ALTERNATIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER CERTIFICATION:
IDAHO ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES

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Authorization to Submit Dissertation

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Abstract

This study examined the views of special education administrators on the impacts of alternative special education teacher certification in Idaho. In-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with eight directors of special education—two each from small, medium, and large school districts and two from charter schools—as well as survey responses from 50 special education directors resulted in data that comprised a mixed methods study. Based on the research, conclusions were drawn about the perceived differences among special education directors regarding the preparedness and proficiency of teachers who were alternatively certified to teach special education in Idaho compared to traditionally trained and fully certified teachers. Participants offered viewpoints regarding human resource decisions related to special education teachers. The study found an overwhelming preference by directors to hire traditionally trained and certified special educators based on preparedness and proficiency. However, there was a willingness to hire alternatively certified special education teachers due to the shortages of teachers in the special education field and the large number of open positions to fill across the state. The results of the study provided a narrative account of recruiting, hiring, mentoring, supervising, and evaluating alternatively certified special education teachers in Idaho. Based on these findings, recommendations are made for partnerships to be established between institutions of higher learning, the state department of education, and local agencies to provide certification programs featuring the opportunity for potential teachers to earn salaries during on-the-job training. Various alternative certification options should continue to be allowed in Idaho, so available special education teacher positions can be filled. Similarly, universities should continue to offer certification programs for teachers desiring special education certification. Mentorship is of critical necessity for new special education teachers. Educational leaders

should make every effort to ensure appropriate and effective mentoring and supervision to these new teachers. Paying close attention to and tracking the progress of participants entering into alternative certification programs would provide rich and important data allowing for generalizations to be formed regarding the backgrounds of those best suited for success in such preparation programs.

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I wish to also thank my colleagues at Filer School District #413 who have seen my potential and have encouraged me to make use of it. The special education teachers I direct, both alternatively and traditionally certified, have kept me grounded. I thank them for serving our students with disabilities with the depth of passion and commitment needed to afford them educational benefit in their individualized programs. These special education teachers and related service providers afford a place of promise and possibility for our exceptional students.

Dedication

To my late brother, Neil John Houston,

Who taught me in the most personal way what it means to have disabilities,

To struggle with the challenges of them each and every day

Within the walls of the school, at home, and in the community

And who inspired my determination in the field of special education,

So others will not have to suffer as you did.

To My Children, Aaron, Heather, Eric, Chelsea, Brandt and Bryce Powell

And their spouses and partners,

Who have supported all efforts to reach my goals.

To my grandchildren

Who have inspired me since the day they each came into my life.

To Elaine

Who makes all my dreams possible, loves me unconditionally,

Gives me confidence to believe in myself and conquer my fears,

And who sacrifices much, so I may have the education

I have always desired.

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Chapter 1

Problem to be Investigated

This study examined Idaho special education directors' perspectives on the preparedness and proficiency of alternatively certified special education teachers in teaching students with disabilities and case-managing their individualized educational programs. Districts are responsible for hiring highly qualified teachers. Whether or not the alternatively certified special education teacher is determined as meeting the status of a highly qualified teacher as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), the directors' perspectives were important to explore. The goal of the study was to identify factors influencing directors' opinions regarding the recruitment, hiring, mentoring, supervision, and evaluation of teachers who are certified traditionally and alternatively to teach special education programs. Further, barriers preventing the selection of alternatively certified special education teacher candidates in future hiring decisions were explored.

Background to the Study

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines a high-needs school as "within the top quartile of elementary and secondary schools statewide, as ranked by the number of unfilled, available teacher positions; or is located in an area where at least 30 percent of students come from families with incomes below the poverty line; or an area with a high percentage of out-of-field-teachers, high teacher turnover rate, or a high percentage of teachers who are not certified or licensed" (http://teach.com/why-teach/high-needs-schools, para. 1). Essentially, high needs schools require teachers because they either cannot fill job vacancies or retain teachers, or they have teachers who are not qualified or who teach in subjects outside their field. High-needs schools also serve communities of higher poverty rates, where classrooms

are influenced by the difficulties of their students' lives. Most high-needs schools are located in rural or urban areas.

A persistent challenge exists nationally in public schools because too few qualified and certified special education teachers seek positions, especially in high needs and rural schools. Moreover, attrition rates for special educators are especially high. Thus, administrators today are challenged in developing a qualified work force and providing the types of supports needed to sustain that work force. Attrition is the single largest factor contributing to new teacher demand as approximately 75% of vacancies are caused by resignation and retirement of educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), the problem is exacerbated for districts and schools in rural locations. Idaho is one of the most rural states in the nation with 39% of Idaho school districts having student enrollments of 500 or fewer students. Thus, students with disabilities in Idaho schools are more likely to be served by a less than fully certified special educator. Special education teacher positions have been one of the most difficult to fill in the state of Idaho. More than 10% of Idaho's special educators are not certified as high quality teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). As a result of the high demand in special education, alternative routes to certification began to emerge after 2000. The U.S. Department of Education (2002, 2004) supports alternative routes to certification, as opposed to traditional routes taken by students pursuing teaching career preparations through institutions of higher education. Former education secretary, Rod Paige, advocated the hiring of second career professionals to meet part of the need for new teachers. Secretary Roderick Raynor "Rod" Paige, 7th United States Secretary of Education from 2001 to 2005, said, "states should eliminate obstacles—such as requiring

formal teaching credentials—and open the teaching ranks to nontraditional applicants" (Capraro, Kadhi, & Zientek, 2005, p. 1).

Options including alternative routes to special education teaching certification are available and authorized in Idaho through State Board rule and are administered by the Idaho Department of Education (IDAPA 08.02.02, Rules Governing Uniformity). State regulations require Idaho districts to exhaust all efforts to hire appropriately certified individuals before requesting an emergency or provisional authorization to be able to employ someone who is not appropriately certified. The published literature has provided minimal data about the characteristics of alternative special education teacher certification options or how many meet the federal requirement of producing highly qualified teachers under the No Child Left Behind Act (Capraro, et al.).

Statement of the Problem

The central research question was, "What do special education directors perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of special education teachers who are alternatively certified compared to teachers who are traditionally trained and certified?" An increased need exists for understanding and dialogue about the impacts of alternative special education teacher certification in Idaho. The problem addressed in the study reflects the demands placed upon special education directors and teachers to increase the educational achievement of students with disabilities. Given the national shortage of traditionally trained and certified special education teachers, a need to understand the experience of directors who hire, mentor, supervise, and evaluate special education teachers subsists. These front line educators are most directly responsible for addressing the problem.

National shortage of special education teachers.

The special education teacher category—those with Standard Exceptional Child teaching certificates—is listed in the nationwide Teacher Shortage Area (TSA) report as a high-needs teaching field. The report includes data from the previous decade through the 2013-2014 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services reports shortages for Idaho in Standard Exceptional Child—Generalist and Early Child/Early Child Special Education teachers (2011). The American Association for Employment in Education supply and demand research (2009) indicates schools have experienced a significant shortage of specialized instructional support personnel over the past 10 years, including special education teachers.

Studies attest personnel shortages in special education exist due to two primary conditions: (1) an increasing demand for services and (2) a tightening supply of qualified personnel to meet the demand. The Condition of Education report (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) estimated school enrollment will continue to increase and reach an all-time high of 51.2 million by 2015. In addition, the demographics in school settings continue to change with increases in disability populations such as autism and brain injury and children ages three through five.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), of the estimated 2.4 million teachers needed due to teacher attrition during the past decade, one of the greatest needs was in the area of special education. The shortage of qualified personnel exists in part because of an overall lack of concerted workforce development planning. This is demonstrated by insufficient funding for incentive programs,

such as loan forgiveness and personnel preparation grants designed to entice new graduate students and support them as they gain their professional training. Additionally, limited capacity of existing training programs to meet the demand for new professions is due to shortages of qualified faculty and increasing higher education costs (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2011).

The supply of special education teacher personnel is tight because of high rates of attrition in the first five years of employment. Some reasons given for leaving their profession included poor supervision, low quality or no mentoring programs, lack of recognition and support from school leadership, and difficult working conditions, including increased workloads and high caseloads. They were overwhelmed by the burdensome due process paperwork and other documentation requirements set forth by federal mandates. Growing pressures on teachers and other professions to meet Adequate Yearly Progress requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, created further discouragement within the special education teaching profession. Personnel attrition due to retirement rates exceeding the supply of new university graduates eligible for employment exacerbated the problems associated with their willingness to stay in their profession. A limited supply of qualified professionals willing to work in hard-to-staff communities or with specific populations also contributed to the problem. Further, narrow educational opportunities in some states for those interested in changing or growing in their professions presented as barriers. Unavailable university training programs, insufficient distance learning opportunities, inflexible higher education admission, degree, and supervision policies presented barriers as well (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2011).

According to Idaho data presented on the Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network (2014), the number of traditionally certified special education teachers in 2010 was 878.36, and the number of alternatively certified special education teachers was 127.41, totaling 1005.77 special educators. During the same year, the number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 was 3,596 and for ages 6-21, the number of students with disabilities was 23,792, totaling 27,388 students needing special education services. The average ratio for special education teachers and student needing special education is 1:27.23. Based on the findings of Scull and Winkler (2011), the national average special education teacher and students with disabilities ratio in the 2008-2009 school year was 1:15.87. The data suggest the need for more special education teachers to meet the needs of students on IEPs if attempting to avoid special education teacher burnout.

Nichols, Bicard, Bicard, and Casey (2008) examined the shortage in special education teachers, emphasizing statistics which clarify the problem. The production of teachers in special education actually increased during the 1990s, but the demand for more teachers severely outstripped the supply. They also reported that the shortage in special education is greater than the shortages of qualified teachers in other areas. Recent "data indicate that just .86 teachers were prepared for each available position in special education, while more than twice as many teachers were produced for each available position in elementary education" (Nichols, et al., 2008, pp. 597-598).

The shortage is only part of the problem. Because of a lack of qualified teachers, about 10% of the special education teachers were less than fully certified in the area of their primary assignment resulting in some students with special needs never being taught by a credentialed special education teacher (Esposito & Lal, 2005; Andrews, Miller, Evans, &

Smith, 2003). In their review of research on the shortage of special education teachers, McLeskey, Tyler, and Flippin (2004) assessed the data using a meta-analytic methodology to find the factors that influence the supply and demand of special education teachers. Most data came from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staff Survey (SASS), and the American Association of Employment in Education (AAEE). McLeskey and Billingsley (2008) summarized what was known from the study about teacher supply and demand as (1) the shortage of special education teachers is chronic and long-term and will become worse; (2) there is a severe shortage of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers in the workforce, and this shortage is likely to weaken; (3) the shortage of special education teachers is pervasive across geographic regions and localities in the United States; (4) the shortage of special education teachers is greater than teacher shortages in any other area, including mathematics and science; (5) reducing teacher attrition is necessary if the teacher shortage is to be successfully addressed; (6) the teaching conditions in special education are a major factor contributing to the teacher shortage (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deshler, 2004), and (7) insufficient numbers of new teachers are being prepared to meet the ongoing demand.

A growing number of states have turned to alternative certification programs to address the concern of shrinking teacher candidate pools. Nadler and Peterson (2009) reported 47 states had adopted a pathway to teaching alternative to the standard state certification otherwise required. As of the turn of the century, more than 250 colleges and universities were currently involved in some type of alternative teacher preparation (Basinger, 2000). Alternative routes to earning special education teacher certification are among such efforts.

In the Secretary's Sixth Annual Report on Teacher Quality: A Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009), many useful statistics were available and revealed pertinent information related to teachers on waivers who were pursuing or had completed alternate routes to certification in special education. This report presents data from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and outlying areas on national indicators regarding America's teacher preparation programs and state's assessments concerning novice teachers' knowledge, skills and abilities. The 2006 data comprise four accountability measures: (1) the number of students who successfully completed their teacher preparation program; (2) the identification of teacher preparation programs that were low-performing or at-risk of being identified as low-performing by states; (3) the performance of teacher program completers on state assessments required for certification or licensure; and (4) the number of waivers to fully certificated or licensure issued by states. The national figures in the report were based on aggregated data from state reports.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Act (HEA) Title II defines "teacher preparation program" as a state-approved course of study, the completion of which signifies that an enrollee has met all the state's education requirements for initial certification to teach in the state's public schools. A teacher preparation program may be either a traditional program or an alternative route to certification, as defined by the state. The alternative programs could involve collaboration with institutions of higher education, or could function as stand-alone programs that do not involve universities. States and institutions may determine requirements of teacher preparation programs. This may include the necessity for individual teacher candidates to pass core academic skills and content

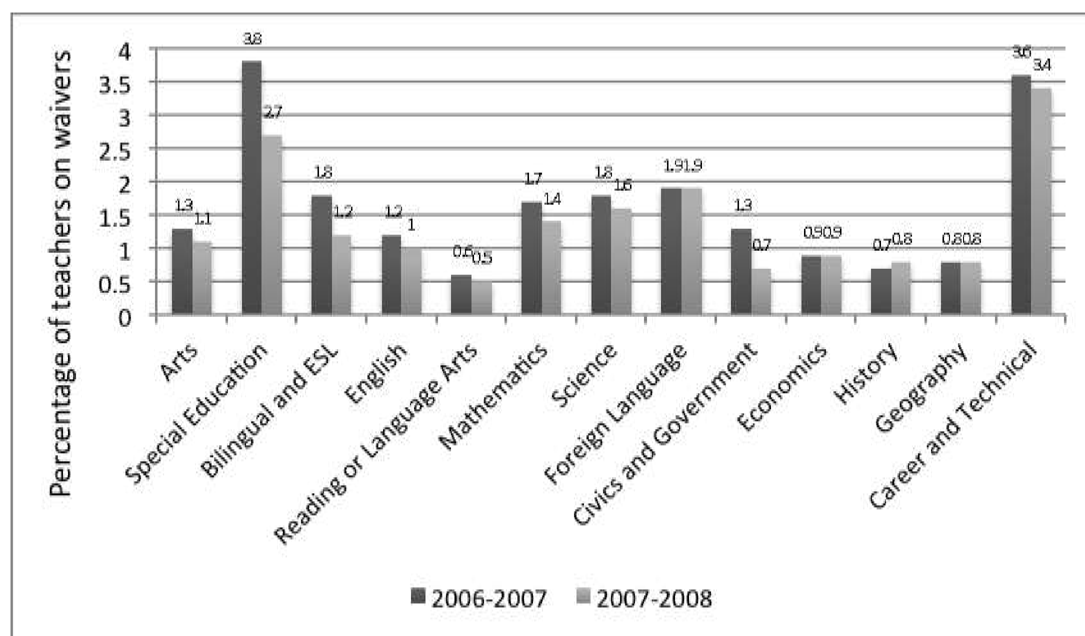
knowledge examinations before conferring degrees, institutional certificates, program credentials, transcripts, or other proof of having met the program's requirements (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009).

The HEA Title II defines waivers as any temporary, provisional or emergency permit, license, or other authorization that permits an individual to teach in a public school classroom without having received an initial certificate or license from that state. Those teachers participating in alternate routes who meet the criteria for being highly qualified under the ESEA are excluded from being counted on a provisional waiver. Also excluded are those teachers who are short- or long-term substitute teachers (as defined by the state), but included are those who are regular full-time or part-time classroom teachers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009).

In addition to waiver accountability data by school districts, HEA Title II also collects basic information related to the number and percentage of teachers employed on waivers to full state certification in the ESEA core academic subjects, plus special education, bilingual education and career and technical education. However, the data by subject area should be interpreted with caution. Not all states certify teachers in all subject areas. Although progress existed across all subject areas in reducing the number of teachers working without full state certification, challenges remained in certain areas (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009). As shown in Figure 1.1, from AY 2006–07 to AY 2007–08, states reported a decrease in the percentage of teachers on waivers by subject area for most areas, with three subjects (foreign language, economics and geography) remaining the same and one subject (history) seeing an increase.

Figure 1.1. Percentage of Teachers on Waivers by Subject Area.

Percentages for AY 2006-07 and AY 2007-08



NOTE: The 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands submitted a state Title II report in 2010. Federated States of Micronesia did not submit a state Title II report in 2007. ESL is English as a Second Language. Data presented in this report for previous years may not be consistent with data published in earlier reports because states are able to revise their data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (2009). Higher Education Act Title II Reporting System, p. 59.

This study explored the perspectives of eight special education administrators from varying sizes of Idaho school districts and charter schools that experienced directing special education teachers with both types of certification. Additionally, survey responses from 50 Idaho district and charter school special education directors provided further information that allowed for richer and more generalizable interpretations of the issue.

Significance of the Study

Effective special education teachers are key to providing explicit, direct instruction to students with disabilities, which results in skill-specific gains and overall educational benefit.

Much of their efforts take place individually and in small groups, both within general education classrooms and spaces dedicated to specific, direct instruction and precision teaching. Critical to this process is planning and preparation—the behind-the-scenes work of organizing for instruction, transforming the curriculum, making it accessible to their students. That effort includes having a deep knowledge of the content itself and designing instruction that is appropriate to diverse learners (Danielson, 2007).

Special education teachers work with students who have a wide range of special needs and disabilities. These specially-trained educators create and apply appropriate curricula and assign activities that are specific to each student's abilities and needs. Special education teachers also involve themselves in each student's academic, social, behavioral, and functional development.

Additional components related to the framework of being a special education teacher in Idaho is the expectation that sound instructional practices are coupled with implementing compliant due process procedures, which are required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and are specified for Idaho educators in the Idaho Special Education Manual (2007). The due process procedures, also known as Part B Indicators of IDEA, comprise a measuring stick for states to evaluate and report their performance in educating students with disabilities.

Special needs educators assist in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each individual student. The IEP is designed to develop individual goals and accommodations for the student and is modified to the student's abilities and needs. Special education teachers review the IEP with the child's parents, general education teachers, and school administrators. They work closely with parents to keep them updated on progress and

make recommendations to promote learning in the home. They are involved in every aspect of due process from processing referrals for special education evaluations to determining eligibility for receipt of special education services to developing the IEP and preparing consents and written notices and other formal documentation.

A large part of a special education teacher's job involves communicating and coordinating with others involved in the child's well-being, including parents, social workers, school psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, speech language pathologists, school administrators, and other teachers. The classroom environment, however, is the most critical aspect of a special education teacher's skill in promoting learning. Teaching, in general, depends, fundamentally, on the quality of relationships among individuals. When teachers strive to engage students in a discussion or an activity, their interactions with them speak volumes about the extent to which they value students as people. Thus, an essential skill of teaching is that of managing positive and supportive relationships with students, creating an environment of respect and rapport where all students feel valued and safe (Danielson, 2007).

At the heart of the framework for teaching is the critical interactive work that teachers, including special education teachers, undertake when they bring complex content to life for their students. Engagement of students facilitates learning. For students to become engaged in learning, teachers must provide clear directions and explanations. Their work is enhanced through the skillful use of questioning and discussion and through the integration of assessment strategies into instruction. Furthermore, only when teachers demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness can they maximize opportunities for learning by their students.

These components work together in playing an important role in making that engagement possible (Danielson, 2007).

Educators, as well as researchers, recognize the ability to reflect on teaching as the mark of a true professional. Through critical reflection, teachers are able to assess the effectiveness of their work and take steps to improve it. The importance of reflection on practice is governed by the belief that teaching, given its complexity, can never be perfect. Reflecting on teaching includes the thinking that follows any instructional event; reflection on practice is a natural activity by all professionals. Doing well is a learned skill. Special education teachers must demonstrate their commitment to high ethical and professional standards and seek to improve their practice, which encompasses the range of teacher professionalism (Danielson, 2007).

In addition to the challenges of the job itself, special education programs, most of which entail significant federal funding, have also experienced increased oversight and demands for accountability. In 1993, the 103rd Congress of the United States passed the Government Performance and Results Act, which embodied its concern that many federal programs lacked specific program goals and, thus, could not provide federal managers with "program performance"—information on how well the program was actually doing. The Act was designed to provide for the establishment of strategic planning and performance measurement in the Federal Government.' Now, as then, the Act requires every federal agency to develop annual performance plans and program performance reports.

When IDEA was reauthorized in December 2004 and its regulations were issued in August 2006, similar performance plan requirements were included for State Education Agencies. In part, the primary focus of the State's monitoring activities centered on

improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensuring public agencies meet the program requirement under Part B of the Act, with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2013). The states are monitored by the use of quantifiable indicators and such qualitative indicators as are needed to adequately measure performance in identified priority areas. This becomes critically important to the special education teacher and special education director because the state monitors the local education agencies.

Richard Henderson, Idaho's former Director of Special Education and Federal Programs, gave a State of the State address at a conference for the Idaho Association of Special Education Administrators (March 9, 2012). He emphasized required special education due process efforts in meeting the 20 compliance indicators specified in Part B of the IDEA (see Appendix G) result in the use of 98% of a special educator's time.

His report to the directors followed a 2011 audit of special education monitoring practices of the Idaho Department of Education by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Henderson said, moving forward, special education directors and teachers must focus on improving results, fiscal monitoring, correcting areas of noncompliance, continuing implementation of successful practices, improving special education data applications, and integrating Common Core State Standards.

The domains in which IDEA is implemented focus on key areas of responsibility toward improving results for children and youth with disabilities, such as graduation rates and dropout rates. The timeframe between identification and evaluation of children, parental involvement, and dispute resolution benefits families. Participation in postsecondary setting

one year after graduation focuses on whether or not the services provided to students under IDEA actually prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Specifically, the 20 indicators and their impact on Idaho's annual performance report as referenced in Henderson's address, also impact what is expected of the special education teacher and the special education director at the local level in terms of maintaining an expected 100% compliance status within each of the 20 indicators.

The study's significance was centered on the framework of teaching specific to the special education teacher. The domains included in the framework are planning and preparation, environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The components and elements of each of these domains work together in providing individual programs considered as reasonably calculated to afford educational benefit to students with disabilities.

Alternative routes to certification in Idaho.

The Idaho State Board of Education (IDAPA 08, Title 02, Chapter 02) provides for alternate routes to teacher certification. Board rule states the purpose of the program is to provide an option for individuals to become certificated teachers without following a standard teacher education program. Individuals who are currently employed as paraeducators, individuals who are currently certified to teach, but who are in need of emergency certification in another content area, and individuals with strong subject matter background, but limited experience with educational methodology must follow the alternative certification requirements described in the Board rule to be able to teach in Idaho.

The available routes for alternative certification in Idaho are attainable by school districts and charter schools. These alternative certification options include the Teacher to New Certification/Endorsement, Content Specialist, and Pupil Personnel Services. The

Provisional Authorization is also available for school districts and charter schools and is to be used as an emergency authorization when all reasonable attempts to hire a fully certified teacher have been exhausted. The Provisional Authorization does not lead to teacher certification and is nonrenewable.

American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE).

Another of the routes for alternative certification or authorization in Idaho is the Computer-Based Alternative Route to Teacher Certification and the Post-Baccalaureate Alternate Route. Nationally, the Computer-Based Alternative Route to Teacher Certification is offered through affiliation with the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), which was founded in 2001 to recruit, prepare, certify and support dedicated individuals to improve student achievement through quality teaching (www.abcte.org, 2012). It is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that purports to provide quality teachers at no cost to states, districts, or schools. Candidate program fees are subsidized by grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

The ABCTE organization claims research demonstrates the program to be a rigorous and an effective predictor of teacher performance in the classroom. Candidates from all 50 states work through the ABCTE program. The ABCTE officials provide rationale for recruiting candidates to their program. Many people want to teach, but do not have the time or money to return to school to earn a degree in education. Career changers have shown the desire to teach, but are deterred by the financial and time constraints. ABCTE indicates it provides the resources to guide career changers through the often complex certification process and partners with districts to complement their recruitment efforts.

The ABCTE officials also expound on the ‘changing face of the workforce,’ referring to ‘Generations X and Y’ as today’s career changers. They further opine that our society is one of career changers, which is both a challenge and an opportunity for school districts. The challenge is many teachers leave the profession; the opportunity lies in attracting career changers from other professions into teaching. Therefore, the officials believe school districts need flexible and customized programs that will attract mid-career professionals to transition into the classrooms (www.abcte.org, 2012).

Officials from ABCTE indicated many of the program’s candidates had the experience necessary to become special education teachers, but needed a program to earn their credentials. In fact, the officials stated 94% of the candidates worked with children who had special needs prior to enrolling in the ABCTE program. The officials further underscored their commitment to filling critical teacher shortage areas, such as in the teacher special education teaching field.

A customized ABCTE preparedness program includes multiple steps in helping candidates prepare for the classroom. They enroll in the teacher certification program and conduct a self-assessment, followed by being assigned an experienced advisor to develop a customized study plan. Each candidate submits transcripts and a background check. They engage in self-paced Prepare to Teach workshops and Subject Matter Refresher courses. The candidates are required to pass a Professional Teaching Knowledge and Subject Matter exam. The average completion time from enrollment in the ABCTE program to passing the exams is 10 months.

The ABCTE route to alternative certification in Idaho is the most popular way for special education teaching positions to be filled when traditionally trained teachers are not

available in the hiring process. Tom Luna, Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction, said, "The ABCTE program is a great option for professionals who are interested in becoming teachers. The State Department of Education will work with ABCTE to help Idahoans become certified and follow their dreams of educating Idaho's children" (http://www.abcte.org/files/infokit.pdf, p. 3). Reports of dissatisfaction by some who have posted on internet blogs and the ABCTE Facebook page expressed concern over costs of ABCTE enrollment, study materials, and tests; however, it remains the most popular and primary method by which to pursue an alternative teacher certification in Idaho.

Teach for America.

Wendy Kopp proposed the idea for Teach for America in her 1989 Princeton University undergraduate thesis. The following year, a charter corps of 500 committed recent college graduates joined TFA and began fueling the movement to eliminate educational inequity. Since then, nearly 33,000 participants have reached more than three-million children nationwide during their two-year teaching commitments in urban and rural public schools (http://www.teachforamerica.org/our-organization/our-history).

Teach for America claims they provide intensive training, support, and career development to help recruitments become leaders, increase their impact, and deepen their understanding of what it takes to provide an excellent education for the most underserved kids. Further, TFA asserts its leadership training develops corps members to have an immediate positive impact on their students as well as fostering leadership of their alumni to continue impacting education in their communities from all sectors (http://www.teachforamerica.org). Teach for America affirmed their corps members work at every level of education, policy and other professions, filling high-need classrooms with

passionate, high-achieving individuals who will do whatever it takes to help students succeed and to ensure all children receive an excellent education. The organization claimed to decrease disparities in education existing throughout the country—urban and rural, east coast to west, small towns and large. Forty-eight regional TFA offices assigned corps member to high-need areas (http://www.teachforamerica.org).

Corps members earn salaries ranging from $25,500 to $51,000. They also receive health insurance and retirement benefits. Their admissions process is designed to help identify whether applicants possess the characteristics seen in their most successful corps members. They state their candidates must possess distinguishing characteristics and admit those individuals who show the most potential to succeed in high-need classrooms (http://www.teachforamerica.org).

Until June 2013, Idaho school districts could not establish partnerships with TFA. According to a newspaper article in *The Times News* (August 27, 2013)*,* the Idaho Board of Education approved the national corps to operate in the "Gem State." Levi Cavener, a special education teacher at Vallivue High School in Caldwell, Idaho, wrote an article published in the *Idaho Education News* (December 23, 2013) after attending a local school board meeting where a TFA representative claimed that TFA recruits are well prepared to teach students with high needs. Cavener quoted Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, who in 2010 was celebrating the anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, "We all know that we aren't yet providing a world-class education for every child with a disability. And we won't rest until we do that" (U.S. Department of Education, November 18, 2010). Cavener further wrote:

> At a December 10, 2013, Vallivue School Board meeting, I listened to Nicole Brisbane, Idaho's TFA point person, pitch her product. During the presentation, board members inquired about TFA's ability to provide staffing for 'hard-to-fill' positions, particularly in special education. Brisbane was clear: TFA can provide 'highly qualified' special education instructors.

Finally, Cavener stated, "TFA is a step toward the de-professionalization of the teaching profession. Sorry, but Teach for America does not fulfill this mandate, especially for Idaho's special education students" (*The Times News*, August 27, 2013).

A national blog post entitled, Idaho: TFA Should Not Teach Students with Disabilities, by Diana Ravitch (January 2, 2014) reaffirmed Cavener's position. Responders in this national web-based blog referenced dissatisfaction with TFA and made further broad comments regarding special education teaching challenges, including wondering how TFA can be characterized as a "charity" and placed in the same category as Make a Wish Foundation. *Marcie Lipsitt*, one of the responders to Ravitch's blog, posted on January 3, 2014:

> If a college grad can become not only a teacher but a special education teacher in five weeks, I want an accredited medical school to provide me with a medical license in five weeks and with one-week fellowships in pediatrics, pediatric psychiatry, pediatric nephrology, pediatric pulmonary, pediatric oncology, pediatric urology and a PhD in pediatric neuropsychology—catch my drift? TFA is insultingly absurd and any foundation or company…perpetuating these 'fake' teachers should be boycotted.

Finally, *retiredbutmissthekids* posted on January 3, 2014:

> There is so much more involved in TRULY teaching in special education—so much more specialization and education required. Therefore, it is laughable (no, actually, it is beyond sad—it is a tragedy and a travesty) to think that a newly minted college graduate from a completely different field of study (economics? journalism? political science?) could even remotely be considered ‘highly qualified,’ let alone ‘qualified.’

While the blog posts on this subject are interesting, the importance of the study addresses the need for administrative feedback to determine how well alternative certification routes meet the needs of districts and charter schools to provide special education programs that are beneficial to Idaho’s students with disabilities. District and charter school special education directors are well placed to provide that information.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of the terms throughout the study.

1. *Alternative certification/alternative routes to certification:* These are routes to teacher certification designed for candidates who want to enter the teaching profession from non-education professions or the paraeducator profession, or for teachers lacking certification in a specific area defined as an emergency district need (www.sde.idaho.gov/site/teacher_certification/definitions.htm).
2. *American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)*: Accepted as a state approved route to full teacher certification in Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah (www.abcte.org/teach).

3. *Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher*: To be compliant with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), all individuals who teach students with disabilities must hold the appropriate special education credential. To be compliant with NCLB, all Idaho teachers of core academic subjects, including special education teachers, must additionally demonstrate subject matter competence in each core academic subjects taught. Special education teachers of elementary students must meet the core HQT requirements for elementary education. Secondary, content specific teachers of special education students must meet the additional requirements in core subject areas. Special education teachers serving secondary students in a support role as part of a team (inclusion model), or teaching in a self-contained environment using an alternative assessment are required to meet the core subject requirement for elementary education (https://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/teacher_certification/HQT).
4. *Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)*: IEP is a special education term outlined by the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to define the written document that states the goals, objectives, services, accommodations, and other considerations of the student with a disability (www.understandingspecialeducation.com).
5. *No Child Left Behind Act*: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is the most recent iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the major federal law authorizing federal spending on programs to support K-12 schooling. ESEA is the largest source of federal spending on

elementary and secondary education (http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/no-child-left-behind-overview).

6. *Online Alternative Route to Teacher Certification*: Clarifies that currently certified teachers may add additional certificates or endorsements through computer-based routes (http://www.teach-now.org/dispstateform).
7. *Paraeducator*: A school employee who works under the supervision of teachers or other professional practitioners, whose jobs are instructional in nature, and who provide other direct services to children and youth and their families (http://www.rrsc.k12.hi.us/ea/paraeducator.html)
8. *Post-Baccalaureate Alternate Route*: Refers to a graduate program, which leads to certification. The higher education institution determines the program of study. The candidate's baccalaureate coursework and relevant life experiences are taken into consideration when determining what will be required in order to meet the State Board-approved requirements as defined by the certification and endorsement requirements (www.teach.gov).
9. *Provisional authorization*: This is an authorization school districts may receive to hire an individual who is not appropriately certified only after all attempts to hire an appropriately certified individual have failed. The provisional authorization is temporary—one year—and may not be renewed for the same individual or for the same classroom assignment (www.sde.idaho.gov/site/teacher_certification/docs/alt_routes_docs).

10. *Standard Exceptional Child teaching certificate*: Holders of this certificate work with children who have been identified as having a disability with no limitation on specific disabilities (http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/teacher_certification/standard_except_child.htm).
11. *Traditionally trained teachers*: These are teachers who received their teacher education training through a prescribed program and course of study at an accredited institution of higher learning.

Summary

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (www.nces.ed.gov, 2012), almost seven million children with disabilities were enrolled in public schools, which represented 13.2% of the total enrollment of children ages 3 through 21 enrolled in the nation's public schools. Each of these students who were eligible to receive special education services had disabilities that presented an adverse effect on their education that resulted in a need for specially designed instruction. A special education teacher is required in order to teach and assist the students as well as case-manage their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). A national shortage of special education teachers has resulted in states providing for alternate routes to certification and provisional authorizations to enable school districts to fill available special education teacher positions.

It is important to understand from the special education administrator's perspective the impacts related to recruiting, hiring, mentoring, supervising, and evaluating special education teachers. The study was layered within mixed methods and sought to provide a "description of the lived-through quality of lived experience and the description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience" (van Maanen, 1990). The goal of the study was to

describe in detail through interview the "everyday and ordinary occurrences" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006) of the lived experiences of eight special education administrators in Idaho as well as to elaborate or expand on the findings through a survey of all consenting special education directors across Idaho.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature relating to human resource decisions, teacher preparation, certification processes, and the perceptions of special education directors regarding teacher training and its effectiveness. First, is a discussion of the overarching conceptual framework for human resource decisions related to special education teachers. Next, is a discussion of the conceptual framework for teaching and learning, largely influenced by Danielson (1996, 2007). Finally, a discussion follows, which is specific to special education teacher preparation in both traditional and alternative routes to certification.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the study with details, rationale, and evidence for utilizing the chosen research design. In Chapter 4, results from the evidence collected during the research phase are presented. Chapter 5 gives a summary with implications and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter offers a review of the literature about the relationship between special education human resource decisions, teacher preparation, certification processes, and special education directors' perceptions of teacher training and its effectiveness. This review emphasizes the purpose of the study, which was to determine whether there were perceived differences among the directors about the preparedness and effectiveness of alternatively certified teachers to teach special education in Idaho and those who are traditionally trained.

First, a discussion of the overarching conceptual framework for human resource decisions related to special education teachers is presented. Second, a discussion of the conceptual framework for teaching and learning, largely influenced by Danielson (1996, 2007) is described. Third, a discussion follows specific to special education preparation in both traditional and alternative routes to certification.

Readers should note the literature is thin in two important areas. Although, researchers have published extensively on teacher training in general education, special education teacher training was not as developed. Moreover, the examination of human resource management in education assumes the existence of a pool of at least relatively qualified and certified teachers from which districts and charter schools can select. Often, that is not true for special education; usually, a small or nonexistent pool of qualified and certified teachers from which to select. Less research was available after the year 2000, although the post-NCLB education literature cited in this chapter incorporated issues of training and teacher qualifications that applied to special education as well as general education.

Conceptual Framework for Human Resource Decisions

The role of the special education director as an administrator of human resource decisions exemplifies the balance between the school district's need to accomplish its mission and the director's need to achieve and to perform useful, satisfying work. Directors understand and reflect the attitude that people are paramount in any organization, especially schools, and that they must focus on everything that influences the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of school personnel. Directors must do what is best for teachers just as teachers believe they should do what is best for students. Most, if not all of the time doing what is best for students is, for directors and other administrators, doing what's best for teachers. Directors must have concern for people—all of their staff members and their needs (Smith, 2013).

This conceptual perspective is guided by the view that recruiting, hiring, mentoring, supervising, and evaluating are critical administrative human resource procedures in consistently placing highly successful candidates. Otherwise, trust cannot be built to sustain an effective program for students with disabilities. Given this context, it is incumbent upon the director to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ability to be effective in providing leadership to the human resources function of the school district, which in large measure, determines the effectiveness of the teachers, the district and schools, and the students.

Recruitment approaches.

Well-prepared special education professionals are the cornerstone to the delivery of quality evidence-based practices for individuals with exceptional learning needs. It has long been understood that well-prepared and qualified teachers acquire the best learning results.

Research has verified a well-prepared teacher has more influence on a child's learning than any other factor under school control (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

While trying to recruit widely, school systems must be selective in the candidates they hire, ensuring that those who enter possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for performing as effective special education teachers in light of the great need for special education teachers, recruitment efforts of most school systems target individuals who are already knowledgeable about what works with children having special needs because they have educational training and experience in the field.

Varying recruitment approaches exist, but networking and word of mouth are, by far, the most common recruitment tools as they more likely yield candidates who are similar to previously successful teachers. Other, less personal approaches, for example, newspaper advertisements, have also proven fruitful, especially for newer programs. Some school systems target specific groups in their recruitment efforts, such as those in geographical regions or underrepresented groups. Information sessions and recruitment fairs are other ways programs inform interested people about their special education teacher needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Burns-Nielson (2001) contended it was the school districts' responsibility to recruit and retain the right candidates. She purported rural school districts should market themselves on quality of life issues to attract viable candidates and emphasized one key reason educators stayed in rural areas were quality of life issues. Harmon (2001) concluded lifestyle and comfort issues involving work and community led teachers to remain in rural settings, instead of salary and benefit issues. Thus, in Idaho, teaching candidates must be the right fit for the teaching position, the community, and the rural lifestyle.

Harmon (2001) further said the appeal of rural schools had to be sold to the candidates. This could be accomplished by promoting the community as an escape from the city and exemplifying values of the rural lifestyle. Administrators must target candidates who have the background with personal characteristics that will help them transition in the rural community. This is particularly important when filling positions in racially or culturally diverse rural districts (Berry & Hirsch, 2005). In order for this approach to be successful, teachers must be made aware of the local culture. It is essential for a candidate to understand that moving to a particular area may be challenging and differ greatly from his or her prior experience. It is important for the special education teacher to be knowledgeable in his or her subject area and the distinctiveness of the community (Lemke, 1994). Teacher training programs should also prepare candidates to meet the changing landscape of a more culturally diverse society. Collins (1999) suggested schools use ‘grow your own’ strategies. He stated most rural teachers come from the region where they work, so it makes sense to have programs to assist local residents in their goal to become educators.

Selection Criteria.

Seeking specific knowledge and skills.

When searching for a special education teacher, it is important to consider the model currently used within the school system as well as the special education program’s goals. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act emphasize the necessity of students with disabilities having access to the general curriculum within the least restrictive environment.

Effective special education teachers possess professional knowledge and skills that distinguish them from general education teachers. Key competencies include maximizing

literacy learning, implementing positive behavior supports, teaching students who have significant disabilities, using technology to support curricular access, participation, and learning, and helping teams implement effective practices for diverse learners in general education classrooms (Fenlon, 2008).

Because students receiving special education services usually have individualized education program (IEP) goals in literacy, special education teachers must bring a strong foundation in effective classroom practices for diverse literacy learners and know how to design and implement intensive supplemental or replacement instruction (Fenlon, 2008). When special education teachers have experience with research-based practices (Allington, 2005; Wilson & Shumack, 1997; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), they can teach struggling learners to read and serve as an important resource for the entire building. Equally important, special educators collaborate with general education teachers in designing and providing appropriate literacy instruction and supports for students with IEPs.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2014) sets forth the expectation that special education teachers demonstrate strong clinical knowledge and skills to conduct in-depth individual formative assessments, the results of which help the special educators to design and provide research-based instruction to ensure students with disabilities make maximum progress as literacy learners. Fenlon (2008) asserted standardized test scores improve when students with disabilities increase their literacy levels. She clarified that a good special education teacher candidate should be able to articulate what a strong literacy program should include for a student reading significantly below grade level.

Effective special education teachers possess skills in functional behavioral assessment and positive behavior support and intervention, a collaborative, assessment-based process to

develop effective, individualized interventions for individuals with challenging actions (Fenlon, 2008). Special educators should be able to gather and analyze data on maladaptive conduct to develop proactive and educative behavior intervention plans (Horner & Sugai, 2005). A good behavior intervention plan includes preventative strategies, teaching of replacement skills, and a response system to implement for both positive and negative consequences. Special education candidates who demonstrate use of these support and intervention practices will be able to serve a range of students with and without disabilities.

The difference between simple classroom presence and substantial learning for students with significant disabilities can be made by special education teachers who have knowledge and experience. These teachers should also have an understanding of available technology to enhance learning and the proper use of assessment and instructional strategies. Task analysis and appropriate prompts and cues maximize participation and independence (Fenlon, 2008). Special education teacher candidates should be able to facilitate collaborative planning, coordinate supports, and provide instruction to address individual curricular and functional IEP goals.

Special education teachers are most effective when they know how to use technology to support the participation and progress of students with disabilities in special education and general education settings (Martin, 2014). For example, word prediction software programs, screen readers, visual and graphic organizers, and visual learning programs can greatly enhance the participation and success of students with disabilities in literacy, content area subjects, and school routines (Fenlon, 2008). She further stated special education teacher candidates who have had experience with computer hardware and software will likely

embrace technology and be able to teach students who have varying needs due to their disabilities.

Based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a special education teacher's primary role is ensuring access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities (Fenlon, 2008). An important set of principles to ensure access to curriculum is Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This concept is the foundation for making the curriculum accessible for all students from the beginning and not adding adaptations after lesson planning is finished. In an interview, prospective special education teacher candidates could be asked to describe how they would meet the needs of diverse learners in a general education classroom, particularly for a student with significant disabilities.

Preselection processes.

Once a highly motivated group of people have shown interest in becoming special education teachers, school systems must decide how to manage the application and selection process to ensure getting the best candidates. According to Toomes and Crowe (2004), administrators have an average of 20 minutes to read a candidate's potential for a particular position. They said an applicant's transcripts and resume are carefully checked, ensuring that his or her preparation program has included specific courses, field experiences, and student teaching in special education roles specific to key competencies.

Fenlon (2008) emphasized grades in education and methods courses should be reviewed. She suggested any grade below a B in any of these courses should raise concerns about a candidate's capability to teach. She further recommended administrators should select candidates to interview who have a strong academic record and letters of

recommendation from college faculty and student teaching supervisors who can speak to the candidate's teaching skills. However, as the leaders in a New York system point out, grade point average is not necessarily an indication of an applicant's ability to become an effective teacher. In general, traditional admissions criteria and letters of recommendation are of little help when applicants are career changers or have been out of school for many years (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The differences in selection screening criteria seem to be based, then, on teacher experience.

What may be most telling for teacher applicants are solid content knowledge and ability, by virtue of training, life and work experience. For those following an alternative path to certification, the rigorous nature and fast pace of the programs expect applicants to have a high level of maturity and tenacity and a learning style that is a good fit with a 'practice-to-theory' approach (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The U.S. Department of Education (2004) stated successful school systems recruit widely and select carefully. They have selection processes and tools to help them identify applicants who have what it takes to succeed in classrooms. Communication with hiring districts and applicant interviews are key elements in making these determinations. U.S. Department of Education (2004) suggested several approaches to utilize screening criteria help to narrow the pool of applicants in urban areas. New York's process involves the narrowing from 17,000 applicants to 1900 candidates. Applicants meeting a first set of basic requirements are invited to engage in a four-hour interview and interaction with trained selectors. During the interaction, applicants teach a five-minute sample lesson, produce a 20-minute writing sample, and participate in a 20-minute, individual interview. The writing sample is intended to reveal a candidate's critical-thinking and problem-solving skills as well

as communication skills. The interview is an opportunity for a selector to question any aspect of the lesson or writing sample and to ask additional questions so that the selector can make a well-informed recommendation. Selectors write a summary and rate each candidate interviewed. Of the applicants invited to participate in the interaction screening, approximately 45% are recommended by the selectors. The final step in the application process involves additional review of files by program staff and experienced selectors. About 10% of the applicants who make it to this stage are eliminated in the file review process (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Districts and charter schools in rural areas with fewer resources and candidates rely on a multistage selection process as well. U.S. Department of Education (2004) stressed each school district is responsible for implementing the adopted processes in the recruitment and hiring of special education teachers. The department further advised a file review should be conducted of the teacher who has worked in a school system prior to applying for the new position. Districts may ask permission from candidates to secure personnel files from previous employers. These files typically include transcripts, certificates, summative evaluations, and any letters or notifications placed in the file by supervisory administration. Even without those files, due diligence is necessary in order to make accurate judgments about the applicant need. A review of the file and letters of recommendation as well as phone calls to other previous employers help set the stage for the screening of all applicants (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2014), the interview is the most time-consuming part of the process and provides more information from the candidate by asking for written for responses to pre-established questions. Once invited for an

interview, the candidate faces perhaps the single most important aspect of the selection process. A structured interview, including scenario-based questions, helps the hiring committee predict how teacher candidates might address challenging and even stressful situations. The interview helps to gauge such qualities as whether a person is persistent, is a problem solver, is protective of learners and learning, can translate theory into practice, and can use successful approaches with students who have characteristics that put them at risk for school failure.

The interview can seek to evaluate a candidate's reasons for becoming a teacher and working with exceptional children. Multiple research studies on successful inclusive education practices suggest the importance of collaborative teaming structures (Fenlon, 2008; Keefe, Moore, & Duff, 2004; Jackson, Ryndak, & Billingsly, 2000). Fenlon (2008) reported on behalf of The National Association of Elementary School Principals that special education teachers must have a sincere willingness to collaborate and share their knowledge, skills, and energy with other staff and families to benefit the students they serve.

Though, other methods are also utilized in the selection process, the interview also makes it clear to candidates that participation in a rigorous program is expected (U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2014). Thoughtful questions allow candidates to demonstrate their strengths, admit their weaknesses, and reveal their beliefs about curriculum, classroom discipline, school culture, collegiality, and commitment to the profession.

According to Fenlon (2008), many school districts are moving to an interview process that involves the special education candidate teaching a lesson to students. This is usually performed in the initial stage of the selection process. The candidate is prepared with certain information about the students and the topic he or she will teach. Candidates are required to

bring materials and a lesson plan, and then teach the lesson in a location with students chosen by district administrators and teachers. The lesson allows the interview team to observe aspects of a candidate's ability not necessarily evident during a typical interview. Rapport with children, use of materials, pacing, and instructional and management techniques can all be observed during a brief lesson.

Fenlon (2008) further resolved the best and brightest teachers are needed to teach students who have the greatest learning challenges. Special education teachers should demonstrate a willingness to interact and share their knowledge and skills with other staff members as well as the families of the students they serve. "The task of hiring special education teachers may seem daunting because they serve in what is undeniably the most complex of teaching roles" (Fenlon, 2008, p. 25). According to Wright (2005, p. 39), "The collective wisdom and expertise of groups of educators far outstrips that of any one person." Rather than subscribing to gut instinct in making administrative hiring decisions, the pre-selection processes described herein can strengthen their decision-making in hiring competent special education teachers.

Effective special education teachers possess both similar and unique professional knowledge and skills as general education teachers, but they need additional qualities as well. They may maximize literacy learning; implement positive behavior supports; teach students who have significant disabilities; use technology to support curricular access, participation, and learning; and/or help teams implement effective practices for diverse learners in general education classrooms.

It is a major decision of the selection committee, once the file reviews, personal interviewing, and reference checking are completed, to decide on the candidate who presents

as the best match for the open special education teaching position and the associated responsibilities required of teacher preparation components and standards to be met.

Pedagogy or teaching skill is at the heart of special education. Special educators have always recognized that the individualized learning needs of children are at the center of instruction. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest professional organization of special educators, takes seriously its responsibility for defining criteria for a competent beginning special educator. As part of the responsibility, CEC developed and continues to update and maintain ethical standards, which were adopted by the CEC Board of Directors in 2010 as well as professional standards for entry-level special education teachers, which were adopted in 2009. Professional special educators are guided by the CEC professional ethical principles and practice standards in ways that respect the diverse characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families. These standards delineate the most rigorous and comprehensive sets of knowledge and skills available anywhere for the preparation of high quality special education teachers.

Induction and mentoring.

Even with well-designed preparation, the beginning special educator faces a myriad of challenges in applying and generalizing learned skills during their initial teaching (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004). Like other professionals, special educators who have focused support of veteran colleagues as mentors become proficient more quickly and are more likely to remain in the profession. Every new professional in special education must receive an intensive focused induction program under a mentor during the first year of practice. The mentor must be an accomplished special educator in the same or a similar role

to the mentored individual who can provide expertise and support on a continuing basis through the induction (White & Mason, 2003).

Informal or low-intensity teacher induction, which may include pairing each new teacher with another full-time teacher without providing training, supplemental materials, or release time for the induction to occur, is relatively ineffective (Glazerman, et al, 2010). One policy option in response to the problems of high turnover and inadequate preparation is to support teachers with a formal, more comprehensive induction program during their initial years in the classroom. Glazerman, et al. (2010) reasoned intensive, structured, and sequentially delivered support is sometimes referred to as "comprehensive" induction. It is often delivered through experienced, trained full-time mentors and may also include a combination of school and district orientation sessions, professional development, classroom observations, and constructive feedback through formative assessment. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a large-scale evaluation of comprehensive teacher induction. The purpose of the study was to determine whether augmenting the set of services districts usually provide to support beginning teachers with a more comprehensive program improves teacher and student outcomes (Glazerman, et al., 2010).

The study found beginning teachers who received more induction support reported being more satisfied, on average, than those who received less. Induction intensity and instructional focus stood out as the two aspects of support that were positively related to teacher attitudes. The relationship of induction services to teachers' reported feelings of preparedness exhibited a similar pattern but with only one statistically significant relationship—induction intensity. These feelings of satisfaction and preparedness did not

translate into better retention. None of the four measures of beginning teacher support was related to retention in the district or in the profession.

Despite the results of the research by Glazerman, et al. (2010), the lack of effective professional mentoring and minimal ongoing support programs have been suggested as two primary contributors to the chronic shortages of special education teachers (Purcell, East, & Rude, 2005). They determined rural districts face additional challenges due in part to frequent geographical isolation, which presents the dual difficulties of initially finding and recruiting personnel, and then providing ongoing professional development and help to retain practicing special educators.

The teacher retention component may be especially significant. In Idaho, for example, special educators leave their position after an average of three years of service. Rural districts have an average of 10% yearly staff turnover rates (Humphrey, Johnson, Allred, & Hourcade, 2009). Surveys of new special education teachers consistently indicate they feel a lack of support, are overwhelmed by administrative requirements, or simply do not feel prepared for the demands of the job (Rochkind, Ott, Immerwahr, Doble, & Johnson, 2007). Thus, any program designed to alleviate the shortage must substantially attend to these issues.

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2009), the goals of a mentorship program should include: (1) facilitating, the application of knowledge and skills learned, (2) conveying advanced knowledge and skills, (3) acculturating in the school's learning communities, (4) reducing job stress and enhancing job satisfaction, and (5) supporting professional induction. Strong induction and mentoring programs are effective strategies for reducing attrition in special education (Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003).

Induction can be considered assistance to newly hired employees and consists of two main segments for two different types of employees (Smith, 2013). When a special educator begins practice in a new area of licensure, they should also have the opportunity to work with mentors who are accomplished professionals in similar roles (Council for Exceptional Children, 2009). The purpose of mentors is to provide expertise and support to the individual on a continuing basis for at least the first year of practice in that area of certification.

Smith (2013) asserted most districts have a short orientation process of one to three days for all teachers new to the district. However, Smith also believed wise administrators can develop a comprehensive program to assist teachers new to the profession throughout the school year. The experienced teacher whose role as mentor could also be invited, encouraged, and, in some cases, directed to attend all induction activities.

It is not surprising that many teachers new to the profession do not return after one or two years. In many cases, this decision can be traced to the lack of a mediated introduction to the school, district, and the community. For many new teachers, a significant adjustment, amplified by moving to a new community, may be different in culture and expectations than the teacher is accustomed to, especially if they come from a different community.

Constructing a mentor network.

Mentoring helps keep people in the teaching field. A possible explanation is provided in the How People Learn approach (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). This work conceptualizes a model of teaching and learning that includes a focus on understanding the individual needs of the learner. It articulates the knowledge, skills, and attitudes successful teacher candidates need to acquire. It emphasizes the assessment of novice learning to guide subsequent mentoring; and offers a professional community of practice to support learning

both during the program and in professional practice. In the How People Learn framework, the evolution of the professional learning community is as critical as acquiring the knowledge and skills required in a preservice program.

Humphrey, Johnson, Allred, and Hourcade (2009) used the How People Learn model as a conceptual starting point in their effort to strengthen Idaho's professional learning community of special educators through two interrelated strategies. First, the university structured a cohort-based preservice special educator preparation program targeting rural areas. Working together from the earliest stages of their programs, preservice teacher candidates developed an inherent camaraderie as they progressed through the program together. Second, they simultaneously developed a statewide network of mentors to supervise field experiences of the emerging novice special educators to provide systematic and high quality induction programs as the preservice candidates entered the special education field. These approaches were supported by a strong collaboration with the Idaho State Department of Education. The Idaho State Department of Education provided ancillary support for the mentor program through sponsorship of mentor teachers in state professional organizations and by arranging annual meetings to discuss updates in state policy, procedure, and practice. Strong collaboration among universities, the state department, and local education agencies offered the promise of significant improvements in the quality of teacher preparation programs, especially those programs relying on such alternative models of service delivery as online coursework (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2003).

According to Humphrey, et al. (2009), simply connecting novice special educators with more experienced colleagues and expecting positive results is unlikely to significantly impact long-term retention. They found that in order to effectively develop a professional

learning community, mentors need mentoring (Zimpher & Rieger, 1988). Training mentors results in more effective induction programs (Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore, 2003). Additionally, when university teacher preparation programs are coupled with school building-based mentor support, the teacher preparation programs are more successful in preparing special educators (Sindelar & Roseberg, 2003). Therefore, Humphrey, et al. (2009) targeted three specific areas as a part of the mentor teacher component of the HPL program. First, they centered on deep content knowledge in the fields of reading, mathematics, and writing. Second, the focus was on expertise in pedagogical knowledge, including instructional design and the integration of evidence-based practices in teaching. Third, they concentrated on leadership training, including effective strategies for mentoring and coaching new teachers.

The mentor program component likewise focused on contemporary best practices related to effective mentoring and induction for new teachers, specifically highlighting reflective practice, preparing personal professional development goals and plans, problem solving; and effective communication. Substantial collaboration between university teacher preparation programs and mentor teachers resulted in an increased sense of accountability for mentors, and more comprehensive development of professional learning communities (Carroll, 2006).

Humphrey, et al. (2009) reported the primary focus of the mentoring program was on the quality and retention of entry-level special educators, and the secondary goal was to increase the number of current special education teachers who would meet the NCLB requirements for highly qualified status, and enter into and complete graduate programs in special education. To help novice special educators achieve the highly qualified

requirements, mentoring teachers must assume substantial roles in the professional development of future colleagues. Humphrey, et al. (2009) believed perhaps the first step in this process is for the mentoring special education teachers to shift their own self-perceptions within the profession. They further suggested the experience of supporting new teachers can be a transformative one in which mentoring teachers progress to view the mentoring experience not as an extra job duty, but as an affirmation of themselves being experts in the field of special education (Mezirow, 1991). As mentoring teachers develop their professional self-concepts to include seeing themselves as experts in the field of special education, they not only make progress towards the highly qualified requirements themselves, but become better able to support new special education teachers striving to meet these same requirements (Humphrey, et al. (2009).

Supervision and evaluation.

Teacher supervision and evaluation is an important focus for directors and other administrators. Since the 1960s, the body of professional knowledge on this topic has grown, supported by the work of Acheson and Gall (1997); Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krawjewski (1993); McGreal (1983); Peterson (2000); Stanley and Popham (1988); Hunter (1976); and Eisner (2002). The process of supervision and evaluation is critical for both the teacher and administrator. It is important for the teachers to receive support when they are doing well or redirection if improvements are needed. In both cases, this is the task of the administrator, and relates directly to teacher effectiveness.

The administrator should develop a trusting relationship with the teachers and have the skills to furnish them with objective feedback about their teaching (Smith, 2013). It is helpful for administrators to employ an instructional model as a guideline when they are in

the role of teacher or coach to the employee. Smith reiterated the necessary planning and preparation necessary for the preobservation conference, the observation, and the postobservation conference. Prior to the postobservation conference, the administrator should consider the information gathered during the observation, as well as the curriculum and the learner (teacher), and then determine the most effective method of sharing the data with the learner. The administrator also will want to reflect on the effectiveness of the entire supervision cycle and continue to refine his or her skills as a supervisor and evaluator. Smith further stated this process is important to the administrator because failure to evaluate can become very serious, even leading to dismissal of the administrator. A teacher would never think of not grading the students, likewise, an administrator not to evaluate the teaching staff.

Supervision aligns with formative evaluation. The assessment of knowledge and skills is similar to a summative evaluation. Teacher growth is the goal in both cases. Smith (2013, p. 9) emphasized "if the teacher won't do the job, it's a motivational problem; if the teacher can't do it, it's a training problem." He says further that the old adage "hire the best, train the rest" (p. 10) is no longer appropriate, if it ever was. The growth and progression of staff is directly related to the same of students. The advancement process starts with the induction and mentoring efforts and continues through the teacher's career.

The improved training of staff is dynamic and comprehensive, the objective of which is to increase student achievement. Comprehensive staff guidance is to provide to all staff, particularly the marginal or weak teacher, fundamental instruction in curriculum development and implementation, instructional strategies, employee assistance and wellness programs, climate improvement, incentives, and supervision (Smith, 2013). For the special education teacher, it would also incorporate pedagogy aligned with the CEC standards,

including foundations of special education. Characteristics of diverse learners with individual differences are underscored. Also stressed are instructional strategies and planning, learning environments and social interactions, language, ethics and professional practice, assessment, and collaboration. Required due process procedures must be embedded within each component of the additional special education staff development.

Unfortunately, a few marginal and even fewer incompetent teachers are employed in schools and represent a special case of supervision and evaluation (Smith, 2013). He asserted the administrator needs to identify and provide assistance to them. In most cases, these teachers will take more of the administrator’s time, planning, and energy than all the others combined. Smith explained this is an example of the Pareto Principle where 20% of the teachers will take 80% of the time.

It is key that the administrator work diligently with the marginal teacher because students’ learning is affected. The administrator may be able to assist the teacher significantly, but in other cases, extra resources and professionals will be needed to assist both the teacher and the administrator. In any case, the administrator needs to have courage in this situation as well as support from the school district. Smith (2013) also notes that even if an administrator does not believe he or she has a marginal teacher, there will always be a weak teacher who needs the administrator’s assistance to improve.

Conceptual Framework for Teaching and Learning

Idaho public school administrators are currently evaluating teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument (2011, 2013). This process for evaluation is recommended for use in conjunction with Danielson’s Teachscape Software, which can be accessed online. Danielson declared since 1996, hundreds of teacher

preparation programs, schools and school districts have found the framework for teaching to be a useful tool in defining good teaching. Educators discovered by having clear standards of practice and descriptions of how those standards are manifested in various contexts, they were able to be increasingly thoughtful and reflective about their work. Danielson further stated the most powerful use of the framework is for reflection and self-assessment to improve teaching. Using the framework to guide reflection enhances the value of the activity and makes teaching more purposeful, thoughtful, and rewarding.

Teaching involves a complex set of skills, so lessons will almost never be perfect. Danielson (2007) advised the key to being an accomplished teacher is acquiring the skills to continually improve one's practice. An important vehicle for this is through reflection and conversation with others, such as mentors, cooperating teachers, student teacher supervisors, and evaluators. Danielson also expounds on reflection as being a natural and highly productive human activity. As argued by John Dewey (1938) in the early days of the 20th century, we learn not from our experience, but from our thinking about that experience. Thus, it is the thinking that matters. Danielson cautioned, however, teachers who are new to the profession tend to engage in superficial, global reflection rather than accurate reflection, which is a learned skill and one they have not yet acquired early in their careers.

Reflection must be systematic and analytic to be productive. It is important for a teacher to recognize when a lesson is not successful and to be able to determine why, so the lesson can be improved upon the next time. To develop reflection skills, one must learn how to analyze all the decisions made in the course of designing the lesson and the adjustments needed during its delivery (Danielson, 2007).

A natural result of consideration on one's practice is a teacher's sense of which areas of teaching would be the most essential ones to strengthen (Danielson, 2007). Thus, pondering is significant in self-assessment, which leads inevitably to a focus for professional learning and growth. Danielson explained although the contemplation and self-assessment might be considered to be distinct conceptually, in practice they are intertwined; one cannot happen without the other. The application of the framework for teaching in reflection and self-assessment is its most powerful use and is integral to every other use of it. Danielson rejected the suggestion of different frameworks for different stages of teachers' careers because the work of experienced teachers is essentially the same as that of beginning teachers. She reiterated as teachers acquire experience and expertise, they do the various tasks associated with the framework for teaching with greater skill and automaticity.

Danielson (2007) referred to supervision theory as discussed by Worthen & Sanders (1973) when she explained effective, supervisory practices needing to be regulated in large part by the teacher. She claimed the framework for teaching can transform what is generally thought of as a rather meaningless ritual of supervisory evaluation into a powerful process for thinking about instructional excellence. Evaluation procedures should simultaneously ensure high-quality teaching and promote professional learning by teachers resulting in fundamental principles (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

The framework for specialists.

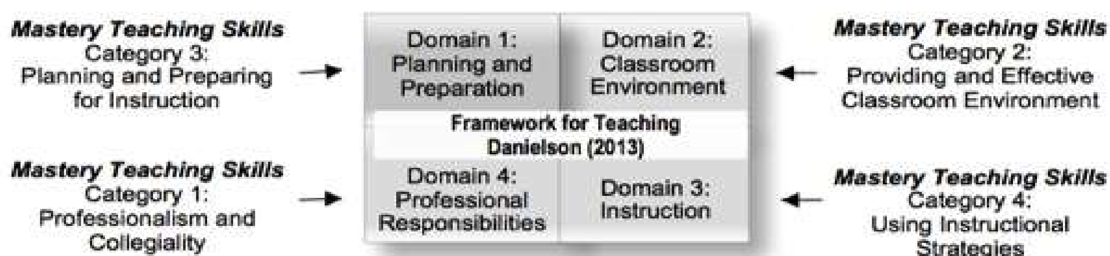
Danielson (2007) did not detail a framework specifically for special education teachers. Danielson admits that teachers of students with special needs may accomplish the components of the framework in ways unique to their situation. For example, teachers of students with behavioral disabilities will include aspects of behavior in their instructional

outcomes, and all teachers of students with special needs must, because of federal requirements, attend more carefully than others to maintaining accurate records, such as Individual Education Programs (IEPs), because these are required by law. Fundamentally, however, they are all teachers of students. Typically, special education teachers organize instruction for large numbers of students. As a result, because these specialists are teachers, they do the tasks of teaching as described in the framework for teaching (Danielson, 2007), which consists of four domains—planning and preparation, the environment, delivery of service, and professional responsibilities. Many school districts in Idaho have developed an amendment to the Danielson teacher evaluation framework to more specifically address the nature of the special educators' and other specialists' responsibilities associated with their roles.

Special education teacher preparation.

Since the mid-1980s, the debate about certification and quality of general education teachers has resulted in many national reform reports targeted at teacher education since the mid-1980s (www.copsse.org). Among the most widely cited national reports are: *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983); *a Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986); *Tomorrow's Teachers* (Holmes Group, 1990); *Tomorrow's Schools of Education* (Holmes Group, 1995); *A Call for Change in Teacher Education* (National Commission on Excellence in Teacher Education, 1985); *What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future* (NCTAF, 1996); *Doing What Matters Most* (Darling-Hammond, 1997); and *Better Teacher, Better Schools* (Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999). Each report focused on the importance of the quality of the teaching force and quality

Figure 2.1. Danielson's Four Domains



Source. Danielson (2013).

of educators. In a review of these reports, Valli and Rennert-Ariev (2000) found the strongest consensus placed on content preparation in the discipline and multicultural emphasis. They also confirmed strong consensus for the use of authentic, field-based pedagogy, the existence of a clear programmatic vision, programmatic emphasis on learning and development, curriculum and assessment, reflection and inquiry, and the use of performance assessment. The national reform reports also accepted the premise that teacher education makes a difference and, therefore viewed highly specified reforms in teacher education as the most appropriate path for improving programs.

In a review of 97 studies on learning to teach, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) disclosed that programs capable of producing conceptual change in preservice students had certain features. These programs use pedagogy and experiences to help preservice students examine their beliefs. They possess strong programmatic vision fostering program cohesion. Small programs are marked by a high degree of faculty and student

collaboration. Carefully constructed field experiences where university and school faculty collaborate extensively are effective.

The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (1991) also observed teacher education programs with specific attributes could make a difference in teachers' beliefs, even though the change was relatively small. Specifically, they resolved programs with a coherent programmatic vision embracing a more constructivist orientation to teaching and learning demonstrate educational validity. Opportunities to apply knowledge acquired in content pedagogy courses to the classroom were best able to change preservice teachers' beliefs (www.copsse.org). Although the studies demonstrated programs with specific features impact teacher beliefs, the need remained for more extensive research on the influence of teacher education on teacher learning. Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) discussed a need for cross-institutional studies to delineate the features of effective teacher education programs and document programmatic impact on preservice students' conceptions of teaching, classroom practices, and the achievement of children in their classrooms.

The Association of American Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) conducted a study of 15 institutions varying dramatically by type, in order to discover information about program features influencing preservice teacher beliefs and classroom practice. Findings from the study included strategies such as crafting extensive field experiences, faculty collaboration, evaluating the impact of teacher education programs, focusing on inclusion and cultural diversity, and maintaining a strong, competency approach to teacher education. These findings supported many recommendations from national reform agendas and provided clear evidence for how they might be operationalized in teacher programs. Critical program features common to

effective teacher education programs were identified as coherent program vision and conscious blending of theory, disciplinary knowledge, and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge and practice. Also included were carefully crafted field experiences, standards for ensuring quality teaching, and active pedagogy that employs modeling and promotes reflection. Focus on meeting the needs of a diverse student population and collaboration as a vehicle for building professional community were recommended as well (Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, 2005).

When it was passed in 1975, P.L. 94-142 guaranteed a free appropriate public education to each child with a disability. This law had a dramatic, positive impact on millions of children with disabilities in every state and each local community across the country. The four purposes of the law articulated a compelling national mission to improve access to education for children with disabilities. Changes, implicit in the law, included efforts to improve how children with disabilities were identified and educated, evaluated the success of these efforts, and provided due process protections for children and families. In addition, the law authorized financial incentives to enable states and localities to comply with P.L. 94-142 (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010).

Despite the federal requirements to provide special education services with teachers certified to teach special education, special education preparatory programs have had no conceptual or research base similar to the general education teacher population upon which to draw. This is problematic, given the critical need for teachers in special education and the emergence of multiple alternative paths to become certified to teach (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2003). Therefore, an extensive review of the literature on special education teacher

education (Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2003) revealed common features of special education programs.

According to Wasburn-Moses (2009), teacher education programs could address five recurring preservice related areas by providing more information or experience. School climate, role ambiguity, workload, collaboration, and experience apply to all educators, but appeared to be more pronounced for special educators. Research is clear regarding attrition resulting from unrealistic teacher expectation (Wasburn-Moses, 2009), and the majority of special education teachers resign their positions after their first several years of teaching (Borman & Dowling, 2008). The evidence, then, seems to point to a detachment between the expectations of new teachers entering the field and the reality of what they actually face in the field. Therefore, it seems a division may exist between the expectations of preservice educators and the perceptions of their special education administrators.

Well-crafted, extensive, carefully supervised field experiences seem to be an important marker of teacher education practice in special education (Bay & Lopez-Renya, 1997; Benner & Judge, 2000; Browning & Dunn, 1994; May, Miller-Jacobs, & Zide, 1989). Preservice programs with the most intense field components (e.g., Bay & Lopez-Reyna, 1997; Epanchin & Wooley-Brown, 1993; Keefe, Rossi, Valenzuela, & Howarth, 2000; Lovingfoss, Molloy, Harris, & Graham, 2001) required early field experiences, one or two practicum experiences, and a semester- or year-long student teaching placement. Programs with such extensive field experiences recognized the developmental nature of teaching and were designed to increase the preservice teachers' levels of competency and responsibility (Lovingfoss, et. al., 2001). In addition to describing extensive field experiences, careful supervision was mentioned as an important feature of special education teacher preparation

programs (Burnstein & Sears, 1998; Ludlow, 1994; Langone, Langone, & McLaughlin, 1991; Rosenberg & Rock, 1994). Other programs relied heavily on mentors who were carefully selected and trained to supervise teachers (King-Sears, Rosenberg, Ray, & Fagen, 1992), which resulted in the identification of areas in need of improvement and the coaching necessary to address the needs. The knowledge and skills acquired in course work, integrated with experiences in field placements, were identified as links enabling preservice teachers to reflect on what they learned across their courses, which can precipitate discussions on how the knowledge and strategies were being applied in schools (Affleck & Lowenbraum, 1995; Bay & Lopez-Reyna, 1997; Burnstein & Sears, 1998; Emond, 1995; Epanchin & Wooley-Brown, 1993; Lovingfoss, et. al., 2001; May, et. al., 1989; Otis-Wilburn & Winn, 2000; Sobel, French, & Filbin, 1998).

Evaluating the impact of teacher education programs.

Belknap & Mosca (1999), Bay & Lopez-Reyna (1997), Goodwin, Boone, & Wittmer, (1994), and Minner, Tsosie, Newhouse, Owens, & Holiday (1995) described many methods for evaluating the effectiveness of special education teacher preparation programs. The methods varied widely and focused on different outcomes, such as student satisfaction with the program, observed teaching performance, faculty perceptions, and cooperating teachers' and administrators' viewpoints of the student teacher and program. Direct assessments and indirect assessment techniques, including surveys or interviews with current and/or former students as methods for providing feedback about the program were utilized in the studies of the researchers. Students also completed surveys about their competencies and satisfaction with the program both during and one year after graduation with faculty using the feedback data for ideas about how to modify the program.

Maintaining a constructivist orientation toward learning and teaching.

Behavioral and positivist theories have played a strong role in special education with the emergence in recent decades of more constructivist practices in special education. Some teacher education programs adopted more positivist approaches (Grisham-Brown, Collins, & Baird, 2000; Miller, Wienke, & Friedland, 1999; Snell, Martin, & Orelove, 1997; Russell, Williams, & Gold, 1992). Competencies were viewed as knowledge and skills to be acquired in course work and then applied in practical settings. The positivist approach would include a requirement of preservice special education teachers to use behavioral methods to demonstrate the effectiveness of their teaching (Lovingfoss, et. al., 2001; Salend & Reynolds, 1991).

Approximately 40% of the teacher education descriptions pointed out faculty maintained more constructivist views of learning to teach (Affleck & Lowenbraum, 1995; Anderson & Baker, 1999; Epanchin & Wooley-Brown, 1993; Hall, Reed, & McSwine, 1997). These programs evaluated employed a variety of pedagogical techniques to help educators consider their beliefs about teaching and learning as well as the diverse needs of their students when planning for and evaluating instruction. These researchers, which combined special and general education teacher professors, used a combination of belief inventories, case studies, weekly seminars, teaching portfolios, coaching, and various assessment projects to help students examine their beliefs about instruction, integrate the knowledge they were acquiring in course work with prior knowledge, acquire academic, social and cultural knowledge about their students; and reflect on the impact of their instruction. Many of the programs embracing more constructivist orientations demonstrated focus on cultural diversity or were unified, blended, or dual certified programs, suggesting

prevailing views of teaching and learning in multicultural and general teacher education were influencing how special education faculty conceptualized their practice.

A particular orientation was most commonly identified; although, it was difficult to determine how pervasive the orientations were or if faculty had adopted positivist or constructivist orientations. Some program descriptions showed that faculty either blended or maintained multiple orientations to learning (Correa, Rapport, Hartle, Jones, Kemple, & Smith-Bonahue, 1997; Ryan, Callahan, Krajewski, & Flaherty, 1997; Salzberg, Lignugaris-Kraft, & Monson, 1997; Zuljan & Vogrinc, 2010). Some faculty used active pedagogy to encourage students to develop a reflective stance toward their teaching and a repertoire of strategies allowing them to individualize for students in their classrooms. Faculty also taught research-based strategies because they believed effective instruction was relevant to all students. Other faculty chose to maintain separate positivist and constructivist orientations. Faculty members argued philosophical differences were so strong that attempts to bridge those differences could have derailed any efforts to educate special and general education preservice students jointly (Salzberg, et. al., 1997).

Teacher Preparation in Traditional and Alternative Routes to Certification

Accreditation standards.

The official vehicle for the approval of teacher education programs in Idaho is the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The Idaho Standards for the Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel are based upon the accepted national standards for educator preparation and include state specific, core teaching requirements. All revisions to the Standards are transmitted by the Idaho State Department of Education to the head of each Idaho college or department of education. Such revisions

take effect and must be implemented with a period not to exceed two years after notification of such revision (Idaho State Department of Education, 2012).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's dual mission is accountability and improvement in education preparation. The NCATE accreditation process establishes rigorous standards for teacher education programs, holds accredited institutions accountable for meeting these standards, and encourages unaccredited schools to demonstrate the quality of their programs by working for and achieving professional accreditation. In NCATE's performance-based accreditation system, institutions must provide evidence of competent teacher candidate performance. Colleges of education accredited by NCATE are expected to ensure teacher candidates know their subject and how to teach it effectively (www.ncate.org).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education works with states to integrate national professional standards and state standards in order to upgrade the quality of teacher preparation in the United States. Currently, 50 state and NCATE partnerships in which the states and NCATE conduct joint or concurrent reviews save institutions and states time and money. As of 2009, 25 states, including Idaho, have adopted or adapted NCATE unit standards as the state unit standards. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's professional program standards have influenced teacher preparation in 48 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The standards are increasingly the norm in teacher preparation. Unit accreditation standards are revised every seven years to ensure the standards reflect current research and state-of-the-art practice in the teaching profession.

The effective teacher.

Research indicates teacher preparation and knowledge of teaching and learning, subject matter knowledge, experience, and the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher licensure are all leading factors in educator effectiveness (NCATE, n.d.). Most of the research findings provided by NCATE (www.ncate.org) on preservice teacher preparation were consistent with common sense and the experience of those in the classroom. Key findings from the existing research on teacher preparation are relevant. First, teacher preparation helps candidates develop the knowledge and skill they need in the classroom. Second, well prepared teachers are more likely to remain in teaching. Third, well prepared teachers produce higher student achievement. Fourth, leading industrialized nations invest heavily in preservice teacher preparation. Lastly, NCATE makes a difference in teacher preparation. Ultimately, NCATE concludes high quality teacher preparation is important. Well prepared teachers outperform those who are not prepared. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education also presumes no credible research exists to reveal any advantage to students who have teachers without preparation.

Teacher preparation and student achievement.

Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) conducted a study on the effects of teacher licensure on student achievement and concluded these effects were greater than a content major in the field, suggesting what licensed teachers learn in methods and education coursework and practice adds to their abilities in the classroom. They shared, “We find [that] students of teachers who are either not certified in their subject…or hold a private school certification do less well than students whose teachers hold a…certificate in math” (p. 139).

Using data for more than 2,800 students, Monk (1994) concluded not only content preparation was positively related to student achievement in math and science, but also courses in methods of teaching math and science. In mathematics, additional teaching methods courses had "more powerful effects" than additional preparation in the content area. Monk concluded "it would appear that a good grasp on one's subject area is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for effective teaching" (p. 142).

Wenglinsky (2002) studied how math and science achievement levels of more than 7,000 eighth graders on the 1996 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) were related to measures of teaching quality and student social class background. He determined student achievement was influenced by both teacher content background and teacher education and professional development coursework, especially in how to work with diverse student populations and students with special needs. Teaching practices, which had strong effects on achievement, were related to teacher training. Students performed better when teachers provided hands-on learning opportunities and helped them develop higher order thinking skills. These practices were related to the training they had received in developing critical thinking skills and related pedagogy.

How Teaching Matters, a study released in October, 2000, was an earlier version of Wenglinsky's 2002 study, which found teachers' classroom practices greatly influenced student achievement, and "more attention needs to be paid" (para. 3) to improving classroom practices. The study concluded students of teachers who conducted hands-on learning activities outperformed their peers by more than 70% of a grade level in math and 40% of a grade level in science. Students whose teachers had received training in working with special populations outperformed their peers by more than a full grade level.

In an examination by Goe (2002) on the distribution of emergency permit teachers in California, she expressed:

> "Generally, the more emergency permit teachers there are in a school, the lower the school's achievement. This phenomenon is examined in the context of other contributors to student achievement, such as socio-economic status and school size. Researchers and policymakers can now clearly connect student achievement (at the school level) with a number of other variables, including the percentage of underqualified teachers. Seeing these connections…can be shocking" (p. 10).

Darling-Hammond (2000) and Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoresen (2001) discovered that controlling for poverty and language backgrounds of students, the largest predictor of student achievement at the state level was the percent of well-qualified teachers (holding full licensure and a major in the field taught).

Teacher preparation increases beginning teacher retention.

Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1997) analyzed data from the Schools and Staffing Survey and ascertained teachers with full certification, including preparation in content and pedagogy, were less likely to leave teaching than those who were only partially certified. Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005) reported:

> "If, as some recent research suggests, teachers who are effective in the classroom are more likely to remain in teaching than those who are not, then it is important to consider whether there are differences in the confidence and success of teachers who are alternatively and traditionally prepared…while it seems clear that those earning certification through alternative paths leave the classroom at higher rates, it also appears that those earning certification through alternative routes are more likely to

attract the candidates that are the most underrepresented in traditional preparation programs" (p. 24).

Shen (2003) examined attrition rates among 1,702 teachers who had graduated from college within five years and calculated 34% of the sample had left teaching. In comparing teachers with pedagogical training and those without it, he found teachers with no training were more than three times more likely to leave teaching during any given year. Those who completed student teaching, acquired certification, and participated in induction were more likely to stay in teaching than those who had no training.

Teacher preparation and acquiring essential knowledge.

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, claimed:

> "To keep America competitive, and to make the American dream of equal educational opportunity a reality, we need to recruit, reward, train, learn from, and honor a new generation of talented teachers. But the bar must be raised for successful teacher preparation programs because we ask much more of teachers today than even a decade ago" (para. 4).

Duncan added:

> "Today teachers are asked to achieve significant academic growth for all students at the same time that they instruct students with ever-more diverse needs. Teaching has never been more difficult, it has never been more important, and the desperate need for more student success has never been so urgent. Are we adequately preparing future teachers to win this critical battle?" (Duncan, A., 2009, para. 13).

Core subjects as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics,

science, geography, history, government and civics. The recently released National Educational Technology Plan reiterates, "Whether the domain is English language arts, mathematics, sciences, social studies, history, art, or music, 21st century competencies and expertise such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, collaboration, and multimedia communication should be woven into all content areas" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 4).

Other themes associated with 21st century learning are global awareness, financial, economical, business, and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy. Also important are learning and innovation skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Information, media, and technology skills ensure students are prepared to access and evaluate information critically and competently, managing the flow of information, and using today's resources to maximize their learning. Life and career skills needed in today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. Cultivating the ability to navigate the complex life and work environments requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills (AACTE, 2009).

According to the AACTE (2009), for teachers to commit to a vision of 21st century knowledge and skills for all students, it is critical to support educators in mastering the competencies that ensure positive learning outcomes for students. These include successfully aligning technologies with content and pedagogy and developing the ability to creatively use technologies to meet specific learning needs. Additionally, aligning instruction with standards, particularly those standards embodying 21st century knowledge and skills, and balancing direct instruction strategically with project-oriented teaching methods are also

necessary. Next, applying child and adolescent development knowledge to educator preparation and education policy, using a range of assessment strategies to evaluate student performance and differentiate instruction are imperative. Lastly, participating actively in learning communities and tapping the expertise within a school or school district through coaching, mentoring, knowledge-sharing, and team teaching, acting as mentors and peer coaches with fellow educators, and using a range of strategies to reach diverse students and to create environments that support differentiated teaching and learning are paramount in the importance of committing to the vision of knowledge and skills for all learners.

Idaho teacher certification.

A Harris poll surveyed 1,020 adults to measure public perceptions of 23 common professions across the country. Three-fourths of the respondents rated the teaching profession as having "very great" or "considerable" prestige. Van Riper (2006) summarized the teacher-related poll results by declaring, "Teachers are clearly the apple of American's collective eyes" (para. 5). According to Van Riper, despite the various challenges associated with many of the nation's schools, teaching is perceived as an esteemed career. Acquisition of the skills and knowledge involved in the profession of teaching is one of the most interesting and enlightening pursuits among all of those available to us. He then added students who elect to earn a teaching certificate are beginning a life-long, dynamic pilgrimage. As reported by Kevin Hart (2011), President Barack Obama was quoted regarding the promotion of education:

> "To every young person listening tonight who's contemplating their career choice: If you want to make a difference in the life of our nation; if you want to make a

difference in the life of a child—become a teacher. Your country needs you" (neatoday.org, para. 5).

For those in Idaho who desire to meet President Obama's challenge, the requirements are set forth to do so. State licensure and certification of individuals for professional practice in the field of special education should be for a limited period, and renewal should be based on planned, organized, and recognized professional development related to the professional's field of practice (CEC, 2009).

Idaho requirements for certification and endorsement.

The Idaho State Board of Education (IDAPA 08, Title 02, Chapter 02) adduce the requirements for special education teacher certification. Many ways exist in which to become certified as a special educator, also referred to in Idaho as a Generalist K/12. Information about the Provisional Authorization, Teacher to New Certificate/Endorsement, Content Specialist, Computer-Based Alternative Route, and Alternative Authorization for Pupil Personnel Services was provided by the Idaho State Department of Education, Teacher Certification Division.

Provisional authorization.

School districts may receive authorization to employ an individual who is not appropriately certified only after all attempts to hire an appropriately certificated person have failed. Measures taken to hire an appropriately credentialed individual must be documented. A minimum of a baccalaureate degree is required unless the authorization is for a specific professional technical assignment for which a degree is not required. This authorization is nonrenewable. It may not be used again for the same individual or for the same assignment. As per Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 34.200.55 and 34.200.56, this authorization will

not meet the federal highly qualified teacher requirement. For federal reporting purposes, the employing district must list teachers holding this authorization for core content area assignments as not being highly qualified. In order for the employee to continue teaching in Idaho, the individual must have the proper certification/endorsement or utilize a different State Board of Education approved alternative authorization.

Alternative authorization: Teacher to new certification.

The purpose of this alternative authorization is to allow Idaho school districts to request endorsement/certification when a professional position cannot be filled with someone who has the correct endorsement/certification. It is valid for no more than three years and is nonrenewable. Prior to application, a candidate must hold a bachelor's degree and a valid Idaho teacher certificate without full endorsement in the content area of need. The school district must provide supportive information attesting to the ability of the candidate to fill the position.

The teacher candidate has several options pertaining to the alternate route preparation program. The first option includes the candidate working toward completion of the alternative route preparation program through a participating institution of higher learning and the employing school district. The candidate must complete a minimum of nine semester credits annually to be eligible for extension of up to a total of three years. The participating college or university provides procedures to assess and credit equivalent knowledge, dispositions, and relevant life and work experiences. The second option involves the National Board for endorsement only. By earning the National Board certification in a content specific area, candidates may add an endorsement in that same content area to a valid certificate. The third option is applicable to candidates who have earned a graduate degree in

a content specific area, who then may add an endorsement in that same area to a valid certificate. Option four promotes testing or assessments for endorsement only and avails two different pathways resulting in either a successful completion of a one-year state-approved mentoring component, or completing the mentoring component along with passing a final pedagogy assessment.

Alternative authorization: Content specialist.

The purpose of this alternative authorization is to offer an expedited route to certification for individuals who are highly and uniquely qualified in a subject area to teach in a district with an identified need for teachers in that area. Alternative authorization in this area is valid for three years and is not renewable. The candidate must hold a bachelor's degree or have completed all of the requirements of a bachelor's degree, except the student teaching or practicum portion. The alternate route preparation program for the content specialist candidate requires a consortium composed of a designee from the institution of higher learning to be attended, a representative from the school district, and the candidate. Together, they determine the preparation needed to meet the Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel. The preparation must include mentoring and a minimum of one classroom observation per month until certified. Prior to entering the classroom, the candidate completes eight to sixteen weeks of accelerated study in education pedagogy. Candidates work toward completion of the alternate route preparation program through a participating college or university, and the employing school district. A teacher must attend, participate in, and successfully complete an individualized alternative route preparation program as one of the conditions to receive a recommendation for full certification. The participating college or university provides procedures to assess and credit

equivalent knowledge, disposition, and relevant life and work experiences. Prior to working in the classroom, the candidate must meet or exceed the state qualifying score on appropriate, state-approved content, pedagogy, or performance.

Computer-based alternative route to teacher certification.

An individual may acquire interim certification through a computer-based alternative route certification program. The State Board of Education must approve any computer-based alternative route to teacher certification. The program must include, at a minimum, a preassessment of teaching and content knowledge, an academic advisor with knowledge of the prescribed instruction area, and exams of pedagogy and content knowledge. Individuals who possess a bachelor’s degree or higher form an institution of higher education may utilize this alternative route to an interim Idaho teacher certification. To complete this alternative route, the individual must complete a Board-approved program, pass the Board-approved pedagogy and content-knowledge exams, and complete the Idaho Department of Education criminal history check. Upon the completion of the computer-based certification process, the individual will be awarded an interim certificate from the State Department of Education’s Bureau of Certification and Professional Standards. The term of the interim certificate is three years. During the term of the interim certificate, teaching by the individual must be done in conjunction with a two-year teacher mentoring program approved by the Board. The individual must start the mentoring program during the term of the interim certificate, and it may be completed after standard certification is granted. All rules and laws governing the fully certificated teachers with respect to conduct, discipline, and professional standards apply to individuals teaching under an interim certificate.

Another form of alternative authorization pertains to pupil personnel services. This alternate authorization in terms of special education applies to candidates who provide related services. These include speech language pathologists, school psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, counselors, and social workers. Since they do not apply to special education teachers, this alternative authorization is not described herein.

Summary

The conceptual framework of the study was human resource management, but three-fold in its application to the research. The topic was reviewed in the literature as a foundation for discussion of the phenomenon of alternatively certified special education teachers in Idaho schools and the impacts on perceptions of their special education administrators.

First, the conceptual framework for human resource decisions regarding special education teachers was presented. This conceptual perspective, guided by the view that recruiting, hiring, mentoring, supervising, and evaluating are critical administrative human resource procedures, requires consistency when placing highly successful candidates, which is essential in building trust to sustain an effective program for students with disabilities. Given this context, it is incumbent upon the director to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ability to be effective in providing leadership to the human resources function of the school district, which in large measure, determines the effectiveness of the teachers, the district and schools, and the students.

Second, the conceptual framework for teaching and learning was discussed. It was emphasized that effective special education teachers possess both similar and unique professional knowledge and skills as general education teachers, but they need additional

qualities as well. They may maximize literacy learning, implement positive behavior supports; teach students who have significant disabilities, use technology to support curricular access, participation, and learning, and/or help teams implement effective practices for diverse learners in general education classrooms.

Pedagogy or teaching skill is at the heart of special education. Special educators have always recognized that the individualized learning needs of children are at the center of instruction. Educators discovered by having clear standards of practice and descriptions of how those standards are manifested in various contexts, they were able to be increasingly thoughtful and reflective about their work. Danielson (2007) further stated the most powerful use of the framework is for reflection and self-assessment to improve teaching. Using the framework to guide reflection enhances the value of the activity and makes teaching more purposeful, thoughtful, and rewarding.

Teaching involves a complex set of skills, so lessons will almost never be perfect. Danielson (2007) advised the key to being an accomplished teacher is acquiring the skills to continually improve one's practice. An important vehicle for this is through systematic and analytic reflection and conversation with others, such as mentors, cooperating teachers, student teacher supervisors, and evaluators. Danielson cautioned teachers who are new to the profession tend to engage in superficial, global reflection rather than accurate reflection, which is a learned skill and one they have not yet acquired early in their careers.

Danielson did not detail a framework specifically for special education teachers. Danielson admitted teachers of students with special needs may accomplish the components of the framework in ways unique to their situation. Fundamentally, they are all teachers of

students. Typically, special education teachers organize instruction for large numbers of students. As a result, because these specialists are teachers, they do the tasks of teaching as described in the framework for teaching (Danielson, 2007), which consists of four domains—planning and preparation, the environment, delivery of service, and professional responsibilities.

Programs with a coherent programmatic vision embracing a more constructivist orientation to teaching and learning demonstrate educational validity. Opportunities to apply knowledge acquired in content pedagogy courses to the classroom were best able to change preservice teachers' beliefs. Special education preparatory programs have had no similar conceptual or research base upon which to draw. This is problematic, given the critical need for teachers in special education and the emergence of multiple alternative paths to become certified to teach (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001).

Behavioral and positivist theories have played a strong role in special education with the emergence in recent decades of more constructivist practices in special education with competencies viewed as knowledge and skills to be acquired in course work and then applied in practical settings. The positivist approach would include a requirement of preservice special education teachers to use behavioral methods to demonstrate the effectiveness of their teaching (Lovingfoss, et. al., 2001; Salend & Reynolds, 1991). Approximately 40% of the teacher education descriptions pointed out faculty maintained more constructivist views of learning to teach.

Many of the programs embracing more constructivist orientations demonstrated focus on cultural diversity or were unified, blended, or dual certified programs. This suggested a prevailing view of teaching and learning in multicultural and general teacher education were

influencing how special education faculty conceptualized their practice. Some faculty used active pedagogy to encourage students to develop a reflective stance toward their teaching and a repertoire of strategies allowing them to individualize for students in their classrooms. Faculty also taught research-based strategies because they believed effective instruction was relevant to all students. Other faculty chose to maintain separate positivist and constructivist orientations. Faculty members argued philosophical differences were so strong that attempts to bridge those differences could have derailed any efforts to educate special and general education preservice students jointly (Salzberg, Lignugaris-Kraft, & Monson, 1997).

Key findings from existing research on teacher preparation are relevant. First, teacher preparation helps candidates develop the knowledge and skill they need in the classroom. Second, well prepared teachers are more likely to remain in teaching. Third, well prepared teachers produce higher student achievement. Fourth, leading industrialized nations invest heavily in preservice teacher preparation. Well prepared teachers outperform those who are not prepared. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education also presumes no credible research exists to reveal any advantage to students who have teachers without preparation.

The third application of the conceptual framework on human resource decisions regarding special education involved special education preparation in traditional and alternative routes to certification. The varying methods utilized in Idaho for teacher certification were described. These included provisional authorization, alternative authorization—teacher to new certification, alternative authorization—content specialist, computer-based alternative route to teacher certification, and alternative authorization—pupil personnel services.

The study contributes to the literature by helping the reader understand and construct meaning of the lived experiences of becoming a special education teacher in Idaho. The major lessons learned from the literature review included human resource related steps, teacher preparation, certification, the standards guiding the practice, and a basis for what it takes as a special education administrator to direct and oversee these practices.

Chapter 3 presents the research design used to effectively determine whether there are perceived differences among special education directors regarding the preparedness and effectiveness of special education teachers who are traditionally trained and certified compared to that of teacher who are alternatively certified or provisionally authorized to teach special education in Idaho.

Chapter 4 provides results from evidence collected during the survey and interview phases of the research. Chapter 5 contains the summary, conclusions, limitations, and implications with recommendations for practice.

Chapter 3

Methods

Study Design

Rationale and evidence for a mixed method approach.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether there were perceived differences among special education directors about the preparedness and effectiveness of teachers who are alternatively certified to teach special education in Idaho and those who are traditionally trained. The nature of self-reported data and sample size encouraged the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, specifically by issuing a survey and conducting interviews. It was assumed by the researcher survey and interview respondents were thoughtful and honest as they answered the questions. The survey results were interpreted and validated by individual directors' experiences and understandings, and this supported the decision to use a concurrent mixed methods design. The mixed methods approach addressed some of the issues posed by the relatively limited number of interviews with special education directors. Since triangulation is possible with more than a single source of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), supplementary information validating the findings and conclusions was sought to lend further credibility to the study and addresses its weaknesses. The collecting, analyzing, and integrating of quantitative survey and qualitative interview research data sets in this single study, combined with the research collected through the literature review led to the process of triangulation was utilized. The purpose of this form of research is that both qualitative and quantitative research, in combination, provides a better understanding of a research problem or issue than either research approach alone.

The researcher based the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem. The study began with a broad survey in order to generalize results. Then, the focus was on qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants.

In planning the study, the researcher considered her own philosophical worldview assumptions, "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). A strategy on inquiry influenced by pragmatism was brought to the study as the research focused on actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions as in postpositivism. Postpositivists hold a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes. Thus, the problems studied by postpositivists reflect the need to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes, such as found in experiments.

Table 3.1. Quantitative, Mixed, and Qualitative Methods

Quantitative Methods →	Mixed Methods	← Qualitative Methods
• Predetermined • Instrument based questions • Performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data • Statistical analysis • Statistical interpretation	• Both predetermined and emerging methods • Both open- and closed-ended questions • Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities • Statistical and text analysis • Across databases interpretation	• Emerging methods • Open-ended questions • Interview data, observational data, document data, and audio-visual data • Text and image analysis • Themes, patterns interpretations

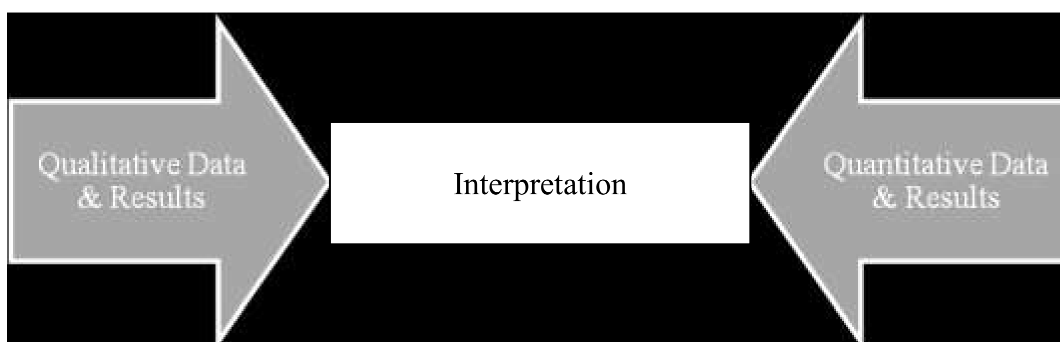
Source. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007).

Cherryholmes (1992), Morgan (2007), and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) address reasons for using pragmatism as a philosophical basis for research. As pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality, its application to mixed methods

research allows for a liberal draw from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions. In mixed methods research, investigators use two or more strategies because they work to provide the best understanding of a problem, opening doors to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis. Creswell and Plan Clark suggest that with a researcher methodology framework involving forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, it is useful to consider the full range of possibilities and to organize the methods as shown in Table 3.1.

Bulsara (n.d.) explains many benefits to using mixed methods as a research design approach. The variation in data collection leads to greater validity. Questions are answered from a number of perspectives. The mixed methods design is designed to minimize 'gaps' to informational data collected as well as ensuring preexisting assumptions from the researcher are less likely. Relying on only one methodology for the study design does not provide all the information required. Figure 3.1 outlines the organization of the study.

Figure 3.1. Explanatory Concurrent Mixed Method Design



Source: Bulsara (n.d.)

A conscious decision was made to give equal priority to the qualitative and quantitative methods and to gather data within the same period of time. All data were integrated in the analysis phase to better clarify and understand the findings. Survey data

allowed the researcher to assess whether the interviewees' responses were typical of the broader population of special education directors. Depth and detail to the survey results were allowed through the interviews.

Survey phase: Procedures, participants, and setting.

Appropriate steps were taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in the research study. Approval by the Internal Review Board of the University of Idaho was obtained to pursue the research involved in the study.

A review of the literature and questioning of authorities representing teacher certification and special education at the State Department of Education revealed no existing document intended to gauge perceptions of special education administrators in Idaho regarding the preparation or effectiveness of special education teachers. Therefore, the survey instrument, Directors' Perspectives on the Impacts of Special Education Teachers' Certification was completed by the researcher. The survey was uniquely designed to address the objectives of the study and to yield the most relevant data. Issues to address in the planning for the survey process included pertinence, clarity, and actual time for completion.

Survey questions were prepared as a result of the researcher's personal observations as a director of special education. Ongoing concerns expressed by directors through networking, at regional directors' meetings, and at statewide directors' conferences, formed the basis for the survey questions. The questions were categorized into five areas. They included the need for special education teachers to assess the impacts of teacher shortages, standards for special education teachers, preparation of special education teachers to determine proficiencies between alternatively certified special educators and traditionally trained and certified special educators, preparedness and effectiveness of alternatively

certified special education teachers, and impacts on directors' decisions regarding the willingness of directors to hire special education teachers who are alternatively certified.

Contextual variables included in the survey were regional location, district or charter school size, areas of specialization, number of special education generalist teachers currently teaching, number of alternatively certified special education teachers currently teaching, directors' highest degrees, whether or not the director was currently teaching either special education or general education at the time of the survey being taken, and the number of overall years of director experience. District history factors surveyed included whether or not the directors had opened a special education teacher position within the past five years, whether or not they were unable to fill the position, fill the position with a traditionally certified special education teacher, the hiring decision was based on availability of special education teachers, the directors' willingness to hire an alternatively certified special education teacher, and whether there is a perceived difference in the preparation, evaluation outcomes, overall proficiency, and entry level preparedness between traditionally certified and alternatively certified special education teachers.

Special education administrators in each Idaho school district and charter school were invited to participate in the survey. Idaho is divided geographically into six education-based regions by the State Department of Education. Region 1 is located in northern Idaho, Region 2 in the north central part of the state, Region 3 in the southwest, Region 4 in the south central, Region 5 in the southeast area of the state, and Region 6 in north east Idaho. Region 4 directors were surveyed at one of their regional meetings. The purpose of and instructions for the survey were provided at the meeting by the researcher. Consent was obtained from each participant and gathered separately from the survey pages to protect confidentiality. To

further ensure confidentiality of sample participants, a coding system was used wherein each respondent was assigned a number. For mailed surveys, the number was written on the back corner of return stamped envelopes provided by the researcher. No names appeared on the survey or return envelopes. The online surveys were printed without any demographic information included and were also assigned a number for coding purposes. Thus, survey methods employed face-to-face, mail, and online surveying.

Statewide, 139 directors were invited to participate in the survey, and 50 (36%) responded. It is important to note 32 directors (64%) from Region 4, which is the researcher's region, responded to the survey. Access to the directors through regularly scheduled director meetings contributed to the higher return rate from those surveyed in this region. The number and percentage of director survey participants were categorized by region, district size, and special education teaching faculty.

Interviews phase: Procedures, participants, and setting.

The major issues of the study included special education teacher shortages resulting in traditional and alternative certification routes. Preparation program structures influenced directors' perspectives of teacher preparedness and effectiveness, which further affected director hiring decisions and evaluation practices. Accessing anecdotes and stories was a critical component of the study in underscoring the human element.

Interview questions were piloted with directors in Idaho's Magic Valley area, or Region 4. Piloting of the interview questions was essential in checking for clarity and ensuring the questions solicited information in response to each research question. The respondents interviewed indicated whether they thought any questions were ambiguous, had any problems in understanding statements or questions, or were perceived as containing

potentially threatening or embarrassing elements in the interview protocol. Flaws were identified as well as awkward or repetitious wording. Additionally, the piloting process provided information about how long the interviews might take to complete. Suggestions for revisions were welcomed.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used during the interview process to elicit information from special education directors regarding perceptions of their special education teachers' preparation and effectiveness. The semi-structured interview procedures focused on the meaning of events within their experience (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) and were guided by the research question: "What do special education directors perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of special education teachers who are alternatively certified compared to those who are traditionally trained and certified?"

In reviewing the typology of strategies for purposeful sampling (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014), the study can be described as criterion-based, meaning that all cases met a criterion—special education administrators who had directed both alternatively certified special education teachers and traditionally trained and certified special educators. This was useful for quality assurance. Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon; thus, all individuals met the criterion (Creswell, 1998). In 2013, a purposeful, criterion-based sampling frame was utilized in the study wherein the most productive sample to answer the research question and share rich experiences related to the study was chosen. A framework of variables influencing the participants' contributions were based on the researcher's practical knowledge of special education administrative and teaching practices in Idaho, including preparation, standards, certification, hiring practices, supervision, and evaluation.

A list of potential participants was accessed through the directory of Idaho special education directors as listed on the Idaho State Department of Education's website (www.sde.idaho.gov). The list was supplemented by key people and agencies, such as the State Department of Special Education regional coordinators, the presidency of the Association of Special Education Administrators (IASEA), and the presidency of the Council for Administrators of Special Education (Idaho CASE).

The researcher sent an inquiry through e-mail to all Idaho special education administrators, asking for those who had experience directing both alternatively certified as well as traditionally trained and certified special educators to respond within a two-week period, also indicating their interest in participating in the study's interview process. An explanation of the study's purpose was provided in the e-mail along with clarification of the random sample method to be used in selecting interviewees, including the necessity for meeting the criterion for potential participation in the interview process. Once the responses from those directors willing to engage in the interview process were received, randomization was used to select interviewees.

A cover letter explaining the nature of the study, consent procedures, and stressing voluntary participation was provided to study participants who were to be interviewed. The researcher assured that confidentiality would be respected and individuals would not be personally identified in the dissertation; nor would the districts or charter schools in which the directors worked be identified. Participation in the research was voluntary, and interviewees were assured they were free to discontinue their participation at any time during the interview process.

Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to protect identities and preserve confidentiality. Names of all school districts and charter schools were changed, as well as any other identifying characteristics of persons or places. A signed consent form was obtained and maintained to certify informed consent and to document that the researcher had described the study and informed each participant of their rights as a research subject (Appendix B). Consent forms signed by participants were retained.

Eight special education administrators were purposefully selected once the researcher received information from directors as to who met the criterion of directing both alternatively and traditionally certified special education teachers. The randomization of the selected interviewees occurred by sorting responding directors' names into categories based on district size or charter school status. From that point, names were indiscriminately selected from each category. The interview phase included directors from two very small or small districts, directors from two medium districts, directors from two large or very large districts, and two charter school directors. For the sake of identifying district or charter school size, reports from the Idaho State Department of Education's Office of Performance Evaluations were used. Their reports defined district size as follows:

- Very large (15,000+)
- Large (5,000-14,999)
- Medium (1,500-4,999)
- Small (500-1,499)
- Very small (1-499)

Consent forms were sent to and obtained from each director chosen for the interview process. All chosen directors agreed to being interviewed. The interviews were conducted in

locations suggested by the interviewee, including quiet, private, and accessible sites. Some interviews were conducted using electronic technology, including Skype, e-mail, and phone. To allow participants the opportunity to provide detailed responses, open-ended questions were asked. These were intended to elicit responses resulting in greater understanding of the constructs being measured. Core questions asked during the interview regarding perceived differences between alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers included:

1. "In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting their preparation?"
2. "In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting performance?"
3. "In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting your hiring decisions?"
4. "In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting their evaluations?"

All interviews were digitally recorded to obtain an exact and accurate account of the interview. Following the interviews, interviews were transcribed, and a copy was sent to each respective special education administrator to check for accuracy and to give them a chance to clarify or amend their remarks. Member checking process was used to test data,

analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions with directors from whom the interview data were originally obtained. This process was conducted to establish credibility by giving participating director interviewees the opportunity to correct errors, challenge what they may have perceived as wrong interpretations, and volunteer additional information.

Following the interview process, the researcher utilized self-reflection as an initial step in the analysis of the data (Moustakas, 1994). Keeping a self-reflective journal was a strategy that facilitated reflexivity, so “personal assumptions and goals” could be examined and “individual belief systems and subjectivities” were clarified (Ahern as cited in Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 2). It helped the researcher to identify the theoretical lens most appropriate for the research and to work through the implications of the chosen framework. Self-reflection had an effect on the research process as changes were made to the research design, methods used, and approaches taken. Boden, Kenway, and Epstein (2005) pointed out inexperienced researchers are often not made aware of the “muddle, confusion, mistakes, obstacles, and errors” (p. 70) that make up the research process and that this is exacerbated when the results of research projects are presented as “a seamless, neat and linear process” (p. 70). Use of the reflective journal made the messiness of the research process visible to the researcher for a better understanding and presentation of the data and its analysis, interpretation, and resulting recommendations.

Data Analysis Strategy.

Survey analysis.

Information about the respondents elicited through the Idaho Directors’ Perspectives on the Impacts of Special Education Teachers’ Certification survey resulted in data that could be analyzed quantitatively. As noted above, data analysis focused on region, district size,

directors' years experience, specializations, alternative teacher experience, and highest degrees. Similarly, responses to whether directors had opened special education teacher positions within the last five years and whether or not they were able to fill the positions were analyzed as to whether alternatively certified teachers were hired and if the hiring decision was based on availability. Finally, and most important, directors perceived differences in preparation and evaluation outcomes between traditionally certified and alternatively certified special education teachers their willingness to consider hiring an alternatively certified special education teacher. For purposes of data presentation in Chapter 4, responses to these questions were displayed in a way that allows the reader to see whether attitudes differed in districts of different size, region, and hiring history.

Interview analysis.

Typical analytic procedures were used in analyzing the interview results. Data were organized, and immersion in the data generated categories and themes. The data were then coded, and analytic memos offered interpretations, which began a search for alternative understandings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). To be able to manage the data, processes for reduction to filter the data and reduce the data set (Bogden & Biklen, 1992; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Wolcott, 1994) were employed. The reduction strategies, including undertaking structural coding of the entire data set before proceeding with further thematic analysis helped to lend meaning and insight to the study. As Patton (2002) noted, "Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But, no recipe…[T]he final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when—and if—arrived at" (p. 432).

Using verbatim expressions from the transcripts, the researcher searched for clusters combining special education teaching with alternative certification and clusters combining alternative certification with preparedness and effectiveness. The clusters were then used to create a textural description reflecting the perspectives of each individual director and of the directors as a group (Alborn-Yilek, 2010).

Reflection on such universal, structural themes was used to determine responsibilities of directing special educators with alternative certification, creating a structural description shared with participants in checking for accuracy and in validating the interpreted data. To ensure suspension of judgment by the researcher, 'bracketing' was utilized, requiring the setting aside of the researcher's personal viewpoints in order for the experience to stand out (Moustakas, 1994).

The final phase of data analysis occurred by looking across the quantitative results and qualitative findings to make inferences and draw conclusions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Using connected results from both phases, the researcher interpreted the data sets to answer the research question and advance the goals of the study.

Limitations and Delimitations

One noted limitation to the study included directors who returned the consent form being the only ones to participate in the study, which may have adversely affected the composition of the population. Given there are multiple alternative certification route options available in Idaho, it was not known in advance upon seeking administrative responses to the survey, whether or not the administrators had any experience with an alternatively certified special education teacher, and if so, what route was used in seeking the alternative certification. Idaho is mostly rural in its population demographic, which could

have adversely affected generalizations to other environments, even in similar conditions. Due to the sample available for the study, results may have not been generalizable beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn.

Delimitations to the study were also noted. The mixed methods study was delimited by the target group chosen for feedback with administrative responses sought, rather than responses from the alternatively certified or traditionally trained and certified special education teachers. Additionally, the study was conducted using only Idaho special education directors, all of whom were invited to participate, and included two directors each of small, medium, and large districts as well as two directors from charter schools for the interview process.

Organized results from evidence collected during the survey and interview phases of the research are found in Chapter 4 along with survey findings shown in tables. Survey results are enhanced by director interview responses. A summary of the study, including conclusions, limitations, and implications with recommendations for practice are found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Results

The mixed methods study investigated directors' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of alternatively certified special education teachers compared to those who are traditionally trained and certified. Results are organized into four main sections: (1) hiring history by type of district; (2) hiring history by director characteristics, (3) director perceptions by type of district, and (4) director perceptions by director characteristics. Survey findings by issue are shown in tables and then amplified by responses from the interviews. The former provide information on the general patterns of response while the latter provide additional examples and insights taken from individual interviews. Eight directors, two each from small, medium, and large school districts as well as two directors from charter schools responded to the 13-question interview.

Table 4.1 shows that 18 (36%) directors were from very small districts. Twenty-eight directors (56%) employed five or fewer certified special education generalists. Forty-four directors (88%) employed five or fewer alternatively certified special education teachers. Forty-nine (98%) of the directors reported having employed five or fewer special education teachers on emergency provisional authorizations.

Summary survey responses regarding director characteristics are shown in Table 4.2. The majority of the responding directors (56%) reported five or fewer years of experience as an educator. Directors' professional history revealed 78% had special education teaching experience, while 26% were or had also been serving as principals. Thirty-eight percent of the directors were teaching special education at the time of the survey. The majority of director respondents (36%) reported having master's degrees, plus at least 30 additional

credits. As shown in Table 4.3, 66% of the directors reported opening special education teacher positions within the last five years. Thirty percent of the directors reported being unable to fill these positions. Forty-eight percent experienced hiring alternatively certified or provisionally authorized special education teachers, and 56% based their hiring decisions on lack of availability of traditionally trained and certified teachers.

Table 4.1. District Demographics

	Number	Percent
District Characteristics: Region		
Region 1	2	4%
Region 2	2	4%
Region 3	9	18%
Region 4	32	64%
Region 5	2	4%
Region 6	3	6%
District Characteristics: Size		
Very Small 1-499 FTE	18	36%
Small 500-1499 FTE	13	26%
Medium 1500-4999 FTE	13	26%
Large 5000-14,999 FTE	6	12%
Teaching Force: SpEd Generalists		
0 - 5	28	56%
6 - 10	7	14%
11 - 15	6	12%
16 +	9	18%
Teaching Force: Alternatively Certified SpEd Teachers		
0 – 5	44	88%
6 - 10	5	10%
11 - 15	1	2%
16 +	0	0%
Teaching Force: Provisionally Authorized SpEd Teachers		
0 - 5	49	98%
6 - 10	1	2%
11 - 15	0	0%
16 +	0	0%

Table 4.2. Director Characteristics

	Number	Percent
SpEd Director Characteristics: Experience as Educator 0-5 Years	28	56%
6-10 Years	12	24%
11-15 Years	7	14%
16-20+ Years	3	6%
SpEd Director Characteristics: Professional History		
SpEd Teacher (#Yes/%Yes)	39	78%
Principal (#Yes/%Yes)	13	26%
Neither (#Yes/%Yes)	3	6%
SpEd Director Characteristics: Currently Teaching (#Yes/%Yes)	19	38%
SpEd Director Characteristics: Highest Degree		
BS/BA (#Yes/%Yes)	9	18%
MS/MA (#Yes/%Yes)	9	18%
M+30 (#Yes/%Yes)	18	36%
Ed.S. (#Yes/%Yes)	12	24%
Ed.D/Ph.D (#Yes/%Yes)	2	4%

Note. Directors responded in duplicate areas; therefore, resulting data may not total 100%.

Table 4.3. Hiring History

	Number	Percent
Hiring History: Opened Special Education Position in Last 5 Years? (#Yes/%Yes)	33	66%
Hiring History: Unable to Fill? (#Yes/%Yes)	15	30%
Hiring History: Hired Alternative Certified? (#Yes/%Yes)	24	48%
Hiring History: Hire Decision Based on Availability? (#Yes/%Yes)	28	56%

Note. Directors responded in duplicate areas; resulting data may not total 100%

Table 4.4 shows directors reported with a mean score of 2.72 that entry level alternatively certified special education teachers demonstrated less preparedness than that of traditionally trained and certified special education teachers, whose mean score rating was 3.58. Data also revealed a distinct difference between the proficiency ratings of alternatively certified special education teachers (mean score of 3.12) and traditionally trained and

certified special educators (mean score of 4.08). Eighty-eight percent of the directors surveyed also marked a difference in the preparedness and effectiveness of special education teachers. Sixty percent noted a difference in evaluation reports of alternatively certified special education teachers when compared to traditionally trained and certified teachers. Despite the consistent lower ratings given regarding alternatively certified teachers, 84% of the directors surveyed said they would consider hiring an alternatively certified teacher, but only because of the special education teacher shortages in Idaho.

Table 4.4. Director Perceptions

	Mean	
Alternative Certified Entry Level Prepared (1=never; 5=always)	2.72	
Alternative Certified Overall Proficiency (1=never; 5=always)	3.12	
Traditional Certified Entry Level Prepared (1=never; 5=always)	3.58	
Traditional Certified Overall Proficiency (1=never; 5=always)	4.08	
	Number	Percent
Differences in Evaluation Outcomes: Alternative vs. Traditionally Certified? (#Yes/%Yes)	30	60%
Will Hire Alternatively Certified Special Education Teacher? (#Yes/%Yes)	42	84%

Note. Directors responded in duplicate areas; therefore, resulting data may not total 100%.

Overall, directors indicated their preference in hiring special education teachers with traditional university-based training who have completed student teaching and have obtained certification through the Idaho State Department of Education. However, given the ever-growing shortage of special education teachers state- and nationwide, they expressed their understanding of the need for alternative routes to certification and, at least, some support for those options.

Director interviewees discussed their use (or non-use) of contingency-based incentives for recruiting certified special education teachers as well as the pathways their districts or schools provide to those seeking to become special educators. Largely, lack of funding prevented the provision of incentives with only minimal exception. Various pathways were mentioned, including completing the HOUSSE rubric, taking the PRAXIS exam, and the paraeducator-to-teacher, and ABCTE programs. Some of these pathways involved director relationships with universities as teacher candidates pursued program completion. Directors spoke of the importance of building and maintaining these relationships with the universities, especially when considering human resource needs.

Further recruitment strategies were discussed as well as the competencies for which the director searches when hiring a special education teacher. Many responses related to difficulties confronted when trying to recruit, hire, and retain special education teachers. They centered on teacher shortages, unqualified candidates, and low pay scales. When asked if recruitment efforts ever focused on alternatively certified special education teachers, most director respondents said they recruited alternatively certified teachers only when they could not find a fully certified teacher. One director emphasized the difference between actively recruiting an alternatively certified teacher and the human resource tasks associated with filling a vacant position—accepting applications, potentially interviewing, and hiring a special education teacher who is alternatively certified. The directors overwhelmingly agreed in hiring an alternatively certified special education teacher, negative impacts on instructional delivery, student achievement, student behaviors, and due process compliance were and continue to be revealed.

Director interviewees were equally split about whether or not there was a difference in hiring procedures between special education teachers and general educators. Interestingly, the majority of the directors believe there should be a different evaluation instrument than what is currently being used across the state for all teachers. While the Danielson evaluation model used in Idaho does address the four domains of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities, there is no specific concentration on specific skills that an effectively prepared and proficiency special education teacher would be expected to demonstrate.

District capacity for preparing and/or contributing to the professional development of special education teachers was also discussed in director interviews. Again, they responded that the lack of funds had a negative impact on their efforts. They also discussed factors contributing to special education teacher retention and attrition. Budget issues prevented most districts from being able to retain many of their good teachers; however, lack of job satisfaction and administrative support, caseloads and paperwork, retirement, and teachers' unforeseen personal issues also contributed to the problem.

Overall, in this researcher's opinion, the directors answered the interview questions realistically about their certified special education human resource history, current status, and future needs. Most directors expressed frustration with the "hoops" through which they as directors need to jump in hiring a special education teacher as well as the "hoops" through which potential teacher candidates, particularly those seeking alternative special education teacher certification, must jump in obtaining employment.

Hiring History by Type of District

Special education hiring history was explored by comparing different types of Idaho school districts, specifically region, district size, and the number of special education teachers certified as generalists, those who were alternatively certified, and those who were provisionally authorized. Survey responses are shown in Table 4.5.

Regardless of experience as a special education director, all respondents had opened at least one special education teacher position within the last five years, the majority of them being directors with 0-5 years of experience (68%). All the directors hired alternatively certified special education teachers based on lack of availability of those who were fully certified.

Across Idaho, shortages of fully certified special education teachers were presented as a problem by director survey respondents by type of district. Overall, the survey data demonstrated the shortage of special education teachers negatively impacted and continues to impact the directors' districts and charter schools.

Directors were asked many questions related to recruiting and hiring special education teachers. When asked about the recruitment strategies they utilized, various strategies were offered. Notifying Idaho universities of openings as well as universities in surrounding states was prevalent among all interview respondents. Position notifications were also posted on the Idaho State Department of Education website, district and charter school websites, and other employment related websites. At least one director spoke of setting up a booth at the university sponsored teacher recruitment fair each spring. Other directors said their districts or charter schools offered bonuses to new special education

Table 4.5 Director Evaluations Perceptions by Director Characteristics

	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 0-5 Years	2.86	3.29	4.00	4.36
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 5-10 Years	2.58	3.00	3.58	3.75
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 11-15 Years	2.57	2.86	3.57	3.43
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 16-20+ Years	2.33	3.00	3.00	4.33
SpEd Director Professional History Special Education	2.67	3.13	3.46	3.90
SpEd Director Professional History Principal	3.00	3.15	3.77	4.23
SpEd Director Professional History Neither	2.67	3.00	4.00	4.33
SpEd Director Highest Degree BS/BA	3.00	2.78	3.67	4.22
SpEd Director Highest Degree MS/MA	2.67	3.56	3.78	4.56
SpEd Director Highest Degree M+30	2.72	3.22	3.50	4.06
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed Specialist	2.50	2.92	3.58	3.58
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed.D/Ph.D	3.00	3.00	2.50	4.00

teachers as well as scholarship programs to “grow their own” special education teachers from within their school systems.

Typically, this pertains to the “para-to-teacher” program where paraeducators, also known as paraprofessionals or teacher assistants, complete their studies at the university to become special education teachers. This approach is popular since the paraeducators already have experience in the school system, have knowledge of the students, curriculum, policies,

and expectations. One director from a large district who had experienced success with the para-to-teacher approach described the experience:

> This program has worked well. We currently have one para using the para-to-teacher program awarded through a scholarship. We have another para who completed the program and is currently working as a self-contained teacher. This helps us grow our own with a higher probability that they remain in the area.

Another director from a large district promoted the program by stating, "Other states use this method. It is actually a stronger method than ABCTE because the para has had real world experience and typically demonstrates a better understanding of the exceptional learner." A small district director explained:

> If the para has the desire to be a teacher for special education, they should be encouraged to do so. Many paras have been stable, long-term employees and know what the special education field is before they get the credential, making them a very desirable special education teacher.

There were, however, directors who shared alternate opinions about the para-to-teacher program. A director from a medium district stated:

> There are a lot of good paras who would make excellent teachers; however, financially, they cannot afford to take classes. I would like to see more scholarship funds available for those who have a great evaluation and who would like to pursue a career as a teacher.

A charter school administrator said, "We tried with NNU (Northwest Nazarene University), but not successfully. We couldn't get the numbers of paras to make it cost effective." Other

Table 4.5 (Continued) Director Evaluations Perceptions by Director Characteristics

	Difference in Preparation: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Difference Evaluation Outcomes: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Will Hire Alternatively Certified SpEd Teacher
	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 5-10 Years	50%	30%	48%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 11-15 Years	20%	20%	20%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 16-20+ Years	12%	8%	10%
SpEd Director Professional History Special Education	6%	2%	6%
SpEd Director Professional History Principal	66%	50%	60%
SpEd Director Professional History Neither	22%	14%	24%
SpEd Director Highest Degree BS/BA	6%	2%	6%
SpEd Director Highest Degree MS/MA	16%	8%	18%
SpEd Director Highest Degree M+30	16%	10%	16%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed Specialist	32%	26%	26%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed.D/Ph.D	20%	14%	20%

strategies in providing pathways to a special education teaching profession include providing contingency-based incentives. One director from a large district explained,

"We provide loan and scholarship programs for current employees. The district pays for special education courses, and in return, candidates agree to work five years. Twenty

percent of the loan is forgiven for each year worked." This district also pays bonuses to new hires. A director from a small district said:

> We have hired certified special education teachers with formal agreements that we would pay 100% for their education to become fully certified in special education and stay three years after completion. That works about 50% of the time for long-term retention. Often, the teachers go to other schools after their obligation is over due to more money. We have offered hiring bonuses after successful completion of a probation [period], but this was a total failure the couple of times this was tried.

Another small district director explained:

> Our district pays for two master's programs available for teachers every other year. The past two have gone to training special education teachers. This has been the biggest area of need in the past two years in our district as we have had two long-term special education teachers retire and almost no applicants.

Another small district director argued:

> We must hire certified teachers. In the past, we have hired all secondary teachers. If I have to do another Teacher-to-New-Certification program for special education, we will hire an elementary teacher as they would have the skills necessary to remediate student academic difficulties while learning special education. Under this option, the special education certification would be paid for at 100%.

Several directors remarked about the difficulties in recruiting special education teachers, especially for secondary levels. A director from a medium district described the difficulty at recruiting for middle and high school levels. "We still need to get our high

school math teacher highly qualified as she has been unable to pass the math PRAXIS." A charter school director explained:

> Due to the competition in pay scales with surrounding districts, it is difficult to recruit. Depending on the nature of the charter, it can be difficult for a charter school to find a special education teacher who has the abilities to work within the charter framework.

A director from a large district summarized the problem of recruiting special education teachers by explaining:

> We would consider using contingency-based incentives for recruitment of ancillary staff, but not for special education teachers. Consider it luck, or whatever, but we typically only have difficulty finding highly qualified special education teachers in content areas at the middle school level. Even then, we employ an alternative route to certification using a variety of SDE (State Department of Education) approved methods to assist the teacher in gaining highly qualified teacher certification in their appropriate [content] area. Secondly, I don't believe the use of incentives will promote long-term teachers to stay in our district. The use of incentives for any type of behavior program is a hotly debated topic as it only serves to entice someone for the short term. Special education and learning itself is best enhanced through multiple pathways. So should the pathways to the special education teaching profession. We utilize the HOUSSE rubric, ABCTE, and a plan for obtaining highly qualified teacher status through PRAXIS [tests] for which we pay.

When asked if the special education teacher candidate's interview and hiring process was differentiated from that of the general education teacher candidate, directors described

their experiences within their districts and charter schools. It was surprising to discover some directors were not even involved in the interview and hiring procedures utilized. For those who were, the differentiated procedures were clarified. A medium district director remarked, "We use special education specific interview questions, but the remainder of the process is the same as when hiring general education teachers." Another director from a medium district said:

> For general education teachers, the principal and a team from the same grade level interview applicants screened by the assistant superintendent. For special education teachers, applicants are screened by the special education director followed by the director, principal, special education teacher, and general education teacher comprising the interview committee before references are checked and a selection is made.

A charter school director echoed the comments of the other directors, but added scenarios are also used in the interview process to which the special education teacher candidate must respond. A large district director affirmed:

> Our hiring processes differ only across elementary and secondary, not across special education versus general education. The special education director is, on very rare occasions, asked to sit in on a special education interview and hiring processes, and that's only if there are existing candidates from with the school district.

Aside from the type of districts or charter schools in which the directors work, directors also responded to the survey based on their own characteristics. These included their educator experience, professional history by positions held, and their highest degrees obtained. Survey responses regarding hiring history by director characteristics are shown in

Table 4.6. All directors opened at least one special education teacher position within the last five years, the majority of them being directors with 0-5 years of experience (68%). Those directors with zero to 15 years of experience were unable to fill opened teacher positions. All directors in this category hired alternatively certified special education teachers based on lack of availability of those who were fully certified.

Hiring History by Director Characteristics

Director respondents described their highest degrees as having either bachelor's (BS/BA); master's (MS/MA); master's, plus 30 credits (M+30), education specialist's (Ed.S.); or doctoral (Ed.D/Ph.D) degrees. The highest reporting group included those directors with master's degrees, plus 30 credits (36%). No matter the degree conveyed by the director respondent, all indicated having opened at least one special education teacher position within the last five years. All, but the directors with doctoral degrees were unable to fill opened special education teacher positions. All degreed directors hired alternatively certified special education teachers based on availability.

Given that director characteristics were used in generating comparative data, directors' survey responses revealed that the special education teacher shortages and the need to fill opened special education teacher positions with alternatively certified teachers exists without regard to the type of district or director characteristics. This important point was emphasized when a director from a medium-sized district stated, "Special education teachers are hard-to-fill positions, and this impacts directors all across Idaho."

Directors were asked about the key competencies for which they look when hiring a special education teacher. They referred to a candidate who demonstrated an understanding of disabilities, strong paper work and organization skills, strong leadership skills, an ability to

be flexible, and eagerness to learn new things. Other competencies included strength in assessment skills, both in progress monitoring and in conducting standardized assessments. These reflect the increasing sophistication of both training and expectations. In the past, concentration was primarily on teaching rather than assessing, other than the standardized assessments needed for identification of disabilities and determining the need for specially designed instruction. Knowledge in the area of positive behavioral supports proved to be an important competency for a special education teacher to demonstrate. A director from a small district shared, "I would like to say experience would be a determining factor; however, I have yet to find an experienced special education teacher apply, since the retiring teacher left at the last minute."

A charter school director iterated the importance of diversity and cultural competence in the field of special education. The director described:

> My experience as a brand new special education teacher was in working with students who were Native American. They made up 85% of our student population at our school. It was critical to be aware of and respectful toward their customs and culture. Later in my career, I worked in a district in which a large number of refugees were living. In special education, it is critical to consider languages, etc., when determining whether a student has a disability, or not as students could easily be misidentified.

The researcher continued to ask all other directors interviewed about their thoughts on the importance of diversity and cultural competence in special education. A director from a small district explained, "Diversity is extremely important for special education teachers and teachers in general. In order to meet individual student needs, the teacher needs to be able to utilize many differing ideas and methods." The director went on to say:

> Cultural competence would mean that the person would be able to recognize the importance of respecting the numerous cultures represented in schools today. I believe it is helping to preserve as much of a person's native customs and culture while ensuring that all students must behave and adhere to a common set of standards for safety.

A large district director said that both diversity and cultural competence play a large part in hiring special education teachers. Another said, "We don't focus on diversity per se; we just look to hire highly qualified teachers that will work well with students and parents." A large district director clarified more fully:

Diversity and cultural competence encompasses many facets of multicultural education that go way beyond the marginalizing of racial and ethnically diverse student populations through assimilation and instead, focuses on infusing the local culture into the curriculum and teaching methods used in the schools. The director explained, "I actually just finished a course on multicultural education. It is required for my professional educator license for another state. Idaho should do the same. It's not enough just to be literacy and technology competent." In working with and sharing opinions about human resource needs with universities, a charter school director explained, "The relationship between universities and districts and charter schools is vital for recruiting, ensuring ongoing dialogue about preparation courses, and university priorities, so our needs in the field can be met." A large district director stated:

> It is important to build strong relationships with institutions of higher education. That way, two-way communication between the two entities helps to clarify the needs of each—what is expected once the teacher is out in the real world of teaching school.

> We have several administrators, including myself, who teach at the university level as adjuncts. This gives us a chance to get to know potential candidates as well as to ensure they have the most recent information available to develop a strong toolkit to teach from.

Director Perceptions by Type of District

Idaho directors described their experiences, opinions, and frustrations with the special education teacher shortage, their hiring histories, and positive and negative impacts of each. Next, the directors' perceptions are considered by type of district. Essentially, the topics of inquiry focused on special education teacher preparation and proficiency. Survey responses with mean scores regarding director perceptions by type of district are shown in Table 4.7. Regionally, directors responded to whether or not they believe that alternatively certified teachers are entry-level prepared, meaning that the teachers' preparation in becoming special educators is sufficient enough to be able to meet the key competencies in teaching students with disabilities. Every region was represented by a director who responded to the survey. In all but one region, directors that alternatively certified special education teachers are significantly less entry-level prepared than traditionally trained and certified teachers. Region 2 rated the opposite with traditionally trained teachers being less entry-level prepared than alternatively certified teachers. Directors in all regions were rated considerably more proficient than alternatively certified special educators.

Directors from various sized districts participated as survey respondents. These were coded as very small (1-499 students), small (500-1499 students), medium (1500-4999 students), and large (5000-14,999 students). Directors from all-sized districts assigned mean scores regarding entry-level preparedness at a much higher level for traditionally trained and

certified special education teachers than alternatively certified teachers. Likewise, the proficiency of traditionally trained special education teachers was rated higher than alternatively certified teachers.

Directors from very small districts provided the highest rating (mean score of 3.33) of alternatively certified teachers' proficiency. Medium-sized district directors gave the lowest rating (mean score of 2.72). The overall mean score of 3.07 described the directors' rating of alternatively certified special educators' proficiency at sometimes-to-usually.

Directors were asked in the survey instrument to indicate the number of special education generalists currently teaching in their districts. These were coded as districts having zero to five, six to 10, 11-15, or 16-plus generalists. Despite the number of generalists employed in the districts represented by director respondents, all directors gave lower mean scores for entry-level preparation to alternatively certified special educators, indicating notably greater confidence in the entry-level preparedness of traditionally trained and certified special education teachers. Proficiency mean scores were also lower for alternatively certified teachers than traditionally trained and certified teachers.

Directors were asked how many alternatively certified teachers were currently employed by their districts. No directors reported having more than 16 alternatively certified special education teachers. Both entry-level preparation and proficiency levels were rated much lower for alternatively certified special education teachers than traditionally trained and certified teachers.

Directors were asked to provide the number of provisionally authorized special education teachers currently employed in their districts. No more than 11 provisionally

Table 4.6. Hiring History by Director Characteristics

	Opened SpEd Position in Past 5 Years	Unable to fill SpEd Positions	Hired Alternatively Certified SpEd Teacher	Hire Decision Based on Availability
	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 0-5 Years	68%	25%	39%	54%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 5-10 Years	67%	42%	42%	67%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 11-15 Years	57%	43%	100%	57%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 16-20+ Years	67%	0%	33%	33%
SpEd Director Professional History SpEd Teacher	62%	26%	49%	56%
SpEd Director Professional History Principal	69%	38%	38%	46%
SpEd Director Professional History Neither	25%	0%	13%	13%
SpEd Director Highest Degree BS/BA	78%	56%	44%	56%
SpEd Director Highest Degree MS/MA	67%	22%	44%	56%
SpEd Director Highest Degree M+30	67%	22%	39%	50%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed Specialist	58%	33%	67%	67%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed.D/Ph.D	50%	0%	50%	50%

authorized teachers were reported by any director. The results were consistent with other director perceptions by type of district. A notable difference was discovered in entry-level preparedness and proficiency between alternatively certified and traditionally certified and trained special educators with the alternative teachers receiving a much lower mean score.

Director perceptions were calculated to find comparative differences between alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers in

Table 4.7. Director Perceptions by Type of District

	Alternative Certified Entry Level Prepared	Alternative Certified Overall Proficiency	Traditional Certified Entry Level Prepared	Traditional Certified Overall Proficiency
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Region 1	3.00	3.00	4.50	5.00
Region 2	4.00	3.00	3.50	4.00
Region 3	2.33	2.78	3.44	4.22
Region 4	2.72	3.25	3.59	3.91
Region 5	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
Region 6	2.33	3.00	3.00	4.33
Very Small District 1-499 FTE	3.00	3.33	3.94	4.61
Small District 500-1499 FTE	2.69	3.23	3.38	4.00
Medium District 1500-4999 FTE	2.38	2.77	3.38	3.46
Large District 5000-14,999 FTE	2.67	3.00	3.33	3.83
0-5 SpEd Generalists	2.86	3.18	3.64	4.36
6-10 SpEd Generalists	2.43	3.00	3.57	3.86
11-15 SpEd Generalists	2.83	3.17	3.50	3.33
16+ SpEd Generalists	2.44	2.78	3.44	3.89
0-5 Alternatively Certified SpEd Teachers	2.75	3.14	3.61	4.09
6-10 Alternatively Certified SpEd Teachers	2.60	3.00	3.20	4.00
11-15 Alternatively Certified SpEd Teachers	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
16+ Alternatively Certified SpEd Teachers	0	0	0	0
0-5 Provisionally Certified SpEd Teachers	2.71	3.12	3.57	4.08
6-10 Provisionally Certified SpEd Teachers	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
11-15 Provisionally Certified SpEd Teachers	0	0	0	0
16+ Provisionally Certified SpEd Teachers	0	0	0	0

preparation and proficiency. Survey responses were calculated by region, district size, and the numbers of employed generalists, alternatively certified teachers, and provisionally

authorized teachers. Sum and percentage scores regarding director perceptions by type of district are shown in Table 4.8.

Directors were asked about their districts' or charter schools' capacity for preparing and/or contributing to the professional development of special education teachers. Frequently, directors stated they are providing what they can within the district or school based on a lack of funding support for professional development provided from other sources. Directors from both a charter school and a small district succinctly stated they provide little, if any, professional development. A director from a medium-sized district said, "We try to provide our special education teachers with professional development opportunities when possible, but this has been reduced due to budget cuts. At this time, most training is provided in-house during inservice times." A large district director explained:

> We are restricted in professional days due to the diminishing funds available from the State Department of Education that has, in turn, caused furlough days. With instructional time at a premium, professional development goes by the wayside in some cases. As a special education director, I try to ensure that I get monthly guidance documents out to my staff on hot topics. I also provide $150 stipends to special education teachers who wish to take outside-the-district professional development.

One charter school director exclaimed:

> I would love to send our special education teachers to state conferences, at the very least. At one time, prior to the recession, we were even able to attend a national conference on rare occasions. Now, aside from the inservice training provided to all teachers in our district, I deliver professional development in three ways: (1) monthly

> special education faculty meetings; (2) weekly teaming meetings between special education departments and myself; and (3) courses I teach as an instructor of record to special education and general education teachers. If they so desire, I arrange for them to be awarded credit through the local college.

Only one director from a small district stated that the district pays for the special education teachers to attend all state trainings and even supports sending special education faculty to an occasional national conference. Professional development was also described as mentoring support provided to new special education teachers, despite their certification. A medium district director explained:

> Mentor teachers are assigned to help in providing day-to-day professional development and support. At this time, there is not a consulting teacher in the district to support the teacher, so any other additional supports beyond the mentor teachers come from the principal, school psychologist, and the special services director.

Directors were questioned about the factors they believe contribute to special education teacher retention and attrition in their districts and charter schools. All directors mentioned that low salary, overwhelming caseloads and paperwork, lack of professional development, and reduced job satisfaction were all detriments for being able to retain their special education teachers. A director from a large district stated:

> Factors contributing to retention or attrition are sometimes outside of my control as a director. Some people experience personal issues such as problems with the local economy and have to relocate. Other times, I have difficulty keeping new teachers, but that's to be expected, I guess. I know there's some statistic out there that states

> that new teachers are expected to leave the profession most in the first five years of teaching.

Another director from a large district shared:

> We try to offer our special education teachers a small rehire bonus if they have been with the district for several years or more, in addition to the new hire bonus. We also offer subs if they have a lot of testing or IEPs to write, etc. I think the small ways we let them know we appreciate them help them feel a part of the district and valued.

Along these same lines, a charter school director offered:

> If the special education teacher feels support, believes the administrator is invested in meeting the needs of the teacher and the students, feels respected and appreciated for the efforts, including financially, believes they are worth the investment of time and money for professional development, and has access to positive relationships with colleagues, then the teacher will most likely stay, unless retirement or some unforeseen issue prevents him or her from doing so.

Director Perceptions by Director Characteristics

Directors provided information on the survey regarding their number of years of experience as educators, professional histories, and highest degrees earned. This allowed for some comparisons between their responses to questions about entry-level preparedness and overall proficiency of both alternatively and traditionally certified special education teachers. Survey responses with mean scores regarding director perceptions by director characteristics are shown in Table 4.9. Regardless of the reported number of years of educational experience, in all cases, agreement among the directors promoted alternatively certified special educators are less entry-level prepared and less proficient than traditionally trained

Table 4.8. Director Perceptions by Type of District

	Difference in Preparation: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Difference Evaluation Outcomes: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Will Hire Alternatively Certified SpEd Teacher
	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
Region 1	100%	50%	100%
Region 2	50%	50%	100%
Region 3	100%	56%	89%
Region 4	84%	66%	81%
Region 5	100%	50%	50%
Region 6	100%	33%	100%
Very Small District 1-499 FTE	94%	50%	94%
Small District 500-1499 FTE	77%	62%	69%
Medium District 1500-4999 FTE	92%	85%	85%
Large District 5000-14,999 FTE	83%	33%	83%
0-5 SpEd Generalists	89%	54%	86%
6-10 SpEd Generalists	86%	86%	71%
11-15 SpEd Generalists	83%	67%	100%
16+ SpEd Generalists	89%	56%	78%
0-5 Alternatively Cert. SpEd Teachers	89%	64%	84%
6-10 Alternatively Cert. SpEd Teachers	80%	20%	80%
11-15 Alternatively Cert. SpEd Teachers	100%	100%	100%
16+ Alternatively Cert. SpEd Teachers	0%	0%	0%
0-5 Provisionally Cert. SpEd Teachers	82%	59%	84%
6-10 Provisionally Cert. SpEd Teachers	100%	100%	100%
11-15 Provisionally Cert. SpEd Teachers	0%	0%	0%
16+ Provisionally Cert. SpEd Teachers	0%	0%	0%

and certified special educators. A director from a small district summarized this point by stating:

> My perspective is based on the fact that I didn't go through any alternative route to become a director. That option shouldn't even be available as it takes specific

> training to do what I do. I think it is the same for special education teachers. When they go to college to earn their degrees, they have participated in a variety of instructional approaches and practices to qualify them to obtain their teaching certificates. They are well rounded. They have built a network with their professors and fellow college students. The question I ask when talking about this is 'how could alternatively certified teachers be proficient at all without having had sufficient training?

Significant differences between the entry-level preparedness and overall proficiencies demonstrated by alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers were noted by directors who had been employed as special education teachers and/or principals. Directors who indicated they had neither been a special educator or principal at any point in their career as well that there was a significant difference in preparedness and proficiency by both categories of special education teachers. In both comparison sets, the alternatively certified teachers were rated much lower than the traditionally trained and certified special educators.

The researcher asked director respondents to identify their highest degrees. Directors identified their degrees as having obtained bachelor's degrees as well as graduate degrees. The category of master's, plus 30 credits was also assigned as a degree indicator on the survey. Directors with all levels of degrees, except for those with doctoral degrees, responded consistently when considering the entry-level preparation and proficiency comparisons between alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers. These directors reported lower ratings for the alternatively certified

Table 4.9. Director Perceptions by Director Characteristics

	Alternative Certified Entry Level Prepared	Alternative Certified Overall Proficiency	Traditional Certified Entry Level Prepared	Traditional Certified Overall Proficiency
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 0-5 Years	2.86	3.29	4.00	4.36
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 5-10 Years	2.58	3.00	3.58	3.75
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 11-15 Years	2.57	2.86	3.57	3.43
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 16-20+ Years	2.33	3.00	3.00	4.33
SpEd Director Professional History Special Education	2.67	3.13	3.46	3.90
SpEd Director Professional History Principal	3.00	3.15	3.77	4.23
SpEd Director Professional History Neither	2.67	3.00	4.00	4.33
SpEd Director Highest Degree BS/BA	3.00	2.78	3.67	4.22
SpEd Director Highest Degree MS/MA	2.67	3.56	3.78	4.56
SpEd Director Highest Degree M+30	2.72	3.22	3.50	4.06
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed Specialist	2.50	2.92	3.58	3.58
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed.D/Ph.D	3.00	3.00	2.50	4.00

teachers than the traditionally trained and certified teachers. However, the two directors with doctoral degrees rated the entry-level preparation of traditionally trained teachers as being less than their counterparts—alternatively certified special educators.

Director characteristics were taken into account when asking the director respondents about their perceptions regarding differences in preparation, differences in evaluation

outcomes, and whether, or not, they would be willing to hire an alternatively certified special education teacher. Sum and percentage scores regarding director perceptions by director characteristics are shown in Table 4.10.

Directors were asked during the semi-structured interview process how teacher certification and degrees correlate with the performance of special education teachers. There were a range of responses from lack of supervision abilities to classroom management to due process. One charter school director responded, “It doesn’t. Certification and university coursework teaches the rules. The teachers’ abilities determine their values.” When questioned further, the director explained that the teachers themselves will project their own values into their teaching styles. Other directors related certification and coursework to improved teacher performance. One large district director exclaimed:

It has been my experience that there is not enough class work and training in the areas of paraeducator supervision as well as individual and classroom management for new teachers. There also seems to be a need for more instruction on the RTI (Response to Intervention) process and the new SLD (Specific Learning Disabilities) eligibility for teachers to feel comfortable with the processes.

Another director from a small district agreed. The director shared degrees and coursework correlating with special education teacher performance “provides a lot of background knowledge and understanding of disabilities and their problems.” The director went on to say, “There is also information about strategies and interventions to try. The university training tells the student nothing about specific state paperwork requirements, so all of the practical learning must occur on the job.”

A director from a large district described teachers who were traditionally trained in a university and who ultimately earned their degrees and full certification to teach special education as having a better grasp on methodology and behavior management. The director shared, "They come in with student teaching experience and are not blind like some alternative route teachers who did not have this experience or required courses." Another director from a large district agreed by saying:

> Certification and degrees are tied closely to performance. Without the degree and regular certification, teachers come out without as solid a foundation as I would like to see for a new hire. It would be beneficial if they had more exposure and practice in writing an IEP and with processes like completing the required due process paper work, which is tied to teaching students with disabilities.

A charter school director provided:

> I tell my staff that what really matters is willingness and ability. Even after additional supports and training are provided, a continued lack of willingness is perceived by the director to be insubordination. Likewise, a continued lack of ability is perceived as incompetence. Certification and degrees have nothing to do with that. However, certification and degrees do document the commitment of the educator to pursue life-long learning and areas of proficiency in one's career.

Directors were asked how the hiring of alternatively certified teachers has impacted effective instructional delivery. One director from a small district succinctly stated, "While the alternatively certified and provisionally authorized teachers are learning, they have very limited skills." A charter school director said:

> It worked out much more successfully in instructional delivery when the alternatively certified teacher already had an education background and special education was an added certificate endorsement. Otherwise, instructional delivery was not as should be expected regarding pacing, questioning, teaching, and coaching student to always strive to grow.

The directors were also asked how hiring an alternatively certified special education teacher impacts student achievement. All directors agreed student achievement does suffer when instructional delivery is not sufficient to help students experience success.

Given the hiring of alternatively certified special education teachers, directors were asked about the impact on student behavior. All directors shared the same perception of there being a negative impact on student behavior. One director from a large district described the problems with student behavior leading to parents filing complaints with the State Department of Education based on disciplinary actions taken against students with disabilities. A charter school director summarized the issue by saying, “An alternatively certified special education teacher may not have acceptable and necessary classroom management skills, which, in most cases, results in misbehavior that interrupts other students’ learning and the teacher’s ability to teach.”

In questioning about the impact on due process compliance when alternatively certified special education teachers have been hired. A large district director remarked, “Fortunately, we have not been in a situation where alternatively certified personnel have had a relationship to any compliance issues.” Likewise, a charter school director stated, “Due process compliance is important as IDEA and parents’ procedural safeguards will prove.

Thankfully, we have not encountered any issues requiring dispute resolution due to the alternative certification of a special education teacher."

Table 4.10. Director Perceptions by Director Characteristics

	Difference in Preparation: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Difference Evaluation Outcomes: Traditional vs. Alternative Certification	Will Hire Alternatively Certified SpEd Teacher
	% Yes	% Yes	% Yes
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 0-5 Years	50%	30%	48%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 5-10 Years	20%	20%	20%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 11-15 Years	12%	8%	10%
SpEd Director Experience as Educator 16-20+ Years	6%	2%	6%
SpEd Director Professional History SpEd Teacher	66%	50%	60%
SpEd Director Professional History Principal	22%	14%	24%
SpEd Director Professional History Neither	6%	2%	6%
SpEd Director Highest Degree BS/BA	16%	8%	18%
SpEd Director Highest Degree MS/MA	16%	10%	16%
SpEd Director Highest Degree M+30	32%	26%	26%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed Specialist	20%	14%	20%
SpEd Director Highest Degree Ed.D/Ph.D	4%	2%	4%

Finally, directors were asked to provide any further comments they would like to share. These comments are useful in summarizing the results of the research. Some

concerns are repetitive of what has already been shared, but others were presented as new concerns and thoughts. A director from a medium district stated:

> I think I have described most of my experiences, but as stated earlier, alternative routes such as online certifications or ABCTE testing have worked out well when an already strong teacher uses this route to add special education certification. However, I have not experienced good success in hiring someone certified through an alternate route as their initial teaching experience.

Another medium size district's director expressed further concerns:

> Evaluating special education teachers using the same rubrics as general education teachers is problematic as their job descriptions are so much different in terms of facilitating IEP meetings, paperwork, and working with general education teachers. Having different pay scales throughout the state makes retaining good teachers difficult if a neighboring school district can pay more. Without a consulting teacher for a district, resources are spread thin to do a great job of mentoring first-year teachers who have little to no experience with actual IEP meetings, BIPs (Behavior Intervention Plans), and para supervision. Special education teachers, because of the shortage of qualified applicants, should have a separate pay scale than the general education teacher due to the legal obligations they burden over other teachers—just my opinion—which would allow better retention as they could go to general education for the same pay with less stress.

A small district's director offered:

> Finding new special education teachers will probably continue to be an issue. When advertising for new teachers, none were special education qualified. This area is

> fairly isolated as well, and getting new teachers to come here has not always been easy. Most of the teachers here have been here a long time and have some roots in this area. The teachers I have hired and trained want to be here and are willing to fulfill the needs of the district to be employed here.

A director from a large district added:

> I wish we had an answer to our SLP (Speech Language Pathologist) situation. We're looking at online therapy. We are also concerned that our employees are making less now than they were six years ago with all the cutbacks and the economy, but they are doing a great job!

Another large district's director remarked:

> I would like to see something different done with evaluation. The Charlotte Danielson rubric is a very good, generalized tool. However, I know that the CEC published a 16-page position paper on special education teacher evaluation, which highlighted some very good points. One of the points was evaluating effectiveness of the special educator through multiple means, including IEP development and implementation, and the use of appropriate instructional strategies, all the while, never evaluating solely on student growth. I believe it is worth some looking into.

A director from a large district shared, "Resources are spread too thin to do a great job of mentoring first-year teachers who have little to no experience, which always includes alternatively certified teachers." Directors want to hire special education teachers with specific knowledge and skills providing evidence of mastery of key competencies expected of special education teachers. These include maximizing literacy learning; implementing positive behavior supports; teaching students who have significant disabilities; using

technology to support curricular access, participation, and learning; and helping teams implement effective practices for diverse learners in general education classrooms (Fenlon, 2008).

Lastly, a director from a charter school stated:

> Professionally, I have hired multiple alternatively certified special education teachers, but I have had success with only one of them. That was because she was already an elementary teacher and added special education as an endorsement. Any others, unfortunately, simply have not worked out. I am skittish about trying again with an alternatively certified special education teacher, but lack of availability of special education teachers who are fully certified teachers may require otherwise.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of the research and results. Limitations are also discussed along with options for generalizing the findings. Lastly, implications and recommendations for practice are given for those who are interested in special education human resource decisions.

Chapter 5

Summary of Study

Chapter 1 introduces the pervasiveness of special education teacher shortages and their impacts across the nation and more specifically, in Idaho. The problem combines the issues of recruitment and retention, the difficulty of teaching conditions, and the often inadequate preparation of entry-level teachers. These challenges exist everywhere, but are especially acute for rural schools. One response to the shrinking special education teacher candidate pools has been the emergence of alternative certification programs. Aggregate national data about certification do not provide a complete picture, although it is clear that the number and size of alternative special education certification programs have been growing. The effectiveness of these new approaches is not known. This survey and interview study was designed to address that question in one state by asking Idaho special education directors to provide their perceptions of differences in their experience between alternatively and traditionally certified special education teachers.

In attempting to frame the study, the literature review in Chapter 2 focuses on a human resource management approach to special education teacher preparation and certification processes as well as the availability of qualified special education teachers and how they might be recruited and retained. Chapter 3 describes the design of the mixed methods study that included both a survey instrument and interviews with special education directors. Mixed methods and procedures are explained, and specific information detailing how the researcher conducted the study utilizing such methods and procedures is provided.

Chapter 4 provides results that describe the texture and structure of directing both alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers.

Textural data and descriptions are provided around four themes—hiring history by type of district, hiring history by director characteristics, director perceptions by type of district, and director perceptions by director characteristics. Hiring history and director perceptions were interpreted based on district characteristics, including region, district size, and the numbers of special education teachers employed in three categories of certification: (1) generalists; (2) alternatively certified; and (3) provisionally authorized. Director perceptions were explored using differences in educational background and professional history.

This concluding chapter discusses the researcher's discoveries about directors' experiences of employing alternatively certified special education teachers and connects them to findings from the literature review. Implications for her own research as well as for the broader field of special education director decisions regarding human resource tasks are provided. Limitations of the research design are revealed as well as recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

Hiring special education teachers is a challenge. It is obvious—not just anecdotally, but apparent from the data that it is not easy. A clear preference is indicated regarding hiring traditionally trained and certified special educators. However, directors do hire alternatively certified teachers anyway, because they are placed in situations where they must fill open positions, so that individualized special education services can be provided to eligible students.

Fifty directors representing all six geographic regions in Idaho responded to the researcher-developed Survey of Special Education Administrator Perspectives. Additionally, eight special education directors representing all-sized districts as well as charter schools

provided opinions and descriptions of their experiences during semi-structured interviews. The study's central research question asked, "What do special education directors perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of special education teachers who are alternatively certified compared to teachers who are traditionally trained and certified?" Secondary core questions summarily ask how the differences in training and certification impact preparation, performance, hiring decisions, and teacher evaluations.

Comparing teachers with differentiated training and certification indicated very large differences between alternatively certified and traditionally certified teachers. The former scored below the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale (2.72). By contrast, the latter scores were much higher (3.58) closer to "usually" than to "sometimes." This gap, close to an entire response choice, indicates wide differences between the two types of teachers.

This is significant because well-prepared special education teachers are the cornerstone of quality evidence-based practices to individuals with exceptional learning needs. Well-prepared and qualified teachers get the best learning results. According to Darling-Hammond (2000), research indicates that a well-prepared teacher has more influence on a child's learning than any other factor under school control. The low rating of "rarely" on the question of alternatively certified special educators being prepared is discouraging for directors who must hire when few, if any, qualified teacher candidates are available. Local districts increasingly hire teachers willing to seek alternative certification because they are unable to recruit fully certified special education teachers for their open positions (Katsiyannis, Zangh, & Conroy, 2003; CEC, 2003). By doing so, teachers certified in other content areas are often hired with the understanding that the teacher will seek special education certification through an alternate route.

Up to 60% of the surveyed director respondents they would hire alternatively certified special education teachers. Overwhelmingly, directors who reported in the survey as having opened at least one special education teaching position within the last five years and who were unable to fill the opened position, hired an alternatively certified special educator based on lack of availability of fully certified special education teachers.

“I have not experienced good success in hiring someone certified through an alternate route as their initial teaching experience,” stated a director from a medium district. A director from a small district expressed frustration in saying:

> Finding new special education teachers will probably continue to be an issue. When advertising for new teachers, none were special education qualified.” A director from a charter school shared, “Professionally, I have hired multiple alternatively certified special education teachers, but I have had success with only one of them. That was because she was already a teacher and added special education. Any others, unfortunately, simply have not worked out. I am skittish about trying again with an alternatively certified special education teacher, but lack of availability of special education teachers who are fully certified may require otherwise.

Comparing directors’ assessment of the performance of alternatively and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers reveals similar differences. Alternatively certified teachers’ performance was ranked at the scale midpoint (3.12), meaning that the average was “sometimes” demonstrating proficiency, while traditionally trained and certified teachers (4.08) “usually” demonstrated proficiency. Note, however, the performance scores were approximately .5 higher than the training scores, suggesting both groups outperformed expectations based on their educational backgrounds even though the gap remained the same.

"How do differences in training and certification impact teacher evaluations?" This interview question elicited interesting responses. A director from a medium-sized district expressed concerns by remarking, "Evaluating special education teachers using the same rubrics as general education teachers is problematic as their job descriptions are so much different in terms of facilitating IEP meetings, paperwork, and working with general education teachers." Another director from a large district stated:

> I would like to see something different done with evaluation. The Charlotte Danielson rubric is a very good, generalized tool. However, I know that the CEC published a 16-page position paper on special education teacher evaluation, which highlighted some very good points. One of the points was evaluating effectiveness of the special educator through multiple means, including IEP development and implementation, and the use of appropriate instructional strategies, all the while, never evaluating solely on student growth. I believe it is worth some looking into.

Quigney (2010) explained that in a study of traditionally licensed teachers and those holding emergency provisional licenses, Nougaret, Scruggs, and Mastropieri (2005) found across all indicators on a teacher rating scale, teachers licensed through a traditional route were assessed more favorably than were those with an emergency licensure. Comparative research of traditional teacher preparation and collaboration between school districts and universities conducted by Sindelar, Daulnic, and Rennells (2004) found traditional preparation program completers surpassed other teachers on numerous criteria related to instruction. These findings underscore the immense differences in preparation and proficiency reported by Idaho directors.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in the study. The survey was not worded in a way to allow for distinction between people whose educational experience was strictly based on alternative certification, rather than on those who had been teachers and then obtained a new special education endorsement. Another flaw pointed to the Likert response options where, in looking back, different option labels may have been more useful in eliciting more solid information.

Difficulty was presented in getting statewide participation in the survey. Most people, including educators, do not like completing surveys, unless the researcher has a captive audience or network as was the case with the directors from Region 4. It is uncertain if the study results are fully representative of the state; although, the researcher is fairly confident that one would not find large differences, especially among the predominantly rural districts that comprise Idaho education. The larger and even medium-sized cities may well be different.

Also, the researcher realized this is a fairly obvious problem, but there were some nuances that became clear only when the data was obtained. It is possible there were characteristics of districts that may have been missed. One characteristic was whether some of the small districts may have had significant disproportionality of other ethnicities and/or minorities, and this may have impacted the results of the survey. There may have been some districts who held close alliances with universities or other certification programs. A large district's director may have been able to speak about his or her relationships with universities, while directors from more rural locations may not have had the same or similar opportunities.

The researcher checked state department of education requirements for alternative pathways to teacher certification in states surrounding Idaho: Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. In addition, a search was conducted for the number or percentage of school districts with rural status in those states as special education teacher shortages most impact these rural districts and schools. The effort in doing so was to determine whether further study involving neighboring states might produce similar findings.

Each state has the same or similar procedures for people with bachelor's degrees to obtain alternative certifications to teach. Utah's system seems to be the most complex. In their process, potential teachers must be determined eligible to participate in the Alternative Routes to Licensure (ARL) Program, which allows them to begin looking for and securing a job in a school district. They then get an ARL plan outlining required coursework, testing, etc. and are assigned an ARL advisor. The ARL plan typically includes such items as related to Praxis tests, six general pedagogy classes, four methods classes, and any additional content classes, if needed, as part of the licensing process, once hired. An ethics review and principal's letter of recommendation are also required prior to the issuance of the alternative licensure.

Applicants in Oregon who have not completed an approved teacher education program, but who can demonstrate subject-matter competency as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, are issued a NCLB Alternative Route Teaching License. Interestingly, the license is only valid in the district that co-applies for the license with the applicant and in the specific subject area and grade levels at which the license is endorsed and authorized (State of Oregon: Teacher Standards and Practice Commission).

The United States Census Bureau uses a formula involving population size (2,500 or more) and a population density (500 persons per square mile or more) to classify a place as either rural or urban. The Census Bureau divides the nation in census blocks, the smallest geographic entity for which the census reports population data. These are aggregated into block groups, which generally have between 300 and 3,000 people. Urban places are defined starting with a block group that has a population density of 1,000 persons per square mile and adding on block groups and blocks that have a density of 500 persons per square mile. If the territory so defined has 2,500 or more people, it is then called an 'urban area.' Urban areas are called urbanized areas if they have 50,000 or more people and urban clusters if they have between 2,500 and 49,999 people. All other areas are rural. The majorities of all six northwest states bordering and including Idaho are considered rural states (http://www.ers.usda.gov).

There are many definitions of 'rural' or 'rurality' for schools and districts. Since 2006, the National Center for Education statistics (NCES) has categorized schools as "city," "suburb," "town," or "rural." This classification provides an indication of a school's location relative to a populous area (www.nces.ed.gov). According to NCES, of Idaho's 116 public school districts, seven are categorized as "city," four as "suburban," 25 as "town," and 81 as "rural." Comparatively, Nevada has 17 school districts with two being categorized as "city," one as "suburban," seven as "town," and seven as "rural." Oregon has 184 districts, 12 being classified as "city," 16 "suburban," 60 "town," and 96 "rural." Of Washington's 295 districts, 21 are reported as "city," 49 as "suburban," 50 as "town," and 175 as "rural." Montana has 414 school districts, seven of which are "city," four "suburban," 49 "town," and 354 "rural." Wyoming reports having 49 school districts with two "city," zero "suburban,"

18 “town,” and 29 “rural.” Lastly, Utah has 41 districts with five categorized as “city,” eight as “suburban,” 11 as “town,” and 17 as “rural.” Across all states surrounding Idaho as well as in the state of Idaho, the majority of school districts are classified as “rural.” Thus, with similar alternative certification route requirements in each of these states as well as their comparable rural statuses, it stands to reason the findings of further study could indicate whether it would be possible for the results to be generalized to the rural portions of neighboring, northwest states having similar demography, geography, and “western” culture.

The survey and interview did not ask if directors had ever fired or nonrenewed an alternatively certified special education teacher. The question thus becomes, “Is the person we have now no worse than the person we are likely to hire?” Hiring is high risk.
Even with all the issues presented, the alternatively certified special education teachers appear, over time, to become more competent. Though some directors may wonder if alternatively certified special educators are generally less capable and less committed, others consider their rate towards competency as being on the same trajectory as those traditionally trained and certified special education teachers.

Despite these limitations, an alignment of the study’s findings with the results of other research may lead the field to an increased understanding of the lived experiences of directors’ perceptions regarding alternatively certified teachers. A limitation to the study involves researcher bias. The researcher reflected on her own previous experiences as a director in the situation of making administrative, human resource related decisions. She reflected on her own biases as well. Reflexivity was used to capture these biases and experiences in a Positionality Statement prior to the study. The statement was regularly read

and reread in relation to the evolving interpretations to dissuade their influence on the study's findings. However, it is difficult to conclude that the results are completely free of bias.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Many reasons exist in providing pathways for alternative certification as well as for pursuing alternative certification. People make money in systematizing the procedures for hopeful candidates to obtain alternative certification. It is less rigorous for students. Traditional providers may not have the capacity to address the needs of students who cannot be on campus due to distance from the university, weather, or family and work schedules presenting themselves as barriers for these students.

Answering the question, "What do special education directors perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of special education teachers who are alternatively certified compared to teachers who are traditionally trained and certified?" has practice and policy implications for the researcher and others interested in special education human resource decisions. Results of the study imply that using special education teachers who are alternatively certified is not preferred, but would be a viable means of filling open teaching positions in special education. Alternative certification programs exist where there are significant shortages of special educators. Institutions of higher learning, the state department of education, and local education agencies should work in partnerships to provide certification programs featuring the opportunity for potential teachers to earn a salary during on-the-job training. Uncertainty prevails of any long-term effects these programs will have on the quality of special education teachers entering the classroom. It is suggested Idaho continue the policy of allowing various alternative certification options, so open positions

can be filled. It is also suggested Idaho universities continue to provide a certification program for teachers desiring special education certification.

Significant research related to the need for mentoring new special education teacher continues to be necessary. Unfortunately, alternative certification programs typically do not, in and of themselves, provide adequate support for candidates who are rapidly placed in the classroom. Education leaders in Idaho should not view the programs universities offer, which deliver research-based curriculum and onsite supervision of internship experiences in the same light as those alternative programs that make little to no effort to do so.

Education leaders as well as researchers should be aware of the backgrounds of participants entering into alternative certification programs as this information would be considered a rich and important source of data. This awareness would allow for generalizations to be formed regarding the backgrounds of those who may be best suited for success for alternative certification program participation. For example, one may consider a potential special educator who was already certified as a general educator may appear to be an excellent candidate for alternative certification due to their experience of a solid foundation for teaching. However, others could perceive the candidate as risky. It is possible the candidate may have not been able to secure a position in general education and desires to use special education as getting their "foot in the door," while planning to leave as soon as an opening in their own chosen area becomes available. In other words, the commitment by this teacher may be short-lived and may not result in a sustained increase in the supply of new teachers.

Mid-career changers would also be risky candidates. If their original careers allowed for them to be paid high salaries or if theirs were professions not similar to teaching, it is

likely they may return to their previous careers as more lucrative opportunities arise. The bottom line is that the programs providing alternative routes to certification are significantly different from traditional programs offered by institutions of higher learning. The most critical factors, such as length, intensity, training activities, preparation time, and life experiences of those who choose to enter the programs are those impacting director perceptions of the preparedness and proficiency of their special education teachers. The study adds to the current body of knowledge regarding the perceived differences between alternatively certified and traditionally trained and certified special education teachers.

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Appendix A

National Institutes of Health Office Completion Certificate Letter

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Pamela Houston

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 10/26/2006.

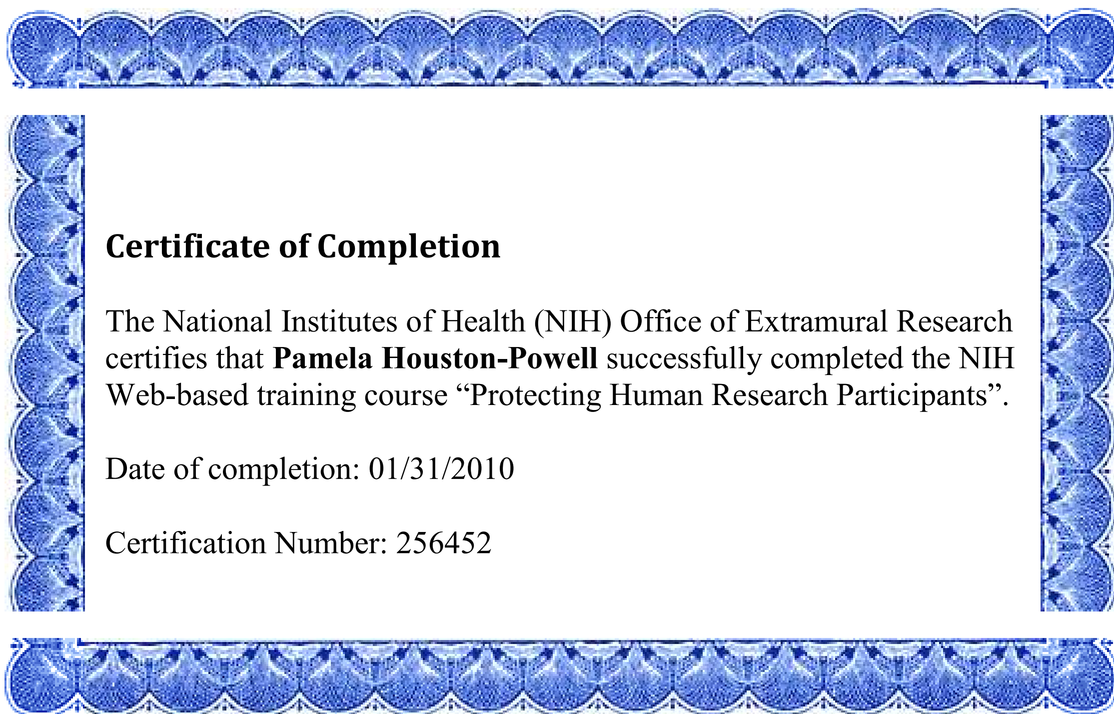
This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov

Appendix B

National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research Certificate



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Pamela Houston-Powell** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 01/31/2010

Certification Number: 256452

Appendix C

Consent

Human Subjects Consent to Participate in Researcher Authorized Interview and/or Survey: Impacts of Alternative Special Education Teacher Certification in Idaho

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Pamela Houston-Powell, Ed.S. (University of Idaho). I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive any additional details desired. I understand I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so. I agree to participate in this study and have been given a copy of this form for my records.

For paper survey (mailed):

1. _____ ***By checking here, I give my consent to participate in this *research project*.**
2. **By signing here, I give my consent to participate in the INTERVIEW:**

   ____ ____________
   Signature Date

3. **By signing here, I give my consent to participate in the SURVEY:**

   ____ ____________
   Signature Date

****
For online survey:
☐ (Please check this box if you give your consent to participate in the research project and choose to participate in the survey electronically.)

Please note: Signed consent forms will be kept separate from completed surveys to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Appendix D

Interview Guide: Special Education Administrator Perspectives

Participant Demographics

Years of experience as a special education director:

____

Years of experience as a special education teacher:

____

Areas of specializations on certificate:

____

Degrees earned:

____

Part 1: The Need for Special Education Teachers

How would you describe the current need for special education teachers in your district?

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, what are the barriers that make filling special education positions difficult?

Part 2: Standards for Special Education Teachers

I am interested in what you consider the most important professional standards for a special education teacher. What would they be, and why?

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in certification impacting their ability to meet the standards?

Part 3: Preparation of Special Education Teachers

Let's discuss special education teacher preparation: What undergraduate preparation do you think is most important for special education teachers and why?

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training impacting their preparation?

Part 4: Alternative Certification/Provisional Authorization of Special Education Teachers

Do you have any reservations or concerns about the performance or effectiveness of a special education teacher who is alternatively certified/provisionally authorized? What are they and why?

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in certification impacting their performance?

Part 5: Impacts on Directors' Decisions

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting your hiring decisions?

In comparing the two certification types of special education teachers in your district, how are the differences in training and certification impacting their evaluations?

Appendix E

Survey Information

Impacts of Alternative Special Education Teacher Certification in Idaho

This survey designed for Idaho's special education directors is intended to assess their perspectives on the comparative differences of special education teachers who are traditionally trained and certified to that of the teacher who is alternatively certified or provisionally authorized. The results of the survey are useful in improving teacher preparation and supports along with impacting hiring decisions and evaluation procedures. The results may create talking points with higher education officials and teacher certification staff at the State Department of Education in a collaborative effort to increase special education teacher skill base, effectiveness, performance, and retention.

Your responses are highly valued and may help future special education directors in Idaho. You are asked for demographic information and opinions you may have that describe your perspectives as a special education director. Please answer based on how you have generally felt recently or how you feel now. There are no correct or incorrect answers; rather, the survey relies upon your honest answers. Please respond to all questions. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

This survey has been approved by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board, and it has been deemed that there are no serious risks associated with participating in this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. You have been chosen to participate in this survey because the records received from the Idaho State Department of Education, Special Education Program, indicate you are a special education director in an Idaho school district or charter school. If this is incorrect, please do not

continue. You may request an executive summary of your personal results to be e-mailed to you upon the completion of the study. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this survey, please contact:

Pamela Houston-Powell, Ed.S.

Doctoral Student, College of Education, University of Idaho

208-308-2410 (cell phone)

Appendix F

Survey of Special Education Administrator Perspectives

Survey Instructions and Information

- You should complete this survey only if you are serving in the capacity of a special education administrator for your Idaho school district or charter school.
- Answer all the questions by checking the box to the left of your answer.
- All information that would let someone identify you or your staff is kept private.
- You may notice a number on the cover of this survey. This number is used only to indicate your survey has been returned and that reminders are not needed.
- Please answer the questions in the survey about your perspectives as a director of special education as completely and honestly as you can. Thank you!

Participant Demographics

Years of experience as a special education director?

____

Years of experience as a special education teacher?

____

Areas of specializations on certificate?

____

Degrees earned?

____

Please respond to the following demographic questions:

1. Number of Special Education Teachers in your district?

    _____ Special Education Generalist

    _____ Alternative Certification (interim)

    _____ Provisional Authorization (nonrenewable)

4. Highest degree you hold as the director

________	________	________	________	________
BS/BA	MS/MA	M + 30	Ed.S.	Ed.D/Ph.D

5. Are you currently teaching special education? _____ Yes _____ No

6. Number of years teaching special education? _____ (please type/write response)

7. Have you ever taught general education? _____ Yes _____ No

8. Number of years teaching general education? _____ (please type/write response)

Part 1: The Need for Special Education Teachers

9. Within the last five years, how often have you opened a special education teacher position in your district or charter school?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

10. Upon advertising for the open special education teacher position within the last five years, how often were you unable to fill the position?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

11. When opening a position for a special education teacher, how often have you filled the position with a teacher who is *alternatively certified or provisionally authorized* to teach special education in Idaho?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

12. When deciding to fill an open position for a special education teacher with an *alternatively certified/provisionally authorized* candidate, was the hiring decision based on the lack of availability to hire someone with traditional special education certification?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

Part 2: Standards for Special Education Teachers

13. Do the special education teachers in your district or charter school, despite their type of Idaho teacher certificate, demonstrate overall proficiency at meeting foundational standards for teaching special education?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

14. Do special education teachers in your district or charter school who are *alternatively certified/provisionally authorized* likely to demonstrate proficiency at meeting foundational standards for teaching special education?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

Part 3: Preparation of Special Education Teachers

15. Has the entry-level training of the special education teachers in your district or charter school, despite their type of Idaho teacher certificate, seemed to you to be sufficient for what is required of a special education teacher?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

16. Do special education teachers in your district or charter school who are *alternatively certified/provisionally authorized* prepared sufficiently enough to enable them to perform that which is required of a special education teacher?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

Part 4: Alternative Certification/Provisional Authorization of Special Education Teachers

17. As a director, do you feel now or have ever felt that there is a difference in the preparedness and effectiveness of special education teachers in your district or charter school who are traditionally trained and certified compared to that of teachers who are *alternatively certified/provisionally authorized* to teach special education?

________	________	________	________	________
NEVER (0 times)	RARELY (1 time)	SOMETIMES (2 times)	USUALLY (3 times)	OFTEN (4+ times)

Part 5: Impacts on Directors' Decisions

18. Given the need to hire a special education teacher for your district or charter school, will you consider hiring a special education teacher who is alternatively certified/provisionally authorized rather than a special education teacher with traditional training and certification?

_____ Yes   _____ No

19. Please explain your response to the question above regarding your hiring preferences and decisions related to special education teachers:

20. Do you now or have you ever noted any differences in the ultimate evaluation outcomes for special education teachers who are traditionally trained as compared to that of teachers who are alternatively certified/provisionally authorized?

_____ Yes   _____ No

21. Please explain your response to the question above regarding your evaluation decisions related to special education teachers:

THANK YOU! Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope.

Appendix G

Special Education Professional Ethical Principles and Practice Standards (2009)

Professional special educators are guided by the CEC professional ethical principles and practice standards in ways that respect the diverse characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families. They are committed to upholding and advancing the following principles:

A. Maintaining challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities to develop the highest possible learning outcomes and quality of life potential in ways that respect their dignity, culture, language, and background.

B. Maintaining a high level of professional competence and integrity and exercising professional judgment to benefit individuals with exceptionalities and their families.

C. Promoting meaningful and inclusive participation of individuals with exceptionalities in their schools and communities.

D. Practicing collegially with others who are providing services to individuals with exceptionalities.

E. Developing relationships with families based on mutual respect and actively involving families and individuals with exceptionalities in educational decision making.

F. Using evidence, instructional data, research, and professional knowledge to inform practice.

G. Protecting and supporting the physical and psychological safety of individuals with exceptionalities.

H. Neither engaging in nor tolerating any practice that harms individuals with exceptionalities.

I. Practicing within the professional ethics, standards, and policies of CEC; upholding laws, regulations, and policies that influence professional practice; and advocating improvements in laws, regulations, and policies.

J. Advocating for professional conditions and resources that will improve learning outcomes of individuals with exceptionalities.

K. Engaging in the improvement of the profession through active participation in professional organizations.

L. Participating in the growth and dissemination of professional knowledge and skills.

Appendix H

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Part B Indicators

- Indicator 1: Graduation Rates – Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma
- Indicator 2: Drop-out Rates – Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school
- Indicator 3: Participation and Performance on Statewide Assessments – Participation and performance of children with IEPs on statewide assessments:
    - Percent of the districts with a disability subgroup that meets the State's minimum "n" size that meet the State's AYP targets for the disability subgroup
    - Participation rate for children with IEPs
    - Proficiency rate for children with IEPs against grade level, modified and alternate academic achievement standards
- Indicator 4: Suspensions and Expulsions – Rates of suspension and expulsion:
    - Percent of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs; and
    - Percent of districts that have: a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs; and
    - Policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and

implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards

- Indicator 5: Participation/Time in General Education Settings (LRE) – Percent of children with IEPs aged six through 21 served:
  - Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day;
  - Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; and
  - In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements
- Indicator 6: Preschool Children in General Education Settings (Pre-School LRE) – Percent of children aged three through five with IEPs attending a:
  - Regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program; and
  - Separate special education class, separate school or residential facility
- Indicator 7: Preschool Children with Improved Outcomes – Percent of preschool children age three through five with IEPs who demonstrate improved:
  - Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
  - Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and
  - Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs
- Indicator 8: Parental Involvement – Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities
- Indicator 9: Disproportionate Representation in Special Education that is the Result of Inappropriate Identification – Percent of districts with disproportionate

representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification

- Indicator 10: Disproportionate Representation in Specific Disability Categories – Percent of districts with disproportionate representati0on of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification
- Indicator 11; Timeframe between Evaluation and Identification (Child Find) – Percent of children who were evaluated within 60 days of receiving parental consent for initial evaluation, or if the State establishes a timeframe within which the evaluation must be conducted, within that timeframe
- Indicator 12: Transition between Part C and Part B – Percent of children referred by Part C prior to age three, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays
- Indicator 13: Post-School Transition Goals in IEP – Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable post-secondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those post-secondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency was invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of the parent of student who has reached the age of majority

- Indicator 14: Participation in Post-secondary Settings One Year after Graduation – Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:
  - Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school
  - Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school
  - Enrolled in higher education or in some other post-secondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school
- Indicator 15: Timely Correction of Noncompliance – General supervision system (including monitoring, complaints, hearings, etc.) identifies and corrects noncompliance as soon as possible, but in no case later than one year from identification
- Indicator 16: Resolution of Written Complaints – Percent of signed written complaints with reports issued that were resolved within 60-day timeline or a timeline extended for exceptional circumstances with respect to a particular complaint, or because the parent (or individual or organization) and the public agency agree to extend the time to engage in mediation or other alternative means of dispute resolution, if available in the State.
- Indicator 17: Due Process Timelines – Percent of adjudicated due process hearing requests that were adjudicated within the 45-day timeline or a timeline that is properly extended by the hearing officer at the request of either party or in the case of an expedited hearing, within the required timelines

- Indicator 18: Hearing Requests Resolved by Resolution Sessions – Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements
- Indicator 19: Mediations Resulting in Mediation Agreements – Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements
- Indicator 20: Timeliness and Accuracy of State Reported Data – State reported data (618 and State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report) are timely and accurate

Appendix I

CEC Initial Content Standards

Standard 1: Foundations

Special education teachers understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies, diverse and historical points of view, and human issues that have historically influenced and continue to influence the field of special education and the education and treatment of individuals with exceptional needs both in school and society. Special educators understand how these influence professional practice, including assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Special educators understand how issues of human diversity can impact families, cultures, and schools, and how these complex human issues can interact with issues in the delivery of special education services. They understand the relationships of organizations of special education to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies. Special educators use this knowledge as a ground upon which to construct their own personal understandings and philosophies of special education.

Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners

Special educators know and demonstrate respect for their students first as unique human beings. Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs. Moreover, special educators understand how exceptional conditions can interact with the domains of human development, and they use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning

needs. Special educators understand how the experiences of individuals with exceptional learning needs can impact families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences

Special educators understand the effects that an exceptional condition can have on an individual's learning in school and throughout life. Special education teachers understand that the beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures can affect relationships among and between students, their families, and the school community. Moreover, special education teachers are active and resourceful in seeking to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the individual's exceptional condition to impact the individual's academic and social abilities, attitudes, values, interests, and career options. The understanding of these learning differences and their possible interactions provides the foundation upon which special education teachers individualize instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Standard 4: Instructional Strategies

Special educators possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special education

teachers select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote positive learning results in general and special curricula and to appropriately modify learning environments for individuals with exceptional learning needs. They enhance the learning of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills of individuals with exceptional learning needs, and increase their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. Moreover, special educators emphasize the development, maintenance, and generalization of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the lifespan.

Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions

Special educators actively create learning environments for individuals with exceptional learning needs that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and active engagement of individuals with exceptional learning needs. In addition, special education teachers foster environments in which diversity is valued and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world. Special education teachers shape environments to encourage the independence, self-motivation, self-direction, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy of individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators help their general education colleagues integrate individuals with exceptional learning needs in general education environments and engage them in meaningful learning activities and interactions. Special educators use direct motivational and instructional interventions with individuals with exceptional learning needs to teach them to respond effectively to current expectations. When necessary, special educators can safely intervene with individuals with exceptional learning needs in crisis. Special educators coordinate all these efforts and provide guidance and direction to paraeducators and others, such as classroom volunteers and tutors.

Standard 6: Language

Special educators understand typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language. Special education teachers use individualized strategies to enhance language development and teach communication skills to individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators are familiar with augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies to support and enhance communication of individuals with exceptional needs. Special educators match their communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences. Special educators provide effective language models and they use communication strategies and resources to facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with exceptional learning needs whose primary language is not English.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Standard 7: Instructional Planning

Individualized decision making and instruction is at the center of special education practice. Special educators develop long-range individualized instructional plans anchored in both general and special curricula. In addition, special educators systematically translate these individualized plans into carefully selected shorter-range goals and objectives taking into consideration an individual's abilities and needs, the learning environment, and a myriad of cultural and linguistic factors. Individualized instructional plans emphasize explicit modeling and efficient guided practice to assure acquisition and fluency through maintenance and generalization. Understanding of these factors as well as the implications of an

individual's exceptional condition, guides the special educator's selection, adaptation, and creation of materials, and the use of powerful instructional variables. Instructional plans are modified based on ongoing analysis of the individual's learning progress. Moreover, special education teachers facilitate this instructional planning in a collaborative context including the individuals with exceptionalities, families, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies as appropriate. Special educators also develop a variety of individualized transition plans, such as transitions for preschool to elementary school and from secondary settings to a variety of postsecondary work and learning contexts. Special educators are comfortable using appropriate technologies to support instructional planning and individualized instruction.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard though the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Areas(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Standard 8: Assessment

Assessment is integral to the decision making and teaching of special educators, and special educators use multiple types of assessment information for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs, as well as to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress. Special educators understand the legal policies and ethical principles of measurement and assessment related to referral, eligibility, program planning, instruction, and placement for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse

backgrounds. Special educators understand measurement theory and practices for addressing issues of validity, reliability, norms, bias, and interpretation of assessment results. In addition, special educators understand the appropriate use and limitations of various types of assessments. Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to assure nonbiased, meaningful assessments and decision-making. Special educators conduct formal and informal assessments of behavior, learning, achievement, and environments to design learning experiences that support the growth and development of individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators use assessment information to identify supports and adaptations required for individuals with exceptional learning needs to access the general curriculum and to participate in school, system, and statewide assessment programs. Special educators regularly monitor the progress of individuals with exceptional learning needs in general and special curricula. Special educators use appropriate technologies to support their assessments.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates

Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Special educators are guided by the profession’s ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to legal matters along with serious professional and ethical considerations. Special educators engage in professional activities and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth.

Special educators view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others' attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are sensitive to the many aspects of diversity of individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them current with evidence-based best practices. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Standard 10: Collaboration

Special educators routinely and effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways. This collaboration assures that the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs are addressed throughout schooling. Moreover, special educators embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators promote and advocate the learning and well-being of individuals with exceptional learning needs across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences. Special educators are viewed as specialists by a myriad of people who actively seek their collaboration to effectively include and teach individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators are a resource to their colleagues in understanding the laws and policies relevant to individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators use collaboration

to facilitate the successful transitions of individuals with exceptional learning needs across settings and services.