

**Examining the Ability of Novice Teachers to Support the Needs of Students with
Disabilities, Based on the Principal Survey for Novice Teachers**

by
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Dedication

To my mother, this journey is for you.

Abstract

Background: Previous research shows that when teachers attend education preparation programs with extensive coursework in pedagogical practices and pre-service coaching, they are more effective in organizing classroom management and improving academic outcomes. Because of national mandates governing funding, national teacher shortages in critical areas, and a decades-long push for educational equity for students with disabilities, more districts are relying on alternative teacher certification programs to provide teachers for the growing number of classrooms without them. Novice teachers have expressed challenges in maintaining motivation throughout the school year when asked to manage atypical behaviors as well as the varying academic accommodations placed on them in the classroom when teaching students with disabilities (SWDs). While education continues to evolve and serve the needs of all students, novice teachers must receive adequate training and support to meet the needs of SWDs when in the general education setting. **Purpose:** This study examined how education preparation programs, specifically, alternative or traditional programs in Texas, affect novice teachers' ability to support the needs of special education students in the areas of classroom management and special education procedures. The following two research questions are posed: How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals with respect to classroom management and supporting SWDs, and what differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity in classroom management and adhere to the procedures to support needs of SWDs? **Methods:** An analysis was

conducted of archival data from the *2018–2019 Principal Survey Questions—Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers* in the domains of Classroom Management and Students with Disabilities. Novice teachers are those teachers who have never taught in the classroom. These novice teachers represent Grades K–12 in the general education setting, totaling 12,417, or 8.2% of all teachers in Texas. The study's teachers come from 124 certification programs included in the principal survey data, 37 of them being alternative programs. The first research question was answered using descriptive statistics across the sample of novice teachers, including type of certification, for the individual questions and domains of interest. The second research question was answered using an independent samples *t* test to examine differences in principal ratings of teachers certified by alternative programs and teachers certified by traditional ones.

Results. Results show that a majority of novice teachers in Texas (over 80% across most survey items studied) are sufficiently prepared to manage the learning environment and adhere to special education policies. Although descriptive statistics indicated that both novice teachers from traditional certification programs (*M* range, 2.28–2.38) and alternative programs (*M* range, 2.17–2.26) were rated on a scale of 0–3 as "Sufficiently Prepared" to "Well Prepared," traditionally certified teachers were rated significantly higher ($ES = .18$ in both domains). **Discussion.**

Findings from this study are congruent with previous research that novices from traditional programs slightly outperform their peers. Overall, novice teachers appear well situated to support students with disabilities via positive classroom management. Since ratings occur at the completion of the first year of teaching, it

would be beneficial to identify key areas of need for these teachers as they begin the year and current practices for supporting their improvement in teaching over the year.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Learning Environment, Students with Disabilities, Novice Teacher

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Chapter I

Introduction

Throughout history, adherence to federal mandates such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) has left school districts in the United States continually reforming programming and teacher qualifications for students with disabilities. Specifically, IDEA mandates that students with disabilities be educated to the maximum extent possible in the least restrictive environment with nondisabled peers by a teacher who meets criteria for being highly qualified in a specific content area (Raymond, 2007). Over the years, special education programs have progressed from large, isolated institutions to special schools, special classes, and resource rooms. However, for over 95% of students with disabilities, the least restrictive environment is the general education setting (Harry & Klingner, 2007). The general education initiative of inclusion pushes general educators to look at their roles differently and embrace themselves as professionals within a system that offers a continuum of services available to all children, including those with behaviors that may affect the classroom. Educators in the general education setting are also being asked to consider the possibility that the presence of a disability is related more to the social/instructional context than to the individual's behavioral characteristics (Raymond, 2007). Adequate educator preparation and ongoing professional development may help to solve this growing problem.

The push for students with disabilities to attend general education classes with nondisabled peers assumes that students gain more substantial knowledge from engaging in differentiated instruction and peer collaborative learning. multiple intelligence

theorists, such as Gardner (1983), propose that students learn best when exposed to content that stimulates the eight necessary abilities: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. All the needs above are met when outstanding education students are included in the general education setting with trained teachers held accountable to practicing research-based methods of differentiation and classroom management (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

Another component that is a driving force in the push for students with disabilities to be included in the general education setting is the adoption of standard-based individualized education programs (IEPs) (Ahearn,2006). McLaughlin (2010) states that as America continually increases academic standards, there seems to be a parallel call for equity for all students, including those with disabilities. For students receiving services through special education, an example of equity would be standard-based IEPs. A standard-based IEP directly links state content standards and assessments to a student's overall yearly goal. For students to have a fair chance at making progress on state academic standards for general education content, participation in general education classes with nondisabled peers is needed (McLaughlin, 2010).

Reports dating back to fall 2013 show that over 90% of 6- to 21-year-old students with disabilities are served in regular schools and are served in the general education setting for more than half of the day (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). Researchers have documented that students with disabilities, including students with autism and students with emotional and behavioral disturbances (EBD), who are fully included, display higher levels of engagement and social interaction, give and

receive higher levels of social support, have larger friendship networks, and have developmentally more advanced IEP goals than their counterparts in self-contained special education classrooms (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995).

National Center for Education Statistics data showed that in 2016 95% of 6- to 21-year-old students with disabilities were served in regular schools; 3% were served in a separate school for students with disabilities; 1% was placed in regular private schools by their parents; and less than 1% each was served at a separate residential facility, at home or in a hospital, or in a correctional facility in 2016 (NCES, 2016). Specifically, for students with autism enrolled in the regular school environment, 33.3% spend less than 40% of the school day in general education classrooms, 18.2% are in general education between 40% to 79% of the school day, and 39.7% participate 80% or more. This leaves only a small percentage of students (7.4%) in a self-contained environment, separate from students without disabilities. Furthermore, of the thirteen disabilities presented under the original IDEA of 1975, EBD and autism present educators and school communities with the most challenging behaviors. Combined students with autism and EBD spent the most time in a general education class, with over 60% spending 80% of their day in general education (Wong et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, despite increased access to the general education classroom, there has been little to no growth in recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures academic growth of the total population of students with disabilities on math and reading scores (NCES, 2019). Specifically, for Texas, the reading score was 256 for eighth-grade students and 244 for fourth-grade students. Both scores are under the national average for the 2018–2019 school year. This trend can also

be seen back in 2017, when only 28% of students scored above the national average.

While 67% of students performed at the basic level on the reading NAEP test, the score falls 6 percentage points below 2017 scores (NCES, 2019).

With legal mandates that rely heavily on assessment, accountability, and placement, there is increased pressure to identify how to educate and how to meet the different needs of 21st-century learners. Previous research has examined teachers' attitudes, accountability, and leadership as indicators of success for special needs students. However, few studies address the relationship between generalist teachers' preparation programs, years of service, and their ability to provide services for students in special education. Ingersoll et al. (2016) stated that if schools concentrate on student performance and school accountability, it would directly influence teacher retention and improve working conditions, school leadership, and management.

Understanding how to bridge the gap for special needs students in the general education classroom requires exploring teaching ability and methods of classroom management during instruction. Tomlinson (2012) identifies differentiation of instruction as a method to account for students amongst the same age group who differ in their readiness to learn, their interests, their learning styles, their experiences, and their life circumstances, much like the students of an inclusive classroom. Furthermore, she states that these differences are significant enough to make a major impact on what students need to learn, the pace they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it well. Although it can be assumed by administrators and school districts that teachers have been trained with fidelity to teach at their highest potential, data on teacher observation remains inconsistent (Tomlinson, 2012).

To make a shift in practice, teachers must be accountable for their role in students' success by practicing evidence-based classroom management strategies and positive behavior supports. This study will examine the ability of novice classroom teachers to address special education students' needs relative to behavior and classroom management in the general education setting. This information will be used to extend information on best practices for training on classroom management when teaching students with EBD and autism. This study also seeks to provide Texas principals with supporting generalist staff through yearly professional development on behavior and classroom management.

National Mandates for Educating Students with Disabilities

NCLB of 2001 and IDEA of 2004 outlined legal mandates for education settings for students with disabilities. Most recently, ESSA of 2015 is building on the policies of IDEA and NCLB while adding guidelines for teacher accountability. Because growth of students with disabilities, such as students with autism and EBD, has been stagnant in the general education setting, these mandates drive the placement, structure, and training of the education system nationally to improve academic outcomes. The responsibility to assess teacher ability is now placed on the state rather than the federal government. Rules also limit the number of special education students allowed to take alternative state testing to 1%.

According to IDEA, students with disabilities are to be placed based on the decisions of the IEP team, which in U.S. Department of Education IDEA Part B regulation 300.321 is defined as "a group of individuals" responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a child with a disability. For each student with a disability, there is a written statement put into place, referred to as IEP, which must be

developed, reviewed, and revised by guidance in regulations 300.320–300.324. It is the, comprising parents, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a supervisor of the educational agency, "an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team" [in another capacity], a skilled individual (at the parent's or agency's request) with "special expertise regarding the child," and "whenever appropriate, the child with a disability," to compose the document, according to 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1).

The official IEP document must consider the best measures to educate a student before and after secondary education. The team must include measurable annual goals, academic and functional plans to address behavioral needs, and objectives to meet the students' needs because of one or more disabilities. The results of the goals and objectives should enable a student to successfully maneuver throughout the school day and make progress in the general education curriculum.

In addition to outlining educational goals and measures, the IEP team must consider the student's participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities. Related is the consideration for the student's right to be educated with peers who are not disabled and other children who are. In some cases, there may be specific outlines of the extent to which students are not to be educated alongside their nondisabled peers in the regular education classroom. However, all IEP accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum must be directly stated. These accommodations will measure the child's academic achievement and functional performance on state and district-wide assessments (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 300.320).

Updated over the years, specifically in 1990, 1997, and most recently in 2004, the law provides that students are to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) based on the IEP. IDEA does not specifically outline a definition for the LRE. However, it is explicitly stated that educating agencies must ensure "to the maximum extent appropriate [that] children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or another removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a) (5)).

Teacher Preparation and Certification

Teacher certification can be obtained through two categories of teacher preparation programs—a four-year university program specifically for potential educators and alternative certification preparation (ACP) programs that require candidates to have an undergraduate degree in a subject other than education (Texas Administrative Code (TAC Title 19, Part 7, 230.5(b)). Alternative certification programs are accelerated pathways to obtaining teacher certification as defined by the U.S. Department of Education (2009). Alternative certification routes offer opportunities for individuals from various educational backgrounds and career paths to become teachers. The programs are rapidly increasing and target teachers from various geographic and subject areas (Marzano et al., 2003). There is also increased interest from recent college graduates and individuals seeking a career change who are exploring opportunities that are not time

consuming, that do not require them to go back to school, or that are not costly yet offer a reasonable salary to maintain their lifestyle (Farias et al., 2000).

Programs that offer alternative certification programs provide individuals with the opportunities to achieve hands-on learning versus the theoretical approach that university-based certification programs may offer (Dill, 1996; Natriello & Zumwalt, 1992). In an alternative certification program, student teaching is seldom a component. Instead, candidates may go directly into teaching in classrooms as a teacher of record while working toward certification. Since there are no official national standards for teacher preparation, programs vary in how they structure teaching practice. Supporters of alternative certification programs understand that these programs appeal to individuals without a teaching certificate who are seeking a career change (Ballou & Podgursky, 1994).

Advocates for more in-depth preservice preparation state the biggest disadvantage of alternative certification programs is the absence of multilayered prerequisite coursework common in many traditional preparation programs (Howard, 2003). Darling-Hammond (1988, 1990) suggests that alternative certification programs decrease the number of highly qualified teachers entering the profession since pedagogy cannot be taught in a compressed amount of time (Feistritz, 2003). Furthermore, advocates of traditional programs argue that alternative certification programs decrease the education profession's quality and prestige. In comparison, programs that follow the standards outlined by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards produce teachers who stay in the field longer and achieve greater outcomes with their students (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The Effects of National Mandates on Teacher Certification

The remnants of national mandates, such as NCLB, can be seen in teacher preparation programs and certification programs. Since NCLB stated that teachers should be highly qualified, states could define what it meant to be highly qualified. In all states, qualifying to teachers had the basic requirements of holding a bachelor's degree and specializing in a specific content area. However, there were no specifications for the level or amount of pedagogical training and mastery of basic teaching skills. Subsequently, teachers who were in alternative certification programs for specific content areas were deemed highly qualified, thus fulfilling the requirements set forth by NCLB. Furthermore, this approach to certification made it easier to fulfill teachers' growing deficits in areas such as English and math.

National mandates such as NCLB and ESSA also outlined requirements for student progress. Accountability for student progress increased when mandates set forth guidelines for adequate yearly progress. Guidelines are based on a school's specific improvement goal; this goal is a score needed to reach 100% passing and must be met in order to receive federal funding (Baines, 2011). Parents are given the option to move their child to another school that is deemed adequate when schools do not meet their goal for two consecutive years. As an outcome, the school has placed an increased emphasis on exposing special needs students to standardized tests and content. Viadero (2007) found that teachers expressed experiencing an increased pressure to raise scores, expose students to content, and maintain positive morale, thus creating a short-lived career due to burnout.

The rising numbers of students displaying deficits in adaptive behaviors and current mandates for special education have increased teacher shortages, causing alternative certification programs to flourish across the nation (Darling-Hammond, 2015). This type of shortage can also be seen in schools classified as Title I or economically disadvantaged schools. At the start of the 2017-2018 school year, teachers who were not fully qualified to teach or held an alternative certification staffed more than 100,000 classrooms. National studies of teacher retention indicate that around 20%–30% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years (Sutcher et al., 2016).

State and Local Context

Prevalence of Students with Disabilities

During the 2017–2018 academic school year, 5,399,682 students were enrolled in Texas public schools according to the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database. Of that almost 5.4 million, over 490,000 students received special education services. The percentage of students served in special education programs increased from 8.9% in 2016–2017 to 9.2% in 2017–2018. Students with autism represented roughly 14%, and students with EBD accounted for nearly 6% of all students with disabilities (Texas Education Agency, 2015). The only other high-incidence disabilities showing larger percentages are students with learning disabilities and speech impairments, totaling over 52%. Students with autism and EBD as their primary disability often show comorbid speech impairments and ADHD (Mody & Belliveau, 2013).

Locally in Houston, over 1 million students enrolled, accounting for 22% of Texas students. In 2017–2018, Region 4 (Houston) continued to serve the largest

enrollment (22.5%) of any state education region. Over 99,000 students are receiving special education services within the region, and 3,500 of that total are classified as showing difficulties with adaptive behaviors. In Houston Independent School District (HISD), in 2016–2017, nearly 70% of students with disabilities spent 80% or more of their school day in the regular education classroom, while about 23% spent less than 40% of their school day in the general education classroom, the remaining 7% are served in through homebound services.

Accountability Based on State Mandates

Teacher Evaluation. Most states did not require a systematic, detailed process for evaluating teachers until 1986 when the national board teacher certification was created as a result of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (Peterson, 2004). Previously, evaluations were conducted informally, requiring only portfolios or work samples, dating as far back as the 20th century (Shinkfield & Shufflebeam, 1995; Peterson 2004). The increased mandates and policies related to teacher evaluation are now used to improve student performance (Kane et al., 2011). This shift can be seen from the federal level down to local districts. Furthermore, with monetary rewards linked to success, efforts increased to meet external pressure from the government (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

The Texas legislature continues to implement new accountability measures, and mandates are introduced. One measure to ensure district accountability is the Texas Accountability Rating. School and district ratings are based on performance on standardized tests, graduation rates, and alternative education readiness outcomes. Specifically, the accountability rating focuses on various student groups, highlighting

areas of improvement for minority groups such as students with disabilities (TEA, 2020). Another measure to ensure the fidelity of teachers is the Principals' Survey for Novice Teachers. This survey's overall goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of novice teachers while supporting their students' needs in seven domains. The Principals' Survey for Novice Teachers will be used in this research study to explore further teacher effectiveness based on the certification program.

While it is important to evaluate teacher outcomes, Texas has also implemented mandates to measure the effectiveness of educational preparedness programs for novice teachers. Outlined in Senate Bill 174, passed by the 81st Texas Legislature in 2009 and included in Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 229, Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs, the Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey for First-Year Teachers (TPES) questions to what extent teacher preparation aligns with the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting. All new teachers under a state certification are required to respond to the survey at the end of the year (TEA, 2019). Questions on the survey pertain to preparedness programs' ability to teach teachers how to standardize classroom processes, the alignment of student performance with district goals, and consistent monitoring of growth. The overall goals of the TPES are to ensure the accountability of Educational Preparedness Programs (EPPs), improve the educational experience for teacher candidates trained through EPPs, and improve EPPs themselves.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. Over the past five years, less than 10% of students with disabilities in Houston met or exceeded grade-level standards across multiple subjects (Texas Education Agency, 2018). In some subjects,

such as reading and writing, scores on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) have increased for students without disabilities but remained stagnant for students with disabilities. Results show that only 7% of students with disabilities met STAAR standards, and over 50% approached STAAR standards on the most recent Texas Academic Performance Report for Houston (Texas Education Agency, 2018). These poor outcomes suggest a need to examine closely the quality of instruction that students with disabilities are receiving and the preparation teachers receive to implement evidence-based strategies.

Supporting the Needs of Students with Disabilities

There are several consistent trends in the state of Texas that harm students with disabilities. One is the number of students with disabilities placed into disciplinary alternative educational programs because of behaviors in the general education setting. Of the over 79,000 students remanded to a disciplinary alternative educational program placement, over 20% or 16,000 were students with disabilities. Another is the expulsion rates for students with disabilities. A quarter of the 2,000 students expelled in Texas for the 2018–2019 school year were considered to have special needs. The trend continued with 2.7% of students with disabilities dropping out in the 2018–2019 academic school year (TEA, 2019).

To support the needs of students with disabilities regarding behavior, Texas has implemented the Texas Behavior Support Initiative (TBSI). The purpose of TBSI is to support teachers in dealing with challenging classroom behaviors. TBSI takes a positive approach centered on being proactive at identifying behaviors in the classroom. Built on positive behavioral support principles, TBSI provides school-wide initiatives for

discipline and behavior (TEA, 2019). While supports to implement TBSI are available online to teachers, state law gives each district the responsibility to train and implement behavior supports at the campus level.

Statement of the Problem

According to Cassady (2011), teachers have expressed ongoing concern about their ability to teach students with disabilities, and it has begun to be reflected in their attitudes toward the population. Furthermore, teachers have also reported that their concern lies in the lack of emotional stability displayed by students with disabilities. In the classroom setting, these students may engage in an emotional outburst and lack social communication skills, thus requiring accommodations to the curriculum. While this study cannot isolate specifically students with autism and EBD, research shows that teachers entering the educational field experienced faster burnout rates when teaching students who show behaviors such as those associated with autism and EBD (Knobloch & Whittington, 2002). With the significant needs for these populations, teachers often express that proper training and support are not provided, further negating feelings toward providing services to students with disabilities outside the general education classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

With the numbers of students with disabilities who attend general education growing, filling classes with highly competent, trained professionals is imperative (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Although alternative programs prepare prospective teachers for the classroom, there has been significant data to show that they are not the most effective in producing student growth (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Furthermore, effective teaching cannot occur in poorly managed classrooms (Marzano et al., 2003). By

exploring the differences in teacher certification programs, states and local districts can identify the type of training needed for generalist teachers and how and when certain components of training should be conducted through professional development.

Purpose of the Study

Previous research has produced contradicting evidence on the opinion that certification programs affect student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Barry, and Thoreson, 2000). Also, some researchers have examined teacher efficacy and perception toward teaching students with disabilities. However, there is little research to identify whether certification programs indicate better classroom management and growth for students with adaptive behaviors. This study extends previous research by examining if novice teachers' preparation supports the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting. The study will analyze the yearly Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers (TEA, 2018). The survey administered by campus principals measures the degree of preparation for novice teachers during their first year of practice.

Research Questions

1. How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals in Texas on classroom management and special education?
2. What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity to respond to classroom management needs of students with disabilities? What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity to respond to the academic needs of students with disabilities?

Independent variables include teacher certification programs, whether offering traditional or alternative certification. Dependent variables include analysis of variance of scores from the principals' survey of novice teachers and the descriptive statistics of the sample group.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Creating the best learning environment possible is a primary responsibility of the classroom teacher. Creating a learning environment that appeals to students with disabilities and meets their various needs while allowing them to interact with neurotypical peers is the primary focus of special education services. In addition to developing and organizing the curriculum, the teacher's role involves a myriad of tasks, including, but not limited to, efficient management of the classroom. This task can be difficult to achieve when accompanied by challenging behaviors, lack of training, and inadequate support (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Novice teachers have expressed that teaching and student teaching experiences made them feel more confident. In contrast, the lack of teaching experience made them feel less confident when working with students who displayed challenging behaviors (Knobloch & Whittington, 2002). The current research supports the need for classroom management and behavior to be at the forefront of educator preparation programs and professional development training.

The literature review will begin by reviewing the legal mandates that form education guidelines and implications for instruction. Components are explained for national and state-level educator preparation programs. The studies included also explain trends in the formatting of certification programs. Next, literature is presented to explain best-practice methods that exemplify each of the seven indicators selected from the Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers about classroom management and behavior. Lastly, research on the components for structuring and

implementing effective professional development programs to support students with disabilities are reviewed to support a plan of action.

National Mandates for Educating Students with Disabilities

As measures to ensure equity in the educational system, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) laid the foundation of policy that identifies mandates to change and emphasize that teacher quality is a significant factor in improving student achievement (Brewer, 2003; Wallace, 2019). ESSA (2015) further states that educators will not be evaluated solely on student outcomes, as proposed under NCLB. States still must test students in reading and math in Grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. However, these data will now be used to assess trends for low-performing population groups, such as English language learners, students in special education, racial minorities, and those in poverty. ESSA maintains the federal requirement for 95% participation in tests, and only 1% of students can be given alternative tests. Lastly, ESSA calls for the use of Universal Design Learning (UDL) and the use of evidence-based strategies for interventions with struggling subpopulations (ESSA, 2015).

For government funding to be used to educate students with disabilities, Congress states that districts must provide high-quality, comprehensive professional development programs to ensure that staff members possess the skills and knowledge necessary to address children's educational and related needs (ESSA, 2015). Professional development is also outlined in components of IDEA, citing that specific professional development models are to be scientifically based and offered continuously to ensure successful teaching practices and model curricula for educating children with disabilities

(Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, 20 U.S.C. §1450 [6-9]). While both mandates show overall guidance for professional development, there are no specific guidelines for general education teachers who teach students who may pose more challenging behaviors, specifically autism and EBD, in the inclusion setting.

Implications for Instructional Practices and Staffing

Mandates for quality teachers have also increased the teacher shortage. There are currently fatal shortages of certified teachers, as well as a shortage of positions needed to meet the demands of students with disabilities requiring special education (Aragon, 2016). Data from 2015 show that over 68% of schools have at least one teaching vacancy in the following subject areas: science, math, bilingual education, and special education (NCES, 2016). Unfortunately, this trend has only increased in urban and low-income districts, specifically those identifying as Title I districts. Other factors that may have an impact on teacher shortages include teacher retirement, increasing student populations, and new classroom policies (Howard, 2003). With such drastic needs for quality teachers, many districts have begun attaching stipends to attract qualified candidates to apply for positions. Some have offered signing bonuses, loan forgiveness, and relocation benefits, and others have tried charming retired teachers back into the field (Vole, 2002). These approaches simplify the process for candidates entering the teaching forces if they agree to work in schools that are hard to staff (David, 2008).

Certification of Teachers

According to Feistritz and Chester (2002, p. 10), a qualified teacher in the United States is someone who holds a bachelor's degree in education and can also be referred to as someone "who has gone through a college education program approved by

the Department of Education which has the authority to then confer a license to teach.” While the requirement of being highly qualified from NCLB has since been dismissed, researchers such as Fennell (2016) outline highly qualified teachers based on pedagogical norms. According to Fennell (2016), highly qualified teachers hold a bachelor’s degree, are fully certified or licensed by the state, and hold competency in a core subject matter. He continues that while states are not required to mandate highly qualified components, districts can ensure educators' fidelity by adopting goals and plans to ensure all teachers are highly qualified and publicly report plans and progress in meeting teacher quality goals.

According to the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (2014), to obtain a teaching certificate in Texas, a candidate must complete all specified requirements. The Texas Education Agency (2016) states that individuals must attain their bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. Some standard practices of coursework may include (a) classroom management and developing a positive learning environment; (b) pedagogy and instructional practices; (c) curriculum development and lesson planning; (d) state assessments of students; and (e) parent conferences and communication skills (Texas Education Agency, 2016). Additionally, individuals must also enroll and complete an authorized certification program, whether at a university or through online coursework sponsored by an alternative certification program. The final step for certification is passing all required certification exams.

Traditional Certification

Traditional teacher certification programs require candidates to be supervised by a master teacher over the required time while completing their student teaching (Texas

Education Agency, 2014). Furthermore, potential teachers must complete the coursework, conduct on-site observation hours, and complete a teaching internship supervised by a certified teacher. It is a norm of traditional programs to work with local school districts to provide future teachers. Often students in traditional programs will gain in-class experience with collaborating districts.

Researchers such as Darling-Hammond et al. (2000) have conducted much of the limited research on the effectiveness of traditional certification programs. Researchers have been able to identify that components of traditional programs for teacher preparation, such as extensive practice in action-based learning and pedagogical coursework, are effective in classroom management skills. However, Darling-Hammond et al. (2000) could not conclude that a direct correlation existed between teacher preparedness programs and overall student success; however components of their data that reflect traditional certification programs were only found to be statistically significant.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2000) go on to state that their theory on teacher preparation program in an article entitled "How Teacher Education Matters." The purpose of this article was to investigate if teachers who have had more preparation were more confident in their teaching practices, thus increasing student success. Through a qualitative analysis of recent studies, the authors concluded that when fully certified teachers who attended traditional certification programs were observed in the classroom and compared with alternatively certified teachers, their confidence level was higher than those who had less preparation. Furthermore, the authors inferred that more training and a higher confidence level could increase student success and time on task in the classroom.

Lastly, they suggested that due to stricter federal education reforms, teachers who have had to attend more extended clinical periods, such as traditional programs, are also more effective.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2006) further their argument, noting there a strong foundation of what is known to be successful in preparing future teachers. The authors suggest that preparation programs should offer more extensive clinical practices, link theory to practice, and focus on serving highly diverse schools if they want to produce well-trained teachers who can maintain a career in the education field. Instead of focusing on what is missing in teacher preparation programs, the author believes that teacher educators should focus on developing models that directly align with previous research suggestions and on-the-job deficits. Researchers suggest a framework for understanding teaching and learning that is based on the belief that creating the best teacher preparation programs requires having three practices guide the coursework: knowing how students learn, knowing the subject matter, and teaching knowledge.

In a 2010 paper, Darling-Hammond discussed the national context of teacher education. The paper stressed the belief that the United States laws on teacher training should be based on research studies proven to work versus settings that only outline shortcomings in teacher education programs. Due to budget cuts and restrictions imposed by the government regarding school finance, many states have opened their certification process to include alternative programs. However, Darling-Hammond contends that these programs can still present a rigorous curriculum with models and theories practiced throughout traditional education preparatory programs. In conclusion, the paper highlights the need for highly effective, adequately resourced models of

preparation for all teachers, without exception, and continued professional development to support the lack of traditional learning.

Alternative Certification Pathways

Alternative certification is largely defined as a method of entering the teaching profession does not require a traditional teacher education program (Shen, 1997). The first alternate route to teaching was created in 1983 by the state of New Jersey. Individuals who were hired did not have to take courses in theory and were trained on the job by mentors during their first year or two on the job. Due to increased enrollment numbers, other states eagerly adopted the model as well, such as California and Texas (Walsh & Jacobs, 2017). Currently, through alternative certification models, potential teachers may earn alternative certification through three types of programming: (A) training before the first day of school or during only a few days of preparation, (B) engaging in over several weeks or months of preservice training, and (C) working as a paraprofessional or other employee already in the schools and being taught how to upgrade skills and earn licenses to teach (Hanover, 2018).

Like traditional certification, alternative certification requires that potential teachers hold a bachelor's degree and demonstrate core subject knowledge through standardized testing (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Alternative certification programs may be offered by a university or a district educational center (Hanover, 2018). Participants in alternative certification programs receive real-time training while learning their craft (Blair, 2003). The National Center for Education Information categorized alternative certification programs as those that allow people to become certified in critically needed subject areas, those offered in postbaccalaureate programs at colleges

and universities, programs administered by state agencies or local districts, and programs that allow certification after passing qualifying exams (Feistritzer & Chester, 2002).

Overall, participants of alternative certification programs are usually those without a teaching background looking to complete an accelerated course (Ingersoll et al. 2012). Supporters of alternative certification programs allude that by staffing schools with alternatively certified teachers, districts are appealing to a wide range of second career seeking professionals that would normally not become educators (Marzano et al., 2003). Moreover, advantages to alternative certification programs include a lack of extensive coursework that usually would deter individuals from joining education (Howard, 2003). Contrarily critics of alternative certification programs label them as quick fixes to an already damaged educational system (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). Nationally, there are currently 47 states that offer alternative certification programs, including Texas, Virginia, and Colorado (Peterson & Nadler, 2009).

Upon entering the early 2000s, alternative teacher certification programs have grown in popularity. A nationally known program, Teach for America (TFA), has certified over 62,000 teachers in the last twenty years. As a component of the program, TFA employs those looking to become educators without the extensive coursework in exchange for teaching at a school deemed Title I, typically serving a low socioeconomic population (Teach for America, 2019). The Teach for America structure focuses on creating tangible resources during coursework for participants to use while teaching. Students must engage in reflective practices to simulate what works and possible routines for when they enter the classroom (Harding, 2012). Unlike traditional certification programs, the TFA certification program has its members participating in a five-week

summer teaching institute for TFA while they are setting up their classrooms and engaging in onboarding for their district. Each TFA member receives feedback and guidance from regional coaches while employed with the company (Teach for America, 2013).

Miller et al. (1998) introduced more in-depth studies to examine the effects on students' academic achievement of alternative and traditional certification. As in the work described above, contrasting results were found. The sample consisted of 41 alternatively certified teachers and 41 traditionally certified teachers in self-contained fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms. Students were administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in all subject areas as a pretest. The researchers analyzed differences between the distribution of the two groups' scores. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the students' mean test scores, and the study results indicated that there were no significant differences observed regarding performance or scores in total mathematics, total reading, mathematics concepts, mathematics problem solving, and mathematics computation.

In 2002, Dorsey also used ITBS scores to assess the differences by teacher certification type in student academic achievement of sixth-grade students in mathematics and reading. The study population consisted of 25 teacher participants, 13 traditionally certified and 12 alternatively certified, along with 609 student participants. Data were collected through surveys administered to teacher study participants and by examining students' ITBS test data. Based on a MANOVA, Dorsey found no statistically significant difference between mathematics teachers, whether alternatively or traditionally certified, and student achievement as measured by mathematics scores. However, when the

comparison was based on the students' academic reading test scores, the researcher did find a significant difference by teacher certification type.

Critics of alternative certification programs worry that students are not under the guidance of a qualified teacher with specified content knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) explored whether traditionally certified teachers were more effective than teachers who participate in alternate routes of credentialing, specifically participants from Teach for America. The sample included teachers and their students in Grades 4 and 5 from the Houston area. State testing data of the teachers from 1996 to 2002 were examined. This study suggested that TFA recruits who achieved full credentialing could produce positive results on standardized testing that are just as valid as those of any other teacher. However, uncertified TFA recruits, waiting for state testing, were found to be less effective than fully certified teachers.

Similarly, Lack-Kerr and Berlinger (2003) evaluated the achievement of those students who were taught by certified teachers and those who were taught by certified emergency teachers. Lack-Kerr and Berlinger considered emergency teachers to be those who hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited university but have little or no educational coursework in their category with alternatively certified teachers. Their study also concentrated on those teachers who were from the Teach for America program. An ex post facto archival research design was implemented for the study. The school districts provided teacher information and Stanford 9 scores. Five school districts in a large urban Arizona city provided data for the study. Descriptive analyses and *t* tests were used in this study. Results from the study revealed that the students of traditionally certified teachers had grade equivalent scores on the Stanford of two months higher than

those students with uncertified teachers. Furthermore, results indicated that each year a student was placed in an alternatively certified teacher's classroom, they lost an equivalent of 20% in academic growth. The study results showed that students of traditionally certified teachers outperformed students taught by Teach for America teachers.

The 21st-Century Classroom

Ryan (2009) found that teachers' perception of special education inclusion can be influenced by the nature and the type of disability a student displays. According to Ryan, general education teachers felt more stress and strain in the inclusive setting when asked to support students who display challenging behaviors. Ross-Hill (2009) expanded upon this idea, adding that teachers are more willing to accommodate students in their classrooms when they perceive that their school administration fosters a supportive climate with adequate training. With over 60% of students with autism and EBD spending half of their day in inclusive settings, it is important to identify behaviors and expectations for classroom management to support these students' needs.

Novice Teachers

Shook (2012) found that a quarter of novice teachers reportedly leave education within one year. Within the first five years, almost 42% of teachers either leave the field completely or transfer to another discipline. It is also reported that 14% of teachers change schools after their first year because of inadequate support and being overwhelmed (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Specifically, teachers have reported that it is because of a lack of support regarding discipline.

Novice teachers express that their limited preservice training gives them a false sense of what to expect in the classroom (Knolbach & Whittington, 2002). The alternative preparation programming of teachers entering the education field usually includes one class on classroom management and effective research-based strategies to implement in the learning environment. Within these classes, teachers are shown how to obtain basic data on whether students can meet academic norms, display appropriate behaviors based on age norms, and follow general routines. Nonetheless teachers are graduating from their respective programs unprepared on how to manage their time and prevent disruptive classroom behaviors in real-life settings (Salameh, Al-Omari, & Jumia'an, 2011).

Teach for America (2013) found that 41% of 8,000 beginning teachers stated that they did not feel adequately empowered with instructional resources for students with disabilities. Moreover, the initial phase of entering the classroom was the first time that they were required to take full responsibility for a class. This idea can also be seen through the research of Clement (2000), who stated that the initial start of teaching is an apprenticeship, where beginners are forced to learn on the job. Consistent research from Darling-Hammond (2004) proposes that the four main areas of concern for beginning teachers are rooted in classroom management, specifically the subdomains of planning differentiated instruction, redirecting interruptions of instruction, implementing routines during instruction, and utilizing prior knowledge.

To retain high-quality teachers, administrators who acknowledge the needs of special education students must support and train faculty. According to Soodak (1998), the support given by principals who base their beliefs on the importance of including

children with disabilities in the regular classroom strongly dictates the general educator's methods. Bai and Martin (2015) discussed the need for preparatory training for administrators who assess special education programs in urban districts. Researchers use the needs survey from the Council for Exceptional Children to outline school administrators' standards of achievement when evaluating teachers. After qualitative data analysis on over 289 participants, researchers were able to determine that there was a significant difference in school administrators' training abilities. Results indicated that school administrators could benefit from specific training on what is needed to provide an inclusive classroom. Researchers also found that principals wanted to share practice to gain more knowledge for special education services. Limitations of this study include essential background, education program, and bias toward the employee.

Students with Autism

Under IDEA, Autism is defined as a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, 20 U.S.C. §1450 [34 CFR 300.8]). Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of five disorders of pervasive spectrum disorders, a neurological disorder characterized by severe or pervasive impairment in several developments (Definition of Autism, 2012, para. 3). The Autism Society of America specifically defines autism as the following:

A complex developmental disability, [autism is signaled when] signs typically appear during early childhood and affect a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. ASD is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a

'spectrum condition' that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees.
(ASA, 2019)

However, though there is no known single cause of autism, with increased awareness and early diagnosis and intervention, outcomes for citizens with ASD have been improved with access to a realm of support services (CDC, 2016) As previously stated, some of the major behaviors associated with autism include delayed learning of language; difficulty making eye contact or holding a conversation; difficulty with executive functioning, which relates to reasoning and planning; narrow, intense interests; poor motor skills; and sensory sensitivities. Autism is a disability of many layers. A person with autism may display one or all the symptoms, or many others besides. To fulfill a diagnosis of autism, professionals assess all behaviors on a spectrum and identify their severity.

Since there is no universal treatment for autism, pediatricians recommend early detection as the best form of preventative treatment. It is recommended by the Autism Support Association that youth displaying the following signs or symptoms be reported to a pediatrician or attending physician before the age of 3 years:

1. Lack of or delay in spoken language
2. Repetitive use of language and motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
3. Little or no eye contact
4. Lack of interest in peer relationships
5. Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play
6. Persistent fixation on parts of objects

The prevalence of autism in the United States has continued to rise since the early 2000s. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018), autism affects an estimated 1 in 68 children. The prevalence is severely disproportionate based on gender. The prevalence is 1 in 42 for boys and 1 in 189 for girls, which averages about 1: 5 girl to boy ratio. These numbers also reflect trends across the state of Texas. In the 2018-2019 school year, 71,951 students with an autism diagnosis received special education services. Students with autism represent approximately 13.5% of all Texas students receiving special education services (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2019)

Students with EBD

The Center for Disease Control (2016), gives the formal definition of EBD as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:

1. An inability to learn, which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers
2. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
3. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
4. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

For EBD to be considered significant in the educational setting, it must affect the student's overall educational achievement. As stated, the term *emotionally disturbed* refers to students whose educational achievement is adversely influenced by some type of inappropriate behavior. Students with EBD are usually characterized by higher absenteeism rates, a low grade point average (GPA), course failure, and unacceptable levels of dropping out of school (National Longitudinal Transition Study–2, 2003).

Concerns for students with EBD continue to grow as traditional school programming maintains an issue for these students. The debate lies in maintaining a safe environment for all populations. However, with trends showing that students with EBD already perform at levels lower than those of their peers, most are placed in the general education setting with hopes of improving interpersonal skills and being taught in various ways to control for inappropriate behaviors (Lane et al., 2002). The problem of poor academic performance takes on added importance because of the current academic standards associated with the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the requirements for participation in statewide assessments outlined in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA.

Nationally, 335,000, or about 6% of students with disabilities, are classified as having an emotional disturbance (Samuels, 2018). This percentage includes 52% ranging between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. The behavior trends are also at the local level. Within Houston ISD, the largest district in the state, 12% of students with an emotional disturbance faced discipline, whereas only 5% of students did overall (PEIMS, 2018). Unfortunately, only 58% of students with EBD graduate, while nationally 78% of all students with disabilities do (CDC, 2018). Dropout rates also show that over 35% of students with ED drop out before their senior year, almost double the 18% of all students with disabilities who do (CDC, 2018). The trends show that educational isolation is an added opportunity to move a child into a more complicated space, and serves to be a counterproductive quick fix (Raymond, 2017).

Classroom Management to Support Students with Disabilities in General Education

Jacob Kounin (1970) is noted as the researcher who explored contemporary classroom management in the seventies. Kounin focused on determining the

environmental conditions that influenced behavior in the field of ecological psychology. The primary focus of behaviors was stopping inappropriate behaviors and identifying triggers. Although he could not make a direct connection between ecological findings and classroom management, Kounin was able to identify a set of teacher behaviors and lesson characteristics. These characteristics and behaviors included Kounin's early studies examining stop events following inappropriate behaviors, momentum, overlapping, and group alerting associated with student work involvement. Kounin was also determined that behaviors that work for regular students have the same effects on students in the same classroom identified as emotionally disturbed (Kounin & Obradovic, 1968). Kounin's work helped change the focus of management research from reactive strategies to preventive strategies and from teacher personality to the environmental and strategic components of management.

Additional research on classroom management has attempted to identify teaching strategies and behaviors. Studies have used student achievement or attitudes as outcomes to help identify student engagement and disruptions. Kounin (1990) argues that, regardless of the nature of a given learning task, it makes sense that students must be engaged for learning to occur. With this understanding, it is logical to assume that on-task behavior is a reasonable classroom management indicator. Furthermore, disruptive behavior is likely to interfere with instructional activities and would likely distract other students from learning. Thus, the conclusion was drawn that good classroom management is viewed as a precursor for student learning. Kounin (1990) also noted that focus on group classroom management skills allows the teacher to develop routines within the curriculum to help individual children. For the diverse classrooms that include

students with disabilities, the teaching style that teachers employ should match the teachers' instructional goals for their students, the types of activities used in the classroom, and the students' characteristics based on the IEP.

Jones (1996) identified five main features of classroom management:

1. Understanding of current research and theory in classroom management and students' psychological and learning needs
2. The creation of positive teacher-student and peer relationships
3. The use of instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group
4. Using organizational and group management methods that maximize on-task behavior
5. The ability to use various counseling and behavioral systems to assist students who demonstrate persistent or severe behavior problems.

Furthermore, this view includes establishing and maintaining order, designing effective instruction, teaching using small group strategies, responding to the needs of individual students, and effectively handling individual students' discipline.

Sutherland et al. (2008), believe that classroom factors are a strong predictor of success for students with emotional disabilities. Also, these factors can be used as triggers for students with emotional disabilities. The authors suggest that teachers build a relationship with students who display behavioral problems. The same relationships will also permit a classroom environment with fewer disturbances, which allows the teacher to give quality instruction. Through a qualitative analysis of descriptive and experimental assessments used to describe the context of classroom settings, the authors

concluded that researchers should focus not only on the state of the classroom but also on the number of interventions being conducted.

Classroom management represents a significant aspect of the teacher's pedagogical knowledge. It is often a description of core knowledge for educators (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2017). Definitions of classroom management include the teacher's actions to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation. According to Meyers et al. (2017), when students with disabilities are given routines with clear expectations and behavior-specific praise within a positive behavior intervention system, they are more likely to reach yearly goals and reduce disruptive classroom behaviors.

Communicating Clear Expectations for Achievement

Process-outcome research during the 1970s served as a basis for examining the effects and principles of classroom management. Studies in this practice targeted teacher behaviors that predicted student outcomes with a specific focus on student achievement. Anderson et al. (1979) initiated a series of process-outcome studies in elementary and middle school classrooms. The instructional model consisted of 22 specific principles believed to promote the effective teaching of young children in small groups. The model was first presented to 10 first-grade teachers in three schools. They agreed to implement it in their reading group instruction. Ten other teachers in three other schools served as a control group and received no special treatment. Researchers looked for key behaviors: monitoring student behavior, communicating clear expectations, keeping students engaged, and minimizing disruptions. Researchers found that when teachers gave specific instructions and direct feedback to questions, students had a sustained increase in

attention to a task. Researchers also found that educators began to routinely give positive feedback after research trials were concluded during follow-up discussions.

To build on Anderson and colleagues' findings, Brophy et al. (1977) conducted an extensive program of research on elementary grade mathematics instruction. They found that teachers whose classes had larger achievement scores were better at classroom management. These teachers spent less time in transitions and dealing with discipline problems. Teachers also were able to keep activities moving faster by explaining expectations and directions in a clear, concise manner before activities.

To build on the importance of process-outcomes research, Anderson et al. (1980) conducted a series of studies to identify and maintain classroom management components. Studies were completed in 27 elementary and 51 middle school classrooms. Researchers emphasized that as the studies were being conducted, it was critical to focus on the beginning of the school year, as most processes are introduced. Specifics varied with grade level, subject, and socioeconomic background of students; however, the concepts and principles that came from the studies painted a clear picture of what is needed for successfully managing classroom settings.

From these studies, two key principles developed: good management is preventive rather than reactive, and teachers help create well-managed classrooms by identifying and teaching desirable behaviors to their students. At the start of the school year, effective teachers had a clear conception of what student behaviors were desired. These behaviors were explicitly taught to students in several ways. They established rules or guidelines for desired behaviors, planned and taught routines and procedures for students' class activities, monitored student behavior, and worked carefully. In doing so,

initial problems were detected and corrected before inappropriate behavior could become a habit. The early practice of such routines resulted in a more positive climate and student cooperation throughout the year. Effective teachers also provided prompt feedback, pacing class activities to keep them moving and consistently applying classroom procedures and consequences.

Providing Behavior Support in the Learning Environment

When teaching a student with special needs, it is important to establish instructional environments that engage students (Harry & Klingner, 2007). This can be done by providing frequent opportunities for students to respond and interact without the fear of backlash. Harry & Klingner suggest that after an opportunity is provided for a student to show a desirable behavior, the teacher must display a praise specific response that coincides with the desired behavior. Furthermore, when students with special needs begin to expect specific praise, they are more likely to follow directions and less likely to be off-task (Sayeski & Brown, 2014). Another key component is classroom structure. Consistent and flexible classrooms use an array of techniques to keep students on task and engaged.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based structure that considers student data classroom systems in practices within the entire school. Positive behavioral interventions and support are broken down into three tiers. Tier 1 focuses on everyone in the environment for the entire school (PBIS, 2013). Tier 1 interventions are initiatives that promote collaboration, community, and social norms. Moreover, Tier 1 interventions focus on teaching students appropriate behaviors before they engage in negative social interactions. Tier 2 interventions are more focused on

students who struggle during Tier I. The students needing Tier 2 intervention are more at risk of engaging in negative social interactions, lack self-management, and need additional academic support. Again, Tier 2's focus, much like Tier 1, is to be proactive using classroom data to identify social skills of students showing difficult behaviors.

For up to 5% of the school population, there are Tier 3 interventions. Tier 3 interventions are designed to be individualized, supporting students who need smaller groups to learn positive classroom interactions before or while integrating into the general education setting. The students receiving Tier 3 interventions usually include those with developmental disabilities, autism, and EBD (PBIS, 2013). While the students are receiving additional support for their behavior, they are still expected to be included in the general education academic setting. In order to make this possible, often students with autism or EBD will be placed on a functional behavior assessment that outlines unwanted behaviors and adds objectives in order to maintain the student in the general education setting as much as possible. A key component of functional behavior assessment is identifying triggers in positive supports that help decrease unwanted behavior (Weist et al., 2017).

Chapter III

Method

Overview

All school systems in the United States have experienced the need to improve student learning because of mandates such as NCLB and ESSA. Unfortunately, resources to allow the study of all 50 states and U.S. territories are limited. This study sought to identify what principals report about novice teachers and to describe their ability to support students with disabilities in the general education setting. Data on novice teachers' ability to support students with disabilities were gathered by examining ratings of classroom management skills, which include skills necessary for promoting positive behavior for all students, including those with behavioral challenges. Further, the study aimed to provide a comparison of these skills for teachers who attended traditional certification programs and those who were certified via alternative pathways. Next, this study addressed the question of whether differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity to respond to classroom management needs of students with disabilities. Last, the study examined potential differences between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity to respond to the academic needs of students with disabilities.

Sample

This study specifically targeted novice teachers of Grades K–12 in Texas. Of the over 700,000 educational staff, 358,450 were considered certified teachers of record for the 2018–2019 academic school year (TAPR, 2019). In total, there were 100,983

alternatively certified teachers and 186,654 teachers certified through standard programming. This represents the most recent data available via the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website . Overall, 23,687 teachers were considered newly certified teachers of record. This included 10,610 certified through alternative certifications programs in Texas and 8,971 certified through standard programming for the 2018–2019 academic year (TAPR,2019). The remainder of the teaching population consists of those with out-of-state certifications, those at open enrollment charters, those working as substitute teachers, or those on temporary permits.

For this study, data from principal surveys for a total of 12,417 teachers were analyzed based on available data for the 2018–2019 academic school year. The participants of interest in this study were novice teachers, defined as first-year teachers certified in Texas through a traditional or alternative certification program. The teachers included some from 124 certification programs, 37 of them being alternative programs. Of the 12,417 teachers with survey data available, 7,475 (60.2%) were certified through an alternative certification program, leaving 4,939 (39.8%) who were certified through a traditional program.

This final sample included initial teacher certification of the following types: early childhood through Grade 6, 38.1%; early childhood through Grade 12, 23.2%; Grades 4–8, 15.4%; Grades 6–12, 4.3%; Grades 7–12, 18.4%; Grades 8–12, 0.2%; bilingual and gifted certifications classified as "N/A," 0.3%.

Procedure

Research Design

This study is considered archival research because data were retrieved from the archive on the Texas Education Agency website. Sample data were obtained from the 2018–2019 principal survey for novice teachers, which is given every year. The survey, completed by principals, assesses relevant educator preparation programs' effectiveness in preparing teachers to succeed in the classroom. As a cross-sectional research design, participants are purposefully separated based on existing differences. For this research study, K–12 teachers were compared based on varied certifications and their chosen route to certification, specifically alternative or traditional.

Survey Instrument

Data from the 2018–2019 Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers was used to analyze principals' reports on teachers' capacity to meet classroom management needs when students with disabilities are in the general education setting. The survey collects data about first-year teachers' performance and the effectiveness of educator preparation programs in preparing first-year teachers to succeed in the classroom. Texas Education Code (TEC § 21.045) and Texas Administrative Code (Tex. Admin. Code, Chapter 229), Accountability System for Educator Preparation Programs, require accountability standards for Texas educator preparation programs. Current State Board for Educator Certification rules require each principal who has one or more first-year teachers on campus to complete a brief survey.

At the beginning of the school year, principals are notified via the educator certification online system to review their novice teachers. Each survey is to be completed separately and independently for each novice teacher. A specific principal or person holding an administrative title is designated to complete the surveys in most Texas

schools. At charter schools, it may require any person with the qualifications to assess accountability, as principals may not hold administrative certifications issued by the state. The survey collection begins in April and ends in May; results are made available by July. Surveys are required for all first-year teachers who may be interns in an alternative certification program or newly certified first-year teachers. The survey applies only to Texas educator preparation programs. TEA established partnerships with organizations like the Texas Comprehensive Center at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, now an affiliate of the American Institutes for Research, and WestED to develop the principal surveys.

Before distributing the survey, superintendents, human resources personnel, and principals have access to training modules posted on the TEA website about how to complete and submit the surveys. The surveys are in the Educator Certification Online System (ECOS) for principals with first-year teachers. Principals will have the opportunity to earn Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits upon completing each survey.

Teachers to be included in the survey are prepopulated for administration. Throughout the survey, on-demand training is available for support. Based on reports, the average principal spends approximately 15 minutes completing each survey. Of the 40 items and seven sections from the survey, two main sections were utilized for analysis. These two sections are " Classroom Environment" and " Students with Disabilities." Both sections were chosen because they identify five target behaviors that are imperative in ensuring students' success. The items included in each section are described within the Analysis section (below). Each question contains a rating of 0–3, with 0 representing

"Not Prepared," 1 representing "Not Sufficiently Prepared," 2 representing "Sufficiently Prepared," and 3 representing "Well Prepared." Unfortunately, TEA does not provide data to support the reliability and validity of the survey. Inferences can be made based on the population and structure of the survey. An example of the principal survey is in the Appendix. For the 2018–2019 academic school year, 15,782 principal surveys were distributed, and 14,930 were completed. However, for this study a total of 12,417 novice teachers were analyzed and based on the available data, novice teachers don't receive the support necessary to be successful in the classroom, which therefore places novice teachers in uncomfortable situations.

Analysis

Data for the principal survey can be downloaded from the TEA website. The data come deidentified and are accessible to the public. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Data are presented for individual novice teachers in Texas separately. The report includes cumulative scores for teachers meeting standards for each program as well as scores for separate domains on the survey. At the beginning, an analysis was conducted to identify the means, standard deviation, and descriptive statistics across the novice teachers as an entire group and by the type of certification.

Next, survey data for teachers was grouped into the following categories for statistical testing: traditional certification and alternative certification programs. The data from the principal survey outline whether a teacher received certification through a traditional program or an alternative program. This study then focused on sections entitled "Section III: Classroom Environment" and "Section V: Students with

Disabilities." Individual scores of teachers who received a rating of 0 to ten as well as an average score of "Sufficiently Prepared" or "Well Prepared" after scores were averaged. The mean of teacher scores as a group, for each type of certification program (traditional vs. alternative) across items were compared for statistical differences. The overall percentage score for the program should not be used to indicate an overall average score.

Research Question 1

The first research question was as follows: How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals on classroom management and supporting students with disabilities? The mean, standard deviation, and range were computed across all teachers in the sample. Then the mean, standard deviation, and descriptive statistics were completed separately for teachers by type of certification training—traditional or alternative program.

Research Question 2

The second research question was as follows: What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity to respond to classroom management needs and to support students with disabilities? Differences in classroom management ratings were analyzed using an independent sample *t*-test procedure using data from "Section III: Classroom Environment," which included survey questions 26 through 32. To address potential differences between these groups in preparation for support of students with disabilities, a *t* test was also utilized using data from "Section V: Students with Disabilities," including questions 40 to 45. Before *t*-test statistics were run, the average rating for each question for sections titled Learning Environment and Students with Disabilities were calculated.

The average was then used to compare groups using the independent sample t test, one for each section.

Chapter IV

Results

This study examined how education preparation programs, specifically, alternative or traditional programs in Texas, affect novice teachers' ability to support the needs of students by ensuring effective classroom management and adhering to special education procedures. This chapter offers an analysis of ratings from the 2018–2019 annual principal survey on 13 survey items. These survey items were selected from the two sections of the survey focused on classroom management and supporting students with disabilities. Principal ratings for novices in Texas were examined to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals with respect to classroom management and supporting students with disabilities?
2. What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity in classroom management and adhere to the procedures to support needs of students with disabilities?

For each item, a novice could be rated from "Not at All Prepared" (0) to "Well Prepared" (3). A rating of 2 indicates that the novice was sufficiently prepared, while a rating of 1 indicates the novice was not sufficiently prepared. For the purpose of this study, a rating of 2 or 3 can be viewed as a desirable rating, while 0 and 1 indicate a lack of enough preparation in the skill area.

Research Question 1

How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals with respect to classroom management and supporting students with disabilities?

Descriptive Statistics: Learning Environment

Thirteen survey items were included in this research to assess novice teachers' ability to successfully manage the learning environment as well as implement procedures needed to support students with disabilities. Seven of the 13 items were included in "Learning Environment" and the final six items were found in "Students with Disabilities."

Across all novice teachers rated, the mean score for "Section III: Learning Environment" was 2.31 ($SD = .66$). When considering rating for each question in this section, novice teachers scored the highest average ($M = 2.41$; $SD = .64$) for question 26, providing a safe classroom. Novice teachers were rated the lowest ($M = 2.24$, $SD = .75$) on maintaining clear expectations for students in the classroom (question 30). Specific results from the survey items in this section are provided in Table 1. Overall, over 80% of novice teachers were reported to be well prepared or sufficiently prepared according to responses to each question in "Learning Environment."

Descriptive Statistics: Students with Disabilities

Regarding "Students with Disabilities," the overall mean score of the sample across items was 2.21 ($SD = .61$). The novice teachers were more prepared ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .61$) on question 45, regarding understanding and adhering to the federal and state laws that govern special education services. Novices were rated least prepared ($M = 2.15$, $SD = .69$) for question 41, differentiating instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. While 15% of teachers scores from the survey were missing for Section V, standard deviation ranged from .61 to .69 for both sections. Analyses of individual survey items are included in Table 2.

Table 1*Principal Ratings of Novice Teachers: Learning Environment*

| Question To what extent was the first-year teacher prepared to . . . | Not Prepared at All (%) | Not Sufficiently Prepared (%) | Sufficiently Prepared (%) | Well Prepared (%) | Mean (SD) (%) |
|--|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| —organize a safe classroom? (Question 26) | 1.01% | 5.4 | 44.9 | 48.8 | 2.41 (.64) |
| —organize a classroom learning environment that is accessible for all students? (Question 27) | 0.9 | 5.5 | 45.9 | 47.6 | 2.40 (.64) |
| —organize a classroom in which procedures and routines are clear and efficient? (Question 28) | 1.8 | 10.7 | 43.2 | 44.3 | 2.30 (.73) |
| —establish clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom (Question 29)? | 2.0 | 11.9 | 43.7 | 42.4 | 2.26 (.74) |
| —maintain clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom? (Question 30) | 2.1 | 13.4 | 43.0 | 41.5 | 2.24 (.76) |
| —differentiate instruction to implement campus behavior systems consistently and effectively? (Question 31) | 1.8 | 11.7 | 44.9 | 41.6 | 2.20 (.73) |
| —differentiate instruction to provide support to students to meet expected behavior standards? (Question 32) | 1.7 | 11.4 | 45.3 | 41.6 | 2.27 (.73) |

Note: Data are from the Texas Education Agency's principal survey assessing 12,416 novice teachers 2018–2019 on the Learning Environment section. Mean scores are based on averages of 0–3 ratings: 0, "Not Prepared at All"; 1, "Not Sufficiently Prepared"; 2, "Sufficiently Prepared"; and 3, "Well Prepared." Adapted from *Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers*, by the Texas Education Agency, 2019 (<https://>).

Table 2*Principal Ratings of Novice Teachers: Students with Disabilities*

| Question To what extent was the first-year teacher prepared to . . . | Not Prepared at All (%) | Not Sufficiently Prepared (%) | Sufficiently Prepared (%) | Well Prepared (%) | Mean (SD) |
|---|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| —differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities? (Question 40) | 1.1 | 12.2 | 55.0 | 31.7 | 2.17 (.67) |
| —differentiate instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities? (Question 41) | 1.4 | 13.2 | 54.0 | 31.4 | 2.15 (.69) |
| —develop and/or implement appropriate formal and informal assessments for students with disabilities to demonstrate their learning? (Question 42) | 1.1 | 11.4 | 56.5 | 31.0 | 2.17 (.66) |
| —ability to make appropriate instructional decisions based on a student's individualized education program? (Question 43) | 1.0 | 9.7 | 56.3 | 33.0 | 2.21 (.65) |
| —collaborate with other relevant staff to meet the academic, developmental, and behavioral needs of students with disabilities? (Question 44) | 0.9 | 7.1 | 55.0 | 37.0 | 2.28 (.63) |
| —understand and adhere to the federal and state laws that govern special education services? (Question 45) | 0.7 | 6.4 | 56.4 | 36.5 | 2.29 (.61) |

Note: Data are from the Texas Education Agency's principal survey assessing 10,669 novice teachers 2018–2019 on the Students with Disabilities section. Mean scores are based on averages of 0–3 ratings: 0, "Not Prepared at All"; 1, "Not Sufficiently Prepared"; 2, "Sufficiently Prepared"; and 3, "Well Prepared." Adapted from *Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers*, by the Texas Education Agency, 2019 (<https://>).

Summary of Results for Research Question 1

Principals rated 12,416 novice teachers in Texas for survey questions in "Section III: Learning Environment." However, principals rated 10,669 novice teachers for "Section V: Students with Disabilities." When item means were compared descriptively, novice teachers were least able to differentiate instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. Contrarily, novice teachers scored the highest mean for organizing a safe classroom environment and adhering to federal and state laws. Results showed that for "Section III: Learning Environment," novices still met standards but were less prepared to maintain clear expectations in the classroom to support behavior. Novices also received low ratings under "Section V: Students with Disabilities" for questions relating to creating, developing, and implementing instructional assessments for students with disabilities, indicating there may be gaps in educational preparedness programs. the following chapter discusses results and implications based on results for Research Question 1.

Research Question 2

What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity in classroom management and adhere to the procedures to support needs of students with disabilities?

The second purpose of this study was to analyze if there was a reported difference between novice teacher's ability to manage the learning environment in adhere to procedures to support the needs of students with disabilities based on their certification

route. The certification routes included in this survey are traditional certifications and alternative certification obtained in the state of Texas. Descriptive statistics and independent samples *t* test were used to examine if a difference exists between novice teachers from traditional and alternative certification programs. Independent sample *t* tests were conducted for "Section III: Learning Environment" and "Section V: Students with Disabilities." Of the 12,417 novice teachers included in this survey who were rated in Section III by their principals, 59.9% were certified through alternative certification ($n = 7,441$), and 40.1% were traditionally certified ($n = 4,976$). Of the 10,699 who were rated in Section V by their principals, 6,953 (65.0%) were alternatively certified, and 3,746 (35.0%) were traditionally certified.

Regarding "Section III: Learning Environment," the mean score for alternatively certified teachers was 2.26 ($SD = .67$), a score suggestive of meeting standards. The mean score for teachers holding a standard certificate was 2.38 ($SD = .64$), which also indicated meeting standards. For "Section V: Students with Disabilities," teachers holding an alternative certification averaged a mean of 2.17 ($SD = .62$). Of the teachers holding a standard certification, for whom survey data was available for Section V, the average score was 2.28 ($SD = .58$), indicating that standards were met.

Impact of Certification Program on Learning Environment

An independent samples *t* test was conducted in order to analyze whether there was a significant difference between novice teachers who were certified by traditional or alternative routes with regard to meeting standards for the learning environment. Overall scores for all the items in this section were averaged in order to run an independent samples *t* test. Outcomes show that there was a significant difference in the mean scores

for alternatively certified teachers ($M = 2.26$; $SD = .68$) and those who were traditionally certified ($M = 2.38$; $SD = .64$) as calculated by t test ($t[11,926] = -10.361$; $p < .05$; $d = .18$). The results suggest that certification route influences novice teachers' ability to implement classroom management skills that affect the learning environment. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .18$) was found to meet Cohen's recommendation for a small effect ($d \sim .20$). Specifically, results suggest that novice teachers who attend traditional education preparation programs are more prepared in this area, as rated by school principals, than alternatively certified novice teachers.

Impact of Certification Program on Supporting Students with Disabilities

An independent samples t test was conducted in order to analyze if there was a significant difference in performance between novice teachers who were certified by traditional means and those certified by alternative means regarding supporting and adhering to the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Overall mean scores for items in "Section V: Students with Disabilities" were averaged in order to complete an independent samples t test. Findings showed that there was a significant difference in the scores for teachers who were alternatively certified ($M = 2.17$, $SD = .62$) and those who were certified by standard/traditional practices ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .59$), as calculated by t test ($t[10,241] = -8.49$; $p < .05$; $d = .18$). The results suggest that certification route influences novice teachers' ability to support the needs of students with disabilities. The effect size for this analysis ($d = .18$) was also found to meet Cohen's recommendation for a small effect ($d \sim .20$). Specifically, results suggest that novice teachers who attend traditional education preparation programs are more prepared than those who obtain alternative certification to support students with disabilities.

Summary of Results for Research Question 2

For individual sections, there was a significant difference on both Section III and Section V of the principal survey for novice teachers based on the independent samples t tests conducted. The effect size of this difference was small. Moreover, since both means were found to be statistically significant, the next chapter discusses implications and recommendations to support alternatively certified novice teachers when entering the field of education.

Chapter V

Discussion

For the 2020–2021 school year there were an additional 1.9 million teachers needed in the field of education for grades K–12 (Sutcher et al., 2016). Unfortunately, research following teacher trends shows this need continuing through 2024 because of various reasons, including difficulty managing students' behaviors and an unrealistic perception of on the job expectations (Carver-Thomas, Darling-Hammond, & Sutcher, 2016). Carver-Thomas, Darling-Hammond, and Sutcher go on to state that, approximately two thirds of new teachers do not return to the field of education because of school staffing decisions, life changes, or dissatisfactions with teaching. Research by Darling-Hammond (2015) suggested that the greatest indicator of student success and teacher attrition is educator preparation. With that in mind, it is imperative to assess educator preparation programs in order to support novice teacher deficits in America's classrooms, including those teachers who support students with disabilities. A well-prepared teacher is one who can use positive behavior supports to manage the classroom as well as adhere to state and federal mandates that support meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

This study posed two research questions using the Texas principal survey for assessing novice teachers. Specifically, the study examined data to answer two questions. Research Question 1: How are novice teachers in Texas rated by principals with respect to classroom management and supporting students with disabilities? Research Question 2: What differences exist between novice teachers from traditional

and alternative certification programs in their reported capacity in classroom management and adhere to the procedures to support needs of students with disabilities?

There was a total of 12,417 surveys completed for the 2018–2019 academic school year. This sample included initial certification of the following types: early childhood through Grade 6, early childhood through Grade 12, Grades 4–8, Grades 6–12, Grades 7–12, Grades 8–12, and bilingual and gifted certifications classified as "N/A." In this study, 13 items were assessed, seven from the Learning Environment section and six from the Students with Disabilities section. Overall, novice teachers scored "Sufficiently Prepared" on both sections.

Research Question 1

Results from answering Research Question 1 showed that novice teachers overall were rated positively, with over 80% identified as sufficiently prepared across survey items pertaining to the learning environment and supporting students with disabilities. The findings from the descriptive statistics of survey items by group further suggest that both alternative and traditional education preparation programs in Texas have a positive impact on novice teacher capacity. Previous research on novice teachers focused on their perception of the job and the workload (Knolbach & Whittington, 2002). Results indicate that while novice teachers may show negative feelings once on the job with low retention rates, they are being sufficiently prepared. The disconnect between performance and job satisfaction may be supported through specific campus and district-based initiatives.

Classroom management skills are rooted in creating routines, structure, and expectations. Research from Meyers et al. (2017) suggests that students with disabilities who are given routines with clear expectations and behavior-specific praise within a

positive behavior intervention system, are more likely to reach yearly goals and reduce disruptive classroom behaviors. The results of this survey show novice teachers can create a stable learning environment, thus further supporting the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Specifically, novices are doing exceptionally well at organizing the classroom environment to support routines. Mean scores indicate novices scored highest on a question regarding understanding and adhering to state and federal laws to support students with disabilities than on other items in the Students with Disabilities question series. Taken together the results are not surprising. In order to adhere to special education law, classroom teachers must follow specific plans of the IEP, including explicit directions for the learning environment.

It is also important to note that all Texas schools follow the PBIS tier system for behavior (TEA, 2019). Based on the results of the survey, it is evident that novices have a solid foundation of what is expected in the classroom. However, previous research on alternative education programs note that while teachers are given strategies for the classroom, they are not given adequate time to practice such strategies prior to the first day of school (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In order to support novices with their workload over the first year, it is imperative that districts implement professional development opportunities that expose them to learning experiences that help them succeed in expressed areas in which they need support for growth.

Research Question 2

Results from the two sections studied show that amongst novice teachers in Texas there was a difference between certification groups with regard to principal ratings of preparedness. However, as noted above, both groups had ratings in these areas that

were indicative of being sufficiently prepared; overall means across items and averages within sections were above 2.0 on scale of 0 to 3. There was a significant difference in favor of traditional preparations programs with regard to average ratings across items in each of the two sections examined. It is important to note that while significance was found, the effect size was small for both sections ($d = .18$), indicating that the magnitude of difference between educational preparations programs in Texas may be minimal. The statistically significant findings were similar to that found by Darling-Hamond et al. (2000), who were able to show a statistical difference between teacher performance based on alternative certification programs and extensive pedagogical coursework but could not make a direct correlation to which aspects of preparedness programs were driving novice success. Moreover, both studies investigated components of effective classroom management skills. When analyzing the specific mean differences, it is important to highlight that novices scored lower on items pertaining to differentiating for behavior, which may affect classroom management skills. Specifically, almost one in seven teachers struggles to differentiate instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This is in line with the expressed feelings of novice teachers, who acknowledge feelings of being overwhelmed by unexpected student behaviors and unrealistic classroom expectations (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Previous research on alternative certification programs focused mostly on the ability of novice teachers certified through alternative measures to produce student outcomes equal to those produced by teachers with traditional certification. Dating back to Miller et al. (1998) to a more recent study from Dorsey (2002), researchers in support

of alternative programs have found that when allowed time on the job, alternatively certified novice teachers are just as successful as traditionally certified teachers when compared on student achievement on state standardized testing. Likewise, this study found that almost 80% of novice teachers were found to be prepared on both sections of the survey. While this research study does not measure explicit student outcomes, it can be inferred that when a novice is well prepared, there will be greater student achievement.

Regarding supporting the needs of students with disabilities in the general education setting, it was found that based on principal ratings, approximately 80% of novice teachers can differentiate instruction to make appropriate instructional decisions based on a students' IEP. Moreover, principals found that nearly 90% of novice teachers were adherent to federal and state laws that govern special education services. The previous findings are interesting to note, as most educational preparation programs for general education only include limited coursework in regard to special education. It is expected that the score for this survey item also has a relatively higher mean because coursework in law and policy are included in both traditional and alternative certification programs. Future research may explore teachers' self-efficacy on law and policy and their ability to implement programs adherent to federal and state laws in the classroom with fidelity.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Since the primary focus was on educator preparation in Texas, this study may not be generalized to represent novice teachers from other universities or education preparation programs across the United States than those preparing the teachers who were studied. While it can be assumed that

components of education programs are the same, this study solely focused on Texas. The teachers and the students in this population may have experience factors or schooling that is solely unique to Texas, therefore giving a limited scope of national education preparation programs. It is important to highlight that all educational preparation programs (EPPs) in the state of Texas require all programs to cover general standards regarding (a) organizing classroom management and developing a positive learning environment, (b) pedagogy and instructional practice, (c) curriculum development and lesson planning, (d) state assessments of students, and (e) parent conferences and communication skills (Texas Education Agency, 2016). With these components being universal in both types of EPPs, it can be inferred that differences, such as the length of time of traditional EPPs and extended on-the-job practice, contribute to why traditionally certified teachers are more prepared. In the future, studies may benefit from additional research focusing on differences amongst EPPs in various states to identify similarities. These findings can be used to support future graduates obtaining certification through EPPs as a whole.

The data obtained were from based on an evaluator's perception. For this study, the evaluators were principals of novice teachers. Thus, results (i.e., ratings) may be impacted by personal experiences with the teachers being rated. More specifically, given that raters knew the participants personally, they may have based their ratings on how teachers have grown on a personal and professional level over the course of the school year rather than solely on demonstrated performance/competency in specific domains at the time of observation. Additionally, principals' perception may have also been impacted by the overall ability of teachers in the school. For novice teachers who are

demonstrating levels of competency higher than that of colleagues, they may have been rated higher by comparison, but that does not mean they do not necessarily show mastery of the skill at question as an individual.

Since there are limited studies on the characteristics of a special education leader, roles for principals and leaders of amongst special education students are outlined through federal mandates, such as the intervention process and IDEA (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010). It is not a requirement in the state of Texas for principals to have direct experience in special education (TEA, 2019). Regarding the principal survey, without this knowledge, it can be implied that principals are giving scores based on an assumption or idea of special education. Additional research should use trained special education raters or use more than rate to compare scores. It may also be beneficial for districts to hold professional development classes to train and calibrate scoring for administrators of the principal survey.

Additionally, this survey is administered at the end of the school year. While teachers are not monitored throughout the school year by law, it is not abnormal for teachers to learn and be mentored by their peers. By the time this survey is administered, novice teachers may have received additional coaching and support through on-the-job experience, which ultimately could skew the actual impact of education preparation programs. As an outcome, the true impact of certification type may not be shown as efficiently as it could be if it were administered at the start of the academic school year. Future research may explore teacher competency at various points in the academic school year. A comparison between the fall and spring semesters could be used to identify skills acquired during EPPs versus on-the-job learning.

As a final consideration, remember that this survey had limited response options, utilizing a Likert scale with only four options. Consequently, novice teachers' abilities have been compacted into four choices that do not allow detailed explanations about competency for individuals. Because of this, researchers must rely on the summary for each section to form an overall understanding of deficits held by novice teachers.

Implications

There are several implications for educational institutions based on this study. It is apparent that novice teachers have a foundation for what is needed to manage the classroom and to adhere to the laws and principles that support students with special needs. However, data show that our students are not growing and that they require additional support (McLoughlin, 2010). Since EPPs must adhere to specific standards, it would be beneficial for novice teachers to continue to receive job training based on campus and district assessment. It may also be recommended that novice teachers undergo a preservice for support and to analyze individual gaps that may require coaching and remediation throughout the academic school year. This preservice could be offered as an additional professional development opportunity that smooths the introductory phase to teaching for novice teachers.

Another implication found in the survey results is drawn from the range of scoring from principals on the survey. Ranging from 0 to 3, scores of 0 were significantly few. Further research results may show that principals are not 100% sure of what an exceptionally outstanding or significantly poor performance looks like in action. As stated before, scores indicate that perception is playing a part in scoring in that teachers are being scored based on personal growth rather than a district standard. It would be

beneficial for districts to collaborate in calibrating principals' scoring ability so that results were truly indicative of what novice teachers are capable of in the classroom.

These results indicate that novice teachers would benefit from a multistep survey that analyzed growth from the beginning to the end of the academic school year. Previous research shows that novice teachers are not returning to the field of education; therefore, support should be given at the start of the academic school year and across the first academic teaching year to analyze concerns, create growth plans, and assess future needs to decrease attrition rates.

Chapter VI

Action Plan

Findings from the principal survey revealed that, overall, novice teachers are rated with positive scores with regard to classroom management skills and supporting students with disabilities. The survey also revealed that there is a small but significant difference between novice teachers' ability based on certification type. Based on what was found in this study, it appears that novice teachers are often adequately prepared by the end of the academic school year. However, it has been demonstrated that novice teachers may struggle with the real-time workload that is placed on them throughout the school year (Knolbach & Whittington, 2002). Further, the lack of growth and continued behavioral and discipline issues amongst students with disabilities remains a concern. Ultimately, it would be beneficial to analyze novice teachers needs at the start of the school year and provide mentorship to ensure that teachers are being supported with fidelity.

In the world of education, there is the belief that if more time and money are spent on teacher trainings, the investment will produce more successful teaching experiences. However, according to Boswell (2018), the process of professional development goes beyond time and money to include best practices focused on the most current research. Although there are state mandates, outlining requirements for how much time educators must commit to professional learning, the true growth of educators comes from quality delivery of coaching, quality content, and consistent follow-up. The concepts outlined by Boswell run consistent with traditional beliefs of collaboration and may be found useful when coaching new teachers or during evaluations.

In order to provide quality growth, the content of mentorship needs to be based on pre- and postassessments on a specific observable goal or need. For mentors, assessments provide an overall snapshot of what educators know how to do in the classroom, eliminating topics that might be addressed during professional training that are redundant. When aligned with change models such as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, educators may also express their concern in implementing procedures and strategies to reach the overall goal. As coaches and administrators analyze both assessments, they may find that teachers' knowledge may be directly affecting their ability to implement behavior management strategies and special education procedures in the classroom.

During professional learning opportunities, it is also the educator's duty to provide knowledge and skills to increase observable classroom behaviors, align learning with the school's goals and framework, and hone in on expanding content knowledge (Boswell, 2018). However, it is impossible to do that accurately without knowing the extent to which current staff already possess these skills. Once administrators have performed those assessments, they can analyze data and provide coaching and professional learning to overcome deficits that really matter to the school community.

In order to remain effective teachers, novices, first, must continue widening their knowledge of fundamental classroom principles, such as classroom management, differentiation, state law, and assessment for students with and without disabilities. Second, in order to support novices, districts must be willing to assess and create target intervention groups for all novice teachers led by special education and behavioral experts within the district.

The action plan proposed here provides an outline of mentorship programs intended to support novice teacher interventions already in place throughout districts in Texas and includes the following forms:

- *Novice Teacher's Needs Assessment*
- *Beginning of the Year Principal's Survey*

Both are needed for novice teachers' mentorship and include guidance on planning, timeframes, implementation, and evaluation.

Implementation of Mentorship Program

The content of the mentorship program entitled “Shaping the Modern-Day Classroom” includes three components: assessment of novice teacher needs, a beginning-of-the-year principal survey, and ongoing mentorship groups. The content of the mentorship is designed to be completed over the course of one school year (8 months), with adjustments being made as needed. The mentorship program consists of administrators as well as novice teachers meeting with district experts to identify areas of weakness. The observation/consultation sessions will be used to provide direct feedback to observed classroom practices and subsequent coaching for the school leader. The objectives for the mentorship program are as follows:

1. Support principals to identify needs of novice teachers early and with fidelity.
2. Assess and support the needs of beginner teachers based on targeted intervention.
3. Create a school-wide culture to help support a diverse classroom.

Outline of Proposed Action Plan

1. Identify district mentors.
2. Identify administrators and staff responsible for completing the principal survey.

3. Survey novice teachers to determine individual needs and struggles.
4. Have administrators complete the principal survey for the beginning of the year.
5. Use results from the novice teachers' needs survey to determine mentorship groups/leaders. Mentees will complete the survey once at the start of the academic school year.
6. Use results from the principal survey to coach principals on areas of support and to target professional learning community (PLC) topics. PLCs at the campus level are already held weekly. It is suggested that administrators attend PLCs quarterly to address topics of support.
7. Identify a schoolwide timeframe of support for novice teachers in the form of face-to-face meetings, and hold them twice in the school year, once in the beginning and once at the end of the year.
8. Have district mentors continuously monitor the administration's level of support throughout the year.
9. Instruct administrators to monitor campus-based supports continuously throughout the year.
10. Ensure administrators use individual growth at the beginning of the year and end-of-the-year surveys to create future campus professional developments.

Components of Mentorship Program

Participating district mentors are to be identified based on their experience with either special education or documented records of growing inclusion classes. Specifically, it would be ideal for mentors to be veteran teachers who had more than 5 years of education experience and were already serving in leadership roles at the campus level.

Mentoring teachers should be identified prior to the start of the academic school year. Mentor teachers may be from various grade levels and or subjects, K–12, to represent the variation of novices represented on the principal survey. Once novices have been separated based on their needs, mentorship teachers will lead groups based on their expertise. Mentors should keep in mind that while the main objective is to create classroom management procedures that support students with disabilities and those without, there are specific topics to be covered during mentee meetings. Groups should discuss differentiation for academic and behavioral needs, adhering to special education law, creating routines and procedures, and outlining expectations for academic success.

Administrators at the campus level are to complete the principal survey at the beginning of the school year. The determination of who should complete novice teacher observations should be based on the same criteria used for the formal TEA data collection, conducted in the spring, as outlined in Chapter III. This survey should be completed during the first 9 weeks of the school year. Administrators should have observations complete within the first six weeks, using the last three weeks for data calculation and reporting to district mentors.

In addition to the mentorship program for novice teachers, preparation programs should be mandatory. In the last decade many new teachers have opted to enter into alternative certification programs. These programs prepare novice teachers in every area, but they fail to prepare them to manage schooling students with disabilities successfully. These preparation programs will cover all the important facts about students with disabilities in addition to hands-on support to prepare these new teachers successfully and provide them with real-life experience so that when they enter the classroom, they are

equipped to handle whatever situation may arise. These preparation programs will also benefit the students because they're able to get the best education possible from trained professionals. The better prepared the teacher is, the better results they will receive in the classroom and from their students.

Roles of Mentorship Program

The roles of mentors, mentees, and members of the administration are explained in the following lists:

| Mentors | Mentees | Administration |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform data analysis of novice teachers' needs. • Schedule quarterly meeting dates. • Schedule initial administration meeting within 2 weeks of second semester. • Complete quarterly briefs to inform administration of topics covered during mentee meetings. • Meet at end of year with administration for growth comparison on principal survey. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the needs survey within the first 6 weeks of the school year. • Attend quarterly mentorship program meetings. • Participate in campus-wide support initiatives-PLCs and professional development conferences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify novices needing observation. • Complete observations within the first 6 weeks. • Perform data analysis of beginning-of-year principal survey. • Report data to mentors within the first 9 weeks. • Attend meeting with mentors to discuss possible campus initiatives/topics. • Complete end-of-year principal survey. • Perform end-of-year data analysis and growth comparison. • Conduct summer training for future mentors. |

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Appendix A

Novice Teacher Needs Assessment

| Directions Please rate yourself on each of the following statements: I can . . . | | Beginner Ability → Expert Ability | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. | —organize a safe classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | —organize a classroom learning environment that is accessible for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | —organize a classroom in which procedures and routines are clear and efficient | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | —establish clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | —maintain clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | —differentiate instruction to implement campus behavior systems consistently and effectively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | —differentiate instruction to provide support to students to meet expected behavior standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | —differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | —differentiate instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | —develop and/or implement appropriate formal and informal assessments for students with disabilities to demonstrate their learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | —make appropriate instructional decisions based on a student's individualized education program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | —collaborate with other relevant staff to meet the academic, developmental, and behavioral needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | —understand and adhere to the federal and state laws that govern special education services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Note: Adapted from Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers

Appendix B

Beginning of the Year Principal Survey

| Directions Please rate the observed novice teacher on each of the following statements: The novice teacher can . . . | | Beginner Ability → Expert Ability | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. | —organize a safe classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | —organize a classroom learning environment that is accessible for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | —organize a classroom in which procedures and routines are clear and efficient. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | —establish clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | —maintain clear expectations for student behavior in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | —differentiate instruction to implement campus behavior systems consistently and effectively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | —differentiate instruction to provide support to students to meet expected behavior standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | —differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | —differentiate instruction to meet the behavioral needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | —develop and/or implement appropriate formal and informal assessments for students with disabilities to demonstrate their learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | — make appropriate instructional decisions based on a student’s individualized education program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | —collaborate with other relevant staff to meet the academic, developmental, and behavioral needs of students with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | —understand and adhere to the federal and state laws that govern special education services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Note: Adapted from Teacher Preparation Effectiveness Survey: First-Year Teachers

