between 20 and 45 minutes. I conducted many (10 out of 14) of the interviews over the phone, while the remaining 4 were in-person interviews. During the initial interview I asked participants to describe their school, their preparation experiences and to reflect on their experiences in their first year of teaching (see appendix D for interview protocol). More specifically, I asked teachers to describe the characteristics of a good day and a bad day in their classroom. After the initial interview, I selected 5 participants to participate in extended follow-up interviews. These interviews lasted around one hour and were all conducted in person. These participants operated as my key
informants, and I asked them to speak to the social and cultural dimensions of learning to teach in an at-risk urban school (see appendix D).

In these interviews I also asked participants to respond directly to the research questions generated from the quantitative analysis. It was in this phase of the research process that I drew on case study research, where quantitative findings acted as propositions—which are similar to hypotheses used in quantitative research (Yin, 2005). In general, case study research is much more a priori than many qualitative traditions; thus certain elements of this tradition are a natural match for sequential explanatory research design. In order to test propositions in the interview context, I constructed a protocol based on the qualitative research questions and developed a consumable definition of teacher efficacy (see Appendix D for interview protocol). I explained to teachers that I needed their assistance in creating an accurate interpretation of quantitative results. It was my goal to conduct 4 to 6 in-depth interviews, yet it became clear that I had achieved saturation by the 5th interview. It was at this point that I discontinued my search for survey and interview participants. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that saturation is achieved when three things happen: (1) no new data is found regarding any of the relevant categories, (2) the properties and dimensions of a category are thoroughly developed and include variation and, (3) the associations between various categories are well developed and validated (p. 212). All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher for analysis. In the final phase of the interview process, the teachers who participated in the in-depth interviews were also asked to provide a member check. I sent a two-page (see appendix E) summary of my qualitative findings to each of these teachers and asked them to respond to the results via email. Their responses, generally 1 to 2 paragraphs in length, often provided an even fuller answer to the research questions and were thus included in the results.

**Analytic Methods**

I analyzed interview data using the constant comparative method common in grounded theory.
(Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I must note that, although I drew on the grounded theory tradition for data analysis, the mixed-methods research design requires more a-priori decision-making regarding existing theory and literature than is common in grounded theory research. With that said, this tradition provided a useful model of analyzing data through an iterative process of data comparison (Charmaz, 2006). Like much qualitative research, grounded theory does not outline any explicit formula for data analysis; rather several grounded theory researchers provide guidance on ways to analyze these data. For this study, I relied on a combination of procedures described by Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1998).

I began data analysis (see appendix G) with a very foundational microcoding process, analyzing interview transcripts line by line, cognizant of my research questions, but without a preexisting coding scheme. Part of this coding procedure involves the constant comparison of data in which I continuously examined and re-examined data as I created new codes and re-classified data (Charmaz, 2006). During the initial coding phase I relied on extensive memoing in order to illustrate and unpack specific codes and to make connections between various codes as categories begin to emerge. Through memoing I identified broad themes and categories for use in the second, focused phase of coding. In this phase of coding I used only the most salient and frequent of the initial codes and continued writing reflective memos in order to construct and refine categories that helped to answer the specific research questions (Charmaz, 2006). The final phase of coding, theoretical coding, involved a further analysis and diagramming of the relationships between the categories and themes that emerged in answer to the questions posed. I used the software package HyperRESEARCH version 2.81 (ResearchWare, Inc.), a qualitative data analysis tool for Macintosh operating systems, to code and analyze data.

Initially I had planned on analyzing the preliminary interviews separate from the follow-up interviews, in which the preliminary interviews would serve to define the context for the study and the follow-up interviews would answer the research questions more specifically. During analysis it became clear that both sets of interviews should be used together to answer the research
questions because the context was a crucial and embedded part of the answer to many of the questions.

In mixed-methods research one of the major challenges is the successful fusion of the quantitative and the qualitative. Because I have designed this study in such a way that the qualitative analyses directly explain the results of quantitative findings, the qualitative findings actually serve as a synthesis of both results. The discussion section (see chapter 11) will serve to synthesize the research into a holistic picture of the impact on teacher efficacy of preparation and teaching in an at-risk school.

**Limitations and Threats to Validity**

The analytic methods described in this chapter have a number of inherent limitations, however, I believe that the way in which I designed the study and the combination of methods used account for many of these limitations and threats to validity. The first major limitation is quite natural when conducting an analysis of secondary data. Because the questionnaires were designed by NCES, I did not create the survey myself. I had to, therefore, select survey items that approximated questions already known to assess teacher efficacy. However, because teacher efficacy is a contextual, situated phenomenon, it was more crucial that survey items fit with my explicitly stated, contextual definition than that they replicated previously used measures. Because individual teacher efficacy has never been used to understand novice teachers in at-risk schools, the risk is not that the items may not assess teacher efficacy, but only that these specific items have never been empirically linked to student-level outcomes. Because of this limitation, I cannot assume that my findings can translate to research on student outcomes. However, because I can make direct associations between teacher efficacy and both perceived longevity and actual attrition, I can make an indirect connection between teacher efficacy and student outcomes insofar as previous retention research demonstrates that longevity influences student success.
The other limitation related to the survey data concerns the TFS. Because of the sampling frame used by the TFS, I only used first-year SASS teachers when measuring retention. My sample for the final hypothesis, therefore, was much smaller than it was for proceeding analyses. Furthermore, the TFS was only administered one-year after the after SASS; thus I can only estimate one-year retention, which also led to my decision to use only first-year teachers. It is because of these two threats that I chose to include a measure of projected longevity in the teaching field; however, this does not query a teacher's feelings regarding his or her present school.

While many of the limitations to the quantitative research were due to the nature of the data set, the limitations to the qualitative analyses mostly lie in the qualitative research process itself. Qualitative research, as compared with quantitative research, is driven by a different set of assumptions; the main goal of qualitative research is to ensure rich description. In order to ensure this rich description, I made an effort to interview teachers with a wide range of experiences, backgrounds and perspectives and I was able to achieve data saturation. Through these descriptions, I am able to confidently answer many questions that I derived from quantitative analysis and come to compelling conclusions.

Secondly, because in qualitative research I, the researcher, am the chief analytic tool, findings are based on my own interpretation of participant responses. Because of the design of the study, this interpretation also determined the way in which I synthesized qualitative and quantitative data. In order to account for the possibility of my own misinterpretation, I engaged in a series of member-checks with the participants who participated in the in-depth interviews. I sent each participant a two-page summary of my findings and asked them to comment via email on how valid they felt the results were. Comments were generally one or two paragraphs in length and I incorporated them into my findings.

Lastly, one of the threats to validity involved in synthesizing an analysis of secondary data with personally collected qualitative data is that the teachers selected for each portion of the study
are not necessarily drawn from the same population. The teachers in my qualitative sample had not begun teaching when the 2007-2008 SASS was conducted and as such constitute a separate sample. Obtaining access to restricted data has allowed me to conduct quantitative analyses of much more recently collected data than I originally proposed, yet this data was still collected three years prior my qualitative data collection. It was in order to account for this discrepancy that I administered relevant SASS questionnaire items to each of the teachers in my qualitative sample. This synthesis served as one of the most critical checks to validity. Mixed-methods research provides an inherent set of checks and balances because they allow the researcher to examine questions from multiple angles. If qualitative data disconfirmed quantitative findings, then I would have had to address that issue. Because, in this case, qualitative data supported the quantitative findings, the qualitative and quantitative results described in the next two chapters, as well as the synthesis, have more validity.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the mixed methods, sequential explanatory research design that I used to conduct this study and outlined the specific procedures I followed to address the guiding questions described in the beginning of the chapter. I began with an overview of the overall research design, followed by a detailed description of the data, variables and analytic procedures of the quantitative phase. I then explained how I use the quantitative findings to develop research questions for the second, qualitative, phase. I then described the qualitative sample and methods and concluded with a discussion of the various limitations and threats to validity involved in this study. The overarching goal of the methods described above was to create a comprehensive, detailed image of the phenomenon of teaching and learning to teach in urban schools that is both broad and deep. In the next chapter I provide a full report of the quantitative analyses, structured to address the stated hypotheses. In the chapters following the quantitative analyses, I describe qualitative findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter responds to the hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter using the results of analyses of the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) and Common Core of Data (CCD). I begin with a discussion of basic descriptive comparisons between the novice samples in at-risk urban schools and those novice teachers in all other schools on both predictor and outcome variables. I then systematically address each of the hypotheses, and I close with a discussion of how qualitative analyses will explain each finding.

Again, the stated hypotheses address answer the following research questions:

1) What are the differences in levels of preparation and teacher efficacy between teachers in at-risk urban schools and those in other schools?

2) How do reported preparation experiences and teaching in at-risk urban schools impact teacher efficacy, from the perspective of novice teachers?

3) Does the relationship between teacher efficacy and the first years of teaching in at-risk urban schools explain any aspect of commitment to teaching and decision to remain in the same school after one year?

Teacher efficacy

In this chapter, as previously noted, I make a crucial distinction between two essential components of teacher efficacy: personal teacher efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE). PTE, by way of review, specifically concerns a teacher’s perceptions of his or her abilities to perform necessary duties and tasks related to teaching. GTE, on the other hand, concerns a teacher’s perceived ability to impact student outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The specific cognition known as PTE is inherently personal, because it only involves a teacher's perceptions of the actions and activities involved in her classroom. A teacher with high PTE, regardless of the students in her class, feels able to plan and execute an appropriate lesson for her students. She has confidence in her abilities to keep students engaged, to keep the students on task, to manage student behavioral problems, and to cover any content standards required by a school or district. High PTE, notably, does not indicate that a teacher believes that these successful lessons will lead to
higher student test scores or student success in later life. Personal teacher efficacy is only concerned with a teacher and what she feels she is able to do on a daily basis in her classroom. A teacher with low PTE, on the other hand, lacks confidence in her abilities to manage student behavior, to plan lessons or to cover standards set by the district. PTE concerns an internal perception of teaching abilities, unlike GTE, which is more related to the perceived power of external forces on student outcomes.

General teacher efficacy (GTE) is often equated with outcome expectancies. A teacher with high GTE, therefore, believes that she has the ability to influence outcomes related to learning. Outcomes can include state test scores, high school graduation, motivating a student to come to school on a daily basis and teacher evaluations. A teacher with low GTE feels unable to influence these outcomes, regardless of his teaching abilities. The low GTE teacher can feel that he is planning and executing lessons well, but because of external forces, believes that his actions will not actually impact students. In at-risk urban schools teachers often cite external forces such as parental involvement or neighborhood violence as having a strong influence on student outcomes, a teacher with high GTE feels able to overcome these challenges in order to ensure student success.

Hypotheses

The analyses reported in this chapter reveal several significant relationships, and provide support for several of the hypotheses. This chapter will expand on each of the following findings:

Hypothesis 1: Among novice teachers, those in at-risk urban schools exhibit lower levels of both personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE) when compared with teachers in other schools.

- I found support for this hypothesis using multilevel regression analysis. Controlling for teacher background, grade-level and region of the country, there is a significant, negative relationship between teaching in an at-risk school and both PTE and GTE.
Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between preparation and both PTE and GTE in the novice teaching population.

- I found mixed support for this hypothesis. Analysis reveals that there is a significant, positive relationship between PTE and both preparation level and HQT (Table 5.5 model 4).
- The effect of preparation is much stronger for PTE than it is for GTE. While preparation level has a weak, but positive and significant relationship with GTE, HQT status has no effect on GTE.

Hypothesis 3: Preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school on teacher efficacy of novice teachers.

- I found support for this hypothesis. Preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school on either PTE or GTE.
- However, at-risk status, though significant and negative, does not mediate the strong positive impact of preparation on PTE.

Hypothesis 4: For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between preparation and/or teacher efficacy and commitment to teaching

- There is a significant, positive relationship between commitment to teaching and both PTE and GTE.
- Preparation is positively associated with commitment. Novice teachers with higher levels of preparation are more likely to have a high commitment to teaching.

Hypotheses 5: For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher retention after one year.

- There is a significant, positive relationship between GTE and remaining in the same school after one year.

Variation Between Schools:

- Analysis reveals that, when I added control factors into the models, there is significant
variation between schools regarding how at-risk schools and preparation influence both PTE and GTE.

- This variation between schools is much stronger for GTE than for PTE. Only 4% of variation in PTE occurs at the school-level, however, 36% of the variation in GTE occurs at the school-level.

- There is significant variation between schools for both commitment to teaching and retention variables. For commitment to teaching, school-level variables account for the between-school variance. For retention, on the other hand, the included school-level variables do not account fully for the between-school variance.

**Descriptive Results**

In order to begin testing hypotheses I compared those teachers in at-risk schools with those in other schools by running a series of t-tests to compare group means. Table 5.1 provides a summary of these results. Notably there are significant differences between the two groups of teachers concerning teacher efficacy, preparation levels and commitment to teaching. As hypothesized, mean comparison tests reveal that novice teachers in at-risk schools have significantly lower levels of both PTE (at-risk $m = -.17$, not at-risk $m = .03$) and GTE (at-risk $m = -.34$, not at-risk $m = .05$), significantly lower levels of reported preparation experiences (at-risk $m = -.12$, not at-risk $m = -.08$) and are significantly less likely to be considered "Highly Qualified" (78% for at-risk as compared with 80% for others). This indicates that, not only do novice teachers in at-risk schools feel less prepared than others teachers (as demonstrated by differences in the teacher efficacy variables), but also that novice teachers in at-risk schools are actually less prepared than other novice teachers in terms of their formal pre-service experiences. The preliminary answer to research question one, therefore, is that teachers in at-risk schools have lower levels of teacher efficacy.
Table 5.1
Mean Comparison $t$-Tests for teachers in At-Risk schools and novice teachers in other schools on major variables included in analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>At-Risk</th>
<th>Not At-Risk</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 1358$</td>
<td>$n = 7776$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTE</td>
<td>-.17 (.93)</td>
<td>.03 (.89)</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTE</td>
<td>-.34 (.46)</td>
<td>.05 (.42)</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>-.12 (.46)</td>
<td>-.08 (.42)</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQT</td>
<td>.78 (.41)</td>
<td>.80 (.40)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.66 (.48)</td>
<td>.68 (.47)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain</td>
<td>.74 (.44)</td>
<td>.74 (.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| n = 266 | n = 1493 |

Notes: * indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .05$ level, ** indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .01$, *** indicates that $p$ is significant at the $p < .001$ level

A simple correlation between self-efficacies, preparation and at-risk teaching (Table 5.2) provides a preliminary answer to research question two. There is a significant positive association between preparation and both PTE and GTE and there is a significant negative association between teaching in an at-risk school and both PTE and GTE. This result indicates that, among novice teachers, preparation has a positive association with teacher efficacy, whereas teaching in an at-risk school has a negative association with teacher efficacy.

Table 5.2
Correlation tests between major variables regarding at-risk teaching, preparation, teacher efficacy and plans to remain in teaching for novice teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At-Risk</th>
<th>HQT</th>
<th>Prep Level</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>GTE</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HQT</td>
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<td>.24*</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTE</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>.16*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
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<td>.03*</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
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</table>

* indicates that the correlation is significant at the $p < .01$ level
In response to the final research question (question three), I also began with a series of mean comparison t tests (Table 5.1) to measure the differences between novice teachers in at-risk schools and novice teachers in other schools. Analyses indicate that teachers in at-risk schools, when compared with other novice teachers, are significantly less likely to have a high commitment to teaching (66% at-risk desire to stay as compared with 68% of others). In other words, novice teachers in at-risk schools appear less likely to want to remain in teaching. These t-tests revealed no significant differences between novice teachers in at-risk schools and other novice teachers regarding retention.

Correlation results (Table 5.2) further demonstrate that there are significant positive relationships between commitment to teaching and the following variables: HQT status, preparation level, PTE and GTE. As teacher efficacy and preparation level increase, so does a teacher’s reported commitment to teaching. In general, these analyses indicate that positive feelings regarding teaching abilities (PTE) and the ability to influence learning outcomes (GTE) are associated with being more willing to remain in the teaching profession.

Table 5.3 displays the results of a similar correlation test run on the one-year retention variable for first-year teachers. The results presented in this table indicate a significant positive relationship between a high GTE and staying in the same school. In other words there is a strong relationship between remaining in the same school after one year and a feeling of confidence regarding the ability to produce positive student outcomes (GTE).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At-Risk</th>
<th>HQT</th>
<th>Prep Lev.</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>GTE</th>
<th>Stays</th>
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<td>.10*</td>
<td>.29*</td>
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<td>.07*</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.08*</td>
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</table>

* indicates that the correlation is significant at the p < .01 level. Results are only for first year teachers.
While the descriptive analyses reported above do not include control variables and fail to account for the nested structure of the data, the significant results both provided evidence that further analysis would be fruitful and also helped to generate the hypotheses that I tested in this chapter.

**Multi-Level Analyses**

**Hypothesis 1**: Among novice teachers, those in at-risk urban schools exhibit lower levels of both personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE) when compared with novice teachers in other schools.

In order to empirically test this hypothesis I ran multilevel regression models including control variables and at-risk status on both PTE and GTE. Results reveal that, controlling for several individual and school level characteristics; teaching in an at-risk school has a significant impact on both PTE and GTE (see Table 5.4 and 5.5, Model 5). More specifically, in Model 5 there is a negative significant association between teaching in an at-risk school and both PTE (Table 5.4) and GTE (Table 5.5). Therefore, controlling for teacher demographics, school level and region, teachers in at-risk schools have significantly lower levels of both confidence in day-to-day teaching abilities (PTE) and confidence in his or her ability to produce outcomes related to teaching (GTE). Furthermore, because I ran the model using a multilevel design, the reported coefficients take into account the nested structure of the variables and the unobserved school-level effects. The significant relationship, therefore, is at least partially attributed to at-risk teaching.
Table 5.4
Results of a multi-level linear regression of teacher background characteristics, preparation and at-risk teaching on PTE $n = 9134$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
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Notes: * indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .05$ level, ** indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .01$, *** indicates that $p$ is significant at the $p < .001$ level
Table 5.5
Results of a multi-level linear regression of teacher background characteristics, preparation and at-risk teaching on GTE \( n = 9134 \)

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**Teacher Characteristics**

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**Random Effects**

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**Model Fit Statistics**

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**Notes:** * indicates that \( p \) is significant at a \( p < .05 \) level, ** indicates that \( p \) is significant at a \( p < .01 \), *** indicates that \( p \) is significant at the \( p < .001 \) level.
**Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant positive relationship between preparation and both PTE and GTE in the novice teaching population.

Mean comparison tests (Table 5.1) indicate that teachers in at-risk schools have significantly lower levels of preparation and significantly lower levels of teacher efficacy (Both PTE and GTE, see Table 5.4 and Hypothesis 1), but the relationships between preparation and teacher efficacies are slightly more complicated than these basic analyses can reveal. First, I found a significant positive relationship between preparation and PTE and between HQT status and PTE (see Table 5.4 Model 4). Teachers labeled as HQT and those with more extensive preparation experience are, therefore, significantly more likely to report high levels of confidence regarding the ability to orchestrate day-to-day teaching tasks (PTE). This relationship remains just as strong when I included at-risk status into the model (Table 5.4, Model 6). Even in an at-risk school, therefore, preparation level still influences PTE. GTE has a weak, but significant, positive association with preparation level. However, there is no significant relationship between HQT Status and GTE (Table 5.5, Model 4). Among novice teachers, therefore, higher levels of preparation only imply slightly greater perceptions of outcome expectancy (GTE). This relationship remains stable with the introduction of at-risk schools into the model (Table 5.5, Model 6). In the full model, therefore, there is a weak, but significant, positive association between GTE and preparation level and no significant relationship between GTE and HQT status. When controlling for at-risk school context, therefore, pre-service preparation levels only have a modest influence a teachers perceptions of his or her abilities to produce student outcomes.

**Hypothesis 3:** Preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school on the teacher efficacy of novice teachers.

The analyses described for hypothesis 2 (above) reveal that higher preparation levels and HQT status share a significant positive relationship with PTE (ability to conduct a lesson) whereas only preparation level had a small, but positive and significant, impact on GTE (outcome expectancy). When I added teaching in an at-risk school into the full model (Model 6 of Tables
the effect of preparation and HQT status were unchanged. This finding implies that, although preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school, teaching in an at-risk school also does not mediate the positive impact of preparation. Again this influence is much stronger for PTE. Therefore, despite lowered levels of PTE related to teaching in an at-risk school, preparation can still have a positive effect on teachers' perceptions regarding his or her ability to organize and orchestrate day-to-day classroom activities.

**Adequacy of the Models for Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3**

In order to uncover how much of the variation in a given variable occurs at the first (teacher) and second (school) level, I began with a calculation of the interclass correlation coefficient (ICC), shown Tables 5.4 and 5.5. The ICC reveals how much variance occurs between schools (amount of variation within schools can be determined by subtracting 1 – ICC). In the null model, the variation in school-level differences between PTE and GTE become quite apparent. While only 4% of variation in PTE is between schools (and 96% of the variation in PTE, therefore, is within schools), 37% of variation in GTE is between schools, implying that teachers' perceptions of their ability to influence student outcomes is more dependent on school characteristics than feelings of personal teaching efficacy.

I also calculated the percentage of those variances that are explained by individual and school-level factors. In the case of PTE (Table 5.4), for example, the full model (Model 6, which includes preparation factors) is able to explain 6% of the variation between individuals (which accounts for 96% of the total variation). Although school factors only account for 4% of the variation in PTE, this model is able to explain about two-thirds (66%) of the school-level variation. A good deal of the explained variance (about 36%) is explicitly explained by the addition of at-risk status, which speaks to the importance of this variable (see Model 4). For PTE, therefore, the majority of the variance occurs at the individual level, and this model only accounts
for a small amount of that variance. The final model, however, is able to explain a good deal of the school-level differences.

Table 5.5, which concerns GTE, tells a slightly different story. Fully 36% of the variation in GTE occurs at the school level, meaning that only 63% of variation occurs at the individual teacher level. Of individual-level variation, the model is able to explain almost none of the variance. Individual-level variables, such as teacher background and length of preparation, only explain 1% of the individual-level variation in GTE. Regarding the variation between schools, however, school-level factors are able to explain 35% of the variation in GTE. In other words, roughly 1/3 of the variation in GTE occurs at the school level. Model 6 (with the inclusion of at-risk status) is able to explain 1/3 of that variation. This supports the finding that at-risk status is a key predictor of GTE.

Lastly, to determine the adequacy of the models at explaining the observed and unobserved variance in GTE and PTE, I included the model fit statistics AIC and BIC. AIC refers to Akaike information criterion and indicates the goodness of fit of any model—such that a smaller AIC value indicates a better fitting model. The BIC, or Bayesian information criterion is interpreted in the same way. For both PTE and GTE the AIC and BIC statistics indicate the final models (Model 6 of Tables 5.4 and 5.5) provide, compared to the other models, the best explanation for the variance in teacher efficacy.

**Hypothesis 4:** For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between preparation and/or teacher efficacy and commitment to teaching

The first column of Table 5.6 displays the results of the multilevel logit analysis regarding the variable "commitment to teaching." Because the variable is dichotomous (0 = low commitment, 1 = high commitment), high commitment is a dummy and all results are interpreted in comparison with those who have low commitment. The Results reveal that there are significant positive relationships between self-efficacies and commitment to teaching. Teachers with high levels of PTE and GTE are more likely to indicate a higher level of commitment to teaching. This
finding indicates that teachers with negative perceptions of teaching abilities (PTE) and lower student outcome expectancies (GTE) are less likely to plan to remain in teaching for an extended time period. Conversely those with positive cognitions related to teacher efficacy are more likely to want to stay in teaching as long as possible or until retirement.

This analysis also demonstrates significant relationships regarding preparation variables and commitment to teaching. There is a significant positive association between qualifying for HQT status and a high commitment to teaching and a significant positive association between preparation level and having a high commitment to teaching. In other words, teachers who qualify for HQT status and higher preparation levels are more likely to have a strong commitment to teaching.

This table also reveals that there is significant variation between schools regarding commitment to teaching. Because the constants listed under the null model are significant, this indicates that there are unobserved school level variables that account for a significant amount of the variation between schools. In the conditional model, however, the constant is not significant, which indicates that the included school-level factors do explain the variation between schools. The model-fit statistics (AIC and BIC) at the bottom reveal that the conditional model does the best job at explaining the variation in the dependent variables. Because previous research on commitment to teaching has been weak, the results concerning the fifth and final hypothesis are more meaningful.
Table 5.6: Results of multilevel logit analysis of the influence of school and individual predictors, including teacher efficacy, on first-year teacher retention.

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Notes: * indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .05$ level, ** indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .01$, *** indicates that $p$ is significant at the $p < .001$ level
**Hypotheses 5:** For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher retention after one year.

The second column of Table 5.6 displays the results of a multilevel logit analysis regarding the retention variable (1 = stays in same school, 2 = leaves teaching or moves to a different school) for first-year teachers. As explained in the methods chapter, this variable concerns only the one-year retention of first-year teachers (hence the smaller sample size). The reference group consists of those teachers who were not teaching in the school one year after the survey, while the comparison group concerns those who stay in the same school one year after the survey. The conditional model of Table 5.6 demonstrates that, among first-year teachers in at-risk schools, there is a significant positive association between GTE and staying in the same school. This indicates that teachers with high levels of confidence in their ability to encourage student outcomes are more likely to remain in the same school after one year and less likely to move schools or leave teaching. The conditional model of Table 5.6, notably, controls for teaching in an at-risk school, which is not significant in the full model. Teachers with lower levels of GTE, like those in at-risk schools (see previous results), are less likely to remain in the same school after the first year of teaching. This finding is critical to highlight because it implies that, while the at-risk school context itself does not have an impact on retention of first-year teachers, a teachers' level of confidence in his or her abilities to produce student outcomes (GTE) does impact retention. Because previous analyses uncovered a relationship between the at-risk school context and GTE, it is possible that the at-risk context impacts the action of retention through the cognition of general teacher efficacy. Personal teacher efficacy, notably, has no significant relationship with retention.

These models also indicate that there is significant variation between schools. In the null model the constant is significant, indicating a high degree of school-level variation. In the conditional model, there is still a significant variation between schools that is unaccounted for (even if there is decreased significance). Again, these unobserved characteristics are further
explored in the following chapter through qualitative analysis. Lastly, model fit statistics (AIC and BIC) provide opposing conclusions regarding the best model. The decreasing level of AIC indicates that the conditional model does the best job at explaining variation in the retention variable, but an increasing BIC indicates that the null model actually has more explanatory power and credibility. This difference is most likely because BIC calculations include a greater penalty for overfitting than the AIC, so there is a chance that these significant results (only the far right column of Table 5.7) might simply be attributable to noise or be due to the large number of parameters and a relatively small sample size.

**Summary**

This chapter investigated several hypotheses regarding at-risk teaching, teacher preparation, teacher efficacy and retention among novice teachers. Using data from the 2007-2008 SASS and 2008-2009 TFS, I systematically addressed each hypothesis as outlined in the previous chapter. My analysis revealed, first, that novice teachers in at-risk schools have significantly lower levels of PTE and GTE than those in other schools. Teachers in at-risk urban schools, therefore have less confidence in their abilities to both manage day-to-day teaching activities (PTE) and encourage positive student outcomes (GTE). Furthermore, preparation has a significant, positive influence on both of these cognitions, although the influence of preparation is much stronger for PTE than it is for GTE. Teaching in an at-risk school, furthermore, does not mediate the strong positive influence of increased preparation on PTE. These findings point to one of the differences uncovered between the two types of teacher efficacy, namely that preparation shares a stronger relationship with PTE than it does with GTE. The relationship between PTE and preparation, crucially, does not mediate but is able to withstand the negative influence of teaching in an at-risk urban school.

Regarding commitment to teaching and first-year teacher retention, analysis indicates no significant relationship between at-risk teaching and either of these outcomes. While at-risk urban
teaching did not significantly influence the retention outcomes, PTE, GTE and preparation factors (all of which share significant relationships with at-risk teaching) did. PTE and GTE, for example, both significantly influenced commitment to teaching. Compared with teachers who plan to remain in teaching for an extended period of time, teachers who plan on leaving in the near future, are unsure of when they will leave, or are planning to leave as soon as possible have significantly lower levels of both feelings of classroom preparedness (PTE) and confidence in their ability to produce student outcomes (GTE). Analysis of one-year retention of first-year teachers, on the other hand, uncovered different relationships. While teachers who moved schools or left teaching had significantly lower levels of GTE than those who stayed in the same school, PTE had no impact on first-year teacher retention. Outcome expectancy (GTE), though less influenced by preparation, has a stronger relationship with retention than feelings of classroom preparedness (PTE) do.

By way of review, the chapter addresses the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Among novice teachers, those in at-risk urban schools exhibit lower levels of both personal teaching efficacy (PTE) and general teaching efficacy (GTE) when compared with teachers in other schools.

- **Hypothesis 2:** There is a significant positive relationship between preparation and both PTE and GTE in the novice teaching population.

- **Hypothesis 3:** Preparation does not mediate the negative effects of teaching in an at-risk school on the teacher efficacy of novice teachers.

- **Hypothesis 4:** For novice teachers, there is a significant positive relationship between preparation and/or teacher efficacy and a willingness to remain in teaching.

- **Hypotheses 5:** For novice teachers, there is a significant negative relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher attrition after one year.

Using multi-level regression models I was able to find support for hypotheses one and three, and mixed support for hypothesis two. Novice teachers in at-risk schools have lower levels of both personal teacher efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE), and increased preparation positively influences both PTE and GTE for novice teachers, although the effect is stronger for PTE. As hypothesized (H3), the positive impact of preparation does not mediate the negative
influence of teaching in an at-risk school on either PTE or GTE. For PTE, notably, the strong, positive influence of preparation is able to withstand the negative effect of teaching in an at-risk urban school. Regarding commitment to teaching (Hypothesis 4) and retention (Hypothesis 5), I found that both PTE and GTE positively influence commitment to teaching (supporting H4), but I found that only GTE influences one-year retention of first-year teachers (therefore I have mixed support for H5). I also found that there is a significant amount of between school variation regarding both GTE and Retention, a finding that requires further attention.

Many of these findings require further explanation, and this type of explanation is the aim of the following qualitative analyses. Much of the following analyses address why a particular relationship exists, but I also address the unexplained individual- and school-level variance. The following chapter addresses the following questions that are unanswered by the quantitative analyses (see Figure 5.1).

Q1: Why do teachers in at-risk urban schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?
Q2: How does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?
Q3: What are the critical elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?
   Q3A: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?
Q4: What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE and retention? What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?
Finding: Teachers in at-risk urban schools demonstrate lower levels of PTE and GTE

Q1: Why do teachers in at-risk schools report lower levels of both teacher efficacy?

Finding: PTE and GTE are positively, significantly related to commitment to teaching. GTE shares a significant, positive relationship with actual retention.

Q2: How and why does self-efficacy impact teacher retention and other aspects of teaching?

Finding: The impact of preparation is much stronger on PTE than it is on GTE.

Q3A: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool? Q3: What elements of teacher training are important to teaching in an at-risk urban school.

Finding: For GTE, 37% of the variation is between schools. The final model explains 34% of that variation and virtually none of the variation between schools. For PTE only 4% of the variation is between schools, the final model explains 66% of this variation and only 6% of the individual-level variation. There is also significant variation between schools on retention measures.

Q4: What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE and retention? What are the factors that are unaccounted for in these models?
CHAPTER SIX: INTRODUCTION TO THE QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter serves as a short introduction to the qualitative results (which I present in chapters 7, 8, and 9 and summarize in chapter 10). This chapter begins with a description of the participants interviewed for this portion of the study. I follow this with a discussion concerning the way participants interpreted the concept of teacher efficacy in the urban context. I close with a review of the research questions and an outline of the next three chapters.

The Participants

I provided a brief overview of the characteristics of the participants as well as the sample selection used for this portion of the study in the methods chapter (Chapter 4). This section provides a more detailed description of the participants in order to contextualize some of the responses that they have given (see Table 6.1). In outlining my research methods (chapter 4) I explained that I selected five teachers to sit for extended interviews and serve as expert advisors in understanding quantitative results. While those five teachers (Noelle, Rhea, Nell, Brad and Laura) provide the majority of the information outlined in these chapters, I chose to include comments and observations from other teachers when relevant (especially Shelly, Kent and Annie, who participated in longer preliminary interviews than others). As previously stated, with the exception of Rhea, all teachers were teaching in the school district of Philadelphia at the time that I interviewed them. Rhea had been teaching in New Orleans and had just left her teaching position for a suburban school in another state; thus she was the only teacher in my sample who moved from an urban area to a suburban area after one year of teaching.
## Table 6.1: Summary of Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race / Sex / Age</th>
<th>Subject / Grade Level / School Type</th>
<th>Preparation Type</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>PTE / GTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noelle</td>
<td>White, Female, 29</td>
<td>High School English, Charter School</td>
<td>Certification through a masters program at a suburban university (suburban student teaching)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.14 / 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>White, Female, 23</td>
<td>4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, full year of suburban student teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.00 / 3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>White, Female, 24</td>
<td>5th grade, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, urban student teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.29 / 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>White, Male, 24</td>
<td>High School Spanish and Social Studies, Public School</td>
<td>Alternative Certification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.29 / 2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Asian, Female, 27</td>
<td>3rd Grade, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, masters degree, urban student teaching</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.86 / 2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>White, Female, 26</td>
<td>High School English, Public School</td>
<td>Certification through masters program at a suburban university (suburban student teaching)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.14 / 2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>White / Black, Male, 24</td>
<td>High School English, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, full year of suburban student teaching, international student teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.29 / 3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>White, Female, 22</td>
<td>High School Math, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, urban student teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.43 / 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>Black, Female, 26</td>
<td>2nd Grade, Charter School</td>
<td>Certification through a masters program with an emphasis on urban teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.14 / 2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>White, Male, 25</td>
<td>High School Physics, Charter School</td>
<td>Certification through integrated bachelor and masters program in science education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.43 / 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td>White, Female, 24</td>
<td>5th Grade, Public School</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, urban student teaching</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.57 / 2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>White, Female, 26</td>
<td>High School Special Education Math</td>
<td>Traditional through undergraduate university, urban student teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.57 / 2.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.1 provides an overview of many relevant background details for each participant. Expert advisors are the first five participants listed. Through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, I was able to collect data from teachers with a variety of different preparation backgrounds and first-year experiences. As I reviewed data from each participant, major themes arose and I was able to categorize teachers along several different lines: certification type, student teaching experience, perceptions of administrative support in the first year of teaching and status at the end of the first year. In order to obtain certification, teachers followed a traditional undergraduate path, undertook a master’s degree, participated in an integrated bachelor’s and master’s degree or completed alternative certification (Table 6.2). In terms of student teaching (one of the more critical factors influencing teacher efficacy), I labeled teachers both by length (long—one year or more, average—around 12 weeks, and short—less than 12 weeks) and location of student teaching (urban or suburban). Both the length and location of student teaching (Table 6.3), described in detail in chapter 9, are quite crucial to teacher efficacy.

Table 6.2: Teachers by Certification Pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Undergraduate</th>
<th>Masters and Certification</th>
<th>Bachelors and Masters Degree and Certification</th>
<th>Alternative Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Brad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>Noelle</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Teachers by Student Teaching Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended (one year)</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (one semester)</td>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>Noelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short (less than one semester)</td>
<td>Brad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also categorized teachers based on the level of support they perceived from administrators in their building and district (Table 6.4). I chose to sort teachers on this dimension because analysis reveals that administrators have a major influence on GTE. The level of perceived administrative support, furthermore, is one likely explanation for the variation between schools found in the quantitative results. Based on participant responses I categorized perceptions of administrators as supportive, mixed, or unsupportive. Those teachers with mixed feelings about their administrators noted misgivings about administrative decisions, but usually implied that they were not impacted by the decisions. For a few participants, furthermore, administrators were not mentioned. Lastly, I categorized teachers by their status at the end of the first year and labeled them as staying in the same school or moving to another school (Table 6.5). Of the two teachers who moved to a new school, one moved within the district (Nell) and one moved to a different district (Rhea).

Table 6.4: Perceptions of Administrative Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Unsupportive</th>
<th>Not Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Noelle</td>
<td>Brad</td>
<td>Hana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>Hadley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5: Status at the End of First Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staying in The Same School</th>
<th>Moving to A New School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Rhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Nell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noelle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Notes: Brad Moved at the end of his 2nd year of teaching

One of the dimensions on which I could have chosen to stratify participants, but did not, was teacher race. I made this decision for several reasons. First, the quantitative results reveal that
teacher race is not a significant predictor of PTE, GTE, commitment to teaching or teacher retention. Secondly, teacher race was rarely a focus of the qualitative interviews. Teachers were more likely to address class as a factor that could lead teachers to connect with or distance from students. Noelle, for example, explained, “Also for me I had a background that was similar to a lot of these kids, I didn’t know my father and I was raised by a single mother, so for me reading was the that I made sense of the world—that is kind of what I brought to the classroom, so it was really really personal” (Noelle, high school English). Nell echoed a similar feeling, explaining that she was ‘from the neighborhood’:

I am fortunate cause I live in the neighborhood, so I will see students just when I am like walking my dog. And I think all of those little things, and that is why I love, and always wanted to teach in my neighborhood—that builds just a different relationship, you get to know the families, they know you. And I think to a lot of the parents and the students you are more approachable, more comfortable, a lot of different things (Nell, 5th grade).

Race, unlike class, was never addressed as a unifier—even from the few teachers who were of the same race as their students. Kent, who described himself as mixed-race (black and white), explained, “I don’t think I was prepared to stand up in front of a class of 30 black students” (Kent, high school English). When pressed to expand on this, however, he explained that the divide was class-based, “because it is totally different—it is so different, with the poverty these students come from, you know” (Kent, high school English). Because the connection teachers made was more based on class—and because neither of these factors emerged as a focal point of discussion, I chose not to group teachers based on race.

**Interpretations of Teacher efficacy**

The goal of the qualitative portion of this study was to contextualize and provide explanations for the results of the quantitative analysis. In order to better interpret the qualitative data, I needed to begin by understanding the meaning that participants brought to the concept of teacher efficacy. While I provided some participants with an explicit definition of teacher efficacy, I gave many a more abstract definition, such as, "feeling prepared for teaching". Despite slight
variations in the protocol, the majority of participants reveal similar reports regarding of the two types of self-efficacies. Notably, to these teachers both PTE and GTE relate to a feeling of control. PTE relates to control at the classroom level, whereas GTE relates to a feeling of empowerment over the entire learning process.

By way of reminder, feelings of PTE are defined in the literature as related to feelings of control regarding the day-to-day teaching process. Teachers’ comments that demonstrate feelings of PTE often relate to classroom management and ability to construct relevant lessons. PTE, as previously mentioned, is inherently personal, relating to the way a teacher feels with her students in her classroom. An ability to keep students on task and engaged in learning appear to be the most critical aspects of personal teacher efficacy for participants. The responses below demonstrate how teachers interpreted high and low feelings of teacher efficacy. It is important to note that teachers who were generally higher in PTE, for example, could express feelings of low PTE at various points throughout the interview. Teacher efficacies (both PTE and GTE) are fluid and can vary throughout the course of a day, week or school year. Feelings of PTE and GTE are most easily explained as functioning on continua. When I considered interviews as cohesive artifacts, my interpretations of a teacher’s general levels of GTE and PTE aligned quite nicely with survey responses—although teachers were often able to identify days or times when their feelings of teacher efficacy were higher or lower than usual.

**High PTE**

- I think one thing was that [my first year] made me realize how prepared I had to be for each class…controlling my classroom was the biggest piece and the idea that I had a lot of structure in place at the beginning of the year. (Brad)

- Last year, actually in comparison to my peers, we had a lot of first-year teachers at my school all hired at once. Umm I felt that I was more…I was calmer than most. (Hadley)

- [On a good day] there are no fights in the classroom and I was actually able to get through my math and literacy blocks and my kids understood everything and were able to follow my instruction. Any day that is like that where the behavior is there and my kids can accomplish the task at hand successfully is a good day for me. (Hana)
- A good day would be, when I am going through instruction, the kids are on task, and they are just mentally there. (Laura)

- I find that you just have to tell them what to do—and if they argue, it is just like: I am the teacher, basically, so...so to me it is like give them some choice, but very limited controlled choice because I find that if they have too many options—it is just chaos, because they don't really know what they want, they want to dabble in everything. So for me classroom management is about letting them feel like they have a choice, but they don't actually have a choice. (Laura)

- When I am confident in what I am teaching and why I am teaching it and how it is relevant to them, then I go in there with a whole lot of confidence and I am able to deal with behaviors a lot more easily, because I am secure with what I am trying to teach them. So when I have all that together, it is much better. (Kent)

**(This comment also describes feelings of high GTE because it indicates that Kent needs to know the purpose of his teaching (GTE) in order to manage the classroom (PTE). This particular comment demonstrates that there is some overlap in these cognitions)**

Low PTE

- I didn't feel like I was prepared enough, so I went directly into grad school to get my masters. And then I did a whole year of masters in Elementary Ed where I did more student teaching. (Laura)

- Being that I was a new teacher it was very difficult, it is much easier to read about or think that you are prepared for some of the behavior and personality issues. (Nell)

- That was especially challenging because trying to teach and trying to deal with that part of students who can’t control themselves who don’t know how to behave, it’s a whole different aspect—from what I learned. (Noelle)

- It was definitely hard, it was really hard, but also...it was kind of overwhelming to really be in charge of your classroom for the first time. (Rachel)

- A bad day would be maybe if something was broken and at the last minute I had to do something else—anything unexpected that is hard to get around, because I feel like when I would get thrown off the kids would get thrown off and it would just be a crazy day. (Rachel)

- I think that going through the program that I did at my university...it wasn't...it is such a really different way of teaching...in an urban setting, because you have to set up your management differently, you have to teach differently, or at least it seems that way, to be able to get to that point where you can move toward some of the things that you learned in your practicum classes, you would just have to do management all day every day for months. So you just have to re-learn the different ways of presenting information to students who, you know, are three or four grade levels behind. (Rhea)
- They would push and push and push and like after I think a month or two it was just like you can't just wait for them to get under control, you know what I mean like you can't just talk over them. So, there was like a couple of months where I was just so just strict and like every day it was just a struggle, because that is not my personality. (Rhea)

- I felt like…I didn’t feel like a good teacher last year, I thought that…I still had a lot to learn in terms of classroom management and I was teaching one class out of subject, which was very difficult because I didn’t know the material that well. So it was tough, it was no cakewalk. (Tom)

While feelings of control at the classroom level defined PTE, a more general perception of control drives feelings of GTE. Often defined as confidence in the ability to produce student outcomes, GTE relates to feelings of control over the entire learning process. Central to GTE is the idea that a teacher can not only keep students engaged, but that he or she can also encourage student outcomes related to learning. In the comments below, teachers describe a variety of outcomes related to teaching: finishing homework, student learning, holding students to high standards and student performance on standardized tests. Outcomes related to student learning, furthermore, today often include results on teacher evaluations.

**High GTE**

- Wow, I am already better than a lot of people in this building and I am not very good" That is kind of an awful way to think about it. But kids are learning a lot more in my classes than they are in other classes. (Brad)

- Or like, all of my students bring in their homework— that means they came ready to accept my instruction. (Laura)

- I feel like I am making a difference and I do feel capable and I feel that with a certain amount of effort and positivity and persistence and determination you can make a difference… but I am kind of getting welled up in my eyes when they are making connections and I can see them learning—I am that emotional person who feels like it matters. (Nell)

- I care more about my kids than anything, that is why I am still there—but I hold them to a really high standard and if they are messing up I let them know. I don’t negotiate things with them—and that is definitely a struggle for any first-year teacher but I think especially in the city. (Noelle)

- I mean, do my students learn from me, yes…do I always know what I am doing…no. (Shelly)
- And our scores, of course, were fabulous, because me and the teacher from 10th grade went to our classes and said "she thinks you can't write and she threatened me, so basically, we need you guys to try really hard, especially for the writing portion, or otherwise I am not going to be able to keep my job", and they like me, so they tried really hard and their scores improved. (Shelly)

- We would take a benchmark test every three weeks and their questions were ridiculous to me…of course my kids would get zero percent, and they would get someone in my classroom every single day, watching me and critiquing every single little thing I was doing. And they were actually doing better in science than they were in social studies, so I pushed social studies, well, all of my students outscored all of their other subjects in social studies, like they did so well. (Rhea)

**Low GTE**

- I see teachers who don't stand up for the way that they think things should be happening, so they just feel really overwhelmed. In most cases they are more prepared than they give themselves credit for. (Brad)

- A bad day would be when they can't even walk in line and it is just like they can't even get themselves together to do something so simple that they learned in Kindergarten to do, then nothing…I am not going to get anything done. (Laura)

- So there is that nervousness and like, and it is like I want my kids to do well because that is a reflection that I am doing something right, but I am like…there are certain things that I can't control—I can't control when my, like right now my kids struggle in reading more than math and personally I know that is my weakness (Laura)

- My first school… I began in November and I was the 4th teacher there, but by January the fact that I could get students seated and listen—that…I wouldn't use the word savior, but I was praised by my principal and the administration because I was able to do that. And I didn't feel like I was achieving my potential as a teacher by challenging my students. I could have intrinsically done that and kept pushing, but then I think it would have taken me the next year with a new group of students based on that climate… (Nell)

- My highest group—it is easy to sit with them and talk through reading, cause they can all respond and they are all giving background knowledge and input and making connections. Then I sit with my lowest group and I feel like pulling my hair out and banging my head against the wall, I don't know what to do to help these students. (Nell)

- It was sad because, oh my God I didn't get anything done—and that is something that I couldn't even control. It is just frustrating that the kids have that much pull in how the day goes. (Annie)

- Initially because I was kind of insecure about what I am I doing, what am I accomplishing—there was a time, like in October or November where I was like really depressed—It was really hard for me, like to have a life outside of the school, because I would come home and I would be miserable. (Kent)
The title of one of the seminal texts on self-efficacy in general is, notably, *Self-Efficacy and the Exercise of Control*. The comments made by these teachers support the importance of control for positive feelings of both PTE and GTE. The difference between the two is subtle but critical. A positive sense of PTE requires a feeling of control over what happens within the classroom.

Classroom management, the curriculum and organization were major themes in the discussion of PTE. A positive sense of GTE, on the other hand, requires that the teacher feel in control of the entire learning process. In the case of urban GTE, it requires that the teacher see past all of the background influences to hold a firm belief that he or she can actually matter in the lives of his or her students.

**The Qualitative Results Chapters**

As outlined previously, the research questions addressed in the following chapters are as follows:

- **Q1**: Why do teachers in at-risk urban schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?
- **Q2**: How and why does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?
- **Q3**: What are crucial elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?
  - **Q3A**: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?
- **Q4**: What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in measures of GTE and retention? What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?

In order to address these questions, I have chosen to organize the qualitative results chapters into three main chapters, as described below. The goal of these three chapters is to create a full model of how teacher efficacy functions in urban schools (Figures 9.1 and 10.1, later); each chapter focuses on one or two research questions and introduces a new element to the model.

*Chapter 7*: This chapter addresses Research Question 1 (how teaching in an at-risk urban school influences teacher efficacy). Based on participant responses, it appears that there are several urban-specific stressors that impact teacher efficacy (student attitude and
behavior, curricular concerns and administrative pressures). Notably, the various stressors impact different self-efficacies differently, therefore I also begin to construct an answer to Research Question 4 (what accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE).

Chapter 8: This chapter addresses Research Question 2 (how teacher efficacy influences teaching and teacher retention). Participants suggest that low teacher efficacy causes teachers to feel overwhelmed, reduces the amount of time for critical reflection, can cause teachers to lower standards for student success and can increase teacher attrition. Again, there are major differences regarding how PTE and GTE impact teachers and teacher retention.

Chapter 9: This chapter provides answers to Research Questions 3 and 3A (how and why preparation influences teacher efficacy). I also address Research Question 4 (what accounts for the variation between schools) in this chapter. Preparation, notably, has a different impact on both PTE and GTE. PTE in urban schools develops through student teaching, practice with lesson plans and a smooth transition to teaching. GTE, on the other hand, develops through a program’s philosophy of education and non-preparation factors at the school-level (such as the influence of colleagues and perceptions of administrators) and individual-level (such as disposition). The impact of administration, especially, qualitatively explains much of the variation between schools regarding GTE and retention.

Chapter 10: Chapter 10 provides a summary of the qualitative results by explicitly addressing each of the research questions. This summary also works as an introduction to chapter 11 (implications for teacher education and teacher induction policy).
CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPLAINING LOW TEACHER EFFICACY

Why do teachers in at-risk schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?

In order to understand the significantly lower levels of teacher efficacy found in teachers in at-risk urban schools, I gave participants a definition of teacher efficacy and then asked them what could cause the difference. Participants reasoned that the lower levels of teacher efficacy found among teachers in at-risk schools are likely explained by a unique set of urban at-risk specific stressors. Irrelevant teacher preparation that was not geared toward understanding the unique challenges of urban schools often exacerbated these challenges. Nell, for example, explained “I think there are more challenges for teachers in urban school districts, so I totally understand how teachers in the suburbs or in—I guess—higher socioeconomic areas of the country, would feel more successful, capable and effective as educators” (Nell, 5th grade). After examining participant reactions to the question posed, I was able to divide stressors into three broad categories: 1) negative student attitude and behavior, 2) curricula that were either irrelevant to urban students or not suited to the challenges of the urban classroom, and 3) unsupportive administrators.

While each participant generally highlighted a particular stressor, most participants commented on multiple themes in some form or another (see table 7.1). Teachers provided intriguingly polarizing evidence regarding one category in particular—unsupportive administrators—most likely because unsupportive administrators are neither endemic nor unique to urban schools. Teachers explain, however, that unsupportive administrators interact with the challenges that are endemic to urban schools, and can produce a unique effect in the urban environment. Supportive administrators, on the other hand, were often lauded as positively influencing teacher efficacy. The impact of the administration, notably, explains some of the variation found between schools. I found contrasting evidence for all four themes, while polarity
was most noticeable in discussions of administrators. Participants explained that when student attitude and behavior was consistently positive, and when curricula were well designed, these elements had the power to positively influence teacher efficacy. In the following sections, I address each of the urban-specific challenges that participants described and I include contrasting evidence in order to understand why a given element impacts teacher efficacy (see figure 7.1 for an overview).

Table 7.1: Teachers Who Commented Individual Urban-Specific Stressors
(Names in *italics* indicate that this category was described as a major source of challenge)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Behavior</th>
<th>Student Apathy</th>
<th>Curricula</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>External Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>Kent</td>
<td><em>Kent</em></td>
<td>Rhea</td>
<td>Rhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Figure 7.1: How the Urban Environment Exerts Stress on Teacher Efficacy
(Bold arrows indicate a major impact; dashed arrows indicate a minor impact)
1. **Student Attitude and Behavior**

One of the main sets of stressors participants described was student attitude or behavior in the classroom setting. The three main aspects of student attitude and behavior responsible for reduced teacher efficacy were: *acting out, student apathy* and the negative impact of *students’ home lives*. According to participants, stressors regarding student attitude and behavior take a particular shape in urban schools both as a result of the many social and psychological stressors the students in urban schools cope with, and because of the pervasiveness of negative behavior and apathy in urban schools.

When asked to describe a bad day, participants often used the words ‘chaotic,’ ‘loud,’ ‘wild,’ ‘disruptive’ and ‘aggressive.’ Conversely, they tended to use the words ‘calm’, ‘focused’ and ‘positive attitude’ to describe their classroom on a good day. These adjectives, although used in the context of good and bad days, all defined student attitude and behavior at the classroom level. Several participants painted vivid pictures of what classroom disruption (or student aggression) can look like in an urban school. For example, one participant described the chaos that can take over the classroom when students were acting out on one particularly bad day:

> They didn't even recognize that I was there—they didn't even think I was listening. And they were looking at me, and they were like OK he is getting steamed—a student answered his cell phone in class, and I was like alright, because that's an instant suspension, and I was like alright you made your decision—the kid came up to me and tried to give me ten dollars, and um, I mean of course I didn't accept it, I was like alright sit down. I had to kick another student out of the classroom. *(Kent, high school English)*

Kent further explained how helpless and out of control this experience made him feel. Regarding that day, Kent explained, "It was awful, that was one of the worst days—one of the worst periods that I have had. I mean I have had bad periods before, and that was pretty bad...". When he states that "they didn't even recognize that I was there", it becomes quite clear how out of control he felt in this situation, and how frustrating the day was. Nell explained that many of the days in her first year of teaching were stressful; she characterized these days as, “kids throwing things across the room, not getting any work done…and just giving up” *(Nell, 5th grade)*. Both of these
Teachers were able to express feeling out of control, Kent explaining that he felt like his students didn’t even know that he was in the room and Nell reports “just giving up”. PTE, notably, is often explained as a dimension of perceived classroom control—an ability to plan and execute a given lesson requires that the teacher be in control of his or her classroom and lessons. From this perspective, Kent and Nell both describe the negative impact that student behavior has on teacher efficacy (and even more specifically PTE).

Participants explicitly stated that negative student behavior is not always typical of all days, or all students. Nell explained “we had a lot of good days too, the days when you can see the kids learning or that you have accomplished something, so you can look around and see their behaviors or attitudes toward learning are finally grasping and understanding the importance of education” (Nell, 5th grade). Hana articulated a similar feeling regarding what defines a good day: “a good behavior day definitely influences whether or not I come home and am relaxed…I greet my students and they have a good attitude…the behavior is there and my kids can accomplish the task at hand successfully” (Hana, 2nd Grade). According to Nell and Hana, positive behavior can increase how in control a teacher feels of her classroom. For both participants, good behavior is necessary for successful teaching.

Teachers explained, however, that even when students exhibited positive behavior, the disruptive behavior of one student could cause a chain reaction. Hana explains “When one student sets the rest of the class off, I have a hard time getting them under control…then voice levels are extremely loud in the classroom” (Hana, 2nd grade). From this perspective, although students were not continually disruptive, the potential for classroom chaos was always there, which caused teachers to feel consistently out of control in urban classrooms. Rhea, for example, explained the potential for classroom disruption: “when I was in [the urban environment] it was more the management and policing all day—so much energy put into just having control of the whole classroom…if they stand up, they fight…” (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies). While consistent positive behavior might influence a teacher’s sense of teacher efficacy
positively, the mere potential of negative behavior could cause teachers to feel out of control. The potential for and increased amount of classroom disruption, they explained, was one likely reason for lower PTE among teachers in urban schools. When students are fighting, talking or shouting, teachers believe that they are collectively unfocused on learning. Positive student behavior is a crucial element in a teacher’s sense of classroom control (PTE). Brad, for example, explains how crucial it was for him to feel in control, “controlling my classroom was the biggest piece” (Brad, high school Spanish and Social studies). For all teachers interviewed, behavior was a primary concern and, although learning was often the end goal, positive student attitude and conduct were a necessary precursor to student learning.

The second major student stressor teachers described was student apathy. Teachers defined apathetic students as those who were not engaged in classroom activity, rarely asked for help and appeared not to care about their own performance. Apathy was an acute challenge for teachers of older students. Shelly, a high school English teacher spoke about offering extra help during lunch and after school for a major assignment. She explained, “the problem is that most of them don't want to ask for help, they kind of just don't want to do the assignment if they don't understand it or they don't like it” (Shelly, high school English). She explained that, because of student apathy, her greatest challenges were "one getting them to do homework and two, like to see the importance of something like a take-home midterm or an essay. They treat them the same way, either they will do it or they won’t". Kent, who also taught high school English, spoke about one of his classes in particular: “They don't care, I mean there is total apathy in the class. It is hard to work with some of them because they literally give up on passing my class.” Both Kent and Shelly, when asked why urban teachers might feel less effective than other teachers, expressed that they felt that some of the students in their classes would often ‘give up’ in the face of a difficult assignment, which made these teachers feel less able to make a difference to their students’ learning.
Again, although many teachers commented on student apathy as a major stressor, they also commented on the positive effects of student attitudes. Kent, discussing the same class as above, recounted a story that particularly touched him: “There are students who are there that want to learn...you know I got an apology letter from a student in that class, she said, ‘I want to move my seat’ and that makes you want to stay there. So...I want to [keep working] for those types of students…” (Kent, high school English). Tom also talked about the benefit of positive student attitude about learning, he made a comparison between his students in his first year and his second year of teaching “Last year was my first year and I think [that group of students] had a lot of hostility toward the [school] in general and a lot of hostility towards me—this year’s kids are just the nicest kids you could ever want to meet” (Tom, high school Physics). While Tom is using the words ‘hostile’ and ‘nice’ rather than ‘apathetic’ and ‘engaged’ it was clear from the context of the interview that his ‘nice’ students appeared willing to exert effort into schooling, while ‘hostile’ students were not. When pressed about how this made Tom feel about his teaching, he responded “I didn’t feel like a good teacher last year...this year has been a lot smoother”. Tom explains, crucially, that student attitude significantly impacted how he felt about his teaching abilities—therefore his perception of these attitudes had an effect on his level of teacher efficacy.

There is evidence in several of the other teachers’ statements (above) that student attitude—student apathy in particular— influences teacher efficacy. When Shelly said, "either they will do it or they won't" she expressed a perceived inability to influence this particular student outcome. In this situation students are in power. Teacher efficacy theory holds that if a teacher believes that a student refuses to try, the teacher, in turn, can feel completely powerless to influence that student's learning and may be less likely to exert effort to help that student. In this sense, student apathy may cause a higher threat to GTE than it does to PTE, because it often produces the powerless belief that students, regardless of a teacher's abilities, don't want to learn (Shelly and Kent express this). Based on participant comments, a teacher may have confidence in his or her abilities to successfully plan and conduct a lesson (PTE), but if the teacher perceives
students as apathetic, he or she will have very low confidence in his or her ability to influence learning outcomes (GTE).

Lastly, teachers were generally unlikely to place the blame for negative attitudes and behaviors directly on students, they were more likely to believe that the fault was outside of the classroom—on the many external forces that at-risk urban students cope with. Negative student attitude and behavior often made teachers feel out of control, flustered or powerless, but teachers almost uniformly ascribed those behaviors to external forces. Annie explained, “but I think it is just that's how a lot of their lives tend to be—just like hostile—and most of the kids just seem so angry, and not at me or not at one thing—just angry with anything” (Annie, high school Math). Students in urban areas do, as Annie explains, often come to school with a lot of ‘extra baggage.’ They are more likely to live in poverty, are often exposed to drugs and violence at a very early age and lack parental support common in most wealthy suburbs. When asked to describe the external forces in students’ lives, the teachers listed:

- Lack of parental involvement…some students that have parents who are there and supportive but are struggling to make ends meet—so lack of educational, technological all of the other extracurricular activities…and I think there are a lot of negative influences in this neighborhood. (Nell, 5th grade)
- Like if you think about the hierarchy of needs—a lot of our kids basic needs aren't met. (Noelle, high school English)
- I wasn't fully prepared for the culture that I was entering—because it is totally different—it is so different, with the poverty these students come from…(Kent, high school English)
- I knew that they were going to come in with a lot of hostility and animosity, and tragedy in their lives—that their weekends could include gang violence, shootings, things like that… (Shelly, high school English)
- Like trying to understand why they are doing this, why they are responding this way—it is because that's what their community does—that is what they learn from their parents and relatives, so I think it is that, I think a lot of teachers are not prepared for that culture change, at least in my upbringing… (Laura, 3rd grade)

Participants explained that the reason that these external forces could influence teacher efficacy is because they occur outside of the classroom—the forces are completely disconnected from the teacher and therefore completely outside of her control. Annie, in an attempt to contextualize this idea, told a story about students coming into her classroom just after a fight. When Annie described the impact that the fight had on her classroom, her low teacher efficacy
was quite apparent: "I am not just sad that the kid is hurt—I mean that is sad, but also sad because, oh my God I didn't get anything done—and that is something that I couldn't even control.” Other teachers provided comparisons that indicated how beneficial it was to the classroom when students came from more stable areas and homes with supportive parents. Nell, for example, made a comparison between the two schools in which she has taught, “comparatively I am in a nicer school because there is a lot of parent involvement, a lot of participation in activity…it is in a working class neighborhood…and that shows a difference in my students…the active parent involvement” (Nell, 5th Grade).

While it is clearly critical for teachers in urban schools to understand these outside influences, this awareness may actually cause teachers to feel more out of control concerning both classroom interactions and student learning. Teachers, when faced with negative student behavior, sometimes did not see the problem as the student (with whom he or she can directly interact). Instead, teachers often saw the problem as in the student’s home or community. This attitude can remove the locus of control to an external place, and in doing so can decrease the teacher’s ability to feel successful and effective. Because external forces define these cognitions, teachers believe that these outcomes cannot be altered through improved practice (as evidenced when Annie said, “and this was something I couldn’t even control”) perceptions of students having 'extra baggage' can have a greater impact on GTE than on PTE. These outside factors are crucial to acknowledge in order to avoid overly negative cognitions and self-blame, but if teachers externalize outside forces too dramatically, a teacher can believe that he or she is unable to influence student learning because of those forces.

When teachers perceive attitudes and behaviors as outside of their control, often because of external factors, their sense of GTE decreases. When teachers believe that their teaching abilities produce the negative attitude and behaviors (as was often the case with disruptive behavior), PTE decreases. In other words, perceptions of the source of student attitude and
behavior could lead to lowered levels of confidence regarding personal teaching abilities (PTE) and actual influence on students (GTE).

2. The Curriculum

The second theme that arose among participants in discussing urban threats to teacher efficacy was an irrelevant or confusing curriculum. While teachers were in the process of coping with student behaviors, they also struggled with the standardized curricula common in city schools, a crucial element in the day-to-day teaching and learning process in a number of ways. Teachers often defined curricula as either confusing or irrelevant to students needs (both academic and cultural needs). Many teachers explained that district or building administrators gave them a required curriculum, often scripted, with little explanation regarding the best ways to use the materials. These required curricula pose a unique challenge in urban schools; according to these teachers, because of the complex bureaucracy common in urban schools, they were often unsure whether they could adapt materials and lessons to their students academic and cultural needs.

Teachers initially struggled with sorting through and understanding requirements and materials that were often overwhelming and confusing. As a result of this confusion, teachers often spent extensive periods of time trying to manage and make sense of curricula. When asked why teachers might have a low sense of confidence in their teaching, Laura focused on her initial struggles with the curriculum: “It was very overwhelming…the literacy curriculum has a lot of materials…that not all the teachers use—and as a new teacher I wasn't sure what was, um, required, what was most important” (Laura, 3rd grade). Laura explained that confusion over how to implement the literacy curriculum in her school had a major impact on her confidence in her teaching abilities. Her lack of confidence led her to remain in school for up to 60 hours a week: “you just had to spend a lot of time—I was working like 12 hours a day trying to figure it out. I would work at school—get there at 7, leave at 6 get home and do more work—it was just like overwhelming” (Laura, 3rd grade). Noelle also commented that in the first year of urban teaching...
“people definitely have no idea where to start and they spend 14 hours a day at work and they work on the weekend” (Noelle, high school English). In trying to figure out what to teach and how to teach it (how to interpret and implement the curriculum), these teachers explain that many first-year urban teachers feel consistently behind.

When asked to reflect on their first year, several teachers, like Laura, responded that it was ‘exhausting’, partially because of coping emotionally with challenging students, but also because they were working 60 hours a week to plan and prepare lessons. Others shared similar responses,

- My first year I was emotionally and physically exhausted every single day, I mean just from what you have to deal with on a daily basis, that on top of all of the additional work that you have to do in your first few years of teaching in terms of planning and preparation for your lessons, it was very hard…(Nell)
- I lost 15 pounds and I worked 12 hours a day, I cried a lot, I did the typical thing that everyone does…ya know, “I don’t know if I can do this”… (Noelle)

Staying in school for 12 hours a day can be interpreted as a coping strategy for a low sense of PTE. If a teacher feels that he or she is not effectively planning or implementing lessons, he or she copes with this perception by reducing uncertainty and increasing the amount of time spent planning for the day. Rhea also explained another way that she coped with curricular confusion—especially regarding how to design lessons to fit certain standards: “like I used a lot of my lessons from the student teaching at the beginning, because I needed something that I had already done and felt comfortable with, but that aligned with some of our standards and things would work out” (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies). Rhea was able to remove some of the uncertainty and confusion in her curriculum by using trusted lessons, which made her feel more in control of her classroom and teaching (PTE).

The emotional exhaustion that teachers, especially Nell, express demonstrates the way in which many of the urban stressors can overlap. While veteran urban teachers often struggle with negative student attitudes and behaviors and all novice teachers cope with learning to implement
and adapt curricular standards, novice urban teachers must manage both of these stressors simultaneously.

The other major curricular threats to teacher efficacy teachers in this sample described involved *academically or culturally irrelevant curricula*. When specifically asked what they did or did not expect when teaching in an urban school, novice teachers in my sample overwhelmingly reported that they expected students to have heightened behavioral, psychological and social troubles, but they did not expect to be teaching students with such varied academic abilities.

- In my first year of teaching, I taught ninth graders—many who were reading at a 3rd and 4th grade level. I had an English degree, which does not mean that I have a literacy degree, I don't know how to teach people how to read (Noelle, high school English).
- I have 11th grade reading levels with fifth, sixth mostly and third and second grade reading levels, it was just...so I had to create an entire curriculum on my own (Shelly, high school English).
- I wasn't ready for was how low-level they were, it was like, I wish I could make you know 22 different things for you guys, but I needed to make it at a second grade level and then the high level students in that class—like I felt really bad (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies).

Teachers felt that the high degree of differentiation they needed to negotiate in their classrooms was unique to urban schools. Many teachers also felt that the curricular resources provided by their districts and individual schools did not adequately help them differentiate their instruction to varied academic needs. Shelly, for example, explained that her school’s English curriculum included the translation of Middle English text, which she felt was not appropriate to their academic level, “my students were looking at me like I was crazy. I didn't translate Middle English until I was a sophomore in college...so I had to create an entire curriculum on my own, which I have had to do all year, and it is just flying by the seat of my pants” (Shelly, high school English).

The academic variation among students caused many teachers to feel uncertain and unprepared for their particular environment. Feeling unprepared to teach a given group of students, like feeling out of control in the classroom, translates into a low sense of personal teaching efficacy. Noelle stated “I didn’t know how to teach people how to read”, this indicates that, while it would have been possible for someone to teach her students how to read, she wasn’t
equipped for the job. When teachers instructed students who did not have such a wide degree of academic variation, they felt that their transition to teaching was made easier because they felt better able to plan and conduct lessons. Laura, for example, explains “last year my stress was only figuring out the curriculum and also my class last year was pretty much all on the same level, unlike this year I have kindergarten all the way up through third grade level—so that is kind of adding to the stress and I feel like I am losing my temper a lot more in the classroom” (Laura, 3rd grade).

While curricula were often not designed for the differentiation needed in urban schools, other participants articulated that mandated curricula were often culturally irrelevant. In the School District of Philadelphia, while there is great variation among schools, 61% of the student population is African American, 18% is Hispanic, 6% is Asian and 13% is Caucasian. With the exception of Annie and Rachel, who taught in racially diverse high schools, the teachers in my sample were teaching in schools that they described as at least 95% African American, including Rhea (who taught in New Orleans). These teachers explained that literacy curricula rarely included black authors and rarely took into account students' ethnic heritage.

In October/November, I was first given this [remedial reading] curriculum, which sucked. It’s a textbook and the idea is for them to read better in their textbooks, and we were going back and forth between science lessons and history lessons—no curricular continuity—no relevance—relevance was obsolete to their lives, ya know…in terms of the content. So, it took me a while to transition away from that stuff. (Kent, high school English)

The lack of cultural relevance is a particular challenge in urban classrooms, especially because scripted curricula are much more common in large urban districts (Kauffman, 2005), and because accepted and standard knowledge are often socially defined by the white, middle class majority (Asante, 1991). Shelly explained, "none of my students like to read anymore, none of them, and the books that they do like to read, they are not allowed to read because they are not considered high literature" (Shelly, high school English). In this statement Shelly demonstrates how she perceives the impact of irrelevant curricula on her classroom: her students do not like reading.
The process of adapting poorly designed or insensitive curricula posed a challenge to teachers in urban schools in ways that could hurt both PTE and GTE. When teachers were unsure how to use certain materials or unclear on how to adapt materials to students’ academic and cultural needs, they had lower confidence in their abilities to design and execute lessons (PTE). It requires a significant amount of confidence to adapt mandated materials, because teachers have to believe that they can do a better job on their own (high PTE). Kent was able to gain this confidence, but, as is evidenced in his comment, it took him time, and students lost that possible learning time.

While less commonly touched on, curricular confusion could also decrease GTE because it consistently reminded them that, often, they were not the ones selecting materials or designing lessons. Because teachers felt that culturally relevant curricula were relevant to student success, teachers often felt that an external force (administrators or district officials mandating a specific curriculum) had more pull on student learning (low GTE). Shelly provides an excellent example of this belief: because her students dislike reading, Shelly felt at a disadvantage in enabling her students to do well in her English classroom (low GTE). Shelly further commented that the lack of curricular relevance was actually brought on by administrators, "[my students] like to read urban fiction, they like to read like Zane and things like that, things that my principal takes from them, but me, I keep thinking…I don't care what they read as long as they are reading." Again, not only are many of the curricular stressors magnified in urban districts and extremely challenging during the first year, but they are also influenced by student behaviors, unsupportive administrators and bureaucratic confusion.

3. **Unsupportive Administrators**

Interpretations of administrative behavior, according to the teachers interviewed, can have a major impact on both PTE and GTE. Administrative behaviors, participants explain, can

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3 Zane is the author of many popular urban erotic fiction novels such as *Addicted*.
be interpreted as either providing support or stress. Participants in this study were particularly vocal about supportive or unsupportive administrators and the impact they could have on teacher efficacy. I labeled administrators whom appeared *apathetic to the needs of teachers and students, openly hostile or inconsistent* as unsupportive. I labeled administrators who generally recognized the difficulties involved in transitioning to urban teaching as supportive.

In explaining his decision to move to another school in the school district, Brad voiced that he felt that the school was *apathetic to the needs of teachers and students*, “The school that I was in was fairly stable, but I don't think it was making any progress. It was very complacent and I had a lot of trouble getting involved and I didn't have a great relationship with the administration” (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies). Brad believed that the administration didn't care about improvement. Brad felt that without an improvement-focused administration, he would not be able to make the impact that he desired. He explained that no matter how hard he worked, he would not have an impact on students without the support of the administration, so he eventually left the school, explaining, “Why would I stay in a system that doesn’t respect me, doesn’t give me time to do my job very well…when I could do something else?” (Brad).

Nell, who moved to a school in the same district after her first year, expressed a similar sentiment when asked her main reason for leaving, she responded, “because I felt like I was not being supported by the administration in terms of the challenges I was encountering in the classroom” (Nell, 5th grade). When asked to explain what this meant, she explained, "like getting reprimanded for breaking up a fight in the hallway, like having to make decisions that are unnatural or inhuman for an adult to allow children to fight" (Nell). When a teacher perceives her administration as unsupportive, from the perspective of these teachers, his or her beliefs in their own ability to create change or affect students’ learning (GTE) diminish.

While some teachers felt that administrators were purely unsupportive, Shelly believed that administrators in her school were *openly hostile*. When asked about her first year of teaching, she explained,
I didn't expect how wildly unsupportive the administration is—when it comes to things as simple as getting resources, to things as complex as what do to when a student does something illegal in the classroom, like starts a fight or steals from the student store—that there are no real repercussions for it, only the teacher gets in trouble. (Shelly, high school English)

One of the most emotional stories Shelly discussed involved the principal of her school “calling her out” during a teachers meeting. Without her knowledge, the principal had given her English classes a surprise writing assessment and the students had performed poorly. “These students can’t write, what are you teaching them?” the principal asked Shelly during a faculty meeting.

After recounting the experience, Shelly explained that this type of administrative hostility, as well as the actions of district-level administrators, seriously diminished her ability to "be a good teacher". In this sense she interpreted two external forces as impacting her students and classroom and each external force originated at a different level of the administration. Administrators are clearly an external force with a lot of power—but they have the ability to either empower teachers, or to ignore or to restrict them.

Shelly helps to demonstrate how interpretations of administrative behavior had the greatest impact on GTE. Some of Shelly's comments above allude to the impact these interpretations can have on outcome expectancies (GTE). When administrators are too controlling, like in Shelly's case, a teacher may feel that he or she is not able to make a difference to his or her students, regardless of his or her abilities. Shelly further questioned the actions of the district administration:

At what point do you start trusting the teachers again, and at what point do you include teachers in the conversation about what curriculum to use, what resources, at what point do you stop spending millions and millions of dollars on ten programs that are designed to replace the teacher, none of which actually work for the student, because they are too hard, they are racially insensitive, they are not well made and they are just canned curriculum.

Because she felt that her administration was utilizing 'teacher proof" curricula, she felt unappreciated and unimportant. These two cognitions, feeling unable to make a difference and feeling unimportant, are two of the crucial elements contributing to low GTE. A feeling of
powerlessness among teachers appeared to be the greatest influence of an unsupportive administration, Nell and Brad (above) also described how these feelings of powerlessness led them to change schools (a finding that I will discuss further in the next chapter).

While teachers described some administrators as decreasing or increasing stress, many teachers depicted administrators as problematic because they were inconsistent. Inconsistencies, like administrative apathy and hostility also led teachers to feel powerless. Rhea explained that one of the major challenges that she faced involved trying to learn how to organize her curriculum while she was managing messages from the administration that she perceived as unclear: “at first the administration was like really supportive and then not at all supportive for a lot of things, we were blamed for a lot of things. They kept changing their minds about things, like hands-on learning versus direct instruction, sending mixed messages” (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies). She continued her discussion of the administration by explaining that "I got a death threat [from a student], I gave it to the administration and nothing was done about it" (Rhea), whereas after a poor set of benchmark tests "they would get someone in my classroom every single day, watching me and critiquing every single little thing I was doing" (Rhea). Rhea explained that she felt both overly monitored and ignored by her administration, that they were sending unclear signals about how they viewed her.

Brad also expressed problems with administrative behavior that he thought was inconsistent, not just inconsistent to the teachers, but to students as well. Brad went so far as to state "I didn't expect the adults in the school to be less functional than the students. And that was, there are a lot of times that I thought that things could have been done better if they had just put the students in charge" (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies). When pressed to explain what he meant, he said, "like discipline, the inconsistency and the randomness of the discipline…enforcing rules that don't matter and ignoring harassment and violence, was one piece" (Brad). Interpreting apparently competing messages from superiors can cause an acute problem for novice teachers, because they lead to uncertainty, which acts as a threat to teacher
efficacy (Bandura, 1997). From the perspective of these teachers, when they could not trust that administrators supported them, they felt powerless (low GTE).

Notably, several participants (Laura, Rachel and Annie) demonstrated that administrators could do positive things to help teachers feel supported and part of a community, which helps them feel that they have a purpose (and decreases powerlessness). Laura explained, "because I was a new teacher…when they set up my class list they gave me kids that were all around the same level and were pretty much on level already. So that made my job a lot easier…it helped that my school sort of supported me as a new teacher (Laura, 3rd grade). The administration, therefore, attempted to tangibly make her job easier. By assigning her a homogeneous group of students, she felt that her administration also sent the message that they wanted to give her the support she needed. Annie (high school Math) recounted a similar experience when asked about her support systems "I mean everyone at this school has been really helpful, the principal, everyone is just unbelievable." When asked exactly what the administration did to help her, she continued, "I had an entire month, they gave me this room that wasn't used, it's great, they were going to give me an entire month to set up—like very comfortable." Again, the administration eased her transition into the school and helped her to feel like she mattered to the school—the administration, therefore, had the ability to empower these teachers (and raise GTE).

Summary

Quantitative analysis revealed that novice teachers in at-risk urban schools have significantly lower levels of both PTE and GTE than novice teachers in other schools. Novice teachers in the qualitative sample explained that the reason for this difference can be attributed to a unique set of urban-specific stressors concerning student attitude and behavior, confusion concerning mandated curricula and perceptions of unsupportive administrators. Participants in this sample tended to articulate feelings of PTE as feeling in control of their teaching at the classroom level. On the other hand, they tended to discuss GTE in terms of feeling either
empowered (high GTE) or powerless (low GTE). Analysis of their comments reveals some variation in the way that urban stressors impact PTE and GTE differently. Participants explained that aggressive student behavior and curricular confusion impact a teacher's feeling of classroom control (lower PTE), while student background, apathy and unsupportive administrators are most likely to cause teachers to feel powerless to effect change (lower GTE).

In short, analysis finds support for the idea that I recounted at the beginning of the chapter from Nell: “I think there are more challenges for teachers in urban school districts, so I totally understand how teachers in the suburbs or in—I guess—higher socioeconomic areas of the country, would feel more successful, capable and effective as educators” (Nell, 5th grade). Many of the challenges that the participants described were structural, such as curricular confusion and administrative pressure. These stressors were endemic to the urban schools as systems. The student related stressors, on the other hand, were usually explained as cultural in nature—stemming from influences in students homes and neighborhoods with which many of the white, female teachers are unfamiliar. According to participants, novice teachers in at-risk urban schools have a greater number of stressors than other teachers and are often in a context for which they feel unprepared; thus, they report lower teacher efficacy. The next chapter details the many ways that participants believed that teacher efficacy altered their teaching practices and commitment to teaching.
CHAPTER 8: THE IMPACT OF LOW TEACHER EFFICACY IN URBAN SCHOOLS

How and Why does Teacher efficacy Influence Teaching Practices and Commitment to Teaching?

In the previous chapter, I outlined the many urban-specific stressors that impact teacher efficacy. Participant comments provide evidence that, not only are there specific reasons why teachers in urban schools have lower teacher efficacy, but also that many urban stressors impact PTE and GTE differently. This chapter builds on that finding by addressing the ways in which low teacher efficacy impacts teachers and teaching practices. I found that teachers in my sample explained that low feelings of confidence regarding classroom teaching (PTE) and student outcomes (GTE) can lead teachers to 1) become flustered, 2) lose time for critical reflection, 3) lower standards, and/or 4) change schools/leave teaching. As with the reported stressors, many participants focused on of these themes, but most teachers were able to provide some evidence for several of the themes that I report (Table 8.1) Similar to the stressors, participants were also able to describe how low PTE and GTE could have different affects on teachers. Figure 8.1 builds on the model presented in the previous chapter (Figure 7.1) by demonstrating how participants explained that PTE and GTE could impact teaching.

Table 8.1: The Impact of Low Teacher efficacy on Teachers and Teaching
(Names in italics indicate that this category was a major focus for the Teacher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Becoming Flustered / Impact on Students</th>
<th>No Time for Critical Reflection</th>
<th>Lower Academic Standards</th>
<th>Teacher Attrition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Nell</td>
<td>Nell</td>
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<td>Hana</td>
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Figure 8.1: Building on Model 8.1, How Teacher efficacy Impacts Teachers and Teaching

Urban-Specific Stressor
- Aggressive / Disruptive Students
- Confusing / Culturally Irrelevant Curricula
- Unsupportive Administrators
- Student Apathy
- Perceptions of External Influences

Teacher efficacy
- PTE
- GTE

Impact on Teacher and Teaching
- Feeling Flustered or Overwhelmed / Students Sense It
- Less Time for Critical Reflection / Less time for Teacher Learning
- Lower Standards (Teacher Apathy)
- Move Schools / Leave Teaching

(Bold arrows indicate a major impact; dashed arrows indicate a minor impact)
1. Feeling Flustered

The most readily apparent effect of low teacher efficacy was an overwhelmed or flustered feeling. Teachers explained that feeling flustered was problematic because of the effect it had on the students. After teachers discussed the many urban-specific stressors they faced in the first year of teaching, I questioned how these stressors, and the accompanying low teacher efficacy, affected them. While teachers gave many responses, they generally began by reporting that there were many times that they (or other first-year teachers) felt 'flustered,' 'overwhelmed,' or 'thrown off.'

- Umm, I was pretty stressed out sometimes—I got hired last minute because of the hiring freeze in Philadelphia. I got hired like two days before school started, so that was a lot of pressure…(Hadley)
- Like I get stressed and then I start barking at them and it is just a chain reaction—so I think [how the day goes] is based on me and how prepared I am…(Hadley)
- I came in sort of expecting the school to not function very well. So when that was the case, I was not really thrown off as far. I think we had a few new teachers who were really flustered by that…(Brad)
- Like feeling completely swamped—Well I know that if I feel very unprepared then I get very stressed and then I know that my students suffer…(Laura)
- Sometimes I am emotionally drained by the time I get to 6th period and I have to trek all the way across the building…(Kent)
- Being that I was a new teacher it was very difficult, it is much easier to read about or think that you are prepared for some of the behavior and personality issues, you really aren't so you try to be proactive and communicate and do all the things that would be best for your students…(Nell)
- It was definitely hard, it was really hard, but also...it was kind of overwhelming to really be in charge of your classroom for the first time…(Rachel)
- Like setting that up was one of the first struggles, it's like, I have this classroom, and you know I don't even know what I need…(Rhea)

While the comments above serve simply to demonstrate the overwhelming emotional component of beginning to teach in an urban school, several of the comments create a clear link between feeling overwhelmed or flustered and low teacher efficacy. Hadley, Brad, Laura, Nell, Rachel and Rhea all appear to equate feeling overwhelmed with feeling unprepared—a cognition that is a critical part of PTE. Rhea, for example, felt overwhelmed because she was unsure how to set up her classroom, whereas Rachel felt unsure as to how to manage her classroom. The uncertainties
experienced by these teachers led to feelings of stress, which in turn had an impact on their
teaching and, as they explain it, their students.

When asked how feeling flustered or overwhelmed would impact teaching and students,
the first response many teachers had was, "they feed off of it". More specifically, teachers
commented that when students could sense that a teacher was under stress, they were likely to
become disruptive. Laura, for example, explained,

I know that when I get crankier, a little thing that, under normal circumstances I
could diffuse easily, could explode to a higher level. I think that if the teacher gets
stressed out than the students will feel that stress too. So it is kind of like, if they
don't know—like what the right thing to do is, then they just do whatever comes
to their head and it is just like—a lot of confusion. (Laura, 3rd Grade)

Laura's comment suggests that, in this instance, feeling uncertain (which can be equated with
PTE) causes teachers to feel overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed changes a teacher's behavior
(getting crankier). These behavioral changes cause students to be confused and act out. In this
sense the cognition of low PTE can produce specific teaching behaviors that change the classroom
dynamic.

Hadley further supported the connections made by Laura, explaining the impact her
stress could have on her students. In a previous comment, she stated "like I get stressed and then I
start barking at them", explaining that her feelings had an impact on her behavior in the
classroom. Hadley further explained,

To be totally frank I think it is my attitude. If I am really organized, super
prepared and in generally a good mood, it really reflects on my students. They
are a completely different group of children, like if I am not feeling well or I
didn't sleep well or I don't have my stuff together—like if my lesson plans are
half-assed or I didn't take time to make copies—then the whole day is in
shambles. (Hadley, 4th Grade)

Nell also articulated a similar, if not more pessimistic, feeling, "I think they see it and feed into it
even more…like the couple of times you might be at your wits end and you just want them to
stop…but they want to see if they can break you and they just want to keep going…" (Nell, 3rd
Grade).
Nell also believed that this type of interaction was specific to urban schools, stating that urban students are much more "aware of interactions on that level—like how to work situations." In Nell's comment it is quite clear that she believes that students in urban schools might be more likely to sense when a teacher is stressed, and they also might be more willing to take advantage of it. Brad was able to add to Nell's analysis of the students by explaining that,

Students pick up on [when a teacher feels flustered] easily and exploit it—a lot. It creates a kind of lost day...they are manipulative, they know that they know the school and the context better than the teacher, which I think allows them kind of to create extra excuses, because they will make it seem like the teacher actually hasn't done something right. (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies)

From Brad's perspective, when low PTE causes teachers to feel flustered or overwhelmed, they become vulnerable—to students and administrators: "I think it allows teachers to get pushed around a little bit more...[also] by the administration. I see it a lot, I see teachers who don't stand up for the way that they think things should be happening so they just feel really overwhelmed" (Brad).

On a more positive note, when teachers felt more prepared or able to manage their stress, it had a positive impact on the classroom. When asked what helped her get through her first year of teaching, Hana explained "I think it was a combination of many different things—I am very organized and I had a lot of things pre-prepared before school started and setting up my classroom and having resources from student teaching made it that much easier for me" (Hana, 2nd Grade). Teachers believed that when they walked into a classroom feeling prepared (high PTE) and mentally ready for the day, their students would respond positively and the day was more likely to be successful. Laura explained that once she was able to learn to manage her own stress, "my students fell into place because I calmed down and I let go, instead of staying at school until it gets dark I actually made myself leave by a certain time every day so that I have time at home." In this statement Laura explains that she relieved her own stress when she was able to remind herself that "you know what to do", and her students reflected the change. In her statement, she alluded to the second impact low teacher efficacy, and even more specifically the
impact that low PTE, can have on the classroom: spending too much time preparing for each day can lead to less time for critical reflection and can decrease the learning and improvement that accompany critical reflection.

2. No Time to Reflect

Participants indicate that the negative cognitions surrounding low teacher efficacy can influence teaching practices and classroom interactions by decreasing the time they and others are able to spend on critical reflection. As mentioned in the previous section, low teacher efficacy in itself does not always directly influence teaching practices. Instead the negative cognitions surrounding low-self efficacy can trigger a number of behaviors that can impact students and the classroom. The previous section described how low PTE can cause teachers to feel and show stress. One of the major coping mechanisms participants associated with low PTE involved spending countless hours planning lessons and sorting through the curriculum.

- So it was just like, my grade partners were great and helpful but you just had to spend a lot of time—I was working like 12 hours a day trying to figure out. I would work at school—get there at 7, leave at 6 get home and do more work—it was just like overwhelming…(Laura)
- So people definitely have no idea where to start and they spend 14 hours a day at work and they work on the weekend…(Noelle)
- I lost 15 pounds and I worked 12 hours a day, I cried a lot, I did the typical thing that everyone does...ya know, "I don't know if I can do this"…(Noelle)

This coping mechanism is specifically driven by low PTE, because it is resultant from a low level of confidence concerning one's ability to run lessons and conduct the classroom on a day-to-day basis. The reason teachers reported spending this long period of time in planning was because they believed that it would help them improve teaching practice. Several of the slightly more experienced participants explained that, while intended to improve teaching practice, the time commitment actually hindered their ability to critically reflect.

Noelle spoke extensively on the need for critical reflection. She highlighted the importance of being able "to concretely process some of the things that are happening instead of rushing around—as I was in my first year of teaching—I had no time to reflect, I was just trying
to get from day to day” (Noelle, high school English). She explained that reflection is a necessary step in improving classroom practices, because teaching is “a lifelong process where you are constantly evolving and getting better and better...people need the guide of that reflection” (Noelle, high school English). When teachers believed that they didn't have time to do anything other than plan lessons, they didn't take the time to really think about the way things were working in their classrooms. This finding is crucial in supporting the conceptual frame described previously, in which learning both affects and is affected by teacher efficacy (see figure 8.1 for the teacher efficacy-learning loop and Figure 8.2 for the Low PTE Cycle).

Figure 8.2: The Low PTE Cycle

From Noelle’s perspective low teacher efficacy causes a teacher to feel as if she is sinking, so she treads water just to stay afloat. The time spent treading water severely diminishes her ability to critically reflect, and without that reflection a teacher cannot engage in this process of lifelong learning. In my discussion with Kent, he explained that halfway through his first year, he was able to begin improving his teaching practices.

Well a lot has changed, I mean I have become a lot stronger, and I do one thing that helped, part of my preparation as a teacher was to reflect critically on my
experiences… I write critical reflections about my teaching and my experience… and I have kept that up as much as I could this year… some of those reflections have been really helpful, some of the things that we have talked about in terms of not giving up on… on the impact you are having on the tough students. Like should I try that much harder to get the tough students an education, or should I work with the students who are there to learn, that has been a struggle for me, where do I… when do I stop trying with a certain student, because these students are ready. I guess that is a tension that you see in every classroom— it is especially in this context… (Kent)

Kent’s comments add further support to the idea that teacher efficacy both affects and is affected by critical reflection. In figure 8.1 I represent this as cyclical, low teacher efficacy impacts teachers in certain ways, and these effects have the potential to impact teacher learning and can lead to even lower teacher efficacy. I refer to this as the teacher efficacy-teacher learning loop in the conceptual framework. Participant comments reveal that low PTE diminishes time for critical reflection, and Kent explains the impact critical reflection can have on GTE (which he demonstrates through how much effort he puts into reaching tougher students). From this perspective, teachers can eventually reach a point where they are comfortable enough with their practices to reflect critically, but others may become “jaded” (Nell, 5th grade), and lower their standards or stop putting effort into their teaching.

3. Giving Up or Lowering Standards

Participants explained that one of the more troubling affects of low teacher efficacy was that this cognition could directly cause teachers to lower the standards they set for students. While the previous two themes seemed mostly related to the impact of low PTE, a teacher’s decision to exert less effort or hold students to a lower standard is more likely the result of low GTE. The definition of low GTE implies that teachers believe that no matter how hard they try, they will not be able to make a difference in student learning (they feel they have no influence on student outcomes). Eventually, this cognition— of feeling powerless— might cause teachers to stop trying as hard. Nell, for example, explained that this feeling leads teachers to “get into a rut… you get used to the way things work in a certain school and before you know it, it has been 15 years and
you are not being challenged and you are not setting high expectations for yourself or your students” (Nell, 3rd grade). She further explained, "A lot of teachers, the less results you are getting...you can easily say 'why even try.'"

In one of the comments that Annie made, she demonstrated, very specifically, the way that her low teacher efficacy influenced her teaching practices. In her experience, she wanted to push her students, but did not trust that her students would rise to the challenge: "I feel like a little more rigor is what I need to practice—like instead of using whole numbers, all of the other Algebra classes they use fractions—but I get nervous that if I use other numbers than whole numbers the kids will give up. So, which they will, they will just shut down" (Annie, high school Math). At the time that I interviewed her, Annie's solution was to lower standards. Kent, in describing a particularly challenging class also admitted to lowering standards, "they weren't prepared for the test at all yesterday and I knew they weren't going to be prepared, so I actually scaled the test down for them—like they didn't have to do as many questions" (Kent, high school English).

Brad provided an even more detailed perspective, although he found it easier to discuss the teacher efficacy of other teachers he had observed. He explained that when teachers believed that external factors had more pull on students' attitude and achievement (low GTE), they were less likely to hold those students accountable:

The kids get away with more...or get away with less academically when the teacher isn't prepared to hold them accountable...cause holding students accountable in an urban district is actually hard...I think a lot of teachers overcompensate for that and don't hold students as accountable as they really could, because they don't want to be insensitive to those background influences...that is the biggest error I see in first-year teachers, just being too soft and too accommodating...to every sob story. In reality the kids could actually do a lot if you actually make them do it. (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies)

Participants also explained the positive impact that GTE can have on teaching. Although Kent admitted to lowering his standards when he felt that he couldn't trust his students, he was careful to stress, “I am holding them accountable for that period—for what they did on the
test...because I set the standards high, and I am not going to pass them for no reason, for just showing up " (Kent, high school English). Although Kent did not trust that his students could perform at the level of his other classes, he still believed that they should be able to perform on the test. Kent also expressed his desire to bring up standards when he modified his scripted curriculum: "I had the head of the English department come and see what I was doing and she was kind of ok with it because she saw that I was bringing the standard to an academic level, to what it should be." Based on the results of the survey, Kent and Noelle displayed very high levels of GTE, and their high levels of GTE show in many of the statements that they make.

Noelle, for example, described the benefit of seeing tangible results, "when you are teaching you need to know that what you are doing is of value and you need to see your kids make gains...because that is the reward that any teacher wants, and when you see that happening, it is a reward that keeps you in it..." (Noelle, high school English). In this statement, Noelle explains that, for teachers to continue to exert effort, they need to believe that those efforts will make a difference for students; they need positive feelings of GTE. In the context of her statements it was clear that when Noelle said "in it" she meant more than simply "in school", she meant for her "it" to imply that it keeps the teacher working hard for her students, it keeps the teacher fighting to help her students succeed. The idea that a teacher is only truly involved with her teaching when she has a positive sense of GTE alludes to the fourth and final way that low teacher efficacy can impact teaching: it causes teachers to move schools or leave teaching.

4. Teacher Attrition

Lastly, participants believed that low levels of teacher efficacy could also be a major influence when it came to teacher attrition—whether defined as moving schools or leaving teaching. When asked about the impact of low teacher efficacy, Nell explained, "I think that is the reason why a lot of new teachers leave after the first year, I definitely think it results from teachers who don't feel prepared...and it is not that they aren't prepared...maybe it is that they are not
aware" (Nell, 5th grade). Evidence for the importance of teacher efficacy, specifically GTE, for retention is also found in Noelle's previous statement regarding "a reward that keeps you in it" (Noelle, high school English). Her definition of 'it', as previously explained, was multifaceted—meaning both ‘keeps you working hard’, and ‘keeps you physically at the school.’

When asked to discuss possible reasons for changing schools or leaving teaching altogether, participants overwhelmingly cited cognitions associated with low GTE (outcome expectancies) as having the potential to influence teacher retention. While quantitative findings revealed that both PTE and GTE have an effect on commitment to teaching, only GTE had an impact on first-year teacher retention—and I found support for this from participant responses.

When teachers experienced low feelings of GTE they reported feeling completely powerless. Feeling powerless, or meaningless to both students and administrators was often cited as a reason for teachers to change schools or leave teaching. Noelle provides a cohesive summary of the impact that low teacher efficacy can have on teacher retention:

Those who resign in the middle of the year or plan on leaving often look at the situation as: ‘I am doing everything that I can, and the kids are not performing and I can’t do it anymore, what am I supposed to do here? My boss is telling me that it is all on me...I am the teacher; I need to make things happen. I am doing everything that I can humanly do, but the kids are not putting in what they need to. (Noelle, high school English)

In this statement, although there are hints of low PTE (“what else am I supposed to do?”), a low GTE related to both students and administrators is present. The hypothetical teacher described by Noelle feels that students don’t try and that administrators are making the task far more difficult than it already is, for this reason she feels powerless (low GTE) and leaves the school or teaching altogether.

Annie also provided an insightful view of the way teachers think about their decision to stay in a particular school. When asked about whether she planned to remain at her current school, Annie explained,

I don't know if it is just this school, but the lack of motivation we have, it is really having to decide whether am I that teacher that is up for the challenge of
motivating the kids, or am the teacher that, now that I am struggling some days, do I just wanna go to a place where the kids are already motivated? (Annie, high school Math)

Annie draws us back to previous discussions regarding how perceptions of student apathy impacted teacher efficacy. In this statement we see the connection between the stressor, the cognition of GTE, and her commitment to her school.

While Noelle and Annie emphasized the impact of perceived student apathy, the way administrators affected GTE also played a significant role in novice teacher retention. A hostile or absent administration had the power to cause a teacher to feel powerless and to, eventually, resign. In explaining his decision to move to another school within the district, Brad explained that he felt “The school that I was in was fairly stable, but I don't think it was making any progress. It was very complacent and I had a lot of trouble getting involved and I didn't have a great relationship with the administration” (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies). Brad perceived that the administration didn't care about improvement. Brad believed that without an improvement-focused administration he would not be able to make the impact that he desired. He felt that no matter how hard he worked, he would not impact the students without the support of the administration, so he eventually left the school, explaining, “Why would I stay in a system that doesn’t respect me, doesn’t give me time to do my job very well…when I could do something else?” (Brad).

Nell, who also moved from one school to another in the same district, expressed a similar sentiment when asked her main reason for leaving, “because I felt like I was not being supported by the administration in terms of the challenges I was encountering in the classroom” (Nell, 5th grade). When asked to explain what this meant, she stated, "like getting reprimanded for breaking up a fight in the hallway, like having to make decisions that are unnatural or inhuman for an adult to allow children to fight" (Nell). When a teacher perceives her administration as unsupportive, from the perspective of these teachers, his or her beliefs in their ability to create change or affect student learning (GTE) diminish.
Although previously quoted, Kent, lastly, reveals the way that feeling like ‘you are making a difference’ can help to prevent attrition,

As often, you know, when I am with friends and I talk about the experience, I tend to talk about the negative aspects, just because it is so strong, also, there are students who are there that want to learn. Even in that crazy 6th period class—who want to learn. You know I got an apology letter from a student, she said, you know "I want to move my seat" and that makes you want to stay there. So…that's why, I want to do it for those types of students…

When student apathy or administrative pressures cause teachers to feel as though they cannot make a difference in the lives of their students (low GTE) they sometimes will choose to leave the school where they are teaching. Kent explains, however, that when a teacher feels empowered and that he is making a difference—he may be more inclined to keep working in that school.

**Summary**

In analyzing participant responses regarding how the apparent differences in teacher efficacy between teachers in at-risk schools and those in other schools impact actual teaching, several themes emerged from participant responses. In general, teachers explained that low feelings of teacher efficacy caused teachers to feel overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed or out of control, in turn, affected student behavior, decreased the amount of time a teacher could spend in critical reflection, lowered teacher motivations to hold students to high standards and could eventually impact his or her decision to remain in a given school. In this sense, according to participants, the negative cognitions associated with low teacher efficacy affected teachers' attitudes and behaviors—and those attitudes or behaviors had the potential to influence student learning. Again, this question reveals some central differences between PTE and GTE. While low GTE was more likely to cause teachers to lower their standards regarding student outcomes, low PTE was most likely to cause teachers to feel overwhelmed and could diminish the amount of time and space for critical reflection. The critical reflection piece is essential to highlight; participants explained that without critical reflection it was hard to continue to improve, learn and grow as a teacher.
Teacher efficacy, according to participants, has an impact on teaching and learning to teach, but it also influences teacher retention and continued learning. Teachers in this sample explain that low GTE, rather than PTE or preparation level, is much more likely to affect teacher attrition (supporting quantitative findings). Participants explained that teachers were most likely to move schools or leave teaching when they believed that they were unable to make a difference in the lives of their students. The perspective offered by the qualitative sample provides support for the quantitative results regarding the impact of GTE on one-year teacher retention. Teachers, they explain, need to feel that they can make a difference to their students in order to keep trying and to remain in teaching. From their perspective both perceived student apathy and unsupportive administrators, sources of low GTE, could lead to teacher attrition. In the next chapter I outline the ways that preparation experiences can influence teacher efficacy.
CHAPTER NINE: THE IMPACT OF TEACHER TRAINING

Introduction

This chapter addresses the influence that preparation for teaching has on teacher efficacy in two parts. In my discussion with participants, they were able to describe both the aspects of their preparation that were most useful as well as the elements that they felt were missing—and could have been meaningful or useful. Part one addresses how preparation can be made meaningful for urban teachers. In my discussion with teachers, there were several themes that arose. Teachers felt that preparation was meaningful when it: 1) gave them exposure to urban students and schools, 2) helped them to ease into teaching, 3) provided them with tangible resources, and 4) helped them to develop an inclusive philosophy of teaching. The first section will expand upon each of these preparation elements. The second part addresses the different ways that preparation can influence teacher efficacy in order to bring more light to the quantitative finding that preparation has a stronger influence on PTE than it does on GTE. In this chapter I build on the relationships established in Figure 8.1 with the addition of the influences of preparation (Figure 9.1).
Figure 9.1: Building on 7.1 and 8.1, the Positive Impact Preparation can have on Teacher efficacy (bold arrows are negative, dashed/dotted arrows are positive impact)
**Part 1: What are the critical elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?**

In examining the benefits provided by preparation programs, it is essential to discuss why a particular aspect of a training program is useful through the lens of Bandura’s (1997) sources of teacher efficacy (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological/emotional states). As previously described, mastery experiences provide practice as well as direct evidence that one can succeed at a given task in a certain social situation. Vicarious experiences involve witnessing social models experience success and can similarly lead to personal confidence. Social persuasion, on the other hand, can be best understood as encouragement. In expanding on social persuasion Bandura (1997) states, "people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise" (4). Lastly, physiological and emotional states influence teacher efficacy greatly. According to theories drawn from Bandura’s research, if a teacher feels stress and exhaustion as a result of teaching, he or she will have a significantly lower sense of teacher efficacy.

Figure 9.2: The Four Sources of Teacher efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mastery Experiences</th>
<th>Vicarious Experiences</th>
<th>Social Persuasion</th>
<th>Emotional and Physiological States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Student Teaching (Exposure)</td>
<td>Observations in Urban Schools (Exposure)</td>
<td>Philosophy of Education (Sense of Purpose)</td>
<td>Exposure to at-risk students / Less culture shock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and Executing Lessons</td>
<td>Viewing Successful Models of Urban Teaching</td>
<td>Support from Colleagues, Mentors and Administrators</td>
<td>Supportive Community</td>
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<td>Praise from Professors</td>
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<td>&quot;Knowing it will get easier&quot;</td>
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To better contextualize Bandura’s sources of self-efficacy for teacher efficacy in this study (Figure 9.2), student teaching, for example, could be helpful for a number of reasons: it could provide mastery experiences, vicarious experiences and social persuasion. Student teaching exposes teachers to urban schools and urban students (mastery experiences). Professors and mentors, on the other hand, used social persuasion to remind teachers that ‘it will get easier’, and helped teachers to ease into urban teaching. Lesson planning during teacher training, on the other hand, provided mastery and vicarious experienced and helped teachers to be organized and prepared on a daily basis. Lastly, an inclusive philosophy of education provided both social persuasion (convincing teachers that they can succeed with all students) and vicarious experiences (an ability to view the successes of others in urban schools). Fascinatingly, these positive aspects described by some teachers, almost exactly mirror the missing aspects described by other teachers, a finding that provides evidence for the importance of these specific program elements. Again, while many participants highlighted one main benefit derived from teacher training, most were able to touch on a variety of benefits. Many teachers also discussed the drawbacks of various missing program elements (see Table 9.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure To Urban Schools and Students</th>
<th>Smooth Transition to Teaching</th>
<th>Tangible Resources</th>
<th>Philosophy of Education</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Present</strong></td>
<td><strong>Urban Student Teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long Student Teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lesson Planning Skills and Tested Lessons</strong></td>
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1. Exposure

In a discussion of exposure to urban schools and students, participants described the ways in which urban teacher training, and usually student teaching, could benefit a teacher's sense of classroom confidence (PTE) during his or her first year of teaching. In particular many participants who student taught in urban areas noted how useful it was that they had experience with the specific student population. Hadley explained that her urban student teaching “took away a lot of the culture shock, cause I am from suburban, Midwestern America. So that really shocked me in student teaching, but I guess that I learned the culture and I have been living in an urban area as well, so now I am used to it” (Hadley, 5th grade). She further explained that the ability to adapt to the urban student culture during student teaching has influenced her classroom teaching; she was less likely to become flustered during her first year because she was not going through culture shock in front of her students. Many teachers highlighted the importance of ‘getting used to the students’, and often they discussed aspects of student behavior as well as instructional strategies. In general, they emphasized that, in this sense, student teaching in suburban areas could not always be applied to teaching in urban areas. Several teachers lamented their lack of exposure:

- I literally did not hear a word about urban education until my senior year, but even then it wasn't like we talked about in detail…(Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies).
- It wasn't a balanced education either—we didn't look at urban schooling…(Shelly, high school English).
- My school definitely prepared people to teach in the suburbs—it does not prepare people to teach in the city, although they are making a change—thank god—to actually try to prepare people to teach in either…(Noelle, high school English)

Those teachers who attended teacher preparation programs in non-urban areas (Noelle, Shelly, Rhea and Kent) often articulated feeling especially deprived of urban-specific mastery and vicarious experiences. Kent, summarized his feelings this way:

I was seeking out diverse experiences for myself [during college], but still I wasn't fully prepared for the culture that I was entering—because it is totally different—it is so different, with the poverty these students come from, you know, I had read
about sometimes, but I wasn't prepared for standing up in front of a class of 30 black students—because I hadn't done that before. I had to overcome a real fear—that was different from overcoming the fear of standing up in front of a group of white students in [the town where my college was]—because that was of course intimidating the first couple of times—but, you know, this was just different because I didn't know what to expect, how to handle these situations, how to react to them in a positive way, and so, all of those things—I mean I really wasn't prepared for the language, constant cursing, the way they talk to teachers. Um, and I guess early on, I just wasn't prepared emotionally to handle it.

When teachers discussed the benefit of exposure to urban students, they explained how critical it was to have experience with the urban-specific stressors that I addressed in the previous chapters—especially the wide variation in academic abilities, behavioral concerns and cultural differences.

Shelly and Noelle, for example, focused on trying to learn to manage the variation in academic abilities. They felt that their teacher training had not given them the tools to differentiate at the level necessary in urban schools, which carries implications for PTE. They missed out on the vicarious experiences (observations) and mastery experiences (practice teaching) that they believed would help them to differentiate instruction in an urban setting. They explained,

- I know what differentiated instruction is, but what does it look like when I am teaching a class of 30 students, some of whom are of 11th grade reading level and most of them are 5th and 6th, but some of them are 1st and 2nd, and what they heck do I do when I have to teach one novel to all of them… (Shelly, high school English)
- Coming out of my suburban university, it was a whole different barrel of stuff partly because I was taught how to have kids analyze literature and I had kids in my class who were reading at a second grade level—so I had no training whatsoever in literacy in how to teach kids how to read, to deal with students who were functioning significantly below grade level… (Noelle, high school English)

Teachers articulated that they knew what differentiation was, but could not translate suburban differentiation into urban differentiation because they had neither been exposed to nor able to practice this type of differentiation. They explained that the students in their urban at-risk classrooms had a greater variation in academic level than they were prepared for.
Rhea, who taught 4th and 5th grade science and social studies, also commented on the challenges she faced concerning variation in academic abilities. She explained that in her suburban student teaching she had learned to differentiate by using centers and grouped instruction. She explained, "I think that going through the program that I did at my [suburban] university, it wasn't...it is such a really different way of teaching...in an urban setting. Because you have to set up your management differently, you have to teach differently." In her classroom, she was nervous about letting her students out of their seats, so she worried that if she tried to differentiate the way she knew how, the students would act out, she would lose control and no learning would be possible.

We tried it and tried it and if they stand up, they fight, and I was like what can you do...I don't know it was just like it was like wasted instructional time when I could do something else...it was something that I struggled with, because differentiating, you can just differentiate like centers or different things, but when you don't have the level of behavior you need to do things it gets harder... (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies)

In this case the two sets of stressors (student behavior and curriculum) were mutually reinforcing and caused additional strain on a teacher's sense of PTE because she felt that she could not teach the way she had learned. Interestingly, because this results in a negative emotional or physiological state, it could prevent a teacher from developing teacher efficacy surrounding learning new methods for classroom instruction or management. Rather than continuing to try new ways to differentiate instruction and utilize hands on learning, “what work best for my students and me, was Powerpoint and I hate to say that, because that like I feel like was the opposite of like everything that I learned.”

Participants coming from suburban universities explained that they were also not prepared for challenges regarding student attitude and behavior. Kent, for example, mentioned feeling unprepared for the foul language and lack of respect he faced. Rhea, in a previous comment, described the particular challenges she faced when it came to student discipline. She also stated, "As far as disciplining in urban Ed I was not prepared at all and I had a lot of different views about discipline and like how it should be done and I like for example I never yelled in a
classroom ever” (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies). Because of her challenges, Rhea explained,

So, there was like a couple of months where I was just so just strict and like every day it was just a struggle, because that is not my personality and I was like yelling and raising my voice then acting like really like serious and we couldn't smile and they are like all of these things. My principal kept coming to me all the time and saying, like they can see right through you when you smile, you smile too much...(Rhea)

Rhea continued to talk about these challenges throughout her interview, explaining that she chose to leave her urban district because "if I stayed there I would have changed my entire personality as a teacher and I don't think that was like a necessarily like healthy thing for me" (Rhea). Rhea felt that she had developed her teaching style during her year-long suburban student teaching placement, and remaining in her urban school would have been too challenging of a change.

Student teaching in urban areas provided teachers with exposure to student populations with which they were previously unfamiliar. Annie, who student taught in an urban area explained, "something that my student teaching prepared me for was that students have extra baggage in Philadelphia" (Annie, high school Math). Annie implied that her student teaching gave her experience (both mastery and vicarious) with the cultural challenges of an urban student population, and this made her feel more prepared during her first year of teaching. Participants further articulated that this exposure was particularly useful in the process of managing a classroom (thus had a positive impact on PTE). Brad, who also student taught in an urban area, noted, “I felt prepared for the particular classroom environment that I was in, which really helps with classroom management” (Brad, high school Social Studies). Classroom management was a big theme for all of the teachers in this study, and student teaching was how classroom management was often learned—through both mastery and vicarious experiences. Laura, who had an extended urban teaching placement, explained, "So, like, I had my classroom management down, so that was like better than a lot of new teachers" (Laura, 3rd grade).

Regarding the impact that her suburban student teaching experience had on her classroom management, Rhea explained, “we talked about what would you do with just one
student who was physically aggressive, but, you know, I can make an action plan for that, what they don't talk about is what happens when the entire class is chanting something or running around the room” (Rhea, 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} grade Science and Social Studies). The participants in my sample clearly articulate the importance of learning classroom management in an urban environment because of the positive impact it has on PTE.

2. \textbf{Easing In}

Exposure to urban students through teacher training provided both mastery and vicarious experiences and increased PTE. According to Bandura (1966; 1997) physiological and emotional states are also a crucial source of teacher efficacy. While teachers in this study did not utilize the language of Bandura, they articulated that the ability to ease into urban teaching allowed them to slowly engage in continued mastery experiences without feeling the stress and exhaustion of many other novice teachers. Easing in, while critical for the positive physiological and emotional states needed for continued learning, was actually afforded to teachers through social persuasion and mastery experiences. While closely related to exposure, easing in did not require urban student teaching. Easing in through urban or extended student teaching, for example, allowed a few participants to maintain a positive emotional state, and offered the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of PTE. Easing in was essential in helping teachers to understand, in the words of Brad, "that I wasn't going to melt or dissolve…that it would be ok and that the students would not eat me” (Brad, high school Spanish and Social Studies). While Brad did have an urban teacher preparation, those teachers who had an extended teacher preparation (Kent, Rhea and Laura all student taught for a full year), also found that, by easing into teaching, they learned (through social persuasion) that they could survive the first year.

When asked about her extended student teaching, Rhea explained "student teaching for an entire year was awesome, and I needed that, I definitely needed that and I definitely wouldn't have felt as comfortable in New Orleans without that" (Rhea, 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} grade Science and Social
Studies). Teaching for a longer period of time, according to Rhea, increased her comfort level with her actual teaching practices. Even though the student population and school context was different, longer student teaching still helped her to manage the first year. Laura, furthermore, described how she was able to ease into teaching through student teaching at multiple schools: "I feel like I had a lot of mini steps before I got to full-blown teaching" (Laura, 3rd grade). She further explained that this was critical during the first year—and made her a better teacher, "because I was more confident in what I would do, because I knew some of the stuff that may work in the classroom and the stuff that may not..." (Laura, 3rd grade). Even more specifically she continued, "for example, I had my classroom management down, so that was better than a lot of new teachers" (Laura). Laura makes a clear connection between multiple sources of teacher efficacy. Because she was able to practice (mastery experience) and observe (vicarious experience) classroom management while easing into actual teaching, Laura felt in control of her classroom and therefore believed that she did not experience the levels of stress of many other first-year teachers.

The process of easing in was crucial, because, according to many participants, much of learning to teach does happen on the job. As previously mentioned, many participants felt that teaching was a lifelong learning process; therefore first-year teachers do not represent finished products. Several teachers approached the first year of teaching knowing that it would be a struggle, knowledge that they accessed from social persuasion from colleagues and mentors. From their perspective, easing in is one of the better ways to continue learning without stress levels that will damage teacher efficacy. Laura expanded on this by stating, "I just feel like new teachers need to be prepared that it is going to be hard and it is going to be a struggle...I think that helped me a lot to know that this is going to be a struggle, but it is going to get easier, because it is a learn on the job kind of job" (Laura). Nell made a similar comment, that "when kids come from backgrounds with these challenges you learn more your first year of teaching than you do if you have three masters degrees, it is that first year that teaches you a lot" (Nell, 5th grade).
According to both Laura and Nell, not only will teachers continue to learn once they begin teaching—but also they need to know that the first year will be a struggle. Nell explained, "all of those things you learn. I wish there was a way that you could learn without affecting your first class, because…I had a professor who called it your first pancake…I feel bad, I mean I feel a little guilty, but I am sure they still got something out of it…” (Nell, 5th grade). Nell explained that because she was aware of the struggle ahead, she allowed herself to ease in and knew that it would eventually become easier—thus the social persuasion afforded by her professor gave her confidence that her teaching abilities would improve (PTE).

3. Tangible Resources

Participants also expressed that training programs provided them with tangible resources (especially lesson plans), which acted to decrease uncertainty and increase teacher efficacy. These resources were all afforded through individual experiences—both mastery and vicarious. These more tangible sources of teacher efficacy, which had a greater impact on PTE than on GTE, could be learned outside of both the student teaching experience, and the urban environment. Teachers specifically discussed the importance of learning tested lesson plans and management tools as sources of higher levels of teaching confidence. These two elements were essential for feelings of PTE because they helped teachers to feel mentally prepared and in control each day as they walked into a classroom.

Brad, for example, stated,

The thing that was most successful for me was that my preparation was very practical, very targeted towards teaching in an urban school. I felt more prepared then I expected for a lot of things, like planning lessons especially… I feel like the specific tangible stuff I found very useful. We had to do a lot of lesson planning—and they got graded and handed back go us, like really rigorous. (Brad)

*Lesson planning* was necessary to participants because, from their perspective, if they walked into the classroom knowing what they were going to do, they were more likely to maintain control of the classroom. Hana further explained that, "having resources from student teaching made it that much easier for me…A lot of people didn’t realize that it was my first year teaching" (Hana, 2nd
Grade). To many teachers this was a major marker of successful teaching (PTE): not looking like it was their first year.

Rhea also spoke of the benefit she felt from having experience with planning lessons during student teaching:

I had to create like all my lessons and things and so, like that up front I was, I didn't feel prepared for like I used a lot of my lessons from the student teaching at the beginning, because I needed something that I had already done and felt comfortable with, but that aligned with some of our standards and things would work out, so that was kind of like my coping mechanism there, like I could use some of the lessons I taught a couple of times in student teaching and felt comfortable with the lesson and I could get to know the students in my classroom (Rhea, 4th and 5th grade Science and Social Studies)

Rhea and Brad found benefit in their lesson planning experience, even if Rhea's lessons were not geared toward urban teaching. Shelly, on the other hand, spoke about how she wished she had more experience with lesson planning:

The only time that we ever planned a unit was as a group, and the teacher that we have didn't even teach us how to write a lesson plan—we wrote one together, one time, and then we had it critiqued, and that wasn't enough practice at all, because we didn't know how to do it, that has been really hard for me…I wish that there was more practical information—here's how to create a lesson plan, read this book, create this unit, write a lesson, now write a unit… (Shelly)

Lesson planning provided teachers with a tangible resource that reduced the amount of uncertainty that they had regarding their classroom and teaching practices—therefore practice with successfully planning and executing a lesson gave teachers a higher sense of PTE. From this perspective both student teaching and education coursework were potentially beneficial to first year urban teachers.

4. Inclusive Philosophy of Education

The philosophy of an individual training program, lastly, could have a positive impact on levels of teacher efficacy. The philosophy of education was important, namely, because it helped participants to situate their classrooms within the broader educational context and society in general. There were two ways that programs made these philosophies meaningful to participants, either through an explicit philosophy of education or through an implicit philosophy of education,
articulated through access to *successful educational models*. A philosophy of education could be demonstrated either through social persuasion or vicarious experiences and analysis of participant responses reveals that when a teacher preparation program expressed an inclusive philosophy of education, it had a positive influence on GTE—rather than PTE. A philosophy of education, notably, helped teachers to look beyond the outside influences in the lives of urban students and allowed them to see themselves as meaningful participants in the educational success of their students.

When participants described the importance of an *explicit philosophy of education*, they explained that what mattered was not just that the program philosophy was there in a measurable way but that the philosophy had meaning for urban teaching. The two comments below exemplify the essential components of the program philosophies discussed by Kent and Noelle—in both cases the teacher explains that it was crucial to know him or herself on a critical level and to understand how his classroom fits into broader society.

That's where I have gotten a real sense of purpose from my preparation—and it goes back to feeling like I know why I am teaching on a really critical level, and I have a good sense of what my racial identity is and what my cultural identity is—and what the cultural identity of the students are, I feel like I can go in there and have some success in terms of opening the students minds (Kent, high school English)

My Philosophy of ed—borrowed from school—is transforming hearts and minds…their philosophy of ed is really focused on having us know who we are when we walk into a classroom, before deciding how you are going to teach. If you don’t know who you are and what you value, it is hard to uphold that in a classroom when you have kids who question you. So my approach was that kids had to be constantly making connections, so connections across like curriculum and connections across cultures so that they can start to see how things are not totally separated. (Noelle, high school English)

The other commonality between these statements is the idea that the goal is to open students’ minds, a goal that helps to give a teacher a sense of purpose. Having a philosophy of education, like these two teachers explain, can help a teacher feel more confident in what he or she does, because their teaching has meaning.
This sense of purpose, drawing on Bandura’s (1997) theory, can be situated as a form of internal social persuasion because it helped teachers to convince themselves that they have a meaningful role in the classroom as a community (part of GTE). In this situation the social persuasion afforded by a philosophy of education gave participants an internal drive that also removed uncertainty and produced positive emotional states. An overarching program philosophy or philosophy of teaching was not something that came up in any of the other interviews, but it clearly has an impact on GTE for these two teachers and may simply not be present in all preparation programs. Because having an explicit and meaningful program philosophy was rare among the qualitative sample, it becomes clear why preparation may not have a great impact on GTE in at-risk urban schools. The preparation elements that impact GTE, like meaningful program philosophy, are far more difficult to quantify and are not captured in the quantitative preparation variable.

Teachers also indicated that some programs articulated an implicit philosophy of education through the ability to view successful models of teaching. These models also tended to have a positive influence on teacher efficacy. Shelly, for example, originally explained the trouble she faced in transitioning from her wealthy suburban student teaching to her urban teaching placement. Despite her struggle, she was able to comment that her student teaching experience "also showed me what education could be...and what a successful school could look like" (Shelly, high school English). Although the program did not provide her with the mastery she felt she needed for an urban teaching job—it did give her the vicarious experience of how a successful school and classroom can look. In this sense, she knew what to aim for with her students on a day-to-day basis. She knew what was possible and she had a goal (therefore a sense of purpose). Hana also spoke about the benefit of vicarious experiences, although hers were more specifically urban. Hana was able to observe more than one type of urban school; she explained "I was grateful because it gave me two very different interpretations of what an urban school could be. My view was very skewed before I came to the program..." (Hana, 2nd grade). For both of these teachers,
they benefited from a vicarious experience that allowed them to see what a successful school looks like; it gave them something to aim for and a sense of purpose.

Both a philosophy of education and vicarious experiences with successful models gave teachers a sense of purpose—the belief that they could succeed with any group of students. In this way these two factors, unlike the other program elements discussed, were able to positively influence GTE—teachers were more likely to believe that they could help students succeed.

**Summary**

The results presented in the first section of this chapter demonstrate that exposure to urban students, the opportunity to ease into teaching, tangible resources, and a philosophy of education focused on a broader purpose for education were the most meaningful elements of teacher training programs in the first year of urban teaching. While it appears that teachers felt the most benefit from the mastery experiences gained in urban student teaching, extended student teaching placements and practice with planning lessons also proved beneficial (and did not necessitate an urban environment). Analysis of the comments made by participants also reveals that, while the first three themes (exposure, easing in and tangible resources) were more critical for a teachers’ sense of PTE (ability to plan and execute lessons), an philosophy of education focused on broader purposes for teaching was more meaningful for a teacher’s sense of GTE (confidence in her ability to help students succeed) (Figure 9.3).
Lastly, while I placed my focus on how these elements influence PTE and GTE, it is also essential to understand that all four of these program elements helped teachers to maintain positive emotional and physiological states during the first year of teaching. These positive feelings were essential for the process of maintaining high PTE and GTE and for continued learning. Therefore, these findings indicate the importance of thinking reciprocally about teacher efficacy and teacher learning (see Figure 9.1), because teacher efficacy causes a teacher to behave in certain ways (whether positive or negative) and these behaviors work to reinforce (either positively or negatively) teacher efficacy. The next section provides an answer to one of the main findings outlined in the previous chapter: preparation has a much stronger influence on PTE than it does on GTE.
Part 2: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?

According to the quantitative results, preparation had a very strong, positive impact on PTE. Teachers with greater preparation tended to experience higher levels of teacher efficacy relating to day-to-day teaching practices (PTE), a finding that was still true for teachers in at-risk urban schools. Preparation had a weak, positive impact on GTE, however the effect of preparation on GTE was much weaker, and there was no relationship between GTE and HQT status. To explain this difference, teachers focused on three main ideas: that GTE is more likely explained by 1) qualitative program differences and that GTE was more influenced by 2) individual disposition and 3) School Level Factors. These things, upon deeper analysis, were not either not captured in the variables measuring amount of preparation or Highly Qualified Teaching status, or had little to do with the preparation program.

1. Qualitative Program Differences

Teachers explained that one of the major reasons for the differential influence of preparation on the two self-efficacies involved the elements of preparation that are actually able to develop PTE or GTE. Increased amount of preparation, they explained, can easily increase PTE, but developing GTE requires specific program elements that are more difficult to quantify. As previously discussed, many teachers argued that preparation program elements like a philosophy of education, and not the amount of preparation, were more likely to have a positive influence on GTE in at-risk urban schools. Because the focus was on quality and qualities and not on quantity, they explained, the amount of preparation was not likely to have a positive impact on GTE in at-risk urban schools. A program philosophy, the element they described as crucial for GTE, from their perspective, cannot be measured in the way that I measured amount of training.

PTE, they explained, was more easily learned in the context of teacher preparation. When asked why preparation influences PTE, teachers focused on how critical it was to learn management routines, gather resources and hone the craft of teaching through vicarious and
mastery experiences and social persuasion. In describing the most meaningful aspects of her teacher training, Annie (high school Math) stated, “One of the things that I learned [in my student teaching] is the benefit and necessity of routines and so, for example, in this class the kids come in, there is something for them to do on the board.” While many teachers felt strongly that these routines were quite different in urban and suburban schools, increased preparation—whether suburban or urban—could help a teacher feel more confident in his or her teaching behaviors (PTE). Rhea, who had three years of education coursework and a full year of student teaching before she began her first year as a teacher, compared herself with an alternatively certified teacher in her building, “I think that even, really for the first few months it seemed like she was ahead of me, because [the specific alternative program] prepares you for some of the urban stuff, but later you could tell that I was better prepared, at least when it came to teaching methods and creating a sustainable management program.” To Annie and Rhea, the experiences they encountered in teacher training helped to prepare them for the rigors of teaching in urban schools, which led to higher levels of PTE. This explains why teaching in an at-risk school does not mediate the impact of preparation on PTE—because increased training provides routines and teaching skills that can improve classroom confidence, regardless of context. GTE, on the other hand, was most likely to be influenced by overarching program philosophies that helped teachers create broader purposes for education. These program philosophies are difficult to quantify because they are based, to a certain degree, on quality as opposed to quantity.

2. Internal Dispositions

To some teachers, the reason why preparation had less of an impact on GTE could be explained through the simple fact that preparation cannot influence intrinsic dispositions. Rachel explained, “I guess they do their best to prepare you and give different models of teaching and stuff but it is almost like until you really do it—you can’t really know. There is only so much I feel like a college in a classroom they can tell you” (Rachel). To some teachers, GTE develops through
intrinsic dispositions and is not the province of teacher training programs. Through providing positive physiological and emotional states, certain internal dispositions can increase teacher efficacy. Many teachers described themselves as "laid back" and almost always articulated a strong internal mission for urban teaching. Together these internal dispositions helped to decrease the physical and emotional stress of the first year of teaching and gave teachers a reason to be there, therefore having the greatest impact on GTE, but also influences PTE.

One of the major intangible dispositions that teachers commented on as a stress reliever was the idea of 'not taking things personally.' Also described as a laid-back attitude by other teachers, this disposition implies the ability to view situations objectively and avoid negative self-blame for certain classroom problems. Hadley, for example, stated, "but, I don't get stressed really easily, it was really stressful, I did go home crying a few days (laughs)...but, I mean I just didn't take anything personally" (Hadley, 5th grade). These teachers are likely to have higher levels of PTE—and have a greater ability to build high GTE. The reason why teachers described this ability as essential in the urban classroom mostly related to the high level of negative student behavior. Regarding extremely disruptive and disrespectful students, Tom explained, "so it was tough, it was no cake walk, but I know some people who get really stressed out about stuff like that, I tend to be pretty laid-back as a person, so if I had a rough day at work I am pretty good at leaving it there, so it never made me question teaching or anything like that" (Tom, high school Physics). This laid-back attitude gave these teachers the opportunity and space to engage in the mastery experiences that constantly happen in the first year of teaching and to build higher levels GTE as they learned on the job. The mastery experience of teaching a first lesson can only promote teacher efficacy insofar that a teacher does not engage in negative self-blame for every problematic situation—thus a high PTE can be a part of building positive feelings of GTE.

The other disposition that acted as a source of positive emotional states, and had a direct impact on GTE, was an internal mission for urban teaching. Similar to, but quite distinct from, a learned philosophy of teaching, this sense of mission helped teachers by making them feel
meaningful in their classrooms. An internal drive—regardless of origin—demonstrates the ways internal social persuasion and emotional states work together to influence teacher efficacy. Shelly explained, "I wanted to work in an urban school for most of my student teaching and certification program...I wanted to be in a place that could use decent teachers—and I thought that I was an ok teacher (laughs)" (Shelly, high school English). Shelly consistently used this drive to remind herself that she mattered to her students (internal social persuasion) and to keep herself from becoming overwhelmed (positive emotional states). In this way, her mission for urban teaching could function as an internal form of social persuasion to prevent negative emotional states. However, from this comment, it is apparent that, as the year went on, a sense of self-doubt may have eroded Shelly's teacher efficacy.

Participants also note that the internal drive can also help teachers to hold students to high standards. Noelle, for example, commented, "I care more about my kids than anything, that is why I am still there—so I hold them to a really high standard and if they are messing up I let them know" (Noelle). In one sentence Noelle was able to make some crucial connections between teacher cognition and teacher action. She has an internal motivation—caring for her students. Implied in this internal motivation, furthermore, is a sense of purpose—she believes that she matters to her students. Feeling valued and meaningful, subsequently, helped her to hold her students to high academic standards. Feeling meaningful is often cited as one of the crucial aspects of GTE, and it is clear that an internal mission helps to establish these feelings by removing uncertainty (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

3. School-Level Factors

Finally, participants explained that preparation has less of an impact on GTE than it does on PTE because there are several school-level factors, in addition to at-risk status, that impact GTE. These school level factors mostly had to do with the school as a community, focusing on the impact of administrators, and mentors / colleagues. Because I outlined the influence of administrators
in a previous chapter (chapter 7), I will touch briefly on the importance of a supportive administration here and focus on the benefits derived from colleagues and mentors.

As previously mentioned, in explaining how her administration supported her, Laura explained, "because I was a new teacher…when they set up my class list they gave me kids that were all around the same level and were pretty much on level already. So that made my job a lot easier…it helped that my school sort of supported me as a new teacher (Laura, 3rd grade). While the impact that administrators can have on teacher efficacy has already been discussed in a previous chapter, what is most critical here is to point out that the influence of administration can vary by school. Because participants made it clear that administrative actions had a definite impact on GTE, and through lower GTE had an impact on retention, it is very possible that variables concerning administrators and administrative action best explain the high level of variation between schools regarding both GTE and retention. The administration, notably, had a less meaningful impact on PTE, which may explain why there is less school-level variation in PTE in the quantitative data.

Nell (5th grade) provides excellent evidence for the way individual administrators can impact both GTE and retention. Nell chose to leave her school after one year of teaching to move to another school in the same district. Both schools fall into the “at-risk” category defined in the quantitative measures, but Nell explains

When I taught at my first school I would be so exhausted by the end of the day that I would just have to go home and cry, eat, or nap or something. It was exhausting and physically took a toll on my body… I switched schools, because I felt like I was not being supported by the administration in terms of the challenges I was encountering in the classroom…Now, nine times out of ten, I mean I am not going to kid you and pretend that I work at a perfect school or my class is great now, I can stay and chat with a colleague or talk to a parent in the school yard or talk with my students…they love to tell me jokes at the end of the day. (Nell, 5th grade)

Nell admits that her current students are better behaved and more respectful than those in her first school, but she largely explains these differences in terms of the school culture created by the administration, "I just wanted to be in a community where the majority, if not all, really believed
in what they were doing and believed in the kids and thought they were making a difference too” (Nell, 5th grade). To Nell, without a strong and supportive administration, other factors that influence GTE are less likely to matter in the classroom. Again, it is important to note that Nell comes back to the theme of giving meaning to teaching—Nell’s administration gave her a sense of purpose, which can help to increase levels of GTE.

Participants explained that the colleagues and mentors who provided direct advice, guidance and support to new teachers were important aspects to this supportive environment. These significant others, therefore, provide positive social persuasion. They were given resources and lessons that had worked for other teachers, so rather than always trying new things that may or may not work, teachers could draw upon proven lessons and tactics (vicarious experiences). In the context of the interviews, I asked many teachers what elements were most helpful in “getting through the year”; many responded that mentors or colleagues provided a major support system,

- My Charter school provided me with a mentor and she was awesome. I actually think that every first-year teacher should have a mentor like her and she would come in and give me more resources and give me more posters—like little mini-lessons just from her… (Hana)
- The mentor teacher I had in school, though a wonderful woman and I probably wouldn’t have a job without her, she is a science teacher, so she doesn’t really have any practical information from an English standpoint…(Shelly)
- So I would say, other teachers, the online blogosphere has been really supportive, and a lot of the methods books that have been recommended to me by other teachers have been really helpful in me not blowing my brains out…(Shelly)
- I guess it was my coworker across the hall and I always tell her that she is like my unofficial mentor…I didn’t have an official mentor, but I could actually go in there. I think especially after December when I really got to know her and I have to go over there and kind of, be like, this is what happened or look at what had happened, and I really relied on her and my other team members a lot. Sometimes I would find out that similar things were going on in their classrooms, and that really validated my experience…(Rhea)

Because mentors and colleagues afforded teachers tactics that they had confidence in, they were more likely to have the classroom control they needed, which impacts PTE. The sense of community provided by other teachers, however, seemed more crucial and bolstered GTE in several ways. First, teachers expressed that a strong community helped teachers to feel like they weren’t alone and allowed them to ease into the first year as a part of a whole. Kent explained,
Talking to other teachers and realizing that it happens to everyone, students curse out the principal, they curse out other teachers that I have a lot of respect for. Everyone has stories…and we were laughing about it, and it is depressing, but it is like wow, it happens to everyone…(Kent, high school English)

Kent indicated that he still felt he could help his students change the negative behaviors, but he did not take responsibility for the origin of those behaviors, which appears to be a crucial balance in maintaining high GTE.

This sense of community, from the perspectives of the teachers, could also have a positive impact on students. Rhea explained that the teachers on her team "were like the reason I made it through the year, they were so supportive and…we really build up a relationship…I really found a community, I think that really helped our students as well" (Rhea). The sense of community helped her feel meaningful to her students. Because she felt supported, she felt like she was part of something bigger, and she believed that this helped her matter in the classroom. The community, essentially, removed uncertainty and provided meaning—a direct source for building GTE.

**Summary**

Based on a review of the results described in the previous chapters, it appears that different urban-specific stressors impacted teacher efficacy in different ways. While student attitude and behavior posed a challenge to both PTE and GTE, curricular confusion had a greater impact on PTE (perceived teaching abilities) and administrative pressures were a more significant threat to GTE (outcome expectancies). The teachers explained, as a result of the different way that stressors impact PTE and GTE, that the threats to PTE were more likely to be addressed through mastery and vicarious experiences provided in teacher training programs than were the threats to GTE. Training programs, they explained, were generally focused on observing and practicing the actions of day-to-day teaching practices (increasing PTE) and less about intangibles like understanding how and why to hold high expectations for diverse groups of students (which, arguably, could increase GTE). Crucially, participants explained that in the urban context, while stressors to PTE were easily influenced by the amount of preparation,
stressors to GTE were more affected by the quality and qualities of preparation program and by individual disposition (see figure 9.1). This final point provides the best explanation regarding why preparation has a much stronger impact on PTE than on GTE. From the perspective of these teachers, program qualities (and quality) make a more significant impact on GTE than does the quantity of training.

**Conclusions**

In defining the elements of teacher training that are most meaningful for urban teaching, participants explained that helpful programs provided them with: exposure to urban schools and students, the opportunity to ease into teaching, successful models of education/teaching and tangible resources and an inclusive philosophy of education. Quantitative analysis also uncovered a complex relationship between preparation and teacher efficacy in urban schools. Preparation has a much stronger influence on PTE than on GTE, and HQT status has a positive significant association with PTE, but not with GTE. When asked to explain this difference, teachers commented that, while PTE could be improved by the amount of teacher training, GTE was much more related to the content and philosophy of a preparation program as well as the internal disposition of individual teachers. In other words, the preparation factors that influence GTE are not related to the amount of preparation, but rather factors that are much more difficult to quantify, like program philosophy. In order to influence PTE, teachers explained, programs should expose pre-service teachers to urban students and urban schools systems, develop classroom management routines and help them ease into the urban teaching experience. In order to influence GTE, on the other hand, preparation programs need to have a philosophy of education focused on continual teacher learning and an idea that all students can learn and succeed.

In the next chapter I provide a summary of the qualitative results (chapters 7, 8 and 9), and offer specific answers the research questions outlined in chapters 5 and 6.
CHAPTER TEN: SUMMARY OF THE QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the qualitative results outlined in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. The goal of these chapters was to explain and contextualize the relationships discussed in the Chapter 5 (quantitative results) concerning teacher efficacy, preparation, teaching in at-risk urban schools and teacher retention. In order to understand these relationships, I focused on several research questions derived from quantitative analysis of nationally representative data (see previous chapter). The questions, as previously stated, were:

Q1: Why do teachers in at-risk urban schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?
Q2: How and why does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?
Q3: What are critical elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school?
   Q3A: Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?
Q4: What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE and retention? What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?

Each of the preceding chapters addressed one or two research questions and systematically built a model to illustrate the relationship between the urban context, preparation, teacher efficacy and the impact on teachers, teaching and teacher retention. This chapter will draw on the data presented in the previous three chapters and provide a direct response to each of the stated research questions. I will close with a brief summary of the results and a brief explanation of the final model, Figure 10.1.
Figure 10.1: A Final Conceptual Model

- **Urban-Specific Stressor**
  - Aggressive / Disruptive Students
  - Confusing / Irrelevant Curricula
  - Unsupportive Administrators
  - Student Apathy
  - Perceptions of External Influences

- **Research Question 1**
  - Four Sources of Teacher Efficacy
    - Exposure/Urban Teaching
    - Ease Into Teaching
    - Tangible Resources
    - Inclusive Philosophy of Ed.

- **Research Question 2**
  - Negative Impact of low TE on Teacher and Teaching
    - Overwhelmed / Students Sense It
    - Less Time for Critical Reflection
    - Lower Standards
    - Move Schools / Leave Teaching

- **Research Question 3**
  - Positive Impact of High TE on Teachers and Teaching
    - Less Overwhelmed
    - Ability to Critically Reflect
    - Keep Standards High
    - Remain in School

- **Research Question 4**
  - Other Factors Influencing GTE
    - Intrinsic Dispositions
    - Supportive Administrators
    - Relationships with Colleagues

- **GTE**
  - PTE

- **Teacher Efficacy**
Teacher efficacy

By way of reminder, in the discussion of teacher efficacy there are several crucial differences between the two strands of teacher efficacy PTE (personal teacher efficacy) and GTE (general teacher efficacy) that are focal points in this chapter. PTE, as described in the previous chapters, relates to how prepared a teacher feels at the classroom level. In discussing PTE, teachers generally describe feelings of control related to classroom management, lesson planning and student engagement. PTE, again, is inherently personal and only applies to the day-to-day activities within a teacher's individual classroom. GTE, on the other hand, is more related to confidence in one's ability to ensure outcomes related to student learning. GTE, therefore, is defined by feelings of control related to the entire learning process, and is often influenced by factors outside of an individual classroom. In the case of urban teacher efficacy, those outside factors include student background characteristics and school climate issues.

Question 1:

Why do teachers in at-risk schools report lower levels of teacher efficacy?

Quantitative analysis reveals that novice teachers in urban at-risk schools have significantly lower levels of both PTE and GTE than novice teachers in other schools. Novice teachers in the qualitative sample explained that the reason for this difference can be attributed to a unique set of urban-specific stressors concerning student attitude and behavior, confusion concerning mandated curricula and unsupportive administrators. Analysis reveals that aggressive student behavior and curricular confusion impact PTE, while student apathy and unsupportive administrators are most likely to negatively influence GTE (outcome expectancies). In short, novice teachers in at-risk urban schools have a greater number of stressors than other teachers and are often in a context for which they feel unprepared; thus, they report lower teacher efficacy. Nell summarized this idea by explaining "The mountain they are climbing is a lot larger" (Nell, 5th grade).
Question 2:

How does lower teacher efficacy impact teaching and teacher retention?

Teacher efficacy, according to participants, has an impact on teaching and learning to teach, and it also influences teacher retention. First, participants explained that low teacher efficacy (and specifically PTE) could cause teachers to feel flustered or overwhelmed, which has a direct result on student behaviors. Second, they explained that PTE also could impact the amount of time teachers spend in critical reflection. When a teacher with a low PTE feels overwhelmed and is "just trying to survive, just trying to stay afloat", he or she is less likely to take the time to reflect critically (Nell, high school English). Participants explained that lack of critical reflection is problematic, because this is an essential process in continued learning. Low GTE, from the perspective of these participants, was more likely to impact a teacher's decision to hold his or her students to high standards. A teacher with a low sense of GTE (outcome expectancies) was more likely to "become jaded" (Nell) and less likely to hold his or her students to high standards.

Quantitative analysis revealed that both PTE and GTE impact commitment to teaching, however only GTE had an impact on actual teacher retention. Teachers in this sample support this quantitative finding, because they explain that low GTE, rather than PTE or preparation level, is much more likely to affect teacher attrition (either moving schools or leaving teaching). Participants explained that teachers were most likely to move schools or leave teaching when they believed that they were unable to make a difference in the lives of their students—which reflects a crucial aspect of GTE. Teachers, they explain, need to feel that they can make a difference to their students in order to keep trying and to remain in teaching. From their perspective, furthermore, the two major sources of low GTE that impacted teacher attrition were perceived student apathy and unsupportive administrators.
Questions 3 and 3a:

What are crucial elements of preparation for teaching in an urban school? Why is the impact of preparation stronger for PTE than GTE in the novice teaching pool?

Quantitative analysis uncovered a complex relationship between preparation and teacher efficacy in urban schools. While preparation had a significant impact on both PTE and GTE, the effect was stronger for PTE. Furthermore, while HQT status had a significant, positive association with PTE, there was no association between GTE and HQT status. In addressing this difference, teachers commented that PTE could be improved by the amount of teacher training (especially lengthened student teaching and extensive practice with lesson plans); GTE, however, was more likely driven by the content and philosophy of a preparation program, the internal disposition of individual teachers and school-level factors. In other words, the preparation factors that influence GTE are not related to the amount of preparation, but rather factors that are much more difficult to quantify, like program philosophy. In order to provide an even stronger influence on PTE, teachers explained, programs should expose pre-service teachers to urban students and urban schools systems, develop classroom management routines and help them ease into the urban teaching experience. In order to influence GTE, on the other hand, preparation programs need to have a philosophy of education focused on continual learning and on broader purposes for education. GTE, notably, was also described as more likely than PTE to be influenced by school-level differences—which also explains why quantitative measures of preparation had a minimal impact.

Question 4:

What accounts for the high degree of between school variation in GTE and retention? What are the unaccounted for school-level factors?

Quantitative analysis pointed to significant school level differences regarding GTE and teacher retention. When asked about this difference, participants commented on the importance of the school as a community—and highlighted relationships with colleagues and administrators.
A few participants focused on the impact that the administration has on individual teachers and the school as a whole. They explained that, because administrators have such pull on GTE and retention and because administrators vary from school to school, this is the force that most likely explains the school level variation. They explained that administrators either did or did not provide support for individual teachers, and this support was a critical determinant of GTE. They further explained that administrators often had a great deal of influence over the school culture—and that school culture affects student attitudes and behaviors, the curriculum, collegial relationships and many other critical aspects of the school. School culture, they explained, often influenced not only GTE but also attrition and retention.

**Conclusions**

In summation (Figure 10.1), analysis of participant responses revealed that novice teachers in at-risk urban schools, when compared with novice teachers in other schools, have lower levels of teacher efficacy related to teaching because of the unique challenges involved in teaching in urban schools (Q1). They further explained that negative cognitions such as low teacher efficacy could influence a teacher’s emotional state as well as her actions (Q2). This also impacts the standards she holds for her students as well as her decision to remain in her current school or in teaching in general (Q2). Participants also point out some critical differences between the elements that impact PTE and GTE, as well as the way PTE and GTE have different effects on teacher behavior (Q2). PTE, which was mostly shaped by student behavior and curricular coherence, had the greatest influence on classroom interactions. Perceptions of student attitude and administrative actions are most likely to shape GTE. GTE, also, was most likely to impact the teacher’s level of effort and standards as well as his or her decisions regarding leaving a particular school or teaching in general.

Participants explained that certain preparation factors could impact teacher efficacy (Q3). Urban or extended student teaching and practice planning lessons can substantially increase PTE.
GTE, on the other hand, was much more likely to be influenced by overall program philosophy. Participants explain that, because program philosophy is not quantifiable, GTE is not likely to be influenced by quantitative preparation factors (Q3a). Teachers also commented that GTE is more sensitive to factors at the school-level than is PTE. Lastly, in explaining why measures of GTE and teacher retention experienced a high degree of school-level variation (Q4), participants focused on the power that perceptions of administrative behavior have over both of these variables. Because administrators vary between schools, the responses suggest that level and type of perceived administrative support was the most likely explanation for the high degree of between-school variation on these measures.

The teachers in this sample clearly support the findings in the quantitative section and provide in-depth explanations for those findings. By recounting the struggles involved in urban teaching, these teachers provide an answer to why at-risk urban teachers have lower levels of teacher efficacy. Participants also helped to uncover the ways that preparation programs and administrators might help to reduce this gap. By providing exposure to urban schools and students and instilling a mission for urban teaching, preparation programs can help prepare pre-service teachers to succeed in at-risk urban schools. Districts, furthermore, should take note of where preparation programs are falling short—and aim to account for these deficiencies in induction programs to help teachers to continue to learn, grow and improve as teachers. Lastly, these findings point to the importance of supportive and well-organized administrators, because administrators have significant influence over teacher efficacy. The following chapter will expand upon the conclusions reached in this chapter as well as discuss the possible implications for education policy.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Significance of the Study

The results presented in the previous chapters provide meaningful information about the transition from teacher preparation to practice in urban schools. This information can be useful to teacher education programs, urban school districts looking to help new teachers making the transition to practice and researchers. Analyses reveal that, as a result of cultural and structural challenges that are specific to urban schools, novice teachers in these schools feel significantly less prepared when compared with other novice teachers. Feeling underprepared leads novice teachers in urban schools to have significantly lower levels of commitment to teaching, and higher rates of attrition. In this chapter I provide recommendations for (pre-service and in-service) programs involved in training teachers for work in at-risk urban schools that are based on my findings. I also explain the contribution this study makes to research on teacher efficacy and teacher preparation.

The findings that I have previously outlined indicate a significant gap in teacher qualification (as measured by preparation, teacher efficacy and attrition) between urban and non-urban schools. This supports the findings of several researchers and the claims made by many politicians (Duncan, 2009; Allgood & Rice, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2010). The results, furthermore, question the efficacy of judging incoming teacher quality based entirely on qualifications such as the HQT designation. This gap can have a drastic impact on the already disadvantaged students who are more likely to be minorities, more likely to live in poverty and less likely to complete high school or attend college. In the course of this research, I have found that urban students are more likely to have teachers who lack confidence in their teaching and their students. Because of the lack of confidence, these teachers are more likely to leave teaching, which burdens urban students with a lack of continuity due to the constant stream
of inexperienced teachers. Previous literature has already documented that teachers in urban schools are significantly less likely to be certified or to satisfy the highly qualified teacher provision outlined in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2010; Eppley, 2009). In this study I have found that, even if I hold preparation level (weeks of student teaching, number of courses taken and HQT status) constant, these teachers continue to feel significantly less prepared when compared with other teachers. In order to decrease this teacher qualification gap, the problem of low teacher efficacy must be addressed in the pre-service preparation process at the district level during the transition to teaching, and within the research community. If the problem of low teacher efficacy is not addressed in all of these areas, I feel that there will be little impact on teacher efficacy or teacher retention.

By far, the most significant contribution that this study makes to education policy is the awareness that there is no simple way to effectively prepare teachers for urban schools. While preparation programs can take some steps to increase teachers’ levels of classroom preparedness (PTE), urban districts need to take steps to acclimate and help novice teachers to feel successful (GTE). The problem of the inequitably distributed teaching force, therefore, needs to be addressed by both teacher education and individual districts. Teacher education and training programs can benefit from an increased understanding of the skills and experiences that teachers believe they need to feel successful in urban schools. Furthermore, teacher-training programs can help attract teachers to urban schools, help them to become comfortable with urban students and help them to develop a mission for urban teaching. Urban school districts, on the other hand, can gain an awareness of the skills and experiences teachers often lack during the first year of teaching. This awareness can help districts to better design context-specific induction programs for novice teachers. An induction program, as I define it, can be understood as a formal program of support and guidance designed to help new teachers transition into a particular school district. These programs often include both orientation programs before the school year begins and in-service professional development during the first years of teaching (Glazerman et al., 2010).
Lastly, researchers can benefit from a new understanding of the concept of teacher efficacy in urban schools. In this chapter I begin with an overview of the salient findings from the study. I then detail the implications of these findings and provide suggestions for teacher education, teacher induction policy and for research on teacher training and teacher efficacy. Lastly, I outline the course of future research from which I will expand and refine the results found in this study.

**Salient Findings**

Below, I provide an overview of the principal findings regarding teacher preparation, teacher efficacy and teacher retention in urban schools that I have discussed in the previous chapters. These findings all deal with the concept of teacher efficacy, a specific cognition defined by an individual's confidence in his or her abilities as a teacher. This concept (as I have explained throughout this study) can be divided into two components: Personal Teacher Efficacy (PTE) and General Teacher Efficacy (GTE). PTE concerns a teacher's confidence in his or her abilities regarding day-to-day teaching duties, such as the ability to plan a lesson, deliver instruction or handle a range of classroom management situations. GTE, on the other hand, concerns a teacher’s perception of his or her ability to influence outcomes related to teaching, such as his or her teacher evaluations or his or her students’ test scores (refer back to Figure 3.5, in the Conceptual Framework for a visual depiction of these differences). In the summary below, I present the findings in a way that suits the explanatory research design by following each of the three key quantitative findings with an explanation that I derived from the results of qualitative research (see Figure 11.1). Again, one of the most important elements of this diagram, and the results below, are the differences between what effects PTE and GTE, and the different impacts that these two cognitions can have on teachers in practice. In the following sections, therefore, I argue that much of the work to improve classroom preparedness (PTE) can be done at the pre-service level, but that efforts to improve outcome expectancies (GTE) ought to concern districts.
Figure 11.1: The Results

1) Novice teachers in at-risk urban environments, controlling for amount of preparation, have significantly lower levels of self-efficacy.

   a. When asked about this difference, participants explained that novice teachers in at-risk schools face a set of cultural and structural challenges specific to the urban environment that lead to lower teacher efficacy. These factors include negative student behavior, student apathy, student backgrounds, curricular struggles and administrative stressors.

   b. Participants noted, furthermore, that training programs do not adequately prepare them to deal with either cultural or structural challenges. From their perspective, lack of preparation has a direct impact on teacher efficacy. They indicated that while the amount of preparation may not increase teacher efficacy, the content of preparation does.

2) There is a positive, significant association between preparation level and both PTE and GTE. The relationship between preparation and PTE, however, is much stronger than the relationship between preparation and GTE. While there is a significant, positive
association between PTE and HQT status, there is no relationship between GTE and HQT status.

a. Participants explained that preparation programs are more likely to engage in practices that increase PTE (and not those that increase GTE). The practices that influence PTE include: exposure to urban students, practice with planning lessons, and easing into teaching through extended student teaching experiences. They note that, while these experiences help in the transition to the urban environment, first-year teachers require more of these experiences.

b. Participants explained that many of the program factors that can lead to an increased GTE, such as an inclusive program philosophy, are more difficult to quantify and are unlikely to be measured in the variable "amount of teacher preparation". Teachers noted that GTE is also more likely to be influenced by individual dispositions and other school-level factors (such as administrative pressures).

3) Novice teachers in at-risk schools with low levels of teacher efficacy (both PTE and GTE) have significantly lower levels of commitment to teaching. First-year teachers in urban schools with low levels of GTE are significantly more likely to either leave teaching or move schools after one year.

a. Participants supported this finding, explaining that teachers were most likely to move schools or leave teaching when they believed that they were unable to make a difference in the lives of their students (an outcome expectancy/GTE concern).

b. Participants also highlighted some crucial school-level differences relevant to this finding. Administrators, from the perspective of participants, had a significant impact on teacher retention. When teachers perceived administrators as supportive, they often felt a greater sense of purpose (which leads to higher levels of GTE). When they perceived administrators as unsupportive, teachers often felt powerless to effect change in the lives of their students. The sense of powerlessness (which leads to low GTE), caused by a school-level difference, could lead teachers to leave the school.

These results paint a telling picture of the novice urban teaching corps. First, these teachers are, in fact, less prepared than novice teachers in other schools. While previous research has documented this finding (Allgood & Rice, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2010), there is also evidence that teachers who obtain jobs in urban schools have often attended less rigorous training programs (Constantine, 2009). While this was not the focus of my study, a few participants indicated that many of the teachers in urban schools are there because they could not find a job elsewhere. Teachers in urban schools are often hired late and come in

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4 Brad, for example stated, “For some people, the only job they could get is ‘public school teacher in an urban district…’ If it is the only job you can get, it’s a great deal, I mean the benefits don't
with less preparation (Jacob, 2007). What is more, when I hold the amount of preparation constant, these teachers also feel less prepared to perform daily teaching tasks (PTE) and to ensure positive student outcomes (GTE). Therefore, not only are teachers in urban schools underprepared for teaching, they are even less prepared for the rigors of urban schools. Lastly, while neither urbanicity nor preparation directly impact teacher attrition, lack of preparation and urbanicity both decrease a teacher's perceived ability to impact student outcomes (GTE). These particular negative cognitions (related to GTE) do lead to increased teacher attrition in urban schools—the most visible negative impact of low teacher efficacy (see Figure 11.2).

Figure 11.2: How Urbanicity and Preparation Impact Teacher Attrition Through Teacher Efficacy

Increased pre-service preparation, as many experience it today, cannot improve teacher efficacy enough to overcome the negative impact of the urban environment. Participants explain, however, that there are steps that preparation programs and school districts can take to increase novice teacher efficacy for those teachers in urban schools. Many preparation programs need to alter their practices in order to train teachers—even those who do not intend on teaching in urban districts—more effectively for urban schools. Urban districts also need to be aware of the experiences and expertise novice teachers may be lacking in the first year, and the supportive environment that they need, for a successful transition. Based on these findings, I believe that the problem of low teacher efficacy needs to be addressed in the preparation process, during the
transition to the actual practice of teaching, and in the research community (see Figure 11.3). The next two sections explain the specific implications and the steps that preparation programs and urban districts can take to improve the teacher efficacy of novice urban teachers, and in turn, improve teacher retention. Following these sections, I outline the implications for the research community.

Figure 11.3: A Dual Approach to Improving Levels of Teacher Efficacy

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

Based on the findings outlined in Chapter 9, it is clear that many novice urban teachers feel underprepared for the challenges of the urban environment. These challenges, they explain, are both cultural and structural. Teachers, most of whom are white and middle class, are often unfamiliar with the cultural backgrounds of students in at-risk urban schools. These teachers, often fresh out of college, are also unprepared to interact with administrators within the multilayered bureaucracy of urban districts (structural challenges). These teachers often were not exposed to either of these challenges during their training; thus they must cope with both culture shock and the shock of an unfamiliar system in addition to the practice shock that is typical of all first teachers (Veenam, 1984; Stokking et al., 2003). Almost all novice teachers, according to Stokking et al. (2003), experience a form of practice shock as they undertake independent teaching for the first time. This shock, regardless of environment, can lead to teacher attrition.
The teachers in my study explain that urban teachers must deal with this practice shock in addition to shock related to urban specific challenges (urban practice shock).

All teacher-training programs need to make significant changes because, while some pre-service teachers will begin training with a desire for urban teaching placements, others will take these jobs as a measure of last resort. Traditional pre-service teacher training programs need to be aware of the reality of the job market and must take steps to ensure the success of their teachers—and, in turn, the success of urban students. Alternative preparation programs that focus on urban school systems, on the other hand, often need to do more to address the practice shock by lengthening student teaching and including more coursework. To address low teacher efficacy, preparation programs should keep in mind the four sources of teacher efficacy outlined in previous chapters: mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion (encouragement) and positive physiological and emotional states. In order to help prepare teachers, participants comments lead me to recommend a number of elements to overcome both the practice shock and the unfamiliar challenges of the urban environment, including: 1) exposure to both structural and cultural challenges of urban schools, 2) extended student teaching experiences, 3) tangible experience with planning and adapting lessons and 4) a philosophy of education focused on broader purposes for education.

1. **Exposure to urban schools and students**

Participants commented that a lack of familiarity with urban schools and students was one of the crucial challenges in learning to manage both the cultural and structural trials involved in urban teaching. In learning to cope with both practice shock and urban practice shock, teachers are likely to have increased levels of stress. These feelings of stress, they explain, can impact their teaching, their students and their decision to remain in a particular school. Exposure to urban students and urban schools, they explain, would help to combat the lack of familiarity and reduce stress. Teacher efficacy theory supports this finding insofar that exposure can provide
both mastery and vicarious experiences, and exposure will decrease the feelings of shock in the first year of teaching that can lead to negative physiological and emotional states (all related of teacher efficacy). To a certain extent, many of these practices are already employed piecemeal by preparation programs, but these elements need to become a focus of all programs (Banks et al., 2005).

The exposure that I recommend should include experience interacting with and instructing students in at-risk urban schools and experience interacting with the schools as systems (including interacting with building administrators and navigating the multilayered bureaucracy). Exposure to urban students and urban school systems can be accomplished through urban field placements and coursework specific to urban systems (see Sleeter, 2001). Urban field placements, therefore, must require observation, teaching practice and practice interacting with administrators. Urban teaching extends beyond the classroom; therefore urban student teaching must also extend beyond the classroom into the school as a system. Pre-service teachers, therefore, should spend time observing administrators at the building and district level, to understand how and why policymakers and administrators make certain educational decisions. Because field experiences can have a negative impact on student teachers, these field placements require a knowledgeable and available supervisor in order to assist, through social persuasion, pre-service teachers in the process of reflecting critically on their practice (Greer & Greer, 1992; Watlington, Slaton & Partridge, 1998).

Urban-focused coursework can provide vicarious experiences and should focus on culturally relevant pedagogy, coping strategies relating to teaching students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and curricular adaptation. Crucially, urban-focused coursework can expose students to the challenges teachers face and offer feasible coping mechanisms for confronting these challenges. Rather than courses in prejudice reduction, these courses should be based on an ethos of social justice and critical reflection—in order to take into account the broader aims and goals of education for under-represented groups (Esposito & Swain, 2009).
Drawing on the theme of social justice, courses should prepare teachers for the structural challenges, as well as cultural challenges, by allowing pre-service teachers to create action plans for interacting with unsupportive administrators or navigating urban bureaucracies. Pre-service teachers, furthermore, would benefit from coursework in education policy that allows them to understand how and why educational decisions are made on the broader scale. Such courses would give pre-service teachers a more critical perspective on education in society. The key task of both urban-focused coursework and urban field placements is to slowly ease pre-service teachers into experience with urban challenges in order to help them feel comfortable and prepared without providing a disincentive for pursuing urban teaching. Because of this challenge, it is most appropriate to combine field placement (under the advisement of a strong supervisor to provide social persuasion) with relevant coursework in order to give pre-service teachers time and space to critically reflect on and learn from their experiences (Levine-Rasky, 1998; Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

2. **Extended Student Teaching**

Novice urban teachers experience a combination of practice shock, culture shock and unfamiliarity with the urban system. One of the most challenging elements of the transition to teaching is that urban teachers face all three of these challenges simultaneously, which seriously increases stress, diminishes teacher efficacy and can impact the classroom. Participants, as explained previously, noted that it was essential to ease into teaching. While districts can do a good deal to smooth the transition from preparation to practice, teacher training programs can also play a part. Through extended student teaching, regardless of context, preparation programs can ease the practice shock that is common to all novice teachers.

According to two participants (Rhea and Kent), a full year of student teaching—even in a suburban area—helped to ease practice shock. Because teachers were not experiencing high levels of practice shock, they found it easier to cope with the unfamiliarity of the urban environment.
Extended student teaching provides both the mastery and vicarious experiences that help teachers to hone the actual practice of teaching. Teachers in the qualitative sample who had a full year of student teaching were less likely to express concern regarding day-to-day teaching duties (PTE). Extended student teaching, therefore, may help to combat low levels of PTE in the urban environment by easing levels of physiological and psychological stress. Although teachers noted that skills gained during non-urban student teaching did not always transition to the urban environment, extended student teaching was beneficial regardless of the environment because they had experience with the act of teaching. Extended student teaching, much like urban field placements, will most likely be successful under the guidance of a strong supervisor. The supervisor can provide social persuasion and help teachers to make sense of experiences during practice teaching. Much of the literature on extended student teaching focuses on the idea of the professional development school, in which student teachers are incorporated as part of a classroom for an entire year. Much of this research finds that these programs do make a difference for teachers and students (Castle, Fox & Fuhrman, 2009; Hammond, 2007; Murrell, 1998)

3. Experience Planning and Adapting Lessons

In order to ease the transition to teaching and overcome practice shock, teachers also explained the benefit of increased experience (mastery experiences) in planning lessons. They focused on the idea, however, that they also needed experience in adapting lessons laid out in highly regimented scripted curricula. Adaptation, they explained, was essential to make lessons both culturally and academically relevant to students. During pre-service training, these mastery experiences can come through both coursework and student teaching. To combat the urban-specific practice shock, practice in adapting lessons to students needs is highly recommended. Practice planning and adapting lessons, furthermore, must be paired with practice executing these lessons. To illustrate this point, Shelly explained that she knew what differentiation was, but
“what does it look like” (Shelly, high school English). During coursework or student teaching, pre-service teachers should be given specific assignments in which they must adapt predefined lessons for the needs of specific student groups. They must then be given the opportunity to execute these lessons—whether with classmates or actual students. This type of practice, notably, is most likely to improve PTE, because it provides teachers with mastery and vicarious experiences and social persuasion relating to the day-to-day tasks of teaching. This supports the theory that teachers need to learn to be adaptive experts regarding a variety of classroom situations and extends it to dealing with the curriculum as a whole (Hammerness et al., 2005).

4. Philosophy of Education

In addition to causing teachers to feel flustered and overwhelmed, practice shock and the urban environment can also impact a teacher's overall outlook on education. A limited understanding of urban education, a lack of familiarity with the urban system and unsupportive administrators or colleagues can, in this sense, lead to low GTE. Low GTE, participants explain, can cause teachers to lower the standards they set for their students or cause them leave the school. Teacher attrition, as noted earlier, has a negative impact on students, and therefore preparation programs need to take steps to bolster pre-service teacher GTE. One of the only preparation elements that participants were able to directly connect to improved levels of urban GTE was the presence of a philosophy of education that helped teachers develop a mission for urban teaching and a belief that all students can succeed. This philosophy, teachers explained, must be an explicit and implicit component of all elements of the teacher preparation process (coursework, observations and student teaching). The two program philosophies were given as examples by Noelle and Kent had noticeable commonalities: a critical awareness of oneself as a teacher and a belief that all students can learn and succeed.

It is difficult to require teacher preparation programs to have a particular philosophy of education; it is even more difficult to ensure that this philosophy is fully integrated into the
curriculum. Many of the tangible suggestions (above) can provide direction for expressing an inclusive philosophy of education. Exposure to urban students, for example, needs to be combined with critical reflection and open dialogues about social class, race and self-awareness. Teachers need to understand how and why their teaching matters to the students in their classrooms, this sense of mission can be developed through student teaching and coursework that give pre-service teachers mastery and vicarious experiences with urban populations. In other words, pre-service teachers need a broader understanding of educational challenges from a sociological perspective. With an understanding of how their classrooms fit into society as a whole, teachers might have a stronger sense of purpose for their teaching.

A meaningful philosophy of education should, furthermore, be focused on teacher learning. Several teachers in this sample stressed the idea that learning to teach extends well beyond pre-service preparation. For many of these teachers, knowing that they were not ‘finished products’ helped them transition into the first year. A successful program philosophy would explicitly remind teachers that they are still learners, and would lead training programs to give teachers tools to continue in the process of learning during the first years of teaching.

The four components of teacher training presented above are essential factors needed for meaningful preparation for teaching in the urban environment. Because of the variety of unique teacher preparation programs in the United States, I have attempted to make my recommendations broad and adaptable. Various preparation programs can take different lessons from these suggestions. Traditional programs, for example, might focus on providing pre-service teachers with exposure to urban students. Alternative programs, on the other hand, might have to lengthen student teaching or include more rigorous coursework. Because of the diversity between and among preparation pathways, it is difficult to provide more detailed information to (or an appraisal of) one particular pathway. In a previous chapter I discussed many of the models that preparation programs rely on to prepare pre-service teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds. The attention that my participants drew to a “philosophy of education” leads me to
recommend models focusing on social justice, in addition to diverse teaching placements, so that teachers might learn to reflect critically on their classrooms and their practice and understand the structural challenges inherent in urban teaching. Cochran-Smith (2010) explains that “teacher education for social justice is not merely activities, but a coherent and intellectual approach to the preparation of teachers that acknowledges the social and political contexts in which teaching, learning, schooling, and ideas about justice have been located historically as well as acknowledging the tensions among competing goals” (447, emphasis original).

The most critical recommendation that I make to preparation programs, one that speaks to each of the components discussed, is that teacher preparation programs need to be cognizant and inclusive of the structural challenges of urban environments—and the social and political contexts of teaching in urban schools. The reality is that there are not enough urban-specific preparation programs to currently prepare teachers for urban environments, therefore, all preparation programs need to account for the possibility that teachers will eventually find work in an at-risk urban school. All pre-service teachers need exposure to and coping mechanisms for urban schools. While I have framed many of these suggestions through the lens of traditional training programs, these elements should also be integral components of alternative teacher preparation. Because my findings indicate that it is just as necessary to address these concerns during preparation, as it is to address them during the practice of teaching, the following section presents implications and recommendations for school districts.

**Implications for Schools and Districts**

In order to address the problem of low teacher efficacy and resulting high teacher attrition in urban districts, it is necessary to make changes at the district level regarding the actual transition to teaching. Evidence from this study demonstrates that novice teachers in urban schools feel underprepared for the task of urban teaching and do not have faith in their abilities to encourage positive outcomes in their students. These negative cognitions lower teachers'
commitment to teaching and raise attrition rates—both of which can have an impact on urban schools and students. Because of these factors, urban school districts have to constantly replace teachers (which is expensive). Furthermore, the already disadvantaged urban students are more likely to be continuously taught by novice teachers who have low levels of confidence in themselves. Teachers in this study, crucially, indicate that those with low levels of confidence are also less likely to maintain high standards for their students—and therefore can act to increase the achievement gap between urban and suburban students. Urban schools and districts can take steps to bolster teacher efficacy, and lower attrition, by designing induction programs that 1) prepare teachers for urban challenges, 2) smooth the transition to teaching and 3) send implicit and explicit messages that they support first-year teachers. Again, I have chosen to keep my recommendations broad so that they serve as general statements applicable to all urban districts.

1. **Preparation for urban challenges**

Teachers in urban districts, as described above, need to be exposed to and prepared for the challenges that they will encounter in classrooms. These challenges are generally connected to student apathy, negative student behavior, curricular concerns and administrative pressures. Each district, notably, has a unique set of challenges and a unique structure—therefore induction is a necessary rite of passage for all new urban teachers. If urban districts focus induction programs on explicitly preparing teachers for the specific challenges they are likely to encounter in their districts, they will experience less urban practice shock at the beginning of the year. Intensive induction programs might be necessary for most urban teachers and need to take place prior to the start of the school year. While literature on teacher induction is limited, one study reveals that those teachers with multiple supports were more likely to remain in a particular school (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Other studies have broken down various induction elements and have reported a positive impact on student learning from elements such as lesson observation (Wang, 2008).
Participants in this study as well as previous literature find that programs need to, furthermore, provide continuous support throughout the year (Wang, 2008; Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995). My analyses indicate that, prior to the start of the year, teachers need to be exposed to urban students within their district’s unique context and need practice in both classroom management and instruction—perhaps in a summer school setting (Billingsly et al., 2004). Induction programs, further, can give teachers a chance to interact with curricula well in advance of implementation. Teachers can be placed in working groups with master teachers and allowed to discuss adaptation strategies. They then have the mastery experience of designing a lesson and encouragement from the social persuasion of a master teacher. Lastly, programs can give teachers a chance to form relationships with administrators and can allow new teachers to build knowledge about how the schools function in the system. These relationships may combat some of the administrative struggles that participants discussed throughout this study. Exposure to and mastery experience with these three elements (students, curriculum and administrators) are, however, only the beginning to a smooth transition to teaching. Again, it is important to understand that urban districts are faced with teachers with very low outcome expectancies for their students (low GTE), and their efforts must be focused on those threats to GTE—such as perceptions of administrative support and student apathy. Induction programs, therefore, need to go beyond exposure to urban students to give them a picture of how the district works to help every student succeed.

2. Smooth the Transition

A smooth transition to teaching, as articulated by participants, is one of the most critical factors in managing the first year of teaching. In addition to the elements outlined in the previous section, districts can begin by focusing on early hiring; many of the teachers in my sample were hired late—which led to rocky transitions (Jacob, 2007). Schools and districts can also smooth the transition to teaching by lightening course loads, increasing planning time and providing mentors
to new teachers. All of these elements, understandably, can help to increase PTE because they focus on the actual task of teaching. Hiring early gives teachers more time to plan and prepare for the year. Lightening course loads and increasing planning time make the task of teaching less stressful and more manageable. More time to plan for the year and each day can decrease stress and lead to positive physiological and emotional states—which impact teacher efficacy. Mentors, lastly, can give advice and encouragement (social persuasion and vicarious experiences) relating to methods and classroom interactions. These factors, however, can also have an impact on GTE. With more time, teachers are more able to critically reflect on and understand the impact of their practice. Mentors who hold high expectations for students can encourage novice teachers to do the same, and lend them experience from a teacher who has experienced positive outcomes. When schools and districts follow these steps to create a smooth transition, they explicitly make the task of teaching more manageable, and they also send implicit messages of support to novice teachers.

3. Sending Messages of Support

One of the principal challenges that participants expressed was that they perceived the administration as unresponsive or unsympathetic to their needs. Creating induction programs and taking steps to smooth the transition to teaching can send messages of support to first-year teachers, but schools and districts should make explicit the steps that they have taken to support new teachers. In order to do this, district officials need to provide strong and supportive leadership and locate effective principals. Strong and supportive leadership at the building and district level is crucial for a teacher to feel a sense of purpose and meaning associated with their teaching. If a teacher feels that an administrator does not support him, he will feel low levels of confidence in his abilities to effect change (low GTE). Principals and district officials also need to make it clear that they have an interest in the needs of novice teachers. One way to send this message involves the creation of new teacher forums in which the district provides direct
responses to any concerns that arise during those conversations. Messages of support help teachers feel that they matter; this is a form of social persuasion that is necessary for the maintenance of teacher efficacy, and GTE in particular.

The three suggestions detailed in this section (exposure to urban students and the school system, a smoother transition and explicit messages of support) are all crucial to helping urban teachers maintain high levels of teacher efficacy in their first years. These strategies, as noted previously, need to be adapted to each district—but they are all critical because they serve different purposes.

**Implications for Research on Teacher Preparation and Teacher Efficacy**

The previous two sections outlined tangible implications and recommendations for teacher education and school districts, but this study can also provide valuable information to researchers. First, researchers who focus on teacher efficacy need to be aware of exactly how situated this cognition is, and need to bring an awareness of the urban context to their relationships. Second, researchers studying teacher preparation and teacher retention need to put more of a focus on teacher efficacy as a part of research on the broader teacher quality puzzle. In the following sections I explain the impact that this study has on these two fields of research and I provide recommendations to these research communities.

1. **A New Understanding of the Situatedness of Teacher Efficacy**

While previous research has operated under the assumption that teacher efficacy is a situated, contextual phenomenon, few researchers have investigated the way that the urban situation can impact teacher efficacy. The finding that teachers in urban schools have lower levels of teacher efficacy highlights the extent and location of the situatedness of this cognition. While researchers have examined teacher efficacy for certain subjects or with particular age groups, they often do not include student demographics or school location into these analyses. In future
research on teacher efficacy, therefore, quantitative researchers need to control for and examine urbanicity and student demographics. Qualitative researchers studying teacher efficacy, on the other hand, need to take into account the particular context that they are examining. While most qualitative researchers are vigilant about addressing contextual factors, they must include urbanicity as a crucial piece of this context. Researchers, furthermore, need to be cognizant that teacher efficacy most likely does not translate between contexts. In other words, a teacher who has high GTE in a suburban school will not necessarily have high GTE in an urban school. GTE, furthermore, is extremely context specific; analyses indicate that GTE will not even necessarily translate as a teacher moves from one school to another school in the same district. This novel finding should inform any future research concerning teacher efficacy.

2. What Teacher Efficacy Says about Teacher Qualification

This study also provides evidence that teacher efficacy should be included into future research on teacher quality. Currently, researchers measure teacher quality using inputs (certification status or the amount of preparation), outputs (student test scores or teacher evaluations), or some combination of the two (Cochran-Smith, 2005). My findings indicate that there are intermediary factors between inputs and outputs that should be used to create a richer understanding of teacher quality. These intermediary factors are teacher cognitions (thought processes generally thought to influence behavior), such as teacher efficacy. In this study I have shown that teacher efficacy not only influences teacher retention and attrition, but qualitative data indicate that low teacher efficacy can also influence teacher behaviors in the classroom. Teachers in the qualitative sample, furthermore, believe that these behaviors can negatively impact students. Teacher cognitions, notably, cannot replace the current definitions of teacher quality—but they should be used in research that works to refine the limited definitions of quality and qualification that are currently in use.
When cognitions such as teacher efficacy are taken into account in research on the broader teacher quality puzzle, my findings reveal that common measures of qualification may not necessarily lead to quality teachers (or even to teachers who feel qualified). The federal government has created a blanket definition, commonly used by researchers, for determining whether or not a teacher is qualified. This definition (HQT status) includes certification and specialization in a given subject area, but ignores the context in which the teacher is trained or will eventually teach. The results of this study reveal that this definition of qualification (HQT status) has only a small impact on teacher efficacy (which indicates that, although technically qualified, teachers do not feel qualified). Researchers, therefore, need to work towards providing a new, more contextual, definition of teacher qualification that produces quality teachers. Urban teacher quality and suburban teacher quality are likely different concepts entirely—therefore districts may need to use different qualification measures.

**Conclusions and Future Research**

The goal of this study was to examine the experiences of novice urban teachers through the lens of teacher efficacy. I have found that teachers in urban schools have significantly lower levels of teacher efficacy than those in non-urban schools. Low teacher efficacy, I find, leads to increased teacher attrition, which leads to a significant teacher quality gap for already disadvantaged urban students. While this chapter has presented several recommendations related to these experiences, I choose to close with questions that I hope to address in the future. Further research needs to continue a dual approach to addressing the problem of low teacher efficacy and high attrition by examining both preparation experiences and those experiences that occur in the first year of teaching.

First, while the variable measuring the amount of preparation was significant, it only explained a small proportion of the individual-level variation in teacher efficacy. Interviews indicate that I need to use variables capturing the many nuanced differences in the qualities of
teacher preparation. In order to do this I propose to undertake institutional analyses of several teacher preparation programs common among teachers participating in SASS in order to determine how they measure on many of the preparation criteria outlined above. Using these analyses I will quantitatively examine the relationship between more specific program qualities, levels of teacher efficacy and teacher retention. In doing this I will also take advantage of the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BLTS), a new NCES program that is an extension of the first-year cohort of 2007-2008 SASS teachers.

In order to better understand school and district level differences in teacher efficacy and retention, I hope to conduct analyses of the role played by both administrators and induction programs. The SASS and BLTS teacher surveys do contain questions relating to both administrators and induction programs. I will rely on the interviews conducted for this study and additional interviews to select the most salient variables. As with this study, these analyses will naturally be followed with qualitative research. The qualitative phase for this future study will take the form of case studies, in which I examine teachers within a particular district context. While the majority of the teachers in the study presented here were all in the same district, I did not engage in any analysis of the district—if I studied school and district level factors more intensely, I would have to more clearly define the bounded system.

Lastly, the data in this study provide some support for more research on the creation of district-level preparation programs. Urban districts are unique entities and teacher efficacy is a situated phenomenon—meaning that one’s teacher efficacy is based within a specific context. Improving teacher efficacy, therefore, needs to focus on very specific contexts. The one non-Philadelphia teacher in the qualitative portion of this study commented, specifically, on the challenges of teaching in the South: “In the South there are still a lot of race issues that I have never experienced, and I did not expect…” (Rhea, 4th and 5th Grade Science and Social Studies). Teacher efficacy is a situated, social phenomenon—therefore it makes some sense to learn to teach in the environment where one will eventually teach. These programs require partnerships
between teacher training and districts in order to help teachers prepare more effectively for a unique district context (Boggess, 2010). Although connecting district-level preparation programs with teacher efficacy requires further research, it is likely that these teachers will experience even less urban practice shock and will feel a greater sense of preparedness for teaching. These programs, however, are usually small and hard to bring to scale. Although these programs have some promise, I feel that these will be useful in addition to making changes in traditional teacher training and induction programs.

Teaching and learning to teach in urban at-risk schools is clearly challenging, and a lack of urban-specific training exacerbates this challenge. While many teachers in urban schools are able to overcome these challenges and to continue to nurture and encourage the students in their classrooms, many are not. Reflecting on her first year of teaching Nell explained that the first class a teacher has almost always suffers, “I had a professor, I forget what she called it…your first pancake… I feel bad, I mean I feel a little guilty, but I am sure they still got something out of it…it is unfortunate and there are so many complicating factors” (Nell, 5th grade). High rates of attrition and an under-qualified teaching force have plagued urban districts for years, this study brings researchers one step closer to coping with these challenges by looking to decrease the burn on the “first pancake” and eliminating the significant gaps in educational quality and educational outcomes that exist between urban and nonurban students.
REFERENCES


Accreditation of Teacher Education


### APPENDIX A: RESULTS OF LINEAR REGRESSION

Multivariate Regression of Teacher Characteristics, School Characteristics and Preparation on Perception of Personal Teacher Efficacy (PTE), Unstandardized Coefficients, \( n = 9134 \)

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Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * indicates that \( p \) is significant at a \( p < .05 \) level, ** indicates that \( p \) is significant at a \( p < .01 \) level, *** indicates that \( p \) is significant at the \( p < .001 \) level
Multivariate Regression of Teacher Characteristics, School Characteristics and Preparation on Perception of General Teacher Efficacy (GTE), $n = 9134$

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Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .05$ level, ** indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .01$ level, *** indicates that $p$ is significant at the $p < .001$ level.
APPENDIX B: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS ON COMMITMENT AND RETENTION

Logistic Regression of Teacher Characteristics, School Characteristics, Preparation, GTE and PTE on 1) Commitment ($n = 9134$) and 2) One-year retention for those in their First Year of teaching

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<th>Stayer $n = 1,759$</th>
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<td>1.65* (.41)</td>
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<td>HQT</td>
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<td>.90 (.10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTE</td>
<td>1.66*** (.10)</td>
<td>1.48** (.19)</td>
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<td>Pseudo R²</td>
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Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. * indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .05$ level, ** indicates that $p$ is significant at a $p < .01$ level, ***indicates that $p$ is significant at the $p < .001$ level
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT ITEMS AND SCREENING
SURVEY

C-1 Recruitment Items

Email Recruitment Message for: Preparation, Teacher efficacy and Retention: How Novice Teachers Negotiate Urban Schools

PI: Sarah Eckert

Would You Like to Talk About Your First Year of Teaching?

I am a graduate student from Penn State University conducting a study for research purposes only that seeks to understand how prepared teachers in urban schools feel.

Are you…
• a first or second year teacher in a Philadelphia Public School? (or have you just finished your first or second year of teaching?)
• fully certified by the state of Pennsylvania?
• interested in sharing your thoughts and experiences about your first year of teaching?

If you answered yes to all three of these questions, than I would be very excited to hear from you!

Please complete the survey by clicking on the link below, please note that all responses will be kept completely confidential.

Survey: Click Here

The last question on the survey asks if you would be willing to participate in a phone interview, these interviews will be at a time convenient to you and will last around 10 minutes.

Contact: Sarah Eckert
Email: sarah.eckert@gmail.com
Phone: 610.324.9756

Note: All interviews will be recorded, but your identity will kept be completely confidential. This study is being conducted for research purposes only as part of my doctoral dissertation for Penn State University.
C-2: Survey Items

Below is a hard copy of the survey that will be distributed via email, the survey can be found here: https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&pli=1&formkey=dFVGa1owdTlueEVLZXNhci1MdXZGOWc6MQ

PART 1: What do you think about your teacher training?

Thank you so much for participating in my survey!

I am a graduate student from Penn State University conducting a study for research purposes only that seeks to understand how prepared teachers in urban schools feel. All answers will be kept confidential.

Please answer all of the questions below; also indicate whether or not you would be willing to participate in a very brief phone interview to further discuss the topics addressed in the survey.

Contact me (sarah.eckert@gmail.com) if you have any questions!

* Required

Do you consent to participate in the survey? * Your information will be kept completely confidential

  ( ) Yes (Go to Part 2, next page)
  ( ) No (Go to Part 6, page 7) *** Note for IRB: Participants who click “No” will not see any of the survey questions and will be taken automatically to the thank you page of the survey
PART 2: What do you think about your teacher training?

* Required

First, I want to know a little bit about your preparation for teaching

In what year did you receive your bachelor’s degree? *

In what year did you begin teaching? *

How many schools have you taught in? *

( ) 1
( ) 2
( ) 3
( ) Other: ____________________

Have all of your teaching positions been in urban areas? *

( ) Yes
( ) No

Are at least 75% of the classes you teach in the area that you are certified in? *

( ) Yes
( ) No
( ) Other: ____________________

How would you describe your certification program? *

( ) Traditional (4-year College or University based)
( ) Alternative
( ) I am not certified
( ) Other: ____________________

Did your preparation for teaching include...

Coursework in how to select and adapt instructional materials? *

( ) Yes
( ) No

Coursework in learning theory or psychology appropriate to the age of the students you teach? *
Your observation of other classroom teaching? *

(____) Yes
(____) No

Feedback on your teaching? *

(____) Yes
(____) No

About your student teaching experience...

How long did your practice teaching last? *

(____) I had no practice teaching
(____) 4 weeks or less
(____) 5-9 weeks
(____) 10 weeks or more

How would you describe the school you did your practice teaching in... * Please select the best possible answer

(____) Urban
(____) Suburban
(____) Rural
(____) I had no practice teaching experience

Is there anything else I might want to know about your student teaching? Were you in a special program such as a PDS or urban field experience?
PART 3: What do you think about your teacher training?

* Required

Next, tell me about how you felt in your first year of teaching

In your first year of teaching, how well prepared did you feel to -- *(Mark the appropriate box)*

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<td>Handle a range of classroom management or discipline situations?</td>
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<td>Use a variety of instructional methods?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach your subject matter?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use computers in classroom instruction?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan lessons effectively?</td>
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<td>Assess Students?</td>
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<td>Select and adapt curriculum and instructional materials?</td>
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Do you agree or disagree with each of the statements? *

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<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
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<td>I worry about the security of my job because of the performance of my students on state or local tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>I sometimes feel it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students come to school unprepared to learn</td>
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**PART 4: What do you think about your teacher training?**

* Required

Finally, tell me a little bit about yourself...

In what year were you born? *

Are you... *

(____) Female
(____) Male

What grade level do you teach? *

(____) Elementary School
(____) Middle School/Junior High
(____) High School
(____) Other:

How would you describe your race or ethnicity? * Mark all that apply

(____) American Indian or Alaska Native
(____) Asian or Pacific Islander
(____) Black
(____) White
(____) Are you of Hispanic origin?

Would you be willing to participate in a brief follow-up interview? * Not everyone who offers will be selected, the phone interview will be very short and at a time convenient to you. I really appreciate your help!

(____) Yes (Go to part 4, next page)
(____) No (Go to part 6, page 7)
**PART 5: What do you think about your teacher training?**

* Required

Please enter your contact information.
Those selected for brief phone interviews will be contacted via email (or telephone if you prefer) to set up a time that is convenient to you. Please enter your contact information below.

If you have changed your mind and do not want to participate in a phone interview, simply enter an X for your name and email address, thanks! If you have any questions please email me at sarah.eckert@gmail.com or 814.863.1314.

Name * you only need to enter your first name: ___________________

Email Address * or preferred method of contact: ___________________

Phone number or alternate contact information (not required): _______________

Comments/Questions Do you have any comments or questions about the survey? Is there a good time to reach you?
PART 6: What do you think about your teacher training?

Thanks for your input!
If you chose not to participate in the survey or phone interview and you change your mind, or if you did participate and have any other questions regarding this survey, please email me Sarah.Eckert@gmail.com or call 814.863.1314

Do you have any comments?
Appendix D: Interview Protocols

D-1: Unstructured Phone-Interview sample items:

1) Tell me, in about two minutes, how did you come to teach in the school you are in?
   a. Probe for specifics of the training program.
      i. Where was it? What are some initial reactions about your preparation?
      ii. How long was your student teaching? Where did you do your student teaching?
      iii. Urban specific? Courses on urban students?

2) Tell me about a day (or time) where things were going well – what did you do?
   a. If a lesson – how and why did you design the lesson that way?
   b. How did you feel that day/after that day? Why?
   c. Was there any skill / knowledge from your preparation that helped you that day?
      What was it specifically? Where did you learn that skill?

3) Tell me about a day (or time) where things were not going well…what did you do?
   a. How did you feel? What were you thinking that day?
   b. How did you recover?
   c. What was the explicit challenge and was it expected?

4) So, how would you say your training prepared you for teaching in your current school?
   What was helpful and what was missing?
   a. Probe for specific details and experiences

5) In general, how have you felt this year? How has this year gone?
   a. Is there a connection with preparation?

6) Are you planning on staying in this school next year?
   a. If yes, why? What makes you feel prepared to stay? How do you think next year will be different?
   b. If no, why? Where are you going? Probe for specifics regarding experiences and factors that lead to the decision to lead? How do you think next year will be different?
**D-2: Interview Protocol: Extended Follow-Up Interviews**

The second interview was more in-depth and asked participants to speak to the general experience of learning to teach in an urban school.

**Given Definition of Self Efficacy:**

“Teacher efficacy as I define it concerns how prepared a teacher feels on a daily basis in his or her classroom. Personal teacher efficacy implies that a teacher feels that he or she can plan and carry out daily instructional tasks in his or her classroom. General teacher efficacy, on the other hand, implies that the teacher feels that his or her actions will actually influence student outcomes.”

Teachers were asked to respond to the following statements and questions:

1) Teachers in urban schools have lower senses of teacher efficacy than teachers in non-urban schools. Do you agree? How do you explain this?
   a. Are there any specific examples you can think of concerning you or teachers you know?
   b. What are the main elements of urban teaching that threaten teacher efficacy?

2) For teachers in urban schools preparation is only related to personal teacher efficacy, and not general teacher efficacy. Do you agree? How do you explain this?
   a. What elements of preparation might be important for urban teacher efficacy?

3) How would you say ‘feeling unprepared’ impacts teaching? How do your feelings of confidence impact your teaching? How does feeling unprepared impact the students?
   a. Can you think of any specific examples?

4) Why might teacher efficacy, specifically general teacher efficacy, vary between schools?
   a. What school factors might cause this variation?

5) Why do novice urban teachers leave? Does it have anything to do with teacher efficacy?
Appendix E: Summary of Findings Given to Participants

Dear Participant,

I want to begin by thanking you for all the help that you have already given me with my dissertation research. The information that you gave me during our interviews was invaluable to helping me understand the experiences of first year urban teachers. I have one final favor to ask of you. I have finished with all of the interviews and I have reached several conclusions that I would love to have your opinion on. I transcribed all of the interviews that I conducted, and read through them to finding broad themes—those are the themes that I am presenting to you below. I ask that you read through the summary below and send me any feedback. If it helps, please keep these questions in mind: 1) Do you agree with the conclusions I have reached? 2) Why do you agree or disagree? 3) Do your experiences contradict or confirm these conclusions? 4) Is there anything that you feel is missing from these conclusions? Please do not feel pressured to write extensively, a paragraph or a few bullet points will suffice.

Thank you very much for your help! Feel free to contact me if you have any questions
(Sarah.Eckert@gmail.com)

A Review of Teacher efficacy

As you might remember from our interview, we discussed a concept called teacher efficacy. This concept is best explained as how prepared and effective a teacher feels for the task of teaching. To measure teacher efficacy is to measure how confident a teacher feels in his or her teaching abilities. Teacher efficacy, when applied to teachers, can be divided into two concepts, please keep these two concepts in mind as you read the summary of results.

- Personal Teacher Efficacy (PTE): PTE measures a teacher’s perceptions of his or her abilities orchestrate the necessary actions to encourage learning. PTE only involves a teacher's perceptions of the actions and activities involved in her classroom. A teacher with a high PTE would feel able to plan and execute an appropriate lesson for her students. She would have confidence in her abilities to keep students engaged, to keep the students on task, to manage student behavioral problems, and to cover any content standards required by a school or district. A high PTE, notably, does not indicate that a teacher believes that these successful lessons will lead to higher student test scores or student success in later life.

- General Teacher Efficacy (GTE): GTE is often equated with outcome expectancies. A teacher with a high level of GTE, therefore, would believe that she has the ability to influence student outcomes. Outcomes can refer to anything from state test scores, to high school graduation or from motivating a student to come to school on a daily basis to doing a particular assignment. A teacher with a low GTE would feel unable to influence...
these outcomes, regardless of his teaching abilities. The low GTE teacher can often feel that he is planning and executing lessons well, but because of external forces, his actions will not actually impact students.

**Summary of Findings**

4) When I compared teachers in urban schools with those in other schools, I found that urban teachers had significantly lower levels of teacher efficacy (both PTE and GTE). In other words—regardless of length of preparation—teachers in urban schools feel less prepared.

   a. When asked about this difference, interview participants explained that teachers in urban schools face a set of challenges specific to the urban environment that leads to lower teacher efficacy (these factors include negative student behavior, student apathy, student backgrounds, curricular struggles and administrative stressors).

   b. Participants noted, furthermore, training programs do not adequately prepare them to deal with urban challenges. The lack of preparation has a direct impact on how prepared teachers feel.

5) Secondly, I found that urban teachers with more preparation (longer student teaching and more coursework) have higher levels of PTE. In other words, these teachers have more confidence in their abilities to plan and conduct lessons. Increased preparation does not lead to higher levels of GTE among urban teachers. In other words urban teachers with more preparation do not have higher outcome expectancies.

   a. Participants explain that preparation programs are more likely to engage in practices that increase PTE (and not those that increase GTE). The practices that influence PTE include: exposure to urban students, practice with planning lessons, and easing into teaching through extended student teaching experiences. They note that, while these experiences help in the transition to the urban environment, more of these experiences are required.

   b. Participants explain that many of the program factors that can lead to an increased GTE, such as an inclusive program philosophy, are more difficult to quantify and are unlikely to be measured in the variable "amount of teacher preparation". Teachers note that GTE is also more likely to be influenced by
individual dispositions and other school-level factors (such as administrative pressures).

6) Novice teachers in at-risk schools with low levels of teacher efficacy (both PTE and GTE) have significantly lower levels of commitment to teaching. First-year teachers in urban schools with low levels of GTE are, furthermore, significantly more likely to either leave teaching or move schools after one year. In other words, when teachers feel less prepared and have lower outcome expectancies, they are more likely to plan on leaving teaching or to move to a new school.

a. Participants supported this finding, explaining that teachers were most likely to move schools or leave teaching when they believed that they were unable to make a difference in the lives of their students (an outcome expectancy/GTE concern).

b. Participants also highlighted some important differences that occur in individual schools. Administrators, from the perspective of participants, had a major impact on teacher retention. When administrators were perceived as supportive, teachers often felt a greater sense of purpose. When administrators were perceived as unsupportive, teachers often felt powerless to effect change in the lives of their students. The sense of powerlessness (low GTE), which was caused by a school-level difference, they explained, could lead them to leave the school.
Appendix F: Research Protections

“Preparation, Teacher efficacy and Retention: How Novice Teachers Negotiate Urban Schools”

Date Submitted: June 11, 2010 10:21:26 AM
IRB#: 34331
PI: Sarah Anne Eckert

Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (ii) any disclosure of the human participants’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants’ financial standing, employability, or reputation. [45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)]
Appendix G: Qualitative Analysis Demonstration

Phase 1: Foundational Coding

Excerpt from Interview with Noelle on 9-25-2010

My Philosophy of ed—borrowed from school—is transforming hearts and minds—I had reservations about going to a catholic university, because I am not religious, but their philosophy of ed is really focused on having us know who we are when we walk into a classroom and that was, well before deciding how you are going to teach. If you don’t know who you are and who you value, it is hard to uphold that in a classroom when you have kids who question you. So my approach was that kids had to be constantly making connections, so connections across like curriculum and connections against cultures so that they can start to see how things are not totally separated. Also for me I had a background that was similar to a lot of these kids, I didn’t know my father and I was raised by a single mother, so for me reading was the way that I made sense of the world—that is kind of what I brought to the classroom, so it was really really personal. So that helps me, because it was like a driving force the entire time. So when I wanted to quit because it was hard and I was upset all the time that was what kept me in there—but that was from me, it wasn’t from the training I was given.

Memo on “Mission for Urban Teaching”

One of the most salient aspects of my interview with Noelle was the idea of a mission for teaching. Noelle is particularly interesting because her mission for urban teaching comes from several different points of origin. It comes from her teacher education program, her personal disposition and her own background. Noelle was raised by a single mother and she believes that this part of her background helps to give her a mission for urban teaching. Sharing backgrounds can be important to making connections with students…Do other participants also note these points of origin for a mission for urban teaching? Does anyone else comment on the connection to a philosophy of education? Although Noelle ends her comment with the phrase “it wasn’t from the training I was given” it was clear from the start that she did borrow this philosophy of education from her teacher training program—so some part of it is connected. How is mission
connected to teacher efficacy? Good question, I think that her sense of mission gives her a feeling of purpose—she seems to really believe that her students can learn as long as they make connections. I was especially drawn to her comment about knowing “who you value,” I think that is a key TE component (GTE) because it is about expectations and trust in the students—if you have a mission you believe you can make a difference. On retention—I know other interviews have mentioned a sense of mission this as a reason for entering the teaching field, but Noelle also mentions that this mission keeps her in—it keeps her from leaving—the mission improves GTE and helps her stay in school?

**Phase 2: Focused Coding**

Bellow is a collection of quotes reflecting a mission for urban teaching:

Shelly: "I wanted to work in an urban school for most of my student teaching and certification program...I wanted to be in a place that could use decent teachers—and I thought that I was an ok teacher (laughs)."

Noelle: "I care more about my kids than anything, that is why I am still there—so I hold them to a really high standard and if they are messing up I let them know.”

Nell: “That is why I love, and always wanted to teach in my neighborhood—that builds just a different relationship, you get to know the families, they know you. And I think to a lot of the parents and the students become more approachable, more comfortable, a lot of different things. I think sharing yourself is part of it—the more you share yourself, the more human like you are.”

Tom: “I think just a little social justice reason...umm...I guess I just feel like the kids in the better schools don’t need the better teachers, it is the kids in the city who need the good teachers. So I figured I might as well give it a shot while I still have some energy.”

Rhea: “I have always been attracted to urban schools.”

Annie: “Do I just wanna go to a place where the kids are already motivated. And I never wanted to say that I am the teacher who just wants to go to a suburban school where kids are already motivated and there is some stress in there...but I don't know.”

Kent: “So I was seeking out diverse experiences for myself, but still I wasn't fully prepared for the culture that I was entering—because it is totally different—it is so different, with the poverty these students come from, you know, I had read about sometimes, but I wasn't prepared for standing up in front of a class of 30 black students.”
Focused Memo on Mission for Urban Teaching

It is quite apparent that many of these teachers articulate a mission that is internal but some teachers (Noelle and Kent) articulate a mission that is also influenced by external factors. Internal factors often include personal background, but also a disposition geared toward social justice. External factors are more likely to be drawn from program factors such as the philosophy of education or a program focused on social justice. We see both the source (internal/external) but also the impact of the mission for urban teaching. Regardless of the source, I think mission increases GTE (see Noelle’s comment) because it gives them a sense of purpose and helps them believe they can make a difference to their students. For many teachers the mission for urban teaching brought them to urban schools but for others the mission positively or negatively influence retention (Annie, in particular comments that her waning mission might influence her decision to stay or leave). Noelle also comments that it helps her hold her students to high standards. I think that I am most likely to discuss a mission for urban teaching in reference to understanding important program elements (for the philosophy of education) and also in reference to other individual level differences that are not explained by the quant data.

Phase 3: Theoretical Coding

This phase involves diagramming and sorting codes in order to understand how they relate to each other. The diagram below is taken from a theoretical coding memo on Mission for Urban Teaching.
SARAH ANNE ECKERT
Curriculum Vitae

Education

Ph.D. Candidate, Pennsylvania State University  
Education Theory and Policy  
2008-Present

Temple University  
Coursework completed in Urban Education program  
2007-2008

B.A., New York University  
Major: Psychology, Minors: Education, Public Policy  
Awards: Magna Cum Laude, University Honors Scholar, Founders Day Award  
2006

Awards and Grants

Lavanda P. Muller Graduate Fellowship in Education  
2009-2010

Penn State College of Education Research Initiation Grant  
2010

2011

Publications, Manuscripts and Conference Papers


