A TALE OF TWO PATHWAYS: THE PERCEPTIONS OF NEWLY GRADUATED
TRADITIONAL AND IN PLACE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER CANDIDATES
ON THEIR TEACHER PREPARATION EXPERIENCES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

EDUCATION

MAY 2013

By
Linda Oshita

Dissertation Committee:

Helen Slaughter, Chairperson
Donna Grace
Mary Beth Pateman
Clifton Tanabe
Lois Yamauchi
DEDICATION

To Roy, Alexander, and Kelly, the loves of my life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

They say it takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to help write a dissertation. There are so many people who have made this work possible. My committee chair, Dr. Helen Slaughter for her words of wisdom and for her steadfast commitment to helping me through this leg of the journey. I enjoyed tremendously the scholarly discussions over breakfasts and lunches. Although I will never be able to repay her, I do intend to pay it forward. My committee members Dr. Donna Grace, Dr. Mary Beth Pateman, and Dr. Clifton Tanabe for the kindness and support they have extended to me and for the genuine interest they have taken in my educational and professional endeavors. Dr. Lois Yamauchi for taking me under her wing all those years ago and for introducing me to the wonderful world of CREDE. It means a lot to me. Dr. Bryan Cook for the conversation in front of Wist Hall that started it all. I am forever grateful for the time, energy, and care that he has invested in my education. Dr. Cecily Ornelles for her mentorship and friendship over the years. Thank you for seeing the potential in me. This is possible because of you. Dr. Mary Jo Noonan and Dr. Amelia Jenkins for believing in me from the very beginning. Dr. Jim Skouge for making me laugh, even through the most stressful times and for reminding me of the real reason for doing what we do. Dr. Jenny Wells for listening to my endless monologues and for dispensing spot-on advice when I needed it. Dr. Rhonda Black and Dr. Drue Narkon for taking an interest in my studies and for cheering me on along the way. Dr. Patricia Edelen-Smith who taught me the importance of making it fun. Dr. Kavita Rao for always supporting my efforts and for buying me beer to celebrate my passing the comps. Vanessa Koseki and Stacey Pulmano for keeping things light and fun when I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders.
Marly Wilson my dearest friend for her unwavering support and friendship. Thank you for listening to me, for laughing with me, for taking me to breakfast, and for keeping me sane. OMG – can you believe it - I ate the whole elephant. Now I will pass the fork to you!

I also want to express my sincerest gratitude to the participants in this study who took time out of their very busy lives to share their experiences and insights with me so that it could benefit future special education teachers. The remarkable and courageous acts they do everyday is inspiring.

And last but certainly not least, my husband Roy, my biggest cheerleader and supporter, who always picked up the slack when I was buried in stacks of journal articles. Thank you for being my rock! And to my children, Alexander and Kelly, thank your patience and understanding through the years and for playing so nicely while I worked. Now let us play bakery and Minecraft!
ABSTRACT

The special education teacher shortage prompted school districts to hire unlicensed teachers on the condition they earn their credentials on-the-job (in place). Although the benefits of traditional student teaching is well documented, little is known about how in place arrangements prepare individuals for teaching special education. Given that large numbers of unlicensed teacher candidates are hired to teach children with disabilities annually, it is important to investigate how the in place student teaching arrangement prepares individuals to teach children with disabilities. This qualitative study explored the perceptions of ethnically diverse, recently graduated traditional and in place candidates on how their student teaching arrangements prepared them to teach special education.

Four research questions guided this study: (a) What are the perceptions of recently graduated in place/traditional special education teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences? (b) To what extent do teacher candidates believe student teaching experiences contributed to their success/challenges in the classroom? (c) Are there any significant differences in the perceptions of former traditional and in place candidates regarding their special education teacher preparation program? (d) What are the perceptions of experienced field supervisors regarding the traditional and in place student teaching experiences? Qualitative grounded theory methodology was used to analyze data and generate theory based on interviews with recently graduated teacher candidates and their university field supervisors from the Master of Education in Special Education Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Findings suggest (a) traditional teacher candidates felt well prepared teach special education but unprepared for care coordination duties; (b) in place candidates reported feeling well prepared for both the teaching and
care coordination responsibilities; and (c) field supervisors resoundingly supported traditional placements for all teacher candidates but also recognized the viability of in place teaching arrangements in preparing select candidates for special education.
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................iv

ABSTRACT ...............................................................................................................................vi

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................xi

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................... xii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................... 1
  Statement of the Problem ................................................................................................. 2
  Purpose of Study and Research Questions .................................................................. 5
  Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................... 6

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................................... 8
  Teacher Shortage and Its Impact on Teacher Preparation ........................................... 8
  Special Education and Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs .......................... 10
  Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs .................................................................. 11
  No Universal Definition of ATL Programs ................................................................ 13
  Criticisms of ATL Programs ......................................................................................... 14
  What We Know About Traditional Student Teaching ............................................ 14
  Traditional Program Criticism ....................................................................................... 17
  Alternative versus Traditional Program Comparison Studies ............................. 18
  Learning Communities .................................................................................................. 35
  Communities of Practice ............................................................................................... 35
  Summary ......................................................................................................................... 37

CHAPTER 3 METHOD ............................................................................................................. 39
  Qualitative Research ....................................................................................................... 39
  Grounded Theory ............................................................................................................. 40
  Sampling Procedures ....................................................................................................... 41
  Participants ....................................................................................................................... 41
  Procedures ........................................................................................................................ 42
  Data Collection and Analysis ......................................................................................... 45
  Role of the Researcher ..................................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER 4 THE DUAL ROLES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER ................. 51
  Teacher of Students with Disabilities ........................................................................... 51
  The Spectrum of Special Education Services ............................................................. 52
  Special Education Services in the General Education Classroom ......................... 54
  Special Education in a Resource Classroom ................................................................. 56
  Special Education in Fully Self-Contained Settings ................................................... 56
  Teacher as Care Coordinator ......................................................................................... 56
  The Felix Consent Decree ............................................................................................... 57
  Implications of Felix for Special Education Teachers ............................................... 60
  The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) .................................................................... 62
  Care Coordination Meetings ......................................................................................... 64
  Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 67

CHAPTER 5 THE TRADITIONAL EXPERIENCE ................................................................ 68
  Student Teaching Requirements ................................................................................... 68
  Experienced "Novices" .................................................................................................... 71
CHAPTER 6 THE IN PLACE EXPERIENCE ........................................................................... 113
In Place Requirements .................................................................................................. 113
Experienced "Novices" ..................................................................................................... 117
Theme 1: Drawn In by the Uniqueness of Special Education ........................................ 121
Theme 2: In Place Candidates Benefitted from Extensive Time Spent in Supervised
Classroom Activities .................................................................................................... 126
Theme 3: In Place Candidates Felt Well Prepared to Teach Because of Their Access
to a Comprehensive Support System During Their First Two Years as Special
Education Teachers ....................................................................................................... 131
Theme 4: In Place Candidates See the Direct Applicability of Coursework to Practice
 ........................................................................................................................................... 138
Theme 5: In Place Candidates Are Frustrated Over the Dual Nature of Special
Education Teaching Responsibilities and Want More Training in IEP-Related Issues
 ........................................................................................................................................... 140
Theme 6: The In Place Arrangement Worked Well But It's Not For Everyone ............. 144
Summary .......................................................................................................................... 146

CHAPTER 7 UNIVERSITY FIELD SUPERVISORS PERSPECTIVES ON THE IN PLACE AND
TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ................................................................................... 148
Role of the Field Supervisor ............................................................................................ 149
Theme 1: Field Supervisors Believe Traditional Student Teaching Benefits All
Teacher Candidates .......................................................................................................... 151
Theme 2: Field Supervisors Are Aware of And Concerned About the Limited
Opportunities For Care Coordination Practice in Traditional Student Teaching As
Both a Problem and a Challenge ................................................................................... 152
Theme 3: Field Supervisors Believe In Place Arrangements with Appropriate
Supports Can Prepare Select Candidates For Teaching Special Education ................ 155
Theme 4: Field Supervisors Feel In Place Candidates Must Prioritize Their Program Which
Limits Their Flexibility To Try Innovative Ideas .......................................................... 157
Summary .......................................................................................................................... 159

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY .......................................... 161
Traditional Candidate Benefits ....................................................................................... 162
The Downside of Traditional Student Teaching .............................................................. 163
False Impression ............................................................................................................... 164
Challenges of Care Coordination in Traditional Student Teaching ............................ 165
The Lack of Special Education-Specific Support Compounds the Problem .............. 165
Role Dissonance .............................................................................................................. 166
Cross-Purposes Pitfall ..................................................................................................... 167
Cross-Purposes Pitfall of Care Coordination ................................................................. 169
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>More Time for Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Place Candidates as “Being” Teachers</td>
<td>Recruitment of In Place Candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Opportunities for Observing Other Teachers</td>
<td>Organized Visits to Other Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need to Know</td>
<td>Formal Opportunities to Connect with Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools as Communities of Practice</td>
<td>Student Teaching Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Place as a Viable Option</td>
<td>Care Coordination Activities as a Routine Student Teaching Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Mentoring</td>
<td>Traditional Candidates as “Becoming” Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX A ................................................................. 190
APPENDIX B ................................................................. 192
APPENDIX C .................................................................. 198
APPENDIX D ................................................................. 203
APPENDIX E .................................................................. 205
APPENDIX F .................................................................. 207
APPENDIX G ................................................................. 210
APPENDIX H .................................................................. 212
APPENDIX I .................................................................. 214
REFERENCES .................................................................. 216
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Summary of Studies Reviewed</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Summary of Outcomes</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participant Demographics</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Field Supervisors</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Major Themes from the Findings</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Summary of Co-Teaching Types and Descriptions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Summary of Traditional Candidates</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Summary of In Place Candidates</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spectrum of Special Education Services</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The shortage of licensed special education teachers is a persistent problem in American education. Approximately 98% of school districts nationwide have consistently reported a shortage of licensed special education teachers (McLeskey, Tyler, and Flippin, 2004). The demand for licensed special education teachers promises to be an ongoing challenge for schools across the country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the need for special education teachers will likely increase by 17% between 2010-2020 (Bureau of Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Similarly, Hawaii is also in dire need of licensed special education teachers. According to the 2009-2010 State of Hawaii Department of Education Annual Employment Report, finding licensed special education teachers to fill vacant positions remains a top priority for Hawaii schools and “the need for special education teachers remains constant” (p. 2).

The demand for shortage-area teachers (e.g., special education) has paved the way for the proliferation of alternative teacher licensure (ATL) programs (Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007). The original intent of ATL programs was to attract teacher candidates who: (a) possess a degree in a non-teaching field; (b) are mid-career changers with expertise in content areas; and (c) are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey, & Rosenberg, 2007). Although it is debatable whether ATL programs are able to attract such diverse candidates with skills in other fields (Cohen-Vogel & Smith, 2007; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005), the goal of ATL programs is to “fast-track” the licensure process for individuals with non-teaching degrees and
backgrounds to fill vacancies in hard-to-fill teaching positions (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2005).

Although there is no universally accepted definition of an ATL program, these programs tend to be shorter than traditional teacher preparation programs and allow teacher candidates to work as teachers while being simultaneously enrolled (Wasburn-Moses & Rosenberg, 2008). One distinctive feature of typical ATL programs is the flexibility of the field requirement. Generally, ATL teacher candidates are hired to teach as they are learning to teach. They are allowed to use their paid teaching positions to fulfill teacher licensure program requirements. These candidates are hired with the stipulation that they complete their ATL program in a pre-determined amount of time (e.g., 3 years) in order to be re-hired. This arrangement differs from traditional teacher preparation programs where teacher candidates must complete their licensure programs before they can be hired to teach.

Supporters of ATL programs contend that this expedited licensing route enables highly skilled individuals to enter the teaching profession quickly (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). Critics of ATL programs have cautioned against hiring individuals without teacher preparation citing poor academic achievement among students who are taught by individuals without teacher preparation and high rates of attrition among ATL-prepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**

The presence of ATL programs is pervasive. According to Walsh and Jacobs (2007), “nearly all states – 47 to be exact – now offer teachers alternative routes into the profession” and “alternative routes now prepare nearly one out of every five teachers” (p.
According to the 2009 report of the United States Government Accountability Office, “alternative routes to certification are gaining in popularity” and “the number of individuals who completed alternative routes to certification programs increased by almost 40%” from 2000-2004” (p. 8). More recently, the Secretary’s 7th Annual Report of Teacher Quality (2010) stated that approximately 15,267 teachers were hired pre-license during the 06 - 07 school year. The large numbers of newly hired unlicensed teachers impacts a significant number of students. Robertson and Singleton (2010) asserted that unlicensed special education teachers are teaching approximately 600,000 children with disabilities nationwide each year.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Hawaii State Department of Education (HDOE) reportedly hired 884 new teachers; 134 of these new teachers, at the time of hire, had not yet completed a state-approved teacher education program (e.g., enrolled in an alternative licensure program). Although the report does not specify the types of teaching assignments for which these new unlicensed teachers were hired, teachers of students with learning disabilities (LD) accounted for the largest number of new hires by category. One can surmise that a significant number of these newly hired teachers of students with LD had not yet completed a state-approved teacher education program at the time of hire.

The reliance of school districts on ATL programs to produce teachers is not likely to abate in the near future. The HDOE (2009) cited partnerships with ATL programs as one strategy for meeting the “increased demand” for teachers (p. 2). Hawaii is not alone in its dependence on ATL programs. Müller (2012) also outlined several model ATL programs around the nation that continue to produce increased numbers of teachers for
school districts in dire need. Thus, it appears that the dependence on ATL programs to produce teachers for vacant teaching positions has become commonplace. However, it is a concern because we seem to know little about how such arrangements (e.g., teaching while learning to teach) prepare individuals to teach special education. And although traditional student teaching (e.g., preservice teachers mentored by experienced teachers) has been extensively studied (e.g., Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000), few studies have examined in place teaching and/or compared the experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates.

As the field placement coordinator for the Special Education Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, the different pathways of teacher preparation are of particular interest to me. Teacher candidates in the Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Special Education program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa are able to fulfill their student teaching requirement in one of two ways: (a) candidates are mentored by licensed classroom teachers in a K-12 special education classroom setting (traditional placement) or; (b) candidates are hired as unlicensed full-time or part-time teachers for preK-12 special education classrooms and receive permission to use their paid teaching positions to fulfill student teaching requirements. Candidates who are hired as unlicensed teachers during their training are referred to as “in place” candidates.

Although the traditional student teaching and in place teaching arrangements are weighted equally in terms of meeting university program requirements (e.g., both arrangements are worth a total of six credits), it appears that the responsibilities and range of experiences of in place teacher candidates are heavier and more varied than those of traditional teacher candidates. It begs the question of whether this difference in
responsibilities between the in place and traditional arrangement prepares teacher candidates differently. The results of a pilot study I conducted suggested that special education teachers who were in place during their M.Ed. programs were significantly more likely to remain in special education positions in Hawaii as compared to their traditional teacher candidate counterparts two years after graduation.

Although this pilot study involved a small sample population and included many limitations, it raised questions about the different student teaching experiences of teacher candidates. What are the experiences of teacher candidates who are hired in special education teaching positions as they learn to teach? What are the experiences of teacher candidates who are placed with cooperating teachers in a traditional student teaching arrangement? How are the two types of experiences similar and different in preparing teachers?

**Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study is to explore in-depth the perceptions of in place and traditionally prepared teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences and how these experiences impacted their feelings of preparedness to teach special education. My research questions are:

(a) What are the perceptions of recently graduated special education teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences (in place and traditional)?

(b) To what extent do teacher candidates believe student teaching experiences contributed to their success or challenges in the classroom?
(c) Are there any substantial differences in the perceptions of former traditional and in place candidates regarding their special education teacher preparation program?

(d) What are the perceptions of experienced field supervisors regarding traditional and in place student teaching experiences?

In the next section, I will highlight and define terminology that will be used throughout this document.

**Definition of Terms**

Several key terms will be used and referred to throughout this study. For purposes of this study:

(a) *in-place* candidates refer to teacher candidates who are hired by the LEA on emergency credentials and use their paid teaching positions to fulfill student teaching program requirements.

(b) *traditional* teacher candidates refer to teacher candidates who were placed with an experienced special education classroom teacher to fulfill student teaching program requirements (i.e., traditional placement).

(c) *cooperating teachers* are licensed special education preK-12th grade classroom teachers who were paid to mentor traditional teacher candidates for one semester.

(d) *university field supervisors* are tenured and tenure track faculty who observed and evaluated the teaching performance and professional dispositions of in place and traditional candidates during student teaching or the yearlong internship. They also assign a final student teaching grade to their assigned candidates.
(e) *UH mentors* are former preK-12th special education teachers hired by the Special Education Department to provide non-evaluative mentoring and support to in place teacher candidates throughout the M.Ed. program.

(f) *Care coordination responsibilities* are non-teaching responsibilities that special education teachers are expected to fulfill. These duties include writing individualized education plans (IEPs), facilitating the re-evaluation process, serving as the point of contact for all IEP-related matters, and scheduling and attending meetings.

In the next chapter, I will present a review of the research literature.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

From as early as the 1800s, many American teacher educators recognized the importance of and the need for an apprenticeship model in preparing teacher candidates to assume the responsibilities of teaching (Fraser, 2007). This apprenticeship, known as student teaching, involves assigning teacher candidates to practice teaching under the guidance of experienced teachers in their classroom. The idea behind student teaching is to give teacher candidates opportunities to observe experienced teachers in action, to allow teacher candidates to demonstrate their ability to apply the principles of teaching to children in an actual classroom setting, and to receive immediate feedback on their teaching practices. Although student teaching requirements may differ among teacher preparation programs, the student teaching experience has typically been the culminating activity in many teacher preparation programs (Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). For over a century, this model of student teaching was used by many normal schools to prepare teacher candidates for the rigors and responsibilities of the teaching profession. It continues to be the model used to train many teacher candidates today. According to Fraser (2007), “student teaching … is a legacy of the early normal schools to a wide range of institutions that succeeded them” (p. 54).

Teacher Shortage and Its Impact on Teacher Preparation

In the mid-1980s, many in the United States feared an impending teacher shortage (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Although critical shortage areas differ from state to state, special education is one area in education that has consistently faced a critical nationwide shortage of certified teachers. According to the USDOE Secretary’s 7th Annual Report of
Teacher Quality (2010), 3.75% of the nation’s 406,848 special education teachers (i.e., 15,267 teachers) were hired on temporary licenses during the 2006 - 2007 school year. School districts, in response to the lack of certified teachers, resorted to hiring individuals with little or no education coursework to fill vacant special education teaching positions (Cook & Boe, 2007).

The critical shortage of special education teachers across the United States is a serious concern for the field of special education (Billingsley, 2004; Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Boe, Bobbit, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; McClesky, Tyler, & Saunders Flippin, 2004). Reasons for the special education teacher shortage problem are multiple and complex (Billingsley, 2004; McClesky et al., 2004; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). Research suggests several reasons teachers leave the field; conditions of employment such as heavy caseloads, overwhelming amounts of paperwork, and lack of administrative support are often cited reasons teachers leave the profession (Billingsley, 2004; Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). New teachers in their first five years of teaching are particularly vulnerable to attrition (Brownell, Hirsh, & Seo, 2004).

The critical need for qualified teachers is certainly not limited to special education. Secondary schools nationwide have reported shortages of qualified math and science teachers. The shortage of certified teachers in these traditionally “hard to fill” positions is a national epidemic and its impact is felt across the United States (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007; Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007; Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). Some suggest the decrease in academic performance levels of students in these content areas is, at least partially, the result of the lack of certified teachers (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001). In the areas of math
and science, for example, the lack of a certified teacher can limit students’ ability to access the knowledge necessary to enter post-secondary education (Gimbert, et al., 2007). The critical need for licensed teachers have resulted in teacher preparation programs feeling the pressure to streamline and shorten the degree process an effort to expedite funneling qualified teachers to the classroom.

The ongoing and critical special education teacher shortage has also resulted in pressure on teacher preparation programs to prepare large numbers of qualified and committed special education teacher candidates to meet the demand for licensed special education teachers in local schools. Producing new teachers who begin their teaching careers with a strong sense of commitment to teach special education and armed with the skills to weather the challenges of their first years in teaching should be a primary goal of all teacher preparation programs.

**Special Education and Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs**

ATL programs are of particular interest to professionals in the field of special education because of the critical shortage of licensed special educators. Professionals in special education have good reason to be concerned. Students with disabilities who are taught by untrained personnel receive inadequate educational opportunities and may not receive an appropriate education as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (Billingsley, 2004; Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey, & Rosenberg, 2007). For these reasons, the idea of “fast tracking” individuals through a special education licensure program as a way to quickly fill vacant teaching positions is of interest to some in the special education community.

In this next section, I will discuss the purpose and goals of ATL programs.
Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs

As early as the 1930s, some believed content knowledge was all that was necessary for teaching. In fact, many teachers in the past were prepared in what today could be described as alternative teacher licensure programs (Ziechner, 1993). Alternative teacher licensure (ATL) programs have become more prevalent over the last twenty-five years in response to a national teacher shortage in the 1970s and early 1980s and more recently the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) “highly qualified teacher” mandate (Blanton, Sindelar, & Correa, 2006; Foster, Bishop, & Hernandez, 2008; Harvey & Gimbert, 2007). In contemporary teacher education, there is much debate over the efficacy of different teacher licensure routes in their ability to produce good teachers. This decades-long debate was reignited by a 2002 U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education report titled, “Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge.” Then U.S. Department of Education Secretary Rodd Paige cited numerous studies that suggested traditional teacher education programs were no better at producing good teachers than ATL programs and proclaimed that, with regards to good teaching, “solid verbal ability and content knowledge are what matters most” (p. 9). Based on these findings, Paige (2002) argued for an alternative and streamlined approach to traditional teaching certification programs as a more efficient way of filling the nation’s classrooms with highly qualified teachers.

Modern incarnations of ATL programs were developed to allow individuals with college degrees and skills in other fields to teach without having to enroll in a university degree program (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). The goal of ATLs is to expedite the teaching certification process so individuals can enter teaching positions quickly (Boe, Shin, &
Cook, 2007; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). ATL programs tend to abbreviate or eliminate coursework that focuses on pedagogy, educational philosophy, and practice teaching (Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007). For example, an engineer who wished to teach secondary-level mathematics could be “fast-tracked” to earn a teaching certificate through an ATL program in lieu of completing a university degree program in teaching. Commonly, ATL programs allow teacher candidates to fulfill student teaching requirements “on the job.” Many ATL program candidates are hired for teaching positions on emergency credentials and are allowed to do their student teaching on the job in their own classrooms. A large number of ATL candidates are pre-service program students who take teaching positions before they complete their teacher preparation program (Turley & Nakai, 2000). ATL programs are typically operated by institutes of higher education (IHEs), local education agencies, non-profit agencies (e.g., Teach for America), and for-profit companies. Although successful completion of ATL programs result in teaching licensure, program completion does not usually result in a university degree.

ATL programs have been praised for attracting a diverse group of teacher candidates (Brownell, Hirsh, & Seo, 2004; Rosenberg, Boyer, Sindelar, & Misra, 2007; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004). Research suggests ATL programs tend to attract proportionately more: (a) males; (b) persons over 25; (c) persons from multicultural backgrounds; (d) individuals who have had business, industry, or military experience; and (e) math, science, and foreign language majors (Mikulecky, Shkordiani, & Wilner, 2004).
No Universal Definition of ATL Programs

The lack of a universally accepted definition of ATL program makes it difficult to thoroughly describe the many ATL program variations. For example, ATLs may/may not provide an intensive “crash course” in teaching prior to starting the position; some ATL teacher candidates undergo highly structured field-based activities, while others do not. Some ATLs offer abbreviated coursework; others have coursework schedules similar to traditional, university-based teacher preparation programs. This lack of uniformity also makes it difficult compare groups (i.e., traditional versus in place candidates) and to generalize beyond individual studies. For this reason, traditional and in place candidates are not comparable in terms of academic background, prior experience, age, reasons for seeking teaching license, and many other factors.

However, a consistent ATL program feature seems to be the flexibility in allowing teacher candidates access to teacher education programs as they work in teaching positions (Isaacs, Elliot, McConney, Wachholz, Greene, & Greene, 2007; Mikulecky, Shkodriani, & Wilner, 2004). For example, an unlicensed individual is hired by the local education agency for a full-time teaching position on an emergency teaching credential. One of the stipulations of employment is that the individual must complete an approved teacher education program in a predetermined amount of time (e.g., three years) in order to remain employed. The individual enrolls in an ATL program because the program allows the individual to fulfill student teaching requirements “in place” (e.g., on-the-job) through their teaching positions. These in place candidates are simultaneously enrolled in an approved teacher education program while teaching full-time as the classroom teacher of record.
Criticisms of ATL Programs

Critics of ATL programs say these so-called streamlined efforts to get qualified individuals into classrooms often fall short of their goal and shortchange students of well prepared teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). They contend that the inconsistency of ATL programs is problematic, with some program coursework resembling traditional teacher preparation programs while other ATL programs offer barely enough coursework to meet emergency credential requirements. They also maintain that most ATL programs have high acceptance rates, with many programs accepting nearly everyone who applies. In addition, critics allege that ATL program costs run anywhere from $5,000 - $30,000 per person, suggesting that some programs are more concerned with earning profits than producing quality teachers (Walsh & Jacobs, 2007).

In this next section, I will review current research on what we know about traditional student teaching and its role in preparing teachers.

What We Know About Traditional Student Teaching

Historically, general education and special education teachers received training through traditional teacher preparation programs. Traditional teacher preparation programs are typically located in colleges and universities nationwide and are usually 2 years in length with undergraduate students admitted during their junior year. Some universities have developed five-year models that include a disciplinary major. Typically, traditional teacher preparation programs employ masters and doctoral level instructors to teach courses on child development, teaching pedagogy, educational philosophy, behavior management, and other education-related coursework. In addition,
traditional program candidates are required to complete intensive field work. This often includes an intensive (unpaid) student teaching practicum with an experienced classroom teacher in a professional development school or a local education agency school (Darling-Hammond, 2000). As a result, traditional program candidates typically do not enter full-time (paid) teaching until their coursework is completed. Candidates who successfully complete traditional programs receive bachelor or master degrees in education along with teaching certification.

Research suggests that teacher candidates benefit from traditional student teaching experiences. Bain, Lancaster, Zundans, and Parkes (2009) asserted that the student teaching experience is important because it allows teacher candidates the opportunity to apply the pedagogy they have learned in their coursework to students in real classrooms. Simply put, teacher candidates learn how to teach from extensive time in student teaching and other structured field experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Grossman (1989) found that without structured field experiences, teacher candidates tended to rely on their personal experiences as students to guide instructional practices, demonstrated difficulty with reflecting on their practices, and lacked pedagogical expertise (see also Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The amount of time teacher candidates spend student teaching in structured field experiences appears to be critical to the development of successful teachers. Connelly and Graham (2009) found that the more time special education teacher candidates spent student teaching, the more likely they were to remain in the field one year later. Almost 80% of in-service teachers who reported 10 or more weeks of student teaching remained in special education teaching positions after one year. Overall, the authors found that
teacher candidates who (a) completed a rigorous teacher preparation program; (b) spent more personal time invested in their own training; and (c) spent more time in student teaching activities tended to remain in their special education programs one year after graduation. Boe, Shin, and Cook (2007) examined a national sample of teacher self-reports on the Public School Teacher Questionnaire and found that extensively prepared teachers with 10+ weeks of practice teaching with feedback, extensive coursework in instructional methods and educational psychology, and opportunities for observations in various classroom settings were more likely to be teaching in their area of certification and reported to be significantly more confident in their teaching abilities as compared to teachers with some, little/no preparation.

In addition to length of time spent in student teaching activities, support and guidance from mentors and others appeared to play a role in the development of teaching skills. O’Brian, Stoner, Appel, and House (2007) examined the perspectives of teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers regarding their first semester of field experience. Their findings suggested the relationship between cooperating teachers and teacher candidates was instrumental in developing teacher candidates’ knowledge and foundational development whereas the lack (or perceived lack) of a supportive relationship was detrimental to the development of the teacher candidate. The authors concluded that although teacher candidates found the field experience complex and overwhelming, it was crucial to the development of teacher candidates.

In addition to benefits for teacher candidates, research finding suggest that the benefits teacher candidates reap from traditional student teaching filters down to benefit the students in their charge. Supporters of traditional programs contend that over 30
years of research supports the notion that traditional programs prepare teacher candidates to be more successful with students than ATL programs. Further, it appears that subject matter knowledge alone has a curvilinear relationship to student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000). That is, the positive effects of teachers’ content knowledge alone on student outcomes increases to a certain point before the positive student effects begin to diminish.

**Traditional Program Criticism**

Traditional programs, however, are not without criticism. Critics contend that traditional programs fail to attract and prepare good teachers. They assert that traditional programs are too rigid in nature, making it difficult for teacher candidates to enter and complete programs due to program length (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005). Furthermore, critics contend that the cost-prohibitive nature of tuition and related expenses and the need to forego employment in order to fulfill student teaching requirements put traditional programs out of reach for many prospective teachers.

Further, Grossman (1989) posited that traditional student teaching arrangements are not able to consistently give traditional teacher candidates the full teaching experience because host schools and cooperating teachers are, first and foremost, obligated to meet the needs of the children in their charge. Thus, the needs of the children and the needs of the traditional teacher candidate can occasionally be at odds; a notion Grossman referred to as the “cross purposes pitfall.” Critics like Paige (2002) maintain that “a majority of graduates of schools of education believe that the traditional teacher preparation programs left them ill prepared for the challenges and rigors of the classroom” (p. 15).
Alternative versus Traditional Program Comparison Studies

Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) completed a critical review of ATL research literature from 1987-2005. They reviewed four comparative studies and six program evaluation studies. Based on these studies, the authors concluded that although much more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of ATL programs, results from these 10 studies suggested ATL programs can produce quality teachers given certain circumstances (i.e., programs collaboratively developed by local education agencies and institutes of higher education and adequate support from mentors). However, there is little research to determine the long-term effectiveness of these programs. The authors recommended future studies that focus on teacher performance and longitudinal studies that look at teacher retention and attrition rates.

Since 2005, the ongoing debate about different pathways to teacher certification has not abated. This debate continues to be important in determining if there are differences in the outcomes for traditional and ATL teacher preparation programs. I reviewed articles that examined differences between ATL and traditional programs published since the review by Sindelar and Rosenberg (2005). I was unable to find research articles that specifically focused on special education ATL and traditional programs. Thus, I reviewed nine studies that compared traditional and ATL-prepared general education teachers. Despite the dearth of special education specific programs included in this review, the studies described here are relevant to special education and to this study. With the push toward inclusion at many schools nationwide, separate special education classroom settings are not as commonplace as in the past. Now more than ever, both special and general educators in inclusive classrooms are teaching students
with disabilities. Thus, both special and general education teachers have an impact on the educational opportunities and outcomes of students with disabilities. For this reason, the impact of general education ATL and traditional programs are of relevance to special education.


**Teacher self-report studies.** Five studies examined teacher perceptions (Duncan & Ricketts, 2008; Foster et al., 2008; Isaacs et al., 2007; Suell & Piotrowski, 2006; & Zinetek, 2007). All five studies used surveys (e.g., Borich Needs Assessment, Likert scale survey based on Florida’s Accomplished Practices survey; survey based on the Darling-Hammond, 2002, study) to assess teachers’ self-perceptions on teaching effectiveness and overall feelings of preparedness.

The results of the five teacher self-report studies are mixed; two studies indicated no significant differences between self-reports of ATL graduates and traditional program graduates (Isaacs et al., 2007; & Suell & Piotrowski, 2007). Zientek (2007) reported mixed findings; no significant differences between ATL graduates and traditional self-reports although traditional program graduates reported feeling slightly more prepared in general. Duncan & Ricketts (2008) reported traditional program graduates feeling
significantly more efficacious than ATL graduates in 11 of the 18 surveyed areas. Foster et al., (2008) found ATL graduates reported higher levels of preparedness than traditional graduates.

Duncan and Ricketts (2008) compared self-reported efficacy levels of secondary agriculture ATL graduates and traditional program graduates with regard to technical agriculture content, FFA (undefined by the authors) leadership development/SAE (undefined by authors), teaching and learning in agriculture education and managing agriculture programs. A total of 136 traditional program graduates and 76 ATL graduates were surveyed during the 2004-2005 school year during a vocational agriculture teachers conference, regional agriculture teacher meetings, and online. Participants were given a modified version of the Borich needs assessment model with a 5-point Likert-type scale. Results indicated: (a) traditional program graduates reported significantly higher rates of efficaciousness in the areas of technical content knowledge than ATL program graduates; (b) traditional program graduates also reported feeling more efficacious in conducting activities related to FFA (undefined in the study), leadership development, and SAE (undefined in the study) than ATL program graduates; (c) traditional program graduates reported significantly higher rates of efficaciousness than ATL program graduates in agriculture program management; (d) there were no significant differences between the two groups in teaching and learning efficacy.

The results of this study are difficult to interpret because it is difficult to discern exactly who the researchers compared. Although they described the National Center for Education and Information (NCEI) characteristics of an ATL program which included: (a) a bachelor’s degree; (b) passed a screening process that may include tests; (c) full-
time teaching (on the job training); (d) completed coursework; (e) worked with mentor teachers; and (f) met high performance standards (p. 39), they did not indicate whether the ATLs in their study actually met these NCEI characteristics.

Foster et al., (2008) surveyed 130 first year teachers in multiple subject classrooms who graduated from the CalState TEACH program (ATL program) and 84 of their site supervisors. The CalState TEACH program is a two-year online program that allowed candidates to fulfill teaching requirements “on-the-job”. In addition to asynchronous online coursework, candidates’ teaching abilities were evaluated eight times a semester by both a university field supervisor and an on-site mentor over four semesters. The study was twofold: first, the researchers surveyed ATL graduates on their perceptions of preparedness for teaching and compared their responses to their school-level supervisors’ perceptions of their teaching abilities. A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between self-reports of ATLs and their supervisors. Three of the 24 items on the surveys yielded significant differences between perceptions of ATLs and their supervisors. ATLs tended to self-report higher rates of confidence in their abilities to: (a) meet the instructional needs of ELL students; (b) monitor progress using formal and informal assessments, and; (c) assess student progress by analyzing a variety of sources when compared to their supervisors’ evaluations. No traditional program graduates were included in this part of the study thus no comparisons can be made between the ATL graduates and the traditional program graduates.

In the second part of the study, the researchers compared program evaluation ratings of system-wide CSU traditional and ATL graduates. Graduates from both ATL
and traditional programs from the CSU system were surveyed on their perceptions of preparedness to teach after graduating from a CSU teacher preparation program. They compiled cumulative data from 21 CSU campuses in 19 different areas of teacher preparation. The researchers found that in all 19 areas, ATL graduates reported higher levels of preparedness compared to their traditional counterparts. The researchers concluded, “[the] data suggest that teachers completing the [ATL] program do as well as those completing a traditional program” (p. 22).

There were several issues raised by the Foster et al., (2008) study. First, the authors focused specifically on graduates from a single university system and did not include demographic data of their participants, thereby making these findings difficult to generalize to other populations and programs. The authors also reported that only 35.2% of the total number of ATL program graduates was included in this study. This raised the question of whether these findings are representative of their own program.

Although the researchers compared the self-evaluations of ATL graduates to their supervisors’ evaluations, traditional graduates were not included in this comparison. It would have been interesting to see the comparison of the two groups in self-reported data and performance evaluations. The program evaluation data from the portion of the study that did compare the ATL and traditional self-perceptions of preparedness were converted into percentages; however, it is unclear what these percentages mean. For example, the ATL percentage for “prepared to teach English language arts (K-12) was 83% and the CSU system percentage (which included traditional and ATL) was 80%. However, the authors did not include the total number of respondents (n) in each category; thus it is unclear what exactly 83% and 80% mean in this context. Although
the percentages of the ATL and traditional responses were compared and differences in percentages reported, no statistical analysis was reported on these comparisons. Finally, in their summary of this data, the authors stated, “These data suggest that teachers completing the CalStateTEACH program do as well as those completing a traditional program” (p. 22). The data in this study do not support this statement because teacher self-reports are not necessarily indicators of actual teaching performance.

Issacs et al., (2007), compared the attitudes and confidence levels of ATL graduates and traditional graduates, their overall feelings of satisfaction with their chosen teacher preparation routes, and their commitment to the teaching profession. A total of 194 new teachers (in their first three years of teaching) in three school districts were surveyed. Of the 194 participants, 114 were from traditional programs and 79 were from ATL programs.

The online survey used in this study was based on an instrument developed for program evaluation purposes by Florida’s Department of Education. The survey assessed the satisfaction levels of program completers and included items such as: (a) certification route; (b) level and nature of teaching assignment; (c) stability of assignment; (d) level of experience with children and teaching; (e) likelihood of staying in teaching or moving to a specialty area (administration, counseling, curriculum specialist). The survey was initially mailed to 1,800 participants; 11% completed the survey.

Of the 61 survey questions, the authors reported the results from 21 of the survey questions. Of the 21 questions, there were significant differences between ATL and traditional program graduate responses on 11 of the 21 reported survey questions. Traditional program graduates significantly and consistently reported feeling very
prepared/prepared to: (a) plan lessons (85% of traditional graduates compared to 72% ATL graduates); (b) do long-term planning (74% of traditional graduates compared to 48% of ATL graduates); (c) teach to a variety of learning styles (72% of traditional graduates compared to 49% of ATLs graduates); (d) teach students who are learning disabled (49% of traditional graduates compared to 32% of ATL graduates); (e) teach students who are ESOL (39% of traditional program graduates compared to 24% of ALT); (f) maintain a safe learning environment (89% of traditional program graduates compared to 76% of ALT), (g) promote and develop literacy (75% of traditional program graduates compared to 57% of ALT); (h) incorporate critical thinking (78% of Traditional program graduates compared to 67% of ATL program graduates), (i) develop classroom assessment (75% of traditional program graduates compared to 59% of ATL program graduates), (j) communicate effectively with all stockholders (87% of traditional program graduates compared to 75% of ATL program graduates), and (k) match classroom curriculum to standards (72% of traditional program graduates compared to 56% of ATL program graduates).

With regard to commitment to teaching, traditional program graduates and ATL program graduates were similar in their reported levels of commitment. Both traditional program graduates (89%) and ATL program graduates (90%) reported to be likely/very likely to remain in teaching; traditional program graduates (77%) and ATL program graduates (75%) likely/very likely to remain at their present schools; Traditional program graduates (90%) and ATL program graduates (90%) likely/very likely to remain in their current district. Adding another specialty to their certification was the only item that ATL program graduates reported higher scores
than traditional program graduates; 71% of ATL program graduates reported to be likely/extremely likely to add a specialty compared to 57% of traditional program graduates.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other populations as the low response rate (11%) is not representative of the group the researchers studied. Further, teachers surveyed in this study are from three school districts served by one university. It is very likely that many of the surveyed teachers are graduates of the same teacher preparation program. In addition, the authors did not describe specific information about the traditional and ATL programs (e.g., length of study, type of coursework, type of field work). Thus, these findings are suggestive only, and cannot be used to generalize to their population or a wider population, making it difficult to draw any firm comparisons between the two groups.

An interesting finding from this study that was not addressed by the authors involved the level of commitment reported by ATL program graduates and traditional program graduates. Although traditional program graduates reported feeling significantly better prepared than ATL program graduates in 11 of the 22 survey items, ATL program graduates (90%) and traditional program graduates (89%) reported similar levels of commitment to the profession. This seems counter to the other findings of this study; the ATL program graduates reported significantly lower levels of feeling prepared; yet, they overwhelmingly reported high levels of commitment to the teaching profession. Why might this be? A follow-up qualitative study that examines this facet of the Issacs (2007) study may be interesting and worthy of further study.
Suell and Piotrowski (2006) administered the Florida Accomplished Practices Survey to 25 first year ATL program graduates who were enrolled in the University of West Florida ALT program at the time of the study, and 18 first year teachers who graduated from traditional program graduates. The authors reported no significant differences between the two groups with regard to perceived strengths and weaknesses in the following areas: (a) assessment, (b) communication, (c) continuous improvement, (d) critical thinking, (e) diversity, (f) ethics, (g) human development, (h) knowledge of subject, (i) learning environment, (j) planning, (k) role of the teacher, and (l) technology. Further, the ATL program graduates in the study reported feeling just as prepared to teach as their traditional counterparts. Although Suell and Piotrowski (2006) briefly discussed the different skill and competency areas of their survey, the survey questions were not included in the study nor were there any detailed descriptions of the different skill/competency areas listed above. Additionally, the authors did not include any statistical data from the survey. As a result, it is difficult to interpret the results of the Suell and Piotrowski (2007) study.

Zientek (2007) studied the self-perceptions and feelings of preparedness of 782 ATL program graduates and 415 traditional program graduates (n=1,197) in their first three years of teaching. The researcher also compared differences between ATL program graduates and traditional program graduates on amount of mentoring received, prior classroom experience, reasons for entering the profession, future commitment to remain in teaching. Finally, Zientek also compared demographic data (e.g., age, gender, highest degree earned, and prior career experience) of ATL program graduates and traditional program graduates.
The results indicated that certification route accounted for a non-significant amount (one percent) of the variance in teaching and personal efficacy. There were no significant differences found between self-reports of ATL program graduates and traditional program graduates with regard to self-efficacy. However, there were significant differences between traditional program graduates and ATL program graduates with regard to perceptions of preparedness, with traditional program graduates, feeling better prepared in the areas of (a) using instructional strategies, (b) curriculum development and planning and, (c) using communication skills to guide students learning and behavior. In addition, prior classroom experience, classroom observations, and mentoring support seemed to be important factors in predicting teachers’ overall perceptions of preparedness. Although traditional program graduates had significantly more classroom experience than ATL program graduates, ATL program graduates (95%) were more likely to receive mentoring support as compared to traditional program graduates (82%).

**Student outcome studies.** Three studies examined student outcomes of traditionally prepared teachers and ATL-prepared teachers (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007; Gimbert, Cristol, & Sene, 2007; & Nunnery et al., 2009). Both the Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007 and Gimbert, Cristol, & Sene, 2007 studies compared traditional graduates to ATL graduates in the Transition to Teach program. This program is based on Haberman’s Five Standards of Excellence for Alternative Certification programs:

1. highly selective approach for the participants’ acceptance;
2. best faculty recruited to teach the candidates;
3. training to implement meaningful curriculum content;
4. effective teaching methods that focus on pedagogy;

5. evaluation of program effectiveness (Haberman, 1991, as cited in Gimbert, Cristol, & Sene, 2007)

Participation in this alternative Transition to Teach program required applicants to have a bachelor degree in mathematics and to undergo intensive coursework that included curriculum and instruction methods, course content, differentiated instruction, and behavior management among other courses. In addition, these participants received intensive mentoring while teaching.

Gimbert, Cristol, and Sene (2007) matched six ATL teachers with six traditional equivalents to compare ATL and traditional student outcomes in math. There was a total of 335 students, 150 taught by ATL candidates and 185 taught by traditionally prepared teachers. The authors found the math student outcomes of traditionally prepared teachers in the first quarter were significantly higher in the first quarter but the student outcomes in math of ATL teachers were significantly higher than those of the traditional in the second and third quarters. The authors reported the interaction between ATL teachers and longitudinal algebra scores was significant. The authors speculated that the initial advantage of traditionally prepared graduates could be attributed to pre-service teaching experience; however, with intensive coursework and mentoring provided by the Transition to Teach program, the ATL student outcome scores “caught up” to their traditionally trained counterparts. The overall design of the study was sound in that the research methods used were appropriate for the inquiry, and student outcomes were tracked over a reasonable amount of time (four quarters of the school year). However, the
small n of teacher participants (6 ALTs and 6 TTEs) made it very difficult to generalize these findings to other populations.

Gimbert, Bol, and Wallace (2007) examined the relation of teacher training to student achievement in mathematics, the implementation of the process standards, and the frequency with which teachers use process and content standards. They used a mixed-methods design for this comparative study. The authors matched six ATL teachers with six traditionally prepared teachers and compared student outcomes of both groups of teachers. The authors found that student outcomes of traditionally prepared teachers were significantly higher in the first quarter than ATL-trained teachers; however, student outcomes in the second and third quarters revealed no significant differences between the two groups. The only exception to this finding was a significant difference in the outcomes of ATL students on the statistics subtest, with ATL students scoring higher than the students of traditionally prepared teachers. Although ATL teachers were observed to implement the content standards more frequently than traditionally prepared teachers, there were no significant differences between ATL teachers and their traditional counterparts with regards to the frequency with which they used instructional practices related to the process standards. In fact, neither ATL nor traditionally prepared teachers were observed using the content standards in their instruction with much frequency. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that ATL teachers were able to produce student outcomes at the same level as the students of traditionally prepared teachers. The authors suggest the quality of the ATL program may be comparable to the traditional program and may account for the lack of meaningful differences between the student
outcomes of traditionally prepared and ATL teachers. However, the small sample size of teacher participants makes it difficult to generalize these findings to other populations.

Nunnery et al., (2009) compared student outcomes in reading and math on the 2003 and 2004 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test of traditionally prepared and ATL teachers from the Troops to Teachers program. The program recruits and trains former military personnel with bachelor or master degrees in any field for teaching positions in urban school districts, with priority given to candidates with teaching backgrounds or military experience in math, science, vocational or technical skills or special education. There were 16 reading ATL teachers with 567 students and 57 traditionally prepared reading teachers with 2,108 students. There were 34 math ATL teachers with 1,637 students and 159 traditionally prepared math teachers with 4,919 students. The researchers compared student outcomes of ATL and traditionally prepared teachers in secondary reading and math using the 2003 and 2004 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. In addition, the researchers also used a matched samples comparison – matching ATL teachers to traditionally prepared teachers who taught the same subject area and who had comparable years of teaching experience. There were 16 matched pairs for reading and 23 matched pairs for math. The researchers found no significant overall relationship between preparation program type (i.e., ATL or traditional) and student outcomes in reading after controlling for course taught, grade level, prior achievement, and student demographics. However, there was a significant relationship between ATL prepared teachers and student math outcomes after controlling for variable such as course taught, grade level, prior achievement, and student demographics.
However, the researchers did not provide a detailed description of the Troops to Teachers program, which made it difficult to compare this program to other ATL programs with regards to the length of education coursework, fieldwork requirements, and/or mentoring support. As a result, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study to other populations.

Overall, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these studies that compared teachers from ATL programs with those from traditional programs. Moreover, none of the studies examined what may be an integral component to teacher preparation programs – the student teaching. In addition, all nine studies were quantitative studies; more qualitative studies that focus on the student teaching aspect of traditional and ATL programs are needed. With the increasing work demands on teachers, a clear understanding of the critical components of a sound student teaching experience – for both traditional and ATL programs – is necessary to prepare candidates for the heavy demands of the teaching profession, particularly in special education. Studies that specifically focus on student teaching are needed to: (a) better understand how different student teaching pathways prepare teacher candidates for teaching; and (b) determine the elements of student teaching that are critical to preparing good teachers (NCATE, 2010; Sindelar, Brownell, & Billingsley, 2010). A summary of the findings from these studies are included on Tables 1 and 2:
## Table 1: Summary of Studies Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan &amp; Ricketts (2008)</td>
<td>212 GETs</td>
<td>secondary agriculture</td>
<td>76 ATLs, 136 TTEs</td>
<td>teacher perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster et al., (2008)</td>
<td>130 K-8</td>
<td>multiple subjects</td>
<td>130 ATLs, unspecified TTEs</td>
<td>CSU system-wide evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimbert, Cristol, &amp; Sene,</td>
<td>12 GETs</td>
<td>secondary math</td>
<td>6 ATLs, 6 TTEs</td>
<td>VASOL, quarterly Algebra assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimbert, Bol, &amp; Wallace,</td>
<td>12 GETs</td>
<td>secondary math</td>
<td>6 ATLs, 6 TTEs</td>
<td>VASOL, quarterly mathematics assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey &amp; Gimbert (2007)</td>
<td>932 teachers</td>
<td>(unspecified)</td>
<td>164 ATLs, 768 TTEs</td>
<td>pedagogical knowledge, performance evaluation, PLT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issacs et al., 2007</td>
<td>194 teachers</td>
<td>(unspecified)</td>
<td>79 ATLs, 114 TTEs</td>
<td>teacher perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunnery et al., 2009</td>
<td>266 GETs</td>
<td>secondary math and reading</td>
<td>50 ATLs, 216 TTEs</td>
<td>FCAT math and reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suell &amp; Piotrowski, 2006</td>
<td>43 teachers</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>114 TTEs, 79 ATLs</td>
<td>teacher perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zientek, 2007</td>
<td>1,197 teachers</td>
<td>(unspecified)</td>
<td>782 ATLs, 437 TTEs</td>
<td>VASOL, quarterly Mathematics assessment, teacher survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GET=general education teachers; ATL=alternative licensure for teachers; TTE=traditional teacher education; VASOL=Virginia Standards of Learning; PLT=Principles of Learning and Teaching Examination; ADEPT = Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating of Professional Teaching (ADEPT); FCAT=Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan &amp; Ricketts, 2008</td>
<td>teacher perception (based on Borich needs assessment)</td>
<td>TTEs reported feeling significantly more efficacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster et al., (2008)</td>
<td>teacher knowledge (PLT) / performance evaluation (ADEPT) / student outcomes (VASOL &amp; Algebra assessment)</td>
<td>TTEs scored significantly higher on PLT / no significant differences between ATLs and TTEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimbert, Cristol, &amp; Sene, 2007</td>
<td>student outcomes (VASOL &amp; Algebra assessment)</td>
<td>no significant differences between students' scores of ATLs and TTEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimbert, Bol, &amp; Wallace, 2007</td>
<td>student outcomes (VASOL &amp; math assessment)</td>
<td>student outcomes (PCAT reading and math)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey &amp; Gimbert, 2007</td>
<td>teacher knowledge (PLT) / teacher performance (ADEPT)</td>
<td>TTEs PLT scores significantly higher than ATLs / no significant differences in ADEPT rating between ATLs and TTEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaacs, et al., 2007</td>
<td>teacher perceptions (self-assessment based on Florida Educator Accomplished Practices)</td>
<td>TTEs reported feeling significantly more prepared to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunnery et al., 2010</td>
<td>teacher perceptions (self-assessment based on Florida Educator Accomplished Practices)</td>
<td>student outcomes (PCAT reading and math)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suell &amp; Piotrowski, 2006</td>
<td>student outcomes (PCAT reading and math)</td>
<td>teacher perceptions (self-assessment based on Florida Educator Accomplished Practices)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Summary of Outcomes
### Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: EP = extensive teacher preparation; VASOL = Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment; ATL = alternative teacher licensure program; TTE = traditional teacher education; FCAT = Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.
Learning Communities

The difference in the structure of traditional student teaching and ATL program in place teaching is an important area to explore. As discussed earlier, traditional program candidates learn to teach as apprentices under experienced teachers prior to program completion; ATL program candidates learn to teach on the job. Insights into how these different student teaching pathways promote candidates’ learning and whether it may influence their development of professional identity as teachers are important to the field of teacher education.

Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduced the theory of legitimate peripheral participation. They posit that when novices are brought into the learning community, they learn through active participation and engagement with more skilled individuals. Lave and Wenger theorized that through peripheral learning, over time, new learners transform into fully participating members of the learning community. Wenger (1998) extended this theory by introducing the notion of communities of practice. He theorized that we develop our identities through active social participation in learning communities and that individuals belong to many different learning communities. Wenger’s (1998) community of practice theory is based on the following components of social learning theory:

(1) Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful.

(2) Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
(3) Community: a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.

(4) Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities (p. 5).

Based on the literature on the professional identities theoretical framework (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), Schultz and Ravitch (2013) analyzed the creative writing of new in-service teachers from traditional and ATL programs. These new ATL and traditionally prepared teachers participated in a narrative writing group formed by the authors specifically to examine the role of narrative and inquiry and to study the development of professional identity development of new teachers. The authors found that: (a) new teachers’ professional identities were shaped by their participation in several different learning communities (e.g., narrative writing group, schools, university); (b) traditionally prepared teachers developed identities based on their cooperating teachers; and (c) ATL prepared teachers (who lacked mentors) based their professional identities their own experiences as students. Given the importance of developing professional identities as teachers, the authors recommended that all pre-service teachers be given opportunities to discuss and reflect on their participation in learning communities and their development as teachers.

Based on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) explored cohort support as a means of providing support, assisting in identity development and protecting against attrition for newly graduated K-12 ATL-prepared teachers. The authors formed the Beginning Teacher Program cohort that
consisted of newly graduated K-12 teachers from an ATL program who met for 15 biweekly sessions. The authors found: (a) the interaction of community of practice elements within the cohort provided support to the new teachers; (b) the peer-mentoring that occurred in the cohort suggested novice learners have “valuable resources” to share with others; (c) peer-mentoring might be an important source of support to ATL-prepared teachers who typically minimal pre-service learning experiences and are expected to be full participants in their schools.

The findings of these studies suggest a possible link between field-based experiences such as student teaching and its role in shaping teacher candidates’ skills and professional identities. However, none of the studies examined the role of the student teaching experience nor did the studies focus specifically on special education teachers. Given that the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers differ somewhat from general educations, studies that specifically examine the special education teacher candidate student teaching experience seems warranted.

**Summary**

The growing need for flexible teacher certification programs paved the way for the resurgence of ATL programs. Although an estimated 20% of uncertified special education teachers are likely to be ATL program candidates (USDOE, 2009) and who complete student teaching requirements in place, we seem to know little about whether the in place experience differs from the traditional student teaching experience with regard to preparing special education teachers for the rigors of the classroom. Numerous studies comparing the effectiveness of ATL programs to traditional teacher education programs have been conducted, however, no studies specifically examined the
differences between the traditional student teaching experience (e.g., teacher candidate placed with an experienced classroom teacher) and the in place (“on-the-job”) student teaching experiences.

The differences between in place and traditional field-based experiences seem to have implications for special educators’ preparedness and likelihood to remain in the field. Intuitively, one might expect that because traditional teacher candidates learn about the profession under the tutelage of an experienced teacher, they will be better prepared to manage the demands of the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000, Darling-Hammond, 2006). Moreover, being saddled with all the responsibilities of a full-time classroom teacher with minimal, if any, formal training or education-related coursework, may overwhelm in place teacher candidates, leave them feeling ill-prepared for the demands of teaching special education; thereby causing them to leave the profession. Conversely, it may also be possible that the “trial–by–fire” approach of in place pre-service teaching develops a realistic understanding of and accelerated facility with all the demands of teaching special education, perhaps more so than their traditional counterparts.

Based on the dearth of research in this area, a study that closely examines the experiences of in place and traditional teacher candidates seems warranted. The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study is to explore the perceptions of recently graduated special education teacher candidates on their in place and traditional student teaching arrangements and to understand how these perceptions impacted their feelings of preparedness to teach special education.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The goals of this research are to: (1) explore the perceptions of recently graduated traditional and in place teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences; and (2) understand how these perceived experiences impacted their feelings of preparedness to teach special education after graduation. I used qualitative grounded theory methodology to analyze and generate theory based on my interviews with recently graduated teacher candidates from the Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Special Education Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Qualitative data drawn from individual interviews with the teacher candidates provided rich descriptions of the student teaching experiences of both traditional and in place candidates as well as their current teaching situations. In addition, these interviews brought to light their perceptions of how their student teaching experiences, both in place and traditional, prepared them to teach special education.

Qualitative Research

Corbin and Strauss (2008) define qualitative analysis as “a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (p. 1). Generally speaking, qualitative research has four distinct characteristics that set it apart from other types of research: (a) the focus is on how people interpret and makes sense of their experiences, (b) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, (c) the process is inductive; researchers gather information to build a theory; (d) qualitative research is based on rich and thick descriptions (Merriam, 2009).
Given the nature of my research questions, I used qualitative analysis to explore the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teachers.

**Grounded Theory**

The grounded theory approach is a type of qualitative analysis. It is aptly named because the researcher collects and constantly compares data to build theory; thus, the developed theory is “grounded” in the data (Charmaz, 2006). This method is appropriate for situations where a guiding theory is lacking or contradictory; instead the researcher seeks to build a theory based on the data that are collected. More specifically, according to Charmaz (2006), constructivist grounded theory is concerned with “how – and sometimes why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations (p. 130). Moreover:

- a constructivist approach means more than just looking at how individuals view their situations… The theory depends on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it (p 130).

I used the constructivist grounded theory approach to understanding the student teaching experiences of the study participants because this approach is the most appropriate for the research questions of this study. As the researcher, I wanted to know the details about their student teaching and in place experiences and whether these experiences differed for traditional and in place teacher candidates. I also wanted to know what the perceptions of these recently graduated teacher candidates were with regards to their student teaching placements and their feelings about how these experiences prepared them to teach special education post-graduation. Given the dearth
of research in this area, the grounded theory approach was the best match for my research questions.

**Sampling Procedures**

My sample for this study was purposeful and non-random. I specifically targeted Spring 2011 graduates of the M.Ed. in Special Education teacher preparation program because of their recent student teaching experiences. The study participants were from both the mild/moderate and severe programs strands. Only candidates in good academic standing were considered for this study. Candidates from the Teach for American (TFA) program were not selected because these candidates are subject to both university program requirements as well as TFA program requirements; this dual program requirement may result in different experiences as compared to the candidates of the conventional M.Ed. in Special Education program.

**Participants**

The study participants were 18 recently graduated teacher candidates. Seven traditional candidates and 11 in place candidates who completed the M.Ed. in Special Education program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the spring of 2011 were selected. There were 16 females and two males ranging in ages from 27 – 57. The participants were from very diverse ethnic backgrounds. There was one African-American, seven Asian-Americans, two Caucasians, two Asians of mixed descent, four individuals of mixed (non-specified) descent, and one Native Hawaiian. All participants possessed bachelor degrees, mainly in social sciences (e.g., Psychology), business administration, or computer science. Three participants had master’s degrees in science, elementary education, and educational administration. Upon program completion, 14
were licensed to teach children with mild/moderate disabilities; four were licensed to teach children with severe/profound disabilities. Four participants were licensed in special education early childhood (preK-3), nine in special education elementary (K-6), three in special education secondary (7-12), and two in special education K-12. The 18 participants were purposefully chosen from a larger group of graduates. Study participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) successfully completed the M.Ed. in Special Education program; (b) enrolled in either a traditional student teaching or in place teaching during their M.Ed. program; (c) maintained good academic standing throughout the M.Ed. program; (d) were not a part of the Teach for America program. Participant demographics are found on Table A-1 in Appendix A.

In addition to program graduates, I also interviewed tenured and tenure-track university field supervisors of these recent program graduates to obtain experienced teacher educators’ perspectives on the traditional and in place student teaching experiences of these candidates. I interviewed a total of four tenured and/or tenure-track university field supervisors from both the mild/moderate and severe/profound programs. A summary of the field supervisor demographics is found on Table A-2 in Appendix A.

**Procedures**

**Initial contact.** I sent email messages to a total of 28 Spring 2011 graduates who met the study criteria. My email message described this study and included the interview questions and consent form as attachments. I asked email recipients to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. Nineteen graduates expressed interest in participating; 18 followed through by returning their signed consent forms and scheduled interviews with me.
Interviews. I conducted semi-structured, in-depth phone and/or in-person individual interviews with all 18 participants. I conducted the interviews in-person at locations convenient to the participants (e.g., local coffee shop) and on the phone. I scheduled interviews during non-teaching hours (e.g., late afternoons, early evenings, school holidays). I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured with 12 questions. The interviews ranged from one hour to just under two hours in length. The purpose of the interview was to allow participants to reflect upon their experiences as in place or traditional teacher candidates. The interviews focused on exploring participants’ experiences and perceptions of how these experiences prepared them to teach special education post-graduation. Depending on the overall “flow” of the interview, I occasionally asked more probing questions to get participants to elaborate or expand on their comments. These sub-questions were impromptu but were always pertinent to the original focus of the interview. Sample interview questions included:

1. Think back to your in place/traditional student teaching experience. Why did you choose to be in place/do a traditional student teaching?
2. Was there anything you wish you learned more about during your in place/traditional student teaching experience? Why? What could have been done to provide you with more experience in this area?

The intent of these questions was to guide the participants’ recollection of their student teaching experiences and to aid them in reflecting on how they felt these experiences prepared them for teaching special education. Participants were informed in advance of their right to skip questions, temporarily stop the interview, or completely withdraw from the interview and study, if they so desired. I had a good sense of the
emotional state of the participants throughout each interview. In addition, I asked participants follow-up questions for clarification as the need arose. These follow up questions followed the initial interviews and were asked via telephone and email. Copies of the in place and traditional interview protocols are located in Appendix B. Copies of the in place and traditional consent forms are located in Appendix C.

To entertain another perspective, I interviewed a total of 4 tenured and/or tenure-track faculty members who were the former field supervisors of several study participants. The purpose of these interviews was to provide the field supervisors’ perspective of the student teaching experiences of the recent program graduates and also to get an overall impression of teacher educators on experiences of the in place and traditional student teaching settings and how these arrangements prepare teachers. The interviews were conducted in-person and took place in faculty offices. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format and audio-recorded. I transcribed the interviews. The interviews were 30-60 minutes in length and consisted of four open-ended questions. Sample questions included:

(1) How good of a practice teaching experience do you think _______ got through this placement? What could have been done to make it a richer learning experience?

(2) Over the years, you’ve supervised students in both traditional and in-place arrangements. What is your opinion on these two types of clinical teaching situations? How well do you think each type of placement prepares candidates for the teaching profession?
The field supervisor interview protocol is located in Appendix B. The field supervisor consent form is located in Appendix C.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The primary source of data was derived from individual interviews of teacher candidates and university field supervisors. After each interview, I wrote memos based on my thoughts of the interviews, I noted any questions that arose after the interview as well as possible follow-up questions to ask during future interviews. I transcribed each of the audio-recorded interviews. To check for accuracy, I conducted member checks with the participants; I asked each participant for checks on accuracy and/or further clarification. I made the necessary edits and I uploaded the transcripts into NVIVO where I analyzed the transcribed data. I compared the data from each interview with data derived from other interviews. In these comparisons, I looked for consistencies and inconsistencies. I identified themes and sub-themes based on the data. I sorted data into themes and sub-themes until I could not identify new themes. A summary of the major themes and representative quotes are located in Table 3 below:

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Representative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional themes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional candidates want a tethered learning experience</td>
<td>“I didn’t feel prepared to just jump in and be the teacher.” (Bonnie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional candidates felt supported by their cooperating teachers</td>
<td>“I had a great relationship with my cooperating teacher. I never felt like I couldn’t ask her questions or ask her for advice or for help in planning.” (Kristina)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Traditional candidates feel well-prepared to teach children with disabilities

“It’s [Teaching special education] just been awesome. It comes down to safety, communication, and then once certain rules established, then we’re able to really get into academics.” (Bonnie)

Traditional candidates feel very unprepared for the care coordinator role

“Those of us "traditional-type" students get a rude awakening to the realities of the job.” (Sharon)

Traditional candidates lack special education-specific mentoring as first year teachers

“No, [we] don’t have sped mentors. I think it’s only general education. It’s not like she can answer any of the special education questions.” (Frances)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Representative Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In place themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In place candidates benefitted from</td>
<td>“It’s growing roots in your classroom, with your children, and with the culture of the school.” (Lindsey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extensive time in supervised</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In place candidates felt well prepared</td>
<td>“I have to say, every teacher, every person from UH… gave me support.” (Brianne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to teach because of access to a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive support system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during their first two years of teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In place candidates see the direct</td>
<td>“When I was in the program, everything I was learning was a lot more applicable for me. You get so much more out of it instead of a few years later. So I think that contributed to how well it prepared me.” (Grace)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>applicability of coursework to practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The in place experience worked well</td>
<td>“The in place worked better for me because of where I am in my career. But if it’s someone just starting out, I would say the traditional would be more beneficial.” (Lindsey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for some but it is not for everyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Representative Quotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field supervisor themes</strong></td>
<td><strong>“I know there are politicians and others that don’t feel we should have teacher training and want to eliminate teacher training but I just don’t see it. You have to have the experienced personnel – supervisors, coordinators, and cooperating teachers with the experience. I think the traditional placement is better because of that.”</strong> (Dr. Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field supervisors believe traditional student teaching benefits</td>
<td><strong>Field supervisors are aware and concerned about limited opportunities for care coordination practice for traditional student teachers as both a problem and a challenge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everyone</td>
<td><strong>We try to encourage the CTs to invite the candidates to all their meetings and the outside of school hours kinds of stuff, especially as they move into solo teaching. I try to get the CT to hand over a lot of the paperwork and the communications. Some teachers can release some of that; some just don’t feel comfortable doing that.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field supervisors believe in place arrangements with the right support can prepare select candidates for teaching special education</td>
<td><strong>“The in place candidates get a better taste of reality. They are better prepared because they’ve had more experience. With the in place, the whole idea has changed with having SPED Department mentors.”</strong> (Dr. X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field supervisors feel in place candidates must prioritize their jobs over their program which limits flexibility to try innovative ideas</td>
<td><strong>“A few of them got caught up in the system so when I would recommend improvements or things to change, it was almost like they were moving with this flow, with this routine that was in place when they got there.”</strong> (Dr. W)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Role of the Researcher**

I was the data collector and I was solely responsible for identifying and contacting the participants, conducting the interviews, analyzing and checking the data, and writing up the analyses. Therefore, it is important to understand my perspectives and experiences in this area of study because it is through my lens that the data were analyzed and interpreted.

Teaching special education is a second career for me. My first career was in social work. I possess an undergraduate degree in psychology and a Master of Social Work degree. My emphasis of study in graduate school was in mental health issues. I have worked with children and adults with chronic and terminal illness and adults who were homeless and mentally ill. I have also worked as a health educator for a local AIDS organization and the Alzheimer’s Association. As much as I found the counseling side of social work to be interesting, the teaching aspect of social work was incredibly rewarding to me. I found education to be a powerful tool in health promotion and prevention. I also saw the power of education in enabling people to cope with and, in some cases, thrive in adverse conditions.

I accepted an offer to teach English in Japan to see if I was well suited for a career in teaching. After a brief stint as an English teacher with the Japanese Ministry of Education, I decided to pursue a second career in education. After some deliberation, I chose to teach special education because I viewed it as a marriage between the fields of education and social work. I felt that given my background in mental health counseling, health education, and working with diverse populations, my transferable skills would benefit the field of special education.
I am a graduate of the M.Ed. in Special Education program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I was placed in two different classrooms for my field experience courses in the first two semesters of my program. My first placement was a rewarding experience with a cooperating teacher who was incredibly warm and supportive. Although my second placement was an equally rich learning experience, my cooperating teacher was not particularly kind or constructive in her feedback to me. In the summer before my second year, I was hired by the Hawaii Department of Education as an in place candidate for a K-6 special education resource setting in the Honolulu district. I was granted permission to fulfill my student teaching requirement through this paid position. I was assigned to the same university field supervisor for the fall and spring semesters. She observed and evaluated me teaching four lessons each semester. At that time, there were no formal mentoring or induction programs in the HDOE or at UH; I had no formal mentoring support from either the university or the HDOE.

After graduation, I served as the mentor teacher for two traditional teacher candidates from the M.Ed. in Special Education program. I also informally mentored two observation-participation students from a nearby community college.

For the last ten years, I have been the field placement coordinator for the M.Ed. and post-baccalaureate in Special Education programs. In addition to my placement responsibilities, I have supervised traditional and in place candidates in the B.Ed., M.Ed., and post-baccalaureate in Special Education programs. Thus, I have had experiences as a traditional candidate, an in place candidate, a mentor teacher, and a teacher educator. Based on my experiences, I feel well suited for understanding the nuances and complexities of the traditional and in place experiences of teacher candidates.
CHAPTER 4

THE DUAL ROLES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Special education teachers carry a dual set of professional responsibilities. On the one hand, they are responsible for teaching students with disabilities and meeting their individual learning needs. They plan and teach lessons that are individualized to meet the learning needs of their students. Lessons can be academic in nature; lessons may also involve teaching students appropriate behaviors, and/or life skills. Special education teachers also serve as comprehensive “care coordinators” for their students. Care coordinator responsibilities typically include developing and writing students individualized education plans (IEP) and IEP-related paperwork, procuring additional services for students as needed, coordinating and overseeing related services (e.g., various therapies, transportation, assistive technology devices), and scheduling, attending, and sometimes chairing various meetings related to their students educational needs.

In this next section, I will discuss special education services and the role of the special education teacher. As will be clear, some of these services are required by federal mandate, but the way they are implemented varies somewhat by state. The descriptions below relate to the way the Hawaii State Department of Education (HDOE) regulates the delivery of special education services. As Hawaii has only one school district, the HDOE, these procedures are fairly uniform.

**Teacher of Students with Disabilities**

Special education teachers teach students who have identified disabilities that negatively impact their academic achievement. According to the National Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY) 2012, there are 14 disability categories in which
students must qualify to be eligible for special education. They are
(http://nichcy.org/disability/categories):

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Developmental delay
5. Emotional disturbance
6. Hearing impairment
7. Intellectual disabilities
8. Multiple disabilities
9. Orthopedic impairment
10. Other health impairment
11. Specific learning disability
12. Speech or language impairment
13. Traumatic brain injury
14. Visual impairment, including blindness

The Spectrum of Special Education Services

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), students with
disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive
environment (LRE). The spectrum of special education services ranges from the least
restrictive to the most restrictive (Rozalski, Miller, & Stewart, 2011). The needs of the
student determine the level of special education services. Figure 1 illustrates the
spectrum of services.
Typically, most special education services offered at HDOE public schools take place in either in general education classrooms or in separate special education classrooms. The responsibilities of the special education teacher may vary depending on the needs of the students and the type of setting in which the teacher is assigned. Typical teaching responsibilities include developing, planning, and teaching appropriate lessons that are individualized to the needs of their students, monitoring student progress, and managing student behaviors.
Special Education Services in the General Education Classroom

Special education teachers may be assigned to provide services to students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Special education teachers serve as a consultant to the general education teacher who may have students with disabilities who do not require special support. Special education teachers may meet regularly with the general education teacher to discuss any concerns or answer any questions. The special education teacher offers suggestions to the general education teacher on teaching strategies to best meet the needs of the students with disabilities. The special education teacher is responsible for monitoring the progress of students with disabilities who are able to receive instruction in the general education classroom. The special education teacher collaborates with the general education teacher to make the general education curriculum accessible to students with disabilities. Special education teachers work in conjunction with general education teachers to make accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities who need them.

In these types of inclusive settings, the general education and special education teachers may adopt one of several models of co-teaching. Co-teaching is generally defined as a two teachers, typically a special education and general education teacher who share the responsibilities of teaching students in the same classroom (Friend and Cook, 1995). There are several types of co-teaching found in the research literature (Friend & Cook, 2003). A summary of typical co-teaching arrangements and their descriptions (Friend & Cook, 1995) can be found in Table 4 below:
Table 4

Summary of Co-Teaching Types and Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Teaching Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Teach, One Assist/</td>
<td>The general education classroom teacher assumes responsibility for teaching and instructional planning for the entire class while the special education teacher is assigned to observe and monitor students, or collect data on student progress with little/no teaching responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Teach, One Observe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Teaching</td>
<td>The general education classroom teacher and the special education teacher are both responsible for teaching and instructional planning. Teaching “stations” are established and the students are expected to move from one station to the next. The general education teacher and the special education teacher are responsible for planning, instruction and teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel Teaching</td>
<td>The general education classroom teacher and the special education teacher share the responsibility of teaching and instructional planning. The class may be divided into two groups; the general education classroom teacher is responsible for teaching and instructional planning for one group while the special education teacher is responsible for teaching and instructional planning for the other group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Teaching</td>
<td>The special education teacher is responsible for the teaching and instructional planning of smaller groups of students within the class while the general education classroom teacher is responsible for teaching and instructional planning for the rest of the class. The students are typically grouped by ability to allow for more individualized instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Teaching</td>
<td>The general education classroom teacher and the special education teacher share equal responsibility for teaching and instructional planning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special Education in a Resource Classroom

Special education teachers may be assigned to teach in a special education resource classroom. This setting is typically for students with mild/moderate disabilities who need more specialized instruction in a smaller class setting. Generally, special education resource teachers teach content area subjects (e.g., reading, writing, and math) to students with disabilities. These students leave their general education classrooms for a portion of the day and receive instruction in a separate special education resource classroom. They usually return to their general education classrooms for other subjects. Resource classrooms tend to be staffed with a special education teacher and an educational assistant (EA).

Special Education in Fully Self-Contained Settings

Children with disabilities in fully self-contained (FSC) settings spend most, if not, all of their school day in the FSC classroom. The FSC classroom is generally appropriate for students who need more specialized instruction and whose needs cannot be met in the general education and/or resource classes. Typically, FSC classrooms have small class sizes. In addition to the special education teacher, the FSC classroom may also be staffed with one or several EAs, part-time assistants, and other adults as needed.

Teacher as Care Coordinator

In addition to their full-time teaching responsibilities, special education teachers also serve as the care coordinator of their assigned students. Care coordinator responsibilities are largely administrative in nature and although students are the focus of these duties, these tasks do not involve any direct teaching and can take up a considerable amount of a teacher’s time. Special education teachers are expected to manage their care
coordination responsibilities in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Care coordinator responsibilities typically include developing educational goals and objectives for their students’ IEPs, completing IEP-related paperwork for each student, procuring, coordinating and overseeing related services (e.g., various therapies, transportation, assistive technology devices), and scheduling and attending various meetings.

Although special education teachers take the lead on many care coordinator duties, some of these responsibilities and decisions are shared among the IEP team members. The IEP team typically consists of special and general education teachers, parents and/or other student advocates, school-level administrators, and service providers.

Before I describe the typical care coordination duties, however, I will briefly summarize the history of the federally mandated Felix consent decree in the HDOE. This discussion of the events that led to the federally mandated consent decree provides the background for the reasons special education teachers are assigned to care coordinator responsibilities.

**The Felix Consent Decree**

In 1989, Jennifer Felix, a high school student on the island of Maui who required special education and mental health services was sent to a facility in Texas at the expense of the Hawaii Department of Education (HDOE). The reason was that the HDOE claimed appropriate educational and mental health services were not available in Hawaii. Jennifer was described as being self-abusive and had a history of running away. According to her mother, her family could not find any services on Maui for Jennifer (Wataoka, 2002). On May 4, 1993, the family of Jennifer Felix sued the Governor of the State of Hawaii, the
Hawaii Superintendent of Education and the Director of Health in federal court on the basis that the HDOE could not provide appropriate education and related services in Hawaii for their daughter. On May 8, 1993, the case became a class action suit on behalf of all children and adolescents between birth and age 20 with disabilities who reside in Hawaii who are entitled to educational and mental health services but were not receiving these services. The settlement of this case entailed an evaluation and review of all special education services in the HDOE (Chorpita & Donkervoet, 2005). This case became known as “Felix.”

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (formerly called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) contains provisions for assuring that all students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This federal law requires that to receive funds under the act, every school system in the nation must provide a free, appropriate public education for every child between the ages of three and twenty-one, regardless of the severity of the disability (Hallahan & Kaufman, 2006). Additionally, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that

“no otherwise qualified individuals with a disability… shall solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Wataoka, 2002).

Thus, public school systems are required under federal law to provide special education and related services to all students who need them. The Felix family, having been forced
to move to Texas to find appropriate services for their daughter, felt that Jennifer’s rights as a student with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504 in a least restrictive environment were violated. The Felix family contended the State failed to provide adequate mental health services to children and adolescents who needed these services to benefit from their educational program.

There were many other reported problems within the HDOE with regards to special education services prior to the Felix lawsuit. There was a reluctance to refer children for special education or related services because services that should have been available were lacking. In addition, affordable community-based programs were not readily available. Overall, there seemed to be a lack of communication and coordination among families, schools and related service providers (Wataoka, 2002).

On May 24, 1994, Federal Judge David Ezra ruled that the state had

“systematically failed to provide adequate and necessary educational and mental health services to qualified handicapped children of the State of Hawaii [was] in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973” (Higa, 1998 as cited in Wataoka, 2002).

In July 1994, the plaintiff class and the State of Hawaii reached a settlement and jointly drafted a consent decree that set forth the terms and conditions of the settlement (Schrag, Barber, Berber, McDougall & Abang, 1998). The Felix consent decree is an agreement to improve Hawaii’s special education program and to develop a self-sustaining system of care for delivering special education services. The attorney general
recommended that the State agree to a consent decree to preserve some measure of state control rather than risk a federal court order placing the entire system in receivership and the loss of all autonomy (Higa, as cited in Wataoka, 2002). The Felix consent decree stipulated that the state not only provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) but also to create and implement a seamless system of care (Wataoka, 2002). The principles of the consent decree directly addressed the problems within the Hawaii DOE. The required components in the new system of care under the consent decree are (a) services for prevention, screening and referral, early identification, and intervention; (b) strengths and needs-based assessment; (c) individualized service plan for child and family; (d) service coordination and implementation; (e) resource development and networking with continuous monitoring and change; (f) vocational services such as vocational assessment and supported employment; (g) recreational services such as after-school care and special projects; (h) other related services (i.e. transportation) (Wataoka, 2002).

The HDOE was given until June 30, 2000 to implement the changes as noted in the consent decree or risk federal takeover of the special education program in addition to a fine of up to $25,000 per day. This deadline was later extended to December 31, 2001. On November 30, 2001, the HDOE had made enough progress to satisfy the federal court and the consent decree was lifted.

Implications of Felix for Special Education Teachers

Some contended that the Felix consent decree pushed the HDOE in the right direction by enforcing federal laws that prohibit discriminatory practices against students with disabilities. The consent decree forced the Hawaii DOE to create a comprehensive
system that allows family participation and is geared toward meeting the needs of students. It ensured that schools would provide a free and appropriate education and reasonable access to services for children with disabilities. And although these changes have been for the better, these changes also have produced challenges for the DOE.

It can also be argued that the Felix consent decree brought more paperwork for teachers. In fact, a 1997 study of Hawaii DOE special education teachers by Schrag and McDougall (1997) indicated that among the barriers to retention of special educators were rapidly expanding paperwork responsibilities, and significant increases in time spent in meetings and conferences with staff, advocates, parents and students. Although it is vital that proper protocols and procedures are followed, it seems that teachers bear the brunt of this burden. Student Services Coordinators (SSCs) have since been hired for each school, in an effort to curb the amount of paperwork; however, large volumes of paperwork continue to be problematic for many special educators and is often cited as a factor in teacher attrition (Schrag & McDougall, 1997).

The Felix consent decree forced the HDOE to address and remedy many of the problems that existed within the delivery of special education programs. To their credit, the HDOE has come a long way in improving its delivery of appropriate services. However, the downside is that it has also generated another enormous set of responsibilities for special education teachers. Special education teachers are responsible for generating a tremendous amount of paperwork and attending a seemingly endless array of meetings that are related to the paperwork and other care coordination responsibilities.
The Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

The IEP is a key responsibility of special education teachers. All students who receive special education services have IEPs as required by law. The special education teacher is primarily responsible for the development of and adherence to the IEP.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), by law, the IEP must include certain information about the child and the educational program designed to meet his or her unique needs. Information on IEPs must include:

- **Current performance.** The IEP must state how the child is currently doing in school (known as present levels of educational performance). This information usually comes from the evaluation results such as classroom tests and assignments, individual tests given to decide eligibility for services or during reevaluation, and observations made by parents, teachers, related service providers, and other school staff. The statement about "current performance" includes how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

- **Annual goals.** These are goals that the child can reasonably accomplish in a year. The goals are broken down into short-term objectives or benchmarks. Goals may be academic, address social or behavioral needs, relate to physical needs, or address other educational needs. The goals must be measurable and it must be possible to measure whether the student has achieved the goals.

- **Special education and related services.** The IEP must list the special education and related services to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child. This includes supplementary aids and services that the child needs. It also includes
modifications (changes) to the program or supports for school personnel, such as training or professional development, that will be provided to assist the child.

- **Participation with nondisabled children.** The IEP must explain the extent (if any) to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and other school activities.

- **Participation in state and district-wide tests.** Most states and districts give achievement tests to children in certain grades or age groups. The IEP must state what modifications in the administration of these tests the child will need. If a test is not appropriate for the child, the IEP must state why the test is not appropriate and how the child will be tested instead.

- **Dates and places.** The IEP must state when services will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last.

- **Transition service needs.** Beginning when the child is age 14 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must address (within the applicable parts of the IEP) the courses he or she needs to take to reach his or her post-school goals. A statement of transition services needs must also be included in each of the child's subsequent IEPs.

- **Needed transition services.** Beginning when the child is age 16 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must state what transition services are needed to help the child prepare for leaving school.

- **Age of majority.** Beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority, the IEP must include a statement that the student has been told of any
rights that will transfer to him or her at the age of majority. (This statement would be needed only in states that transfer rights at the age of majority.)

- **Measuring progress.** The IEP must state how the child's progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of that progress.

Typically, the special education teacher calls an annual meeting to review the student’s progress on the IEP goals and objectives and to discuss new goals for the upcoming year. However, technically any member of the IEP team can call a meeting at any time. In some cases, special education teachers may also serve as the care coordinator for students who they do not teach. Special education teachers must write new IEPs for each of their students annually. Annual IEP meetings occur throughout the school year. The annual date is determined by the date the initial IEP was generated. For example, an IEP that was written on October 15, 2012 must be renewed on or prior to October 15, 2013.

Care Coordination Meetings

Special education teachers are required to attend many care coordinator-related meetings. These meetings occur before, during, or after school hours. The special education teacher is expected to attend several different types of meetings including:

**Eligibility conference/initial IEP meeting.** Facilitated by a student services coordinator (SSC) in HDOE schools, the purpose of the eligibility conference is to decide, based on assessments and various other data sources, whether a student who was referred for special education services is eligible to receive services and if so, under what disability category. The special education teacher’s role in this meeting is to share his/her expertise in analyzing assessment and other data with team members to help make an
eligibility determination for the student. If the student in question is eligible for special education services, the special education teacher must develop the student’s IEP within 10 days of the eligibility conference.

**Annual IEP meeting.** The purpose of the annual IEP meeting is to discuss and evaluate the progress of the student with regards to his/her IEP objectives and goals and well as discuss the goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Special education teachers take the lead as the facilitator of this meeting. They call together the members of the IEP team. They ensure that student progress in the various areas (e.g., academic, behavioral, related services) is reported. Special education teachers are also responsible for generating the new IEP that will be used for the upcoming year.

**Re-evaluation.** Special education teachers must also facilitate re-evaluation meetings, sometimes referred to as “re-evals.” The purpose of the re-eval is to reassess the student who is receiving special education services to determine if these services are still needed or if there are any significant changes to the student’s situation. Re-evals are typically held once every three years and requires a minimum of two meetings - the first meeting is for the IEP team to discuss the student’s overall progress, to plan out the upcoming re-evaluation process, and to obtain parental permission to have the student undergo various assessments. The second re-eval meeting is held after the assessment data are collected. At this meeting, the IEP team meets to determine if the child is still eligible for continued special education and related services.

**Student support team meetings.** In addition to meetings concerning students who receive special education services, HDOE special education teachers are expected to attend Student Support Team meetings (SSTs). General education teachers who are
concerned about the progress of a general education student lead these meetings. The parents, administrator, the general education teacher, and other appropriate school-level personnel (e.g., school counselor) attend the SST meeting. Special education teachers are consultants to the team. They share insights to the situation and may suggest strategies/interventions that may benefit the student of concern. The general education teacher closely monitors the progress of the student. If the student’s progress does not improve with a specified amount of time, a referral for special education services may be made.

**Annual parent teacher conferences.** In some cases, especially at the elementary school level, special education teachers may also be asked to attend the yearly parent-teacher conferences with the general education teacher.

The above descriptions of the different special education-related meetings is very general; special education teachers who have students with complex needs (e.g., due process) may be required to attend/facilitate meetings more frequently than described above, and the number of people in attendance may be much larger than the typical IEP team meeting. It is not unusual for students requiring complex IEPs to have parent advocates, attorneys, and various related-service professionals (e.g., social worker, therapist), in addition to the typical IEP team members in attendance. It is clear, however, that special education teachers face a myriad of meetings and duties outside of the classroom.
Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the different kinds of teaching skills and care coordination skills required of special education teachers. Depending on the classroom setting and the severity of the disabilities of their students, public school special education teachers may find themselves co-teaching in a general education classroom, a separate resource classroom, or a fully self-contained classroom. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, special education teachers are also required to oversee the care coordination responsibilities for their students. Care coordination requires knowledge of the administrative rules and regulations of special education and related services, the ability to serve as a consultant to general education teachers, and facilitating and/or attending various meetings.
CHAPTER 5
THE TRADITIONAL EXPERIENCE

To contextualize the experiences of traditional teacher candidates, I begin this chapter with the university requirements of traditional student teaching. I will summarize the traditional candidates’ backgrounds, student teaching settings, and their current (post-graduation) teaching lines. I will discuss the themes I have identified from my interviews with the traditional candidates.

Student Teaching Requirements

Traditional candidates in the M.Ed. in Special Education licensure program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) are assigned to and mentored by a licensed special education preK-12th grade teacher. The UHM Special Education Department’s field placement coordinator makes traditional student teaching placement arrangements for traditional program candidates. Traditional student teaching placements occur in public, private, or charter schools and must align with the teacher candidate’s program emphasis (e.g., mild/moderate or severe/profound) and intended level of license (e.g., elementary, secondary). For example, a candidate in the severe/profound program who wants to earn a K-6 license must be placed in a severe elementary classroom setting.

Course requirements. Teacher candidates in good academic standing are allowed to enroll in student teaching. Student teaching is a one-semester, 6-credit course (SPED 627). Traditional candidates enroll in student teaching during the third or fourth semester of the program. Traditional candidates are required to spend a minimum of 20 hours per week over a 16-week semester for a total of 320 hours in their student teaching placements with their cooperating teachers. The course schedule and course titles for the mild/moderate and severe/profound traditional candidates are included in Appendix D.
Evaluation. Traditional candidates are assigned to a university field supervisor who observes and evaluates a minimum of four lessons throughout each student teaching semester. Lesson observations are typically scheduled in advance. University field supervisors use a structured lesson assessment rubric, or the lesson observation form, to evaluate the teaching performance of candidates. Candidates are assessed on seven different dimensions including: (a) planning/preparation, (b) presentation, (c) strategies, (d) effective use of instruction time, (e) management, (f) evaluation, and (g) professional development/self-evaluation. For each section, candidates are rated on a 4-point scale: 1 (does not demonstrate competency); 2 (demonstrates at a level below expectations), 3 (demonstrates at a level expected), and 4 (demonstrates at a level beyond expectations). Cooperating teachers may use this form to assess the teacher candidate; however, they may also take their own notes and share them with the teacher candidate. A copy of the written feedback is given to candidates at the end of each lesson debriefing. In addition to the lesson observations, all candidates are required to develop and teach a 5-lesson unit of instruction. Field supervisors observe and evaluate at least of the five lessons in this unit; they are also responsible for grading the unit of instruction.

Candidates are also assessed for their professional dispositions during the yearlong internship. The university supervisor and/or the cooperating teacher assess the professional dispositions of the teacher candidate. The candidates are assessed on six different areas of professional dispositions including: (a) professional and ethical conduct, (b) individual and cultural sensitivity, (c) work habits, (d) effective communication, (e) self-reflection and; (f) collaboration. Candidates can earn a score of 0 (unacceptable), 1 (acceptable), or 2 (target) in each of the above six areas. Candidates
must earn a minimum of 1 (acceptable) in each of the six areas. An unacceptable rating in any one of the areas can lead to dismissal from the program.

The candidates’ overall teaching performance (e.g. teaching skills, professional dispositions) is assessed at midterm and at the end of the semester. The lesson observation form is located in Appendix E. A description of the 5-lesson unit of instruction is located in Appendix F. The midterm and final evaluation is located in Appendix G and the professional dispositions rubric is located in Appendix H.

The field placement coordinator arranges student teaching placements for traditional candidates. The host school is paid $200 for hosting the teacher candidate; it is the school administrator’s decision as to how the $200 is disbursed. In some cases, the cooperating teacher is paid. In other cases, the school may use the funds toward purchasing supplies for the classroom. The mentor teacher must be a licensed special education teacher and teaching in a setting and level appropriate to the program and licensure requirements of the traditional candidate. For example, a secondary traditional candidate in the severe/profound program must complete student teaching in a severe/profound classroom setting at the secondary level. Traditional candidates are not paid for student teaching.

**Traditional placement responsibilities.** During the course of the student teaching semester, the traditional candidate solo teaches for six to eight weeks. Solo teaching requires the candidate to be responsible for all the planning, grading, and teaching responsibilities. Traditional candidates also accompany their cooperating teachers to IEP and other school-level meetings (e.g., faculty, grade-level), when feasible.
In summary, traditional candidates are placed with a cooperating teacher in a special education classroom setting that is appropriate to their program emphasis and license level. They must satisfactorily fulfill all university student teaching and program requirements.

**Experienced “Novices”**

All seven traditional candidates enrolled in the M.Ed. program were seeking their initial special education teaching license. All seven traditional candidates had previous experience teaching and/or working with children, though not necessarily children with disabilities, prior to starting the program. Collectively, the traditional candidates were more experienced in special education and/or related fields than their in place counterparts. Candidates described their previous experiences as educational assistants (EA) in public and private school special education classrooms, as special education related-service providers, and as general education language teachers who taught abroad. Their experiences in these areas ranged from one year to twenty years. Four of the seven traditional candidates worked in these positions in Hawaii; three worked out of state. A summary of the traditional candidates is listed below in Table 5.
Table 5:
Summary of Traditional Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Student Teaching Setting</th>
<th>Current Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelsea</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Related services provider</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Pre-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Language teacher</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Pre-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristina</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Educational assistant</td>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Educational assistant</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Pre-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>S/P</td>
<td>Language teacher</td>
<td>Pre-school</td>
<td>Fully self-contained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Educational assistant</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Educational assistant</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  M/M = Mild/Moderate program emphasis; S/P = Severe/Profound program emphasis

Kristina worked as an EA at a special school prior to enrolling in the M.Ed. program. Initially, she was interested in working in the area of psychology and accepted the EA position for the opportunity work closely with children with behavioral challenges. The students who attended this school had serious disability-related
behavioral challenges that made them unable to attend public school. Kristina’s experiences at this special school caused her to consider a career in teaching:

It was not like any other school I’ve worked in since because the students were so severely emotionally disturbed that it was just a lot of maintenance of behaviors. So I actually did a lot of classroom management. More classroom management than assisting with instruction - even a little bit of counseling, too. I was 23 when I started there, and the kids I was working with were 17, 18, 19. As the youngest staff member at the time, the girls really flocked to me so I ended up doing a lot of informal counseling that I didn’t even really realize I was going to be doing. They would just ask me a lot of questions about everything. When they would be upset about things, they’d come to talk to me. It was really interesting. It was a unique experience. They were all classified. They all had IEPs, specifically special education for emotionally disturbed. A lot of the kids had Asperger’s, too. Working with the emotionally disturbed population was kind of along the lines of psychology and I was kind of wanting to go back to school for that but I really loved being in the classroom. So I kind of made my decision from there that I was going to pursue teaching.

Sharon had over a decade of teaching experience as an out-of-state language teacher. Although her students did not have disabilities, she had extensive teaching experience with a wide range of age levels. Her professional experience ranged from teaching elementary aged children up to undergraduate students at a vocational college:
I had been living and working [out of state] for 12 years. I was teaching at both a vocational college – so I was teaching kids from 18-20 years old and also at a private school… for elementary kids and they would be anywhere from, I guess most of them, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders.

**Theme 1: Wanting to Make a Difference**

The majority of traditional candidates cited a desire to work with children, particularly those who face obstacles and challenges, as the main reason for their interest in pursuing a special education teaching license. This desire to “make a difference” was reflected in many of the participants’ responses to the question, “Why did you decide to go into special education?

Frances, a traditional candidate in an elementary setting, described how she vacillated between teaching and counseling as possible career options. Prior to starting the M.Ed. program, she sought employment at a local school in the hopes of getting work experience to help her make her decision. She was hired as an educational assistant (EA) in a special education classroom. This experience working with children with disabilities is what led her to pursue her license in special education:

I just happened to be working in the special education classroom and I liked it. I liked the challenge. I liked working with a smaller group of students. I liked how you could give them a lot more attention as compared to the general education classroom. I think a lot has to do with the challenge, for me, personally. Students who have disabilities - that is probably the most challenging. If they can overcome some of the aspects, in life later on because I was their teacher and I helped them, then that’s a pretty good accomplishment.
Evelyn, a traditional candidate in an elementary setting, had previously worked part-time with general education students and had intended to pursue a general education secondary teaching license. Before she formally applied to a general education secondary program, however, she was offered a full-time EA position in a special education elementary classroom setting. She took the position for practical reasons (e.g., salary, medical benefits) but intended to pursue a general education secondary license. Her positive experience in the special education classroom, however, was the impetus for her pursuit of a special education teaching license:

I liked being with special education, I liked how it was a small group setting. You really got to help the kids more one-on-one or even in small groups. You really got to see their gains through that. So that’s when I turned around and said I actually prefer working with special education instead of going into general education.

Bonnie, another traditional candidate who did her student teaching in an elementary setting, also cited her previous experiences as an EA in a special education setting as the inspiration for her to return to school to obtain her special education teaching license:

I was working with children with behavior disorders or autism. I was an EA in the class. I was really impressed with the programs that help children who fall behind or have challenges, you know, like autism and Asperger’s. And I was really impressed with how these programs helped and worked for the students. For example, I was working with a child who has autism. They were using PECS
[picture exchange and communication program] and the visual schedule to help get him through the day and it gave him a sense of ownership to what he was doing. He took pride in getting his work done. It was very consistent and it worked really well. Seeing that work made me very excited about being a part of wanting to teach kids with special needs. So with those programs working for the children, I wanted to be a part of that.

Julie discussed how education played a significant role in her ability to overcome her personal challenges. Her belief in education as a great equalizer is her main reason for wanting to help others, particularly those with disabilities, to achieve the same goals: So from my point of view, individuals should have equal chance to study. Since becoming a mother myself, I understand that having a child is challenging and having a child with disabilities especially physically or mentally must be extremely difficult for the parents. So I hope I can help. The scholarship I received makes me always feel thankful because I was brought up in very a poor family. The belief from my parents is that education is very important and can change your life. I think I education is the key to open any door. And this is also one of the reasons and motivation for me to become a special education teacher because I have received encouragement and a lot from life to overcome all the challenges and obstacles. So that’s the reason for me to go to school and give back.

**Theme 2: Traditional Candidates Wanted A Tethered-Learning Experience**

Although all of the traditional candidates had prior teaching or special education-related work experiences, the majority of traditional candidates cited feeling unprepared
to assume the responsibilities of a teacher without formal training as the main reason for choosing a traditional placement. Candidates reported feeling more secure in practicing their teaching skills with a more experienced cooperating teacher in close proximity. Cuenca (2011) refers to this desire for a mentor teacher safety net as “tethered learning.”

Although Frances had worked as an EA in a special education classroom setting prior to applying to the M.Ed. program, she did not feel ready to take on a position before she completed her program:

I would not be comfortable becoming a teacher without having any education. I needed to get a feel for what I’m supposed to do, what are my responsibilities, you know, without having to jump the gun or being thrown to the sharks!

Kelsea had worked as a related service provider for nearly 20 years prior to starting the M.Ed. program. She did not feel comfortable with taking an alternative route to getting her teaching license and felt that doing a traditional placement with a cooperating teacher would better prepare her for teaching:

I could have gone through other alternative education programs because of the [related services] background that I had. I like to be over-prepared. I don’t like surprises. I really felt like given the students now and since I’ve been out of the classroom for such a long time, I knew that for me, it would be better. Every profession has its ways. I felt like I really wanted to learn. I don’t like just winging it although I can and you have to sometimes, but my preference really is to be prepared.
Evelyn opted for the traditional student teaching placement because she felt a cooperating teacher would give her the feedback and guidance she needed to develop and improve her teaching skills:

I thought it was important to have a mentor, a lead teacher to see how the classroom functions and to know what type of strategies work. When you’re student teaching, you can try something and then you always talk to your mentor and you can say do you have any ideas or can you help me on this thing or this topic. You can collaborate that way. I think when you’re thrown in and you’re surviving on your own, then you might not catch that. You’re kind of winging it, you’re trying to keep going. And so I think this route kinds of helps you improve yourself. You can get more feedback that way.

Bonnie noted that working under the guidance of a cooperating teacher would better prepare her for a teaching career. Given the coursework demands and the demands from any new job, she felt that the traditional placement made more sense for her situation:

Being able to be mentored by a teacher, it’s the way it should be, what I should be doing. That’s why I chose that. I didn’t feel prepared to just jump in and be the teacher, especially with the amount of work I had to do as a student. I didn’t feel prepared to just jump in and start - get a job and then have to learn on the job and also be a student at the same time.
Theme 3: Traditional Candidates Felt Supported by their Cooperating Teachers

Overall, traditional candidates reported having good working relationships with their mentor teachers and felt supported by them. Frances particularly appreciated the feedback she received from her cooperating teacher:

My mentor teacher was really nice. She’s very dedicated and she was very blunt - I like honesty. I like it when people can say what they mean without having to put icing on the cake. I like bluntness and she was very blunt and straightforward with me. She always pushed me to become better or if I did something wrong, she would correct me pretty much immediately. She never left the classroom and she always sat at her desk doing her own thing but she’d observe and during recess, if I did something wrong, she’d be like, “OK, this is what you need to do.” Or you need to be a little more strong when you’re doing classroom management. Or you need to watch this student more and give corrective feedback immediately. So, it was good. It was like having someone there for you the whole entire time.

Kristina had taught special education for a period of time, however, she opted to do a traditional student teaching placement. She entered her student teaching experience with some background in teaching special education. Kristina appreciated the respect her cooperating teacher had for her previous teaching experience and the skills she brought to her student teaching classroom. Having the support and respect of her cooperating teacher built her confidence and reaffirmed her belief in her ability to teach special education:
It was a really positive experience for me because I loved my mentor teacher. She was great. The EAs were wonderful, very supportive. I could talk to them about anything. I never felt that I couldn’t ask a question of my mentor teacher. She knew that I had some experience, too, so she wasn’t overbearing with her advice. She kind of let me do my own thing and she just supervised. She knew that I had experience in planning. It was a good development period for me. To be able to do what I wanted to do, plan my own lessons but under the guidance of somebody because it gave me the confidence to know that what I’m doing is good - that what I’m doing is OK, that I know what I’m doing. It just gave me the confidence that I needed. I had a great relationship with [cooperating teacher]. I felt never felt like I couldn’t ask her questions or ask her for advice or for help in planning.

Evelyn, too, felt very supported by her cooperating teacher and appreciated the easy manner in which they could collaborate:

It was very open and a very collaborative effort on both parts. If I had any questions, I could ask my mentor. He would think about it and make suggestions. So it was really easy to communicate back and forth. Even after a lesson, he would say it was great. He was always open to sharing ideas. He wasn’t held to saying it was good, if it wasn't. He would give really constructive feedback on it. He was comfortable with doing that. And I was comfortable enough to absorb it and to use that to better my next lesson. We worked well together.
The majority of traditional participants remained in contact with their cooperating teachers well after the student teaching semester ended. The reach of the support provided by their former cooperating teachers extended well beyond the student teaching semester. Julie described the extent to which her former cooperating teacher continues to help her:

Before I even got the job, I called her right away and she said, “come to my class.” So I went to her class and she sat down for hours to talk to me and shared materials and stuff with me, you know? I know in my mind that I always have someplace to go when I need to talk. So wonderful! She [cooperating teacher] introduced me to [a district-level support person]. So she [district-level person] came to me and asked me if I needed any help.

Although the majority of the traditional participants reported good relationships with their cooperating teachers, not everyone had entirely positive experiences. Although Sharon talked about some differences in opinion she had with her cooperating teacher, she admitted that she learned from her cooperating teaching, too:

She had a very, narrow view of how a lesson should be and what she wanted me to do with them. I spent so much time battling with her over lesson plans that, you know, I thought when I teach I will do what I want, but I got some good philosophy from her.

**Theme 4: Traditional Candidates Feel Well Prepared to Teach Children with Disabilities**

Traditional participants reported feeling well prepared for the teaching and
teaching-related duties of special education. The majority of the traditional participants described having positive learning experiences with regards to the planning and teaching aspect of special education. Traditional participants consistently reported having many opportunities to conduct teaching-related duties such as lesson planning, teaching, behavior management, and assessment. However, the freedom they were given to plan for lessons and the strategies they were able to use to teach those lessons differed among them and it appeared to be linked to the preferences of their cooperating teachers.

**Lesson planning and teaching.** Traditional candidates recalled having extensive opportunities to plan curriculum and individual lessons with their cooperating teachers. Frances, who student taught in an elementary resource setting, described the extent to which she collaborated on planning and teaching activities with her mentor teacher. She seemed to be included and heavily involved with the overall planning of the curriculum:

> We always had to talk about what I was going to do the next day. We always planned what was going to be next so there was never a break. I would go on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. She taught on Mondays and Tuesdays so we would talk about what she did Tuesday on Wednesday mornings - where she left off - and that’s where I would continue. We would follow the curriculum. That’s how we did our lesson planning. There was always assemblies, field trips, or something. There was always something going on and sometimes we would have to skip so we would have to really talk about things, plan things in advance. She would have the chart for the whole month of where she wanted to be. As far as the curriculum, I mean, we couldn’t follow it exactly how we wanted to follow it but at least it was a guide.
Frances also recalled being given the freedom to apply the teaching strategies she learned in her coursework to her lessons with the children. Her cooperating teacher helped her modify and refine those strategies:

The teaching strategies were covered throughout our coursework so the majority of my teaching strategies, methods, came from coursework. I learned it through the coursework and then I would try and implement it in the classroom. Once in a while, my field supervisor would come in do an observation they would say, you can also do this, you can also do that. My mentor teacher would also give me feedback and input. And then, you know, if that teaching method/strategy didn’t work, my mentor teacher would tell me, try this next time.

Julie was placed in an FSC setting for children with severe disabilities. She described how she learned about the capabilities of children with severe disabilities in addition to more concrete aspects of teaching, like scheduling:

I learned a lot from her class because people think that children with severe disabilities cannot do anything - just put them in hospital care. But I learned a lot of things from [cooperating teacher] like using technologies, like communication devices. They can do art. My experience from [cooperating teacher] in my student teaching days is very helpful for me right now. I learned how to schedule for all of my students right now. Mondays, Tuesday, Wednesdays, Thursday, Fridays… every day, I will have to take him to the bus, 8am they come to school,
what they’re supposed to do, what’s the teacher supposed to do. They can look at the schedule and it’s easy for them.

Evelyn described how her cooperating teacher scaffolded the teaching responsibilities for her. He gave her the space to practice her teaching strategies and gradually folded her into taking on more and more teaching responsibility:

If I had some ideas or if I wanted to do a mini lesson this way, he [cooperating teacher] always gave me the opportunity to teach it. He’d say maybe you can lead the class on this. So when it was time for student teaching, it wasn’t totally brand new, like, “oh no I have to do this on my own!” I was slowly doing more and more. For the students, they didn’t see it as, “oh she’s doing this on her own now.” It was kind of like, “this is what we’ve been doing.” So even for them, I think they weren’t uncomfortable or nervous that it was somebody different being the lead, working with them. For the students and for me, it wasn’t a drastic change - they saw me do more and be more involved as the lead and so it really wasn’t a shocker for them and for me, too. It wasn’t like, “oh my gosh, I’m doing all this other stuff “ - some of the stuff I was already doing.

Kristina was placed in a preK setting. She, too, described being given a lot of freedom to plan lessons:

Lesson planning? I did it all for my student teaching… I observed for two weeks and I did all the lesson planning for the rest of the time I was there. I think maybe for two weeks I taught the lessons that [cooperating teacher] planned and then I did the rest of the lesson planning. I had a lot of freedom to apply any teaching
strategies that I wanted to use. I really modeled everything that I did based on what I saw [cooperating teacher] do.

**Assessing students as part of the student teaching experience.** Special education teachers are expected to know how to administer assessments to their students. In some schools, special education teachers may be tasked with administering a wide variety of assessments – both formal and informal – to their students. Some teachers are required by their administrators to administer educational assessments for re-evaluations, annual evaluations, and other assessments on a more frequent basis. Other school administrators may only require special education teachers to conduct annual educational assessments. Traditional candidates reported getting ample opportunities to practice their assessment skills from their cooperating teachers within an already established system that their cooperating teachers developed.

To prepare her for the demands of the classroom, Frances’ cooperating teacher gave her many opportunities to practice her informal assessment skills using instruments that were either developed by her cooperating teacher or instruments that were currently in use at her host school. In addition, she was also given some space to develop her own teacher-made assessment. Frances’ cooperating teacher gave her extensive guidance and support as she practiced her assessment skills:

I would have to correct their chapter tests and chapter reviews. [Cooperating teacher] already had a way to collect data and I would just have to input the data on each child. So basically, I followed everything [cooperating teacher] had already. No, I didn’t have to make up my own, that’s another good thing. I got to
see how to keep records, keep track of how to grade students and their performances, and how to collect data. And it’s just as simple as making a form. If I had to be a teacher, how should I make a form to keep track of a student?

That’s something you get to see, so that was really, really helpful. I had to grade them, keep track of it, I’d have to write it into her book, and give out teacher made assessments. I would have to come up with teacher-made assessments to give to students and then [cooperating teacher] would make me correct them. It’s really hard to grade writing! When I had questions or I needed help, if I wasn’t sure how to score them – it was based on a 1-2-3 scale, she would tell me to think about the student and think about their performance, overall. Like if a student was always a bad writer and they did really good writing this assignment for the test, she would ask me, what do you think they deserve for it? Based on your knowledge of the student, what do you think? Like, you know what they do on a daily basis. So, what do you think? She would always make me think. OK, what should I do? OK, yeah, that’s what I should do.

Kristina’s assessment experiences were limited to teacher-made assessments. She, too, was given opportunities to practice her use of assessments. She was also given opportunities to create some assessments of her own:

I didn’t do any formal assessments with them. I did teacher made assessments and checked if they were learning what I was teaching. I actually created the assessments. I administered them but I didn’t do any formal assessments.
Practicing Behavior Management Strategies. Behavior management principles and techniques are extremely important for special education teachers to understand and be able to apply. To ensure candidates have the depth and breadth of knowledge and skills of behavior management techniques, candidates in the M.Ed. program are required to take both a beginning and advanced behavior management course.

The ability to apply appropriate behavior management skills is critical for special education teachers. Many students with disabilities also have behavioral challenges. In some cases, maladaptive behaviors may be directly connected to their disability (e.g., emotional impairment). In other cases, students with learning challenges may develop maladaptive behavior as a means coping with their learning problems. For example, a student with reading problems may have angry outbursts in class as a result of his frustration with the assignment. For obvious safety reasons, special education teachers must know how to apply behavior management techniques to minimize and eliminate disruptions in the classroom.

All traditional candidates reported opportunities to practice behavior management techniques in their student teaching classrooms. However, like with other teaching skills, traditional teacher candidates reported practicing behavior management skills within an already established system set up by the cooperating teacher. There are advantages and disadvantages to using an established system. On the one hand, teacher candidates get the opportunity to practice using a system that works. This minimizes loss of instructional time as the teacher candidate is able to quickly step in to implement a system that is familiar to the students. Using an already established system also provides the necessary consistency for the children in the classroom setting.
However, the disadvantage to using an already established system is that traditional candidates may not know how to develop or establish a system with a new group of students. Furthermore, instances of student misbehavior may have already been significantly minimized or even eliminated prior to the teacher candidate’s arrival a month after the school year began. The teacher candidate may have missed the first weeks of implementing a behavior management system in the classroom. As a result, they may develop an impression that there were no behavior management issues among the students when, in fact, the cooperating teacher may have already resolved problematic behaviors prior to the teacher candidate’s arrival.

Frances, who student taught in a resource setting with students with learning disabilities, implemented the management system developed by her cooperating teacher. She reported benefitting from implementing the established system. She also seemed to recognize the problems associated with implementing a new behavior system for her learning benefit:

When I did my student teaching, my mentor teacher already had set up classroom rules and management so she asked me to just follow it. I think that’s really good because I can’t be teaching Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and have my own rules and then Mondays and Tuesdays she has her own, you know? I think when you’re a teacher candidate; you need to follow what’s been set. If it’s working, then keep it. I felt comfortable enough to say if something wasn’t working. I could ask her, what about if we did this instead and she was open to suggestions. She wouldn’t be like, no, this is how it is, this is my classroom this is how you’re going to do it. She was very open. And the students were really, really well
behaved. We didn’t have a problem with behaviors in the classroom. They were really good! The only problem that we really had with the students was getting them engaged to participate. That was the biggest issue. As far as behavioral management, the students were really, really good. And I think that’s because of the way that she set up the classroom before I came in. She’s very strict and she’s very on top of them, with their attitudes and their behavior.

Clearly, Frances benefitted from using a system that had already been established by the cooperating teacher. Following her cooperating teacher’s lead, France was able to practice consistently implementing a system with which students were familiar. Frances was able to see the importance of establishing a consistent behavior management system in the classroom as she attributed the students’ good behavior to the cooperating teacher’s system. As a result, Frances was able to teach with minimal behavioral disruptions.

Frances might have benefitted even more from the opportunity to apply her knowledge of behavioral management principles to design and implement her own behavior management system. However, in the short term, this could have been problematic and disruptive for the students in Frances’s classroom. In this instance, the students’ need for consistency outweighed Frances’s need to practice designing and implementing her own system.

Kristina, too, seemed to realize the disruption a newly developed system would create for the students:

I used an already existing system. It’s difficult when you’re dealing with kids, special ed kids. It’s hard to come in and they’re already adjusting to a new teacher, right, and then it’s hard to come in and kind of change up everything they
already know. I like to study behavior so I considered doing my Plan B paper on a behavior strategy but the reason I decided not to was because I didn’t want to change what the kids already were doing.

Bonnie was able to see the benefit of experiencing different placements and seeing different classroom management styles. Although she did not have opportunities to develop and implement her own behavior management system during student teaching, she was able to see different classroom management styles in her field experience and student teaching settings. Bonnie was able to discern management techniques/styles that worked better than others. She stated:

Behavior management, I think that I’m getting better at it. I’m very consistent as far as what I want from the students. I think with experience, with time under my belt and figuring out what works for each specific student, I’ll find what works for me. Sometimes sticker charts work really well. And sometimes it’s just a verbal reward, attention, verbal praise works. I think that will come in time for me. I’m seeing with each teacher I’ve worked under, consistency made all the difference. I did have one teacher, she was not consistent and she was super sweet. I love her to death but the kids knew that and they would just act out. You know, that was a good thing for me, to see the difference. See how consistency does make all the difference.

As much as traditional candidates benefit from using an already established classroom management system, traditional candidates may miss opportunities to observe and analyze misbehavior and to apply behavioral principles to design and implement a classroom management system to encourage appropriate behavior.
Collaboration with parents, service providers, and other school personnel.

Children with special needs often receive a variety of specialized services to address their learning, behavioral, and health needs. Examples of specialized services include counseling, speech/language therapy, and physical therapy. Special education teachers are designated as the main point of contact for all school-level and related services for their students. As a result, special education teachers have to collaborate with many different school-level personnel, related services professionals, parents, and other adults who work with their students. It is critical that special education teachers have strong collaboration skills.

Depending on the student teaching setting and the specific needs of their students, special education teachers have differing levels of contact and collaboration with related service providers. For example, some students with mild disabilities in a resource setting may require an additional related service, such as speech/language therapy. Furthermore, students with more severe needs may require multiple related services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and/or skilled nursing care in addition to special education. Special education teachers in different setting have varying levels of contact with related service providers, depending on the needs of their students.

A semester-long course on collaboration skills is among the required courses in the M.Ed. in Special Education program. Additionally, strategies for collaboration are discussed across the different courses in the M.Ed. in Special Education program. Although collaboration skills must be learned and practiced, it appears that the traditional student teaching arrangement provides limited opportunities for traditional candidates to practice collaboration skills with others.
Frances did not have any opportunities to collaborate with related service providers. In fact, through my interviews with her, it did not appear as though she knew specifically which students, if any, received additional related services. Although the students in Frances’ student teaching resource classroom received special education services for reading, writing, and/or math instruction, they returned to their general education classrooms for other subjects, such as social studies or art. Frances did not have opportunities to collaborate with her students’ general education teachers. Frances’ opportunities for collaboration with other adults seemed contained within the four walls of her student teaching classroom:

Collaboration with the EA, yes. The EA. I also got to see the teacher next door because that’s where one of the other teacher candidates was placed. So I got to peek in once in a while. Collaboration with the other teachers, like the other 6th grade teachers? Not really. I would go with my cooperating teacher to the meetings they would have to kind of see where everybody is on, what are they teaching, what content, areas, and kind of see where the special education students were at. There wasn’t any collaboration with parents. She sent out a letter stating that she was going to have a teacher candidate in her classroom. But as far as that, there was no collaboration with parents.

Kristina, too, was limited to collaboration opportunities that did not go outside of her student teaching classroom:

There wasn’t really a lot of collaboration with anybody else. I mean even with the other preschool teachers, now I know they have meeting times but they didn’t
do any meetings last year to work together and collaborate. My cooperating teacher had two EAs that would kind of alternate, they were both part-time or subs maybe and I sort of worked with both of them in the classroom. I collaborated a lot with my cooperating teacher and I collaborated with the EAs but not so much with the outside. You know, not really with administration or with any of the service providers, like speech. I didn’t do any collaborating there.

Sharon described the very narrow collaboration opportunities she had with the EAs in her student teaching classroom:

I wrote in my reflection, “I could have used them [EAs] in a better way.” I just thought of my lesson, my lesson, I hadn’t thought they’d be there to help me. So it was an after-thought that I thought, wow, I could’ve used them and it could’ve run smoother, if I had planned for that. But that’s a far as collaboration went. And I prepped them for it, you know? I would tell the EA not to pass out the markers until I tell them to so like when I say to the students, “Ok, now you’re going to mark the main idea in pink highlighter,” then I would tell the EA to go ahead and pass out the pink markers. And there were, except that kinda stuff, no collaboration.

Frances and Sharon’s collaboration opportunities may have also been limited by the structure of their student teaching resource classrooms. In their student teaching settings, students typically received reading, writing, and math instruction. They returned to their general education classroom for other subjects. Some of these students required
assistance in the general education settings and were accompanied to the general education classrooms by the EA. The opportunity for collaboration may have been limited because the EAs spent part of their time in the general education classes during the periods the teacher candidates were teaching in the special education classrooms.

Julie’s opportunities for collaboration were very limited despite the fact that she was in a fully self-contained setting where the students required related services and she had regular contact with service providers. However, her ability to speak a language in addition to English gave her some opportunity to interact with, though not necessarily, work collaboratively with parents:

I didn’t have opportunities to do that [collaborate] in my student teaching. I didn’t have a chance to really talk to the OT [occupational therapist] or PT [physical therapist]. I did some language translation for some IEPs during my student teaching. And the teacher talked on the phone with the parents a lot.

Every time they called me and they put me on the phone with the parents.

Interestingly, the few opportunities for communication and/or collaboration with others outside of the student teaching classroom was usually with the parents of the students. Although Evelyn did not see the parents of the students on a daily basis, she was allowed to maintain regular communication with them:

With the IEP meetings, I would sit in, so they [parents] knew who I was. I was allowed to write in their communication books so they knew me. And we could converse back and forth. So that part wasn’t a problem.
Bonnie, however, made it a point to collaborate with the general education teacher. She applied the principles of collaboration she learned in her course and applied it to her student teaching:

When I was student teaching, I was taking a class, what was it called? It was the Special Education Interactions and Collaboration Skills for Professional Development. Through that class, when I was student teaching, I had done a project with a general ed teacher and I talked with parents anyway so that was you know, just practicing, but then being conscious of it. Using those, you know, guidelines from the book to communicate with parents. It was like oh wow, I do a lot of these things anyway but being aware of it was really good on a regular basis. And I know that the collaboration with the teachers worked out really well.

It appears that with the exception of Bonnie, the traditional participants seemed to have minimal opportunities for collaboration with other school-level personnel, related service providers, and parents. One of the reasons Bonnie may have had access to opportunities for collaboration may be due to her familiarity with the school and school personnel. She worked at her host school for several years prior to being placed there for her student teaching. As a result, Bonnie may have felt less inhibited about initiating interactions with school level personnel and parents. Likewise, the personnel at the school may have been more comfortable collaborating with her and giving her permission to assume more responsibilities. Upon the completion of her program and at the recommendation of her cooperating teacher, Bonnie was eventually hired for a special education position at this school.
For the few traditional candidates who did report collaboration with parents, their actual descriptions of these collaborative interactions with parents seemed to be more like interactions (e.g., chatting with parents at drop off and pick up), rather than actual collaborations. The scant collaborative opportunities they did report seemed to be centered on the adults who worked extensively in the classroom – namely, the EAs.

**Theme 5: Traditional Candidates Feel Very Unprepared for Care Coordinator Role**

To a large degree, traditional candidates reported feeling very unprepared for assuming care coordinator responsibilities. This theme clearly emerged from traditional candidates across programs (e.g., mild/moderate, severe/profound) and license levels (i.e., preK, elementary). Although the vast majority of traditional candidates voiced their concern over the lack of preparedness for writing IEPs, coordinating the various people and levels necessary for composing the IEPs and related paperwork also presented a formidable challenge.

As first year teachers, many traditional candidates reported feeling blind-sided by the degree to which care coordination responsibilities consumed their time. Sharon, who was halfway through her first year of teaching at the time of the interview, reported feeling unpleasantly surprised by the amount of time care coordinating duties subsumes:

I think we should have been forewarned about the realities of the job - on what the job entails like meetings, paperwork. It is certainly not what people's idea of being a teacher is. Yes, my job would be a whole lot easier and more manageable if I had only the teaching, curriculum-planning and writing of IEP goals/objectives to
do. How much of my day is spent on care coordinator duties? Well, it depends on the day. That is, if an IEP meeting is coming up, the week or so before until a few days after then 25% - 30% of my day could be spent on care coordinator duties. However, on average, I would say 15-20% of my day. Doesn't sound like much, but it is that much time that I spend away from my students that I feel guilt/regret. Doing paperwork, making phone calls, typing up something on my computer when I could be talking to, teaching and playing with my students. What a shame! I had no idea. Honestly, if someone would’ve told me - like a special ed teacher-do you know what kind of paperwork and how many meetings you’d be going to, do you really want to do that? I probably would’ve said, no, honestly, now that I look at it.

Evelyn, too was halfway through her first year of teaching at the time of our interview. Like Sharon, Evelyn expressed her extreme frustration with the time she is required to spend on IEPs, related paperwork, and attending meetings. She lamented on her lack of preparedness for the care coordinator duties:

Through the whole day, I’m basically teaching. And I’ve been having meetings, you know, eligibility or SSTs [student support team meetings] or meetings with just the parents and general education teachers. You know, different kinds of meetings. It was always after I got back to the classroom, after 3:30 or 4pm. And it’s so overwhelming. And that’s the important part – the legal stuff! I mean, not the important part but that’s the part that hangs over your head. And all these deadlines! You know, right after school, I rush off to meetings so sometimes I just leave all my things out. Then I get back to the classroom at 4pm, clean it up, then
maybe work on an IEP. Then you know it’s 6pm already! And I haven’t prepared what I needed for a lesson for the next day, you know. Then I’ll come home late then finish up an IEP at home, which is unfortunate, because it takes away from the actual teaching itself.

Evelyn, like Sharon, was not given to care coordination responsibilities during her student teaching. As a result, she was unaware of the different meetings that special education teachers are required to attend. She was also unaware of the sometimes complicated, administrative processes in special education. It is important to note the staggering number of IEPs and meetings she was required to complete in the first half of her first year of teaching:

I think I’m getting the hang of it. It’s just, you know, 17 times I practiced [facilitating IEP meetings]. I couldn’t believe I had to do that many already! For the re-eval, I didn’t know I was supposed to do that. If I knew, I would’ve scheduled it earlier. It’s not just the IEP itself - but things we don’t really learn until you’re thrown at it. My SSC said, “you need to do an SOP.” And I said, “I don’t even know what that stands for!”

Frances recalled having some exposure to the IEP process during her student teaching but she, too, expressed her surprise over the great extent the care coordinator duties consumed her day. Like Evelyn, it is important to note the number of meetings Frances was required to attend in addition to her teaching responsibilities:

Special education teachers should get paid at least 5K+ more than a general education teacher. We have to do so much! Just the paperwork alone is ridiculous. I think I held 15-20 meetings in 5 months and I had a sub EA that
finished work at 2 and earlier at 12:30 on Wednesdays. I had no help with correcting papers, making copies, and other clerical things.

**Lack of preparedness for IEPs.** Among the responsibilities of the care coordinator, traditional candidates identified the responsibilities of the IEP as incredibly stress inducing. Overall, traditional candidates were very vocal about their dissatisfaction with the amount of IEP instruction they received during their teacher training. This may attributed to the “hit or miss” nature of IEP exposure and training they received during student teaching. It appears that the amount and quality of IEP training they received varied greatly among host schools and the cooperating teachers. Some participants were given opportunities for involvement with IEP-related tasks; others were given minimal or no opportunities for working with IEP-related tasks.

Evelyn’s cooperating teacher included her in IEP meetings; however, her role was that of a silent observer. Upon reflection, she acknowledged that reading through an already prepared IEP and observing someone else facilitate an IEP meeting did not prepare her for developing IEPs on her own and being responsible for facilitating meetings:

I was allowed by my cooperating teacher to sit in. We used them [IEPs] for our lessons. I’d see the objectives, I heard him deliver the conference. So I know that you explain this and this but I mean, when you’re there, you’re just listening. You’re not the one expected to present the whole IEP – to create it, present it, deliver it. You’re kind of in the back seat.
One of the difficulties associated with allowing traditional teacher candidates opportunities to develop IEPs and run IEPs is confidentiality. IEPs are legal documents that contain sensitive information and are protected by confidentiality laws. Only those who work directly with the child are allowed access to the IEP. In most cases, teacher candidates can and should have access to the IEPs. In particular, teacher candidates should have access to the educational goals and objectives of the students they teach. However, school administrators and cooperating teachers sometimes feel uncomfortable allowing candidates access to students’ IEPs. Additionally, they may not feel comfortable with relinquishing IEP-related duties to teacher candidates. Missteps and oversights with IEPs and the IEP process can lead to serious ramifications for the school.

Kelsea was very frank in her wish for more IEP experience, particularly in working with the IEP computerized system:

More IEP experience as a teacher candidate, even if it’s just the (computerized IEP system) sandbox. It starts then. There’s no reason why all of us should be novices when we went through training. I understand that procedures change but 90% of it is not going to change by the next semester.

Frances described the extent of her IEP training and the exposure she got during her student teaching. When I asked about her current comfort level with IEPs, she responded:

My cooperating teacher would help me, like let me show you what it looks like. She would tell me this is what you gotta do for re-evals, this is where you type in this but I forgot it already! I think on a scale of 1-10, I’d say an IEP comfort level
of 5. Basically, you’re looking at their scores and you’re saying this student is below average for this percentile, or above. Then it’s like, what does that mean? So that’s where I had a really rough time. That’s what was really hard. If we had more opportunities to analyze data - that would’ve been a lot better. I would feel more comfortable right now. I’m not really comfortable because I know they work on a certain program on the computer and I have no experience whatsoever to even be on that computer.

Kristina had some experience with IEPs from her previous teaching experiences, however, she, too, reported having very little in the way of direct mentoring of these care coordination tasks by her cooperating teacher. Interestingly enough, according to Kristina, her cooperating teacher, a veteran special educator was struggling with her own care coordinating duties:

My cooperating teacher told me that in the past, she’s had her teacher candidates write IEPs. I think she didn’t have me do it because she knew that I had experience with writing IEPs. So I don’t think she felt it was an important part of my training. It wasn’t something that was completely new to me. So she didn’t push it too much. And I also know that my cooperating teacher was very overwhelmed with her own care coordinator duties during my student teaching so I don’t think she was really in a position where she could do too much training on IEP development with me.

Julie was not given free access to students’ IEPs during her student teaching. She intimated that the lack of opportunities to familiarize herself with IEPs, related
documents, and the computerized system put her at a disadvantage at the start of her first year teaching:

No - they are confidential so my teachers didn’t want me to look at them.

Developing IEPs, it’s my first time with the (name of the computerized IEP system)? In the beginning, when I first started, I didn’t know how to do it, how to manage it. Most of my classmates, they’re so experienced about that so maybe for me, a person that didn’t have any experience before, I wish I had to actually develop IEPs more, you know?

Like Julie, Sharon’s access to IEPs and related care coordinator responsibilities was also limited. Sharon wished that she had more opportunities to experience conducting IEP meetings during her student teaching but she also expressed her understanding of the legal dilemma of the situation. She stated:

In fact, in some field experience classes, they wouldn’t even let me look at the IEPs, which was a problem. I wish I had learned how to write an IEP. I wish I learned about an annual [IEP] versus a revision versus an initial and the whole process. I wish I’d learned the computer stuff, how to get on, what comes next, next, why and all of this. All of the technical stuff, I wish I had more of that.

We’re going to be teaching and we need to know to survive. We need to know how to get on the computerized IEP system to put in all that information. We could have had a class just on that, alone, that could help us, really be prepared for day-to-day teaching, yeah? We never had that - how to run a meeting? We never actually got that. They just expected that we might get that in our student teaching. But when you think about it, there is the confidentiality part of it. It’s
not possible that you can have a dry run at doing a meeting unless there’s a class where you can practice with not real participants.

Bonnie, who was very familiar with the teachers at with her placement school was the only traditional participants who seemed satisfied with opportunities for working with the IEP during her student teaching. Having worked as an EA for several years at her student teaching school, Bonnie understood the significance of the IEP and made it a point to ask to be included in IEP tasks. Her familiarity with the teachers at her placement school may have also contributed to her cooperating teacher’s willingness to share confidential information with her. As a result, she was afforded her opportunities to be included in the IEP process:

I was able to ask my cooperating teacher if I could watch him work on IEPs. And he actually let me click the mouse and OK, go, click this, click that. See that plus sign over there? Open it up. And just being exposed to it a little bit - and I asked to be a part of that - I didn’t ever write their IEPs but I was able to sit there and go through the motions with the funny computer system. That’s helped my mind a lot. I didn’t write anything down as far as how to do it but just being exposed to it when it came time for me to actually do an IEP this time, for the first time, I felt really comfortable, yeah. And then also, I knew that I could go to my former cooperating teacher, who is right next door to me now in my current job, to say, “Hey I forgot, what was it I was supposed to do when it comes to this?”

Overall, traditional candidates reported feeling well prepared for the teaching responsibilities of special education. They were given many opportunities to plan, design, and teach lessons during student teaching with corrective feedback from their
cooperating teachers. Traditional candidates were also given opportunities to practice classroom management skills although they lacked opportunities to develop their own management systems.

However, traditional candidates were unable to fully experience the care coordinator responsibilities during student teaching. With the exception of one candidate who was very familiar with her student teaching school and teachers and who was very assertive in asking to be included in the IEP process, traditional candidates were not consistently allowed access to IEPs nor were they given opportunities to practice care coordination responsibilities. Overall, traditional candidates reported feeling very unprepared for the care coordination responsibilities.

Theme 6: Traditional Candidates Have Trouble Initially Applying Coursework to Teaching

Traditional candidates do not seem to make firm connections between the some of the content they learned in their coursework to their teaching practice. Although the traditional candidates came into the program with considerable teaching and/or special education-related experiences, it seems that their lack of experience with the care coordinator responsibilities gave them little with which to anchor some of their coursework.

The first two classes that we had that first semester - it was where we learned the IEP writing process. I had absolutely no idea what was going on in those classes! I was one of the few people that weren’t in place. Most of the people in my classes were emergency hires. The conversation level was just so far above my
understanding of the system - it’s crazy. I almost wished I could go back and take those classes again. I think I’d get so much more out of them now! I was like, I’m never going to know what’s going on in these classes unless I’m teaching. That’s really how I felt! It’s kind of crazy! It doesn’t mean anything unless you can apply it.

Kristina was not alone in her feeling the need to take a position in order to make sense of the content in some of her courses. Sharon, too, immediately felt at a disadvantage at being a traditional teacher candidate among in place classmates:

I thought, “oh my gosh, what a big difference.” In place people, they have all these experiences to talk about and that’s what our classes were about. “So at your school, do you folks do this? Do you have a chance to choose your textbooks or have any say in your curriculum?” I had nothing to say and everybody else had comments about their students. All I could do was listen and I felt really behind. I don’t know what the statistics are but it felt like 90% of the students are in place, have a lot of experience, and they have a lot to say about what’s been happening at their school. And I felt UH made a mistake in accepting me into this program because it really is a program for people who’ve had the experience but they just don’t have the degree. Because once they come into the program, they need that experience to discuss things, to learn from and apply what they've learned to their work. But I was working backwards, I felt, because I was learning things that I hadn't seen or experienced yet and when you do that you have no way to compare whether what you're doing or saying is right or wrong. It's really just the big picture that we get at the university in the
Master's program. But the nitty-gritty, day-to-day kinda survival things, is not there unless you've already had that experience. That would be perfect. Then, you get all the experience and the practical knowledge you need for the daily work by actually working at a school and go to the university to see the bigger picture. Why we do things the way we do, it makes so much sense. Then it coalesces into a really sound education, I think. But doing it my way, you’re talking about something that you’ve never done, just imagining it, you know.

Evelyn, too, had difficulty with directly applying some of her coursework:

I do remember there was the one class in the beginning - I think it was an IEP class, right? A basic one? We had to create an IEP and talk about it, go over it, like that. But I don’t think really any class can prepare you for this! I think you have to just go in and experience it! I think it goes back to how it didn’t really prepare me for the whole paperwork or legal side of it.

Less relevance to their immediate roles. Unlike their in place counterparts who were teaching full-time, traditional candidates spent considerably less time in the special education classroom setting. In their first two semesters of their programs, traditional candidates were required to spend 9 hours per week over two semesters in two different field experience classrooms. The emphasis of the first two semesters in field experience was on developing and writing lesson plans, and practice teaching and behavior management. Some traditional candidates may be invited to attend IEP meetings or to discuss some aspects of the IEP with their cooperating teachers. However, it is unlikely for most traditional candidates to have extensive in-field exposure to the IEP process in the first two semesters of their fieldwork. Because of this, they may lack an
understanding of the significance that the IEP carries in the day-to-day responsibilities of the special education teacher. As a result, learning how to write IEPs may initially appear to be less relevant to their responsibilities as a teacher candidate.

**In place driven discussions.** Traditional and in place candidates enrolled in the same courses in the same sequence. In any given M.Ed. course, there was a mix of candidates who are traditional and in place. At the time of this this study, in place candidates outnumbered the traditional candidates. Thus, it was easy to see how class discussions could have been driven by the questions, experiences, and comments of the in place candidates. Class activities and discussions may have centered on the needs of the class majority – the in place candidates. As a result, as Sharon and Kristina suggested, traditional candidates may have felt embarrassed to contribute to class discussions or to ask basic questions because their in place classmates appeared to be much further ahead in their understanding of the course material.

Perhaps as a result of the lack of opportunity to fully practice the full range of special education teaching duties (e.g., care coordination activities), traditional candidates seemed less able to see the direct applicability of their coursework to their teaching positions. The lack of immediacy in applying their care coordination-related coursework to their daily responsibilities as teacher candidates hampered their ability to really grasp the material and apply it at a later date. The time that lapsed between their courses and their initial teaching positions may have been too great for them to see the direct applicability of their coursework.
Theme 7: Lack of Special Education-Specific Mentoring as First Year Teachers

The research literature on beginning teachers supports the notion that teachers in their first few years of teaching are vulnerable to attrition; however, the exodus of new teachers can be mitigated with mentoring support. Traditional candidates noted that they did receive some form of mentoring support, both formal and informal, during their first year of teaching; however, this support tended to be generic in nature. Their assigned mentors either lacked any background in special education or they did not have very much special education teaching or care coordination experience. Because of the lack of special education-specific support, particularly with care coordination duties, traditional candidates reported feeling incredibly overwhelmed with their new teaching careers. Sharon described the mentoring support she received during her first year:

We have a district mentor teacher who comes by twice or four times a month, something like that. She should be coming in to either observe a lesson or meet with me and the other preschool teacher to talk about any problems or concerns we have. We also have a district person for sped preschool because our mentor is not a sped teacher. She was a general ed teacher. So some of the questions that we have cannot be answered by her. So she said, “go to the (district) sped resource teacher.” Because that mentor is overseeing so many schools, she can’t possibly help us in a timely fashion. And then we have that district SPED preschool teacher that is strictly for preschool and she can answer some of the sped questions. So we go to her most of the time. But she also has so many [mentees]. So when I had a problem and she came to see me and we briefly just went over things and I told her all my concerns and whatnot. But my whole thing
is - I can get over this one problem but I just feel like there should be somebody to mentor us at our school.

Kelsea was assigned to a district level mentor but found her assigned mentor was not available to assist her when she really needed help:

We had a double eligibility meeting and IEPs. They had two plans because they were twins. And the principal asked me afterward, “well, how did it go?” And I said, “Quite honestly, it wasn’t as smooth as I would’ve liked but it was my week from hell. My car got totaled, these things happened and I said, “it won’t happen again. I will be much more prepared.”” And he [principal] asked me what kind of help did I have. The thing is my mentor teacher was gone and the other district person was not available.

Frances discussed the general nature of her mentoring support. Her mentor, a former general education teacher, supported her overall teaching but Frances needed more specific special education support:

It’s not like she can answer any of the special ed questions - they can’t give any critique [about special education related issues]. She just observes what we did in the class, takes notes. She tries to help plan, she was going to help me do my PEP-T, where we are supposed to come up with our goals and we have to report back to the principal. She says that we have a district special education resource teacher that we can call if we have sped specific questions. The things I’m not comfortable with are the IEPs, how to navigate the IEP computer system – everything in that aspect!

Evelyn was grateful for her mentor - another special education teacher in her
department. Her mentor was the most senior in the Special Education department; however, he, too is an early career teacher and is limited in his ability to provide Evelyn with assistance:

Our most experienced teacher – he’s been there 3 or 4 years. He’s nice - whatever questions I have - he tries to answer. He doesn’t have that much experience but he does try to help me. In the beginning, he sat in when I had to deliver my first couple of IEPs. And he had the students before so he knew the parents and he sat in as my administrator designee. He sat in to make me feel comfortable. So that helped. This school doesn’t have a person who was there long to build the program. There was always a high turnover. So when I asked him, “how do I do an SOP? I have the form but what does it entail? I want to do it correctly.” And he said, “oh, I really don’t know! I never did one yet!” And I said, “thanks for your honest answer, but it doesn’t help me!” Basically, I looked at it as a sample and figured it out myself. It took me a while to complete! But I am able to ask him questions and he’ll try to help me out.

Unlike the others, Bonnie was mentored by one of the special education teachers at her school. Because of Bonnie’s history with the school, this teacher knew Bonnie well, as an EA prior to the M.Ed. program, then as a teacher candidate. This teacher advocated for hiring Bonnie at the school when a vacant special education teaching position materialized and took it upon herself to mentor Bonnie through her first year of teaching:

Maybe it was an implied mentoring. I mentioned she’s been there for many years. And when I got this position, it was because of her request for me to be in the
position. She groomed me, put me under her wing and you know, in that sense, I do feel like I’m mentored by her since I’ve been there.

On some level, traditional candidates feel a certain amount of real or perceived pressure to do well as licensed teachers with master’s degrees. Although they are new to the teaching profession and very new to the care coordination responsibilities of special education, traditional candidates felt they were expected to know how to do all aspects of their jobs (teacher and care coordinator). Sharon candidly stated:

If possible, get as much help as you can, while you’re practicing because you’re just practicing and you just have your BA, the school will be more understanding. But when you have your masters degree, they think you’re getting paid so much, you have a masters, you’re licensed, you’re certified, how come you don’t know these basic things?

Summary

Teacher candidates reported the desire to work under a cooperating teacher as the main reason for their opting the traditional student teaching placement. Traditional teacher candidates reported feeling well prepared for the rigors of the teaching responsibilities of the special educator. Traditional candidates reported having many opportunities to plan lessons and curriculum, to develop and administer assessments, to teach lessons, and to implement already established behavior management systems with their cooperating teachers. Traditional candidates also reported feeling very well supported by their cooperating teachers.

Traditional teacher candidates reported feeling very unprepared for the care coordinating duties of special education teachers. Many felt incredibly overwhelmed and
blindsided by the great extent to which care coordination eclipsed their teaching responsibilities. Traditional candidates attributed the lack of regular opportunities to directly work with IEPs, participate in the various meetings, and to practice other care coordination responsibilities during their student teaching to their current difficulties with these responsibilities. Further, opportunities for collaboration with other adults (e.g., related service providers, parents, other teachers) were limited when it did occur, and it was often limited to basic collaboration with the EAs who worked in their student teaching classrooms or communication with parents.

Traditional candidates seemed less likely to see the direct application of the coursework to their teaching and care coordination responsibilities. Overall, traditional candidates seemed very overwhelmed by their first year of teaching, particularly with the care coordination responsibilities. This seemed further impacted by the lack of special education-specific mentoring.
CHAPTER 6
THE IN PLACE EXPERIENCE

To better understand the experiences of in place candidates, I begin this chapter by providing the context of the in place experience. I will describe the M.Ed. in Special Education program requirements and I will also describe the general HDOE school-level requirements and expectations of in place candidates. I will also summarize the in place participants’ backgrounds, in place positions, and their current (post-graduation) teaching positions in Table 6. I will then outline and discuss the themes I have identified from my interviews with them.

In Place Requirements

In place candidates in the M.Ed. program at UHM fulfill their student teaching requirements through their paid positions as uncertified preK-12th grade special education teachers. Student teaching for in place candidates is referred to as the year-long internship and occurs in the second year of the M.Ed. program. Candidates must receive approval from the UHM Special Education Department and from their Department of Education school administrators to use their paid teaching positions to fulfill the yearlong internship requirements. The course schedules and titles for the mild/moderate and severe in place candidates are included in Appendix I.

Teaching positions. Candidates in good academic standing may secure paid special education teaching positions on their own. These teaching positions may be in public or private schools and must meet specific program requirements. For example, a candidate in the mild/moderate program must be hired in a setting that allows them to teach children with mild/moderate disabilities. Candidates obtain the necessary approvals
from their school administrator and the UHM Special Education Department in order to fulfill student teaching requirements through their positions. Typically, candidates are hired as instructors in emergency hire positions under the stipulation that they complete their approved teacher licensing programs within three years of being hired. Candidates in emergency hire positions receive a full-time salary and benefits (e.g., medical coverage, sick leave); however, they do not accrue time toward tenure or retirement. All candidates must teach at the grade level that is appropriate to their intended level of license. For example, candidates who intend to earn a K-6 special education teaching license must be hired in a K-6 special education teaching position.

Occasionally, a candidate may be offered a long-term (e.g., one school year) substitute teaching position in a special education classroom. Long-term substitutes are paid per day and do not receive benefits. In place candidates may receive approval to fulfill student teaching requirements in appropriate long-term substitute positions.

**In place school responsibilities.** In place candidates are responsible for all the duties and responsibilities of their paid positions as outlined in their contacts and as assigned by their school administrator. Typical duties of an in place teacher include teaching and grading students with disabilities in their assigned classes, developing individualized education plans (IEPs) for assigned students, scheduling and facilitating IEP and related meetings, and other care coordinator duties, in addition to other school-level responsibilities (e.g., committees, advising) as assigned.

**Yearlong internship responsibilities.** In addition to their school-level teaching responsibilities, in place candidates are required to enroll in a 6-credit yearlong internship course (i.e., SPED 628a/b). The yearlong internship must occur during the academic year;
it is taken over two consecutive semesters – fall and spring. In place candidates are responsible for meeting the competencies as outlined in the 628a/b syllabus. This includes scheduling lesson observations with their university field supervisor, writing lesson plans, teaching, and demonstrating professional dispositions at a satisfactory level. In addition, they are required to develop and teach a 5-lesson unit of instruction.

**Evaluation.** In place candidates are assigned to university field supervisors who observe and evaluate a minimum of four lessons each semester of the yearlong internship for a total of eight lesson observations. Lesson observations are typically scheduled in advance. University field supervisors use a structured lesson assessment rubric, or the lesson observation form, to evaluate the teaching performance of candidates. Like their traditional counterparts, in place candidates are assessed on seven different dimensions including: (a) planning/preparation, (b) presentation, (c) strategies, (d) effective use of instruction time, (e) management, (f) evaluation, and (g) professional development/self-evaluation. For each section, candidates are rated on a 4-point scale: 1 (does not demonstrate competency); 2 (demonstrates at a level below expectations), 3 (demonstrates at a level expected), and 4 (demonstrates at a level beyond expectations). A copy of the written feedback is given to candidates at the end of each lesson debriefing. A copy of this lesson observation form is located in Appendix E.

Candidates are also assessed for their professional dispositions during the yearlong internship. They are assessed on six different areas of professional dispositions including: (a) professional and ethical conduct, (b) individual and cultural sensitivity, (c) work habits, (d) effective communication, (e) self-reflection and; (f) collaboration. Candidates can earn a score of 0 (unacceptable), 1 (acceptable), or 2 (target) in each of
the six areas. Candidates must earn a minimum of 1 (acceptable) in each of the six areas. An unacceptable rating in any one of the areas can lead to dismissal from the program.

The candidates’ overall teaching performance (e.g., teaching skills, professional dispositions) is assessed at midterm and at the end of the semester. The lesson observation form is located in Appendix E. A description of the 5-lesson unit of instruction is located in Appendix F. The midterm and final evaluation is located in Appendix G and the professional dispositions rubric is located in Appendix H. Additionally, in place candidates must receive satisfactory teaching evaluations from their school administrator to remain employed.

Mentoring support. Although there is variation among schools, in place candidates typically lack a formal mentor teacher. In response to this need, the UHM Special Education Department hired mentors to assist in place candidates. These mentors are former preK-12th grade licensed special education teachers who give non-evaluative assistance to in place candidates. Mentors typically provide support in the areas of teaching-related duties (e.g., applying behavioral management techniques, teaching strategies), IEP-related support (e.g., assisting with development of goals/objectives, navigating computerized system), and/or emotional support. Mentors typically meet with in place candidates once a week.

In summary, in place candidates are hired to teach special education at the local schools. They must fulfill their employment responsibilities as well as their university program requirements. Both their university field supervisors and their school administrators evaluate in place candidates. In addition, in place candidates receive non-evaluative mentoring support from university mentors.
**Experienced “Novices”**

All 11 in place candidates enrolled in the M.Ed. program for their initial special education teaching license. All 11 candidates had prior experience working with children, though not necessarily with children with disabilities. Seven of the 11 candidates entered the M.Ed. program with teaching or special education-related work experience. These professional experiences included teaching in elementary and secondary general education, extensive substitute teaching in both general and special education, and serving as skills trainers for students with autism, and tutoring. Their experiences in these areas ranged from one year to ten years. There were four candidates who lacked teaching and/or special education-related background; however, they had prior experiences teaching adults and coaching. Nine of the 11 in place participants worked in these positions in Hawaii and two worked out of state.

Ten of the 11 in place candidates were hired as unlicensed special education teachers, some for a semester or longer, prior to entering the M.Ed. program; one was hired halfway through the M.Ed. Program. Six candidates reported being offered the position because of a previous connection to the school (e.g., substitute teacher, skills trainer); others actively sought their positions. For some, taking the special education teaching position seemed like a natural career progression. For others, it was a change of pace they felt they needed. Although the way in which they found these positions differed, all eleven participants cited financial reasons for accepting and keeping the position.
A summary of the in place participants is list below in Table 6:

Table 6

Summary of In Place Candidates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>In Place Setting</th>
<th>Current Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaila</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Business trainer</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Resource/FSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Inclusion/Resource</td>
<td>Inclusion/Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Preschool teacher</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>S/P</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Special school</td>
<td>Special school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>S/P</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>FSC</td>
<td>FSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brianne</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Elementary teacher</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>S/P</td>
<td>Skills trainer</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Substitute teacher</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Secondary teacher</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Skills trainer</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M/M = Mild/moderate program; S/P = Severe/profound program; FSC = fully self-contained classroom

In this next section, I will highlight some of the in place candidates’ professional background experiences.
Sally, a secondary in place teacher had extensive substitute teaching experience in both local public and private schools prior to getting hired for an emergency hire special education position and starting the M.Ed. program:

Before I started [teaching special education], I was a substitute teacher for both private and public schools. I did longer term subbing in a Hawaiian immersion school for about a month and I worked a lot in that school. Also I worked for a variety of schools, all grades - K-12 - but I enjoyed high school the best. I was called for a job at the high school where I’m working now. It was in my subject area and in fact, they had two openings and they weren’t quite sure where they were going to put me in. It was [special education] English and Social Studies (SS) and I was really thrilled because it was the first school that actually wanted to hire me for English or that I interviewed with that had English and SS. Those are both my subject areas –graduate for SS and my BA major in English. And I decided to teach there because I liked the high school and the principal gave me a nice tour of the school and he really chatted up the school and gave me statistics about how many go to college and teachers staying there a long time. He said that most people who are hired decided to stay at the school so it sounded nice.

Grace, a secondary in place candidate was hired to teach in a secondary special education position for a full semester prior to starting the M.Ed program. She was already licensed in early childhood education. She had the unique experience of having taught a special education/general education combination class prior to starting the M.Ed. program:
My undergraduate was in early childhood education. So I did four years in [state] at [name of college] during undergrad. And I was doing a lot of field experience and observations and things like that. I was tutoring on the side for extra money and also babysitting so I was always with children in general. Then for about a year and a half after I graduated, I taught preschool for the [school district] at a public school, at a preK – 6th school. It was a lot of responsibility. It was all-day and I had 16 kids and one EA and it was a mixed class - it was special ed and general. But at the time, I hadn’t even had any special ed background. So that was in [state]. And then, I moved to Hawaii and started teaching 7th grade special education for language arts.

Pat, an in place special education preschool teacher had worked as a skills trainer for a child with autism for three years prior to getting into the program. Skills trainers are contracted employees of private agencies who are assigned to provide direct one-to-one support to children with autism in the public schools.

I was skills training for like 3 years. I was with one boy, I got him in 3rd grade and then I was with him for 3rd, 4th and 5th. He was severe. He was a 2:1 [required two adults to assist the one child]. And that’s why I chose the severe track because at the time I was in an FSC room.

Lindsey, an in place preschool special education teacher started the masters program with considerable secondary teaching and administrative experiences:

Prior to my getting into the masters program, I started at (High School), working in an alternative learning center, an after school program for at risk students.

Shortly thereafter, I started working one-on-one in the --- Program. Then I
became a classroom teacher, a special motivation teacher. I had my own classroom. I developed the curriculum for the after school program. While I was doing that, I was in a post-bac program for secondary ed through [another teacher preparation program]. Then I got displaced. So I went over to [social services agency], their court guided program for adjudicated youth. I was their ed specialist for a short time. Then I got an offer to come back to the DOE. When I came back, I worked at --- School [in an administrator position] for about 9 1/2 years. After that, I went to --- School, where I am now and I started the masters program. I’ve been in special education since then.

These in place candidates were not licensed to teach special education at the time they enrolled in the M.Ed. program but they had considerable prior teaching and special education-related work experiences and they were not completely new to the teaching profession. Collectively, they brought a significant amount of related professional experiences to their classrooms. Although they could be labeled “novices” in that none of them were licensed to teach special education; as a group, they were quite experienced in working with children with and without disabilities.

**Theme 1: Drawn in by the Uniqueness of Special Education**

The majority of in place candidates cited an interest in the unique nature of special education. Candidates noted the smaller classes, closer contact with students, and the different approaches to teaching children, particularly those who face obstacles and challenges, as the reasons for their interest in pursuing a special education teaching license. Some candidates had prior experiences in special education classrooms as substitute teachers or skills trainers. Others knew people who taught special education.
Their experiences with special education settings left them with very favorable impressions of special education.

Olivia, a history major who was an in place candidate at a private institution talked about how she found herself drawn to teaching special education:

My initial intention wasn’t to do sped. I hadn’t even thought of it as a consideration. My initial goal was to become a secondary high school teacher in US history or AP Government, something along those lines. I really did enjoy history and learning from like, different, you know, cultures and stuff. But I’d never been in a public school setting. I went to private school my whole life. The way it’s [public school] structured, the kinds of students, and teaching styles were very foreign to me, you know? What I did was one of my co-workers - I worked in a restaurant prior to starting the program - was actually a teacher at [name of local public school] and so he gave me the opportunity to visit his classroom. I got to sit in with him and he was working with a sped classroom but it was more behaviors than the actual disabilities. He had kids with emotional problems and you know, acting out type thing. But what I really liked about it was the fact that he had like 8 kids or something in that classroom! I did get to see - he took me around the school. I was really more interested in teaching styles than anything else - how it works in the classroom, how teachers interact with their students and such. He took me around to history class, math class and when I saw his class, compared to the teachers who were in the other ones, I really liked how well he was able to communicate with them, work with them, they were able to talk with him and they were all engaged. I really liked that aspect of it. You go to the
general education math class and there are 30 kids. Half of them weren’t even listening. And you know, like, they weren’t getting it. And that kind of bummed me out. I started at looking into sped and I just happened to come across the UHM program in the newspaper.

Sally discovered her interest in special education through her work as a substitute teacher in various schools and classrooms. She was interested in brain research and teaching using different approaches and special education seemed to be a good “fit” for her, based on her interests:

I liked the smaller setting. I liked working closer with students, and I looked at other schools as well and I saw a variety of different styles. It seemed to fit me so that’s why I thought I’d give it a try. I saw from high need to mild/moderate and so I guess I had good experiences because well, I did have an experience at a school where it was rougher and I but mainly it seemed like it was doable, something that I could do. And I like alternative types of teaching so I thought maybe I could blend that in. I did brain gym and I was interested in brain research and things like that. It thought maybe I could use that to help students.

Beatrice, an in place special education preschool candidate had initially set out for a career in elementary education but found teaching children with disabilities to be interesting and personally fulfilling. Through her job as a skills trainer, she found support through the special education teachers:

I pretty much knew I wanted to be a teacher since I was in elementary school. I was not one of those people who didn’t know what they wanted to do. I always knew that I wanted to be working with kids along the teaching/counseling
profession. So that’s what I initially went for – my bachelor’s in elementary education. I knew I wanted to get my masters. I took an educational psychology course and I loved it so I actually switched my major to psychology because that’s what I wanted to get in to. Then later on, when I was deciding on my masters, I wanted to get practical experience so after I graduated and got my bachelor’s, I figured what’s a better way to deal with the foundations of education but to go to skills training. So I was a skills trainer for a pretty severe autistic student. I really loved it. I had really good teachers around me who taught me a lot and I really liked the small classroom – 1:1 type of thing. I really liked solving the puzzle, you know, figuring out what works for the kids. And I had such great support that I decided to get my masters in special education.

Brianne, an in place candidate in an elementary special education position, had a background in elementary education and worked as a long-term substitute teacher for the Hawaii public schools when she realized the need for special education teachers and that she could meet those needs:

I had the opportunity to do a long-term [substitute teaching] in special ed and I began to see the needs, the need of teachers of special education, good special ed teachers - I should say so – because there was such a need in [name of school district]. There was a great need… being able to teach children with special needs and having the patience to do the teaching and to understand the kids.

Grace was planning a move to Hawaii. Although she was already licensed as a general education pre-school teacher, she initially accepted a position in special education
as a temporary measure. She thought it would be good way to break into the local school system. After a year of teaching in a special education line, she changed her mind:

I applied and I was looking at places and schools and I had spoken to people who were already living out here. When I got a call and got an interview with [name of local school], you know, I connected with the administrator so well. Other people told me the school was in a great district and a great school to get in to, so I looked at it as sort of a break or leeway into something, you know, until I could find other schools or another teaching position. I loved special education that whole year. And that’s why I decided to do my masters in it.

Kaila, an in place candidate in an elementary school, worked in the information and technology field teaching adults before she realized an opportunity for teaching. As Kaila looked into education as a possible career change option, she learned about the special education program and realized it was something she really wanted to pursue:

My degree was in computer science. I enjoyed the creative aspects of writing the programs and designing the systems but what was even more rewarding was actually working with the people and training them on how to use the system - training them on how to feel comfortable so that they wouldn’t feel like this technology was now a threat to their job security. I was part of the user support system where we taught, we trained clerks and people like that, the secretaries on how to use the word processing systems, lotus spreadsheets, those kinds of software. It was the most rewarding thing because I would have to know how to use it and I was designing lesson plans without any training. Nobody really trained me, the only training, if you want to call it that was attending other
software training classes. I ended up designing the training packet from the user perspective, how to make it so user friendly, they could just pick it up, use it, and realize oh my god, look, I can put this altogether and go for it. I always got really positive feedback… and then lo and behold, I saw in the paper, advertising the stipend program. I know it could have been math or it could have been sped. I wanted to go into sped because I figured I could do a lot more with that population. I wanted to do elementary, I didn’t want to do intermediate, I didn’t want to do high school because I didn’t want the attitude. That’s how I kinda came into special ed. I also have a brother who has Down’s syndrome. My mother was teacher and I knew what it was like. I knew it was going to be hard work. My mom retired at the same age I started the M.Ed program. When my mom was a teacher, she took up this one course, a summertime course, it had to do with behavior modification. She tried it on my brother. I was like 8 years, 9 years old. I would help my mom with behavior modification with my brother. And that was like an a-ha moment for me. So if you go all the way back, it was in my blood. I didn’t want to do the same hours my mom used to do… although I am now! (laughs). Everything pointed to teaching.

**Theme 2: In Place Candidates Benefitted from Extensive Time Spent in Supervised Classroom Activities**

In place candidates appeared to benefit from the extensive amounts of time they spent in supervised classroom activities as compared to their traditional counterparts. A typical in place teacher spends 6+ hours per day over an average of 180 school days in an academic year for a total of 1,080 hours per year in the classroom. When calculated over
a two-year period (most in place teachers were hired full-time in their first year) in place teachers will have spent a minimum of 2,160 hours in the classroom at the conclusion of their program. This does not include the time they spend outside of the school day in meetings, planning, or engaged in IEP-related responsibilities. As a comparison, traditional teacher candidates spend 288 hours of first year field experience (nine hours per week over two 16-week semesters) in addition to the required minimum 320 student teaching hours (20 hours per week of over one 16-week semester) – traditional teacher candidates spend approximately 608 supervised classroom hours throughout the program. When compared to the amount of time their traditional counterparts spent in supervised field activities, in place teachers spent 3.5 times longer in supervised, teaching-related activities.

During the 2,160+ hours, in place candidates directly experience the gamut of school year milestones: from the flurry of activities leading into the first day of school to the end-of-the-year closing activities. During this time, they have many opportunities to implement teaching and behavior management strategies. They are also able to monitor student progress over a longer period of time. This is particularly important in special education, where student progress may take longer due to the chronic and, sometimes, severe nature of students’ disabling conditions.

Over half of the in place candidates attributed the amount of time they spent teaching students with disabilities as a big benefit to the development of their teaching skills. Candidates also mentioned the opportunity to see change and growth of their students over a period of time as very beneficial to their growth and development as teachers. They described the value of working with their students on a daily basis.
Melanie described the continuity of working the same students over time as beneficial to her development as a teacher:

Being with the kids everyday to learn about them, just spending all that time with the kids – because if I were in a traditional student teaching situation, I would just be in the classroom, what for a couple hours, right? And that’s no way to get to know the kids. To just see snapshots of them, you know, it's not enough. So I really enjoyed having a full-time job, seeing the kids everyday, seeing their good days and their bad days. Something worked one day and then it didn’t work the next day or how they reacted two weeks later to it. That was enjoyable.

Grace discussed the benefit of daily interaction with students as well as the added benefit of learning things that one can only learn while doing the job:

I only learned [certain skills] because of being an in place teacher and I don’t know if I really would’ve learned it in the class-I really didn’t, at least I don’t really remember diving into it as I do on a weekly basis at school but I think that the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) that’s something that I do every couple weeks. It’s something that you kind of learn how to administer and read and take from that on your own ‘cause it’s a test that I will have to use and we use it regularly. So things like that, I think being in place you learn those a lot better whereas just the time you’re in the classroom, it’s hard to pick it up. I would recommend the in place teaching because you learn, you’re able [to do] day-to-day, things come up that may not come up if you weren’t in place and you weren’t there all the time and you weren’t ‘fully responsible for students’ papers
and IEPs and things like that. So I think this kind of learning, being there everyday and being responsible for these students and then learning about why you’re there for them - it really ties altogether really nicely. It’s a lot of work and a lot of time but I think it’s beneficial.

Adrian, an in place teacher of students with severe disabilities described the benefit of working with a student with intensive needs and seeing his improvement as a result of her work with him over a period of a year and a half:

So [name of student], from the first year I had him, he was very intense. This kid had 24-hour services. He even had someone who sleeps with him at nighttime. He hits his head, he’s self-abusive, beats himself up. I dealt with him and now he’s good. He still has his hitting and his tantrums, once in a while. But all this head gear, his arm gear, all that stuff is gone.

Lindsey had a similar experience with seeing gradual improvement of the behavior of her student with autism:

Midway through the year, I got a transfer student from another school. He was autistic and so physically aggressive – I’ve got scars from him! But to see his growth over the next year and a half, oh my gosh, it was just amazing.

Lindsey identified the added benefits of getting to know the school culture and climate as another benefit of the extended time she spent in her school and setting:

It’s growing roots in your classroom and with your children and with the culture of the school. It’s helped [me] purchase materials and things to help build curriculum and build it in that one spot. If you’re not in place, you don’t have that ability to start building your own curriculum.
The 2,160+ hours in place candidates spend in the field also encompasses time they spent doing other tasks in addition to teaching and working with students. Tasks such as curriculum planning and care coordinator duties are also included in this total. Grace reflected on how spending large amounts of time in the classroom as in place teacher really contributed toward her feelings of preparedness after graduation. This confidence is not only self-evident but evident to others as well. Although she, at the time of this interview, was in her first year of teaching special education post-graduation, she was proud of the way new teachers at her school now turn to her for assistance:

   Honestly, after going through the M.Ed. program and having classes while I’m learning about what I’m doing on a daily basis, this is my first year where I feel really prepared. I noticed that there’s a lot of new teachers now who come to me with questions and I know how they feel. So I definitely feel prepared and I think it truly was being in a program and having to face it every single day and still being about to learn about it and have professors that I can ask questions, you know? I had a chance to talk with other candidates who are going through the same things so all those kinds of things were difficult to balance at the time but paid off because this year I feel like I’m prepared.

   In her first year after graduation, Brianne was hired at a different school after graduation. Despite being new to the school, Brianne’s previous in place experience gave her the confidence to approach her administrator with her ideas on improving the special education math curriculum at her new school. She was pleased that her administrator took her suggestions seriously:
It's [the upcoming school year] gonna be very exciting – I’m so excited because I had an opportunity to sit in the office with the principal and I shared some thoughts, some of my personal thoughts and he just wrote everything down. He said, “I like some of the ideas that you have.” They’re going forward [with the ideas]! I said, “I want my children to walk out of the school saying, I’m very well-equipped to go to (school) and do algebra. They’re going straight to Algebra I. If we give them a taste of pre-Algebra here, then it would be a lot easier for them to make the transition when they get to the high school.” So the principal wants to send me to a math curriculum training in California in the summer!

Perhaps as a result of being tasked with the full responsibility of teaching and coordinating care for their students, in place candidates were able to have extensive conversations with me about special education-related issues. The quality of our discussions revealed a deeper understanding on their part of these issues. They were able to discuss issues related to students and student learning, care coordinator issues, and issues related to the school system at large. Although these candidates were newly licensed special education teachers, the level of these conversations impressed me and, in some instances, struck me as similar to the conversations I have had with more seasoned cooperating teachers.

**Theme 3: In Place Candidates Felt Well Prepared to Teach Because of Their Access to a Comprehensive Support System During Their First Two Years as Special Education Teachers**

Although all in place candidates described the stress, in some cases, considerable amounts of stress, they experienced while being in place and going through the M.Ed.
program, in place candidates reported feeling much better prepared and considerably less stressed as compared to their traditional counterparts one year after graduation. Perhaps the most obvious reason for this may be due to the fact that in place candidates, though considered newly licensed, are really in their third year of teaching in the year after graduation. The two years of teaching experience in place teachers throughout the M.Ed. program appears to have an impact on their feelings of preparedness post-M.Ed. program. Interestingly enough, feelings of preparedness were fairly consistent among both in place teachers who remained in the same school and teaching line throughout their programs as well as those who changed teaching lines after graduation. Retrospectively, none of the in place participants reported regretting their decision to be in place during their programs.

The reasons for this may be attributed to the access to a comprehensive support system throughout the critical first years of teaching. In this next section, I will discuss the layers of support that in place candidates received during the M.Ed. program and their first two years teaching special education.

**In place support system.** In place teachers must cope with the demands of the M.Ed. program as well as the responsibilities of a full-time teacher. In place teachers reported having access to a comprehensive support system during their first years on the job. In place candidates agreed that the support they received through their program helped to alleviate some of the stressors of learning to teach while teaching. This support seems to come from a variety of sources and addressed different needs.

**University support.** In place candidates reported relying heavily on the support of university faculty. In any given semester, candidates are in communication with a
minimum of four experienced, special education faculty; course professors, field supervisors, and their university mentor. Access to these university faculty members allows in place candidates to tap into the different areas of faculty expertise. The immediacy of getting answers to questions or assistance with problems from those with special education expertise at the university was reported to be crucial to the support of in place teachers. Grace identified the benefit of having close contact with her university professors as she learned to teach:

But I think being in school at the same point [as being in place], really gave you this extra base and resources. When I was going through the problems that maybe a first year teacher might be experiencing. I was really close in contact with my professors. You know, people right there where if you’re first year teaching and you’re already out of this program, and you’re kind of own your own so it’s a lot harder to get that help. I really did enjoy, you know, having a professor come out to my school and see what I’m doing so they can give me feedback. I think that is extremely, extremely helpful.

Olivia described how much she valued her coursework and her field supervisor’s feedback on her lessons:

Just learning the application [of concepts] was a huge factor, so, in combination, I do think the coursework prepared you well for having to do those things, forcing you to do those routines, critiquing those things. If you don’t actually get the practice, you’re not going to understand why you’re doing it or what it’s for. I do think it was good. I probably wish maybe it was another year or so in terms of more application but it covered all the bases, I think. And having someone be
there, to see how you interact with students, how you apply things, how you control situations and getting that feedback really helped build confidence in the classroom. It’s really important for a lot of teachers. You know, if you’re stuck by yourself, there’s no way you know, that you’ll be effective in the classroom. But I really appreciated the feedback, the type of feedback they gave - different suggestions they have, you know for the next one [lesson], “OK, so for the next one, please work on work on this behavior.”

Brianne particularly enjoyed the feedback from her field supervisors to improve her teaching:

I enjoyed the input of the teachers [university field supervisors] that came in and observed me. I didn’t feel like I was under pressure. I felt that they were there to give me constructive criticism or to give me help and to let me see it a different way than what they saw and what I thought. Because there were several times where [university supervisors] really encouraged me more than [they] really knew but [they] made me feel as if I, it was OK if I didn’t finish the lesson. It was OK not to rush, you don’t have to rush through the lesson and I liked that! Because my thinking was, I have to finish the entire lesson, get to the end and I just, the feedback [they] gave me… I still have all my feedback. The feedback [they] gave me, it really was helpful to me and even now when I teach, I go back and reflect at the end of the day. I have to say, every teacher, every person from UH that graded me gave me support. They gave me the support. They let me know the things I did good, things I could work on, the different ways that I could do it.
And I really, really liked it, the feedback and the support that I got, having someone come in and observe me.

Pat, a preschool teacher also recognized the benefits of university support:

Every time I had a question, I had my field observers, I had my university mentor. So if I even had a little bit of a question, I’d be getting answers pretty quick. It was really helpful. The amount of support was amazing.

Beatrice summed up nicely the benefits of being in place while in school, “you kinda get the best of both worlds… you have your own classroom and you see the progress. You have your own class but at the same time, you can go back to UH if you have problems.”

**School-based support.** To a lesser extent, in place candidates reported some level of school-based support with their job-related responsibilities while they were in the M.Ed. program. Several in place candidates reported having some of their care coordinator responsibilities (e.g., IEPs, evaluations, scheduling meetings), at least temporarily, assumed by the student services coordinator (SSC) or another more seasoned special education teacher at their school. Others reported receiving support as they learned how to write their first few IEPs. Sally, who was hired a semester prior to starting the M.Ed. program was relieved of IEP responsibilities for her first semester:

Actually, I did not have to do IEPs. I had one IEP student and the SSC did everything. I didn’t really get my first IEP student until that August. I was really, really lucky. I had one student and everything was written but I did go to the meeting and developed a rapport with the family and it worked out really well.

Morgan, who was hired a semester prior to starting the M.Ed program also received
school-level IEP support:

My department head was really instrumental in helping me with that [IEPs], you know. She really, really helped me. But when I first got my IEP load, then I felt pretty confident because my department head helped me out. She was really helpful in asking me do I understand and why I’m doing certain things and going through the (computerized system).

Beatrice, too, received quite a bit of school-based support as she learned about IEPs:

My SSC was really nice, especially with my first one. She kind of ran it and I just kind of went over things. I picked it up really quick because I watched what they did and I asked a lot of questions [like] “what do I say here?” Even the smaller things you don’t even think about – how do you transition to this? What if it’s taking too long and we need to move on? They gave me tips like having an agenda and being able to transition and how to build rapport with the parents, that kind of stuff. They helped me a lot.

**Peer support.** Candidates also reported relying on the support of fellow in place colleagues in their cohorts. Although there were no formal social gatherings for teacher candidates in the M.Ed. program, it appears that these in place candidates organized their own informal support systems. Taking courses each semester provided opportunities for in place participants to meet and talk on a regular and consistent basis. For some, the chance to talk with other in place candidates about the issues in their classrooms or schools that they did not feel comfortable sharing with their professors or field supervisors validated their experiences and helped them get through challenging times. This peer supported seemed to have extended beyond the M.Ed. program.
Brianne noted:

When I was at UH I made a lot of friends. We met a lot off the record. We met, you know, at Starbucks and we shared different things and ideas. We shared a lot of things via email to help each other. We all shared different lesson plans, we shared different things that worked in their classrooms that I wanted to try. If I had a particular problem with a particular student, I would call someone from my cohort and I’d ask them, “How would you handle this? This is what I’m going through, can you give me some pointers on how to handle things?” There were times when I would get to school early, before class, and I would see some of my cohort - they were outside and I would ask, “do you guys have a minute?” They’d be like, sure! I’d say, “I want to share something with you and I want to see how you feel about it.” Then when I would share it, they’re like, “we are going through that, too!”

Lindsey stated:

Yes, I did find the friends I made in my cohort a source of support. Not necessarily for teaching, but as support for the stressors we experienced during the program. It was nice to know that others were feeling the same way. I think because I had been in the classroom for many years, I did not feel the anxiety of being a brand new teacher who just entered the field. It was neat to laugh with others and discuss the stressors of progress reports and procurement for extra support for our students. Then there were those from the other cohorts who we had class with and I met some really awesome friends who I still keep in touch with. We also still share resources with each other.
Kaila, too, found and continues to receive support from peers in her cohort:

The cohort provided comfort and support during my 1st year as a licensed teacher. We were experiencing similar challenges and stress and offered each other suggestions on how to handle some situations and coping strategies. The cohort friends were a valuable source of support while I was going through the M.Ed program.

**Theme 4: In Place Candidates See the Direct Applicability of Coursework to Practice**

In place participants recognized the direct applicability of their coursework to their teaching and they stressed the ability to directly apply the information they learned in their coursework to their classrooms as a big benefit to being in place.

Brianne stated:

I experienced some of the things we shared in class. I could share, oooh, I saw that in my classroom! I saw that! And then, because of the information I received, I was able to take that information and apply it to my classroom. I felt the coursework was very informative. Having the experience of learning about how kids learn, I just was in awe because when they took us back to all the different ways that kids learn and the different ways to teach them and how to reach them, I was in awe. I just thought the information that I got was awesome. And I kept everything – I kept all my books and I didn’t throw out anything! I kept all my stuff I had. I have them in binders, labeled. If I have to go back, I have the resources.
Pat also recognized and appreciated the direct applicability of coursework to teaching:

I thought in place teaching was a lot better than if I went to school for 2 years then like, OK, I learned this a year ago, what was it again? And then you have to go back, but here’s it’s all fresh, it’s like hands-on training, yeah? It’s really good. I’d be reading a book and I’d think OK, I have this kid who does this.

Grace stated:

While I was in the program everything I was learning was a lot more applicable for me. I know when I started, I had no idea what a re-eval[uation] was but I do remember touching on it in a course and then, it’s like when you learn a new word and then you notice it in a book, you know? It’s like that! Like, oh we just learned about that a month ago and you can go back to your notes and you can apply it and then you get that much more out of it instead of a few years later. So I think that contributed to how well it prepared me.

Several in place participants also specifically mentioned they benefited from the freedom to directly practice different teaching strategies they learned in their university classes in their own classrooms without having to worry about offending a mentor teacher. Lindsey stated, “I don’t feel like if I change this [in a lesson], I [will] offend my teacher. I felt like I had more freedom to take in what they [university faculty] said and then work from there.” Beatrice mentioned the relief of not having to negotiate lesson ideas with a mentor teacher who may be reluctant to their turn their class over to someone else:
I heard from other [traditional] students in my classes who say, “oh my [mentor] teacher doesn’t do that or they’re not really helpful.” To me that’s so unfortunate. I picked up a lot because I learned on the job. I had a classroom to test it out on. And I think being in place – it allows you to do that. Being under somebody, it’s hard to do. You can’t just take over somebody’s class. If you’re with a teacher that’s not willing to let you do things, it’s a lot harder.

The responsibilities that accompany their role the teacher of record enables in place candidates to see and recognize the direct applicability of their coursework to their everyday practices.

**Theme 5: In Place Candidates Are Frustrated Over the Dual Nature of Special Education Teaching Responsibilities and Want More Training in IEP-Related Issues**

In place candidates expressed frustration over the dual nature of teaching special education. Candidates reported entering the special education teaching profession with the preconceived idea they would spend most of their time teaching children with disabilities, and seemed unpleasantly surprised by the extent to which their care coordinator responsibilities eclipsed their teaching responsibilities. Overall, they reported a general feeling of frustration over their care coordinator responsibilities.

Beatrice, who had taught special education preschool full-time throughout her two-year program and was at the end of her first (post-graduation) year in her teaching at the time of this interview, stated her continued frustration over the extent of her care coordinator responsibilities:
You need to know how to schedule things and organize things and scheduling due dates with IEPs. You have to make sure your tests and reports are in on time so that you can start [the IEP]. That part of it is the part that’s going to break you. You feel like a chicken without a head, you know? You figured that you entered teaching, you can just work with your kids. But no! It’s everything else that’s going to drive you crazy! And that’s the stuff that, on top of your kids, you have to do all of that scheduling, making sure you’re on top of other people. If you’re the care coordinator, it’s your butt on the line. You have to make sure that the related services are doing their job and they’re collecting their data. And you’re scheduling your meetings on time with parents, with gen ed teachers, with yourself plus your administrator. I think that is one of the related difficulties of it.

Kaila, who taught elementary special education during her second year of the program, describes her frustration with the time she spends on care coordinator duties and responsibilities:

But the thing of it is that teaching might be, if you’re lucky, 50% of it. The other 50% and in some weeks, it’s even more than 50% - it’s the other stuff that gives you stress, takes your time, that I hate to say it but it’s almost like you have to wing it [teaching], you know? But I’ll tell you, I don’t know how everybody else is dealing with it [care coordination duties]. So many times I told my husband, I’m ready to throw in the towel.

Adrian is a secondary in place teacher in a fully self-contained classroom (FSC). Adrian describes the difficulty of FSC teachers in getting their paperwork done because students are with them for the duration of the school day. Adrian shares her frustration
with the paperwork that is generated as a result of her care coordinator responsibilities and the lack of time teacher have to do it:

I am really over it, though. I don’t like the paperwork. It’s over the paperwork, really. I stay here late. And I can’t stand when people complain when they don’t get a prep [preparation period]. You know, like us, we are FSC [fully self-contained classroom] teachers, we don’t get a prep. They complain, complain. And then us three [FSC teachers], are like what are you complaining about? So me and the other teacher, sometimes we stay here late and the other teacher, she has her second job. So she comes in at like 4 o’clock in the morning to do her work.

**More IEP practice.** In the very first semester of the M.Ed. program, all teacher candidates take a course on IEP development. The topic of IEPs is also infused in other courses throughout the program. However, in place participants voiced their concerns over the perceived lack of sufficient IEP preparation in their programs. In place participants were particularly concerned with the legal ramifications of poorly written IEPs. Through their full-time teaching positions, in place candidates have seen firsthand the heavy emphasis school administrators place on this document. Lindsey, an in place preschool candidate who had considerable special education administrative experience stated:

That short period of time where we reviewed the IEP [instruction], the goals and objectives, I don’t think that was enough. Maybe just a course on how to write an IEP, a good IEP? As a special ed teacher, that’s what your day is, your life is the
IEP. If your IEP is not good, it’s not going to hold up in court. When you stand in front of the court, you’ll get shot down.

Brianne, too, recognized the high value in which schools put on the IEP and expressed her wish for more coursework on the IEP:

I wish we had a class with nothing but learning the whole IEP system - just knowing how to write goals and objectives - how to write goals that are good goals. I’ve seen some goals and I’ve seen some objectives that were crazy! This IEP is a legal documentation and your name is on it and you’re held accountable to that. [It’s] so overwhelming, actually, the importance of it, that’s it’s a legal document and you can be called up on charges if the needs of the child is not met.

That’s what a lot of teachers don’t realize.

Morgan, an in place secondary special education candidate, compared the IEP preparation from his program to the training he received from the DOE. He discussed what he wished he learned in his M.Ed. program:

I guess, just like, the actual IEP. We learned a lot about the kids and the different disabilities and things like that, you know, but I like structure and I want to know the format, like how do you do this - more tools. I took the IEP 101 class, the PD class [from DOE]. It was all these resources. They gave us all these resources. I would [also] recommend [that] IEP 101 be a class. I think that should be a definitely class in the program because what that does is that merges the practice and the research. I think that would be really awesome. I mean, you could do case studies and talk about how you would develop this certain IEP for this kid or what are appropriate goals for this kid.
The computerized IEP system. In place candidates also cited the absence of learning about the inner workings of the computerized IEP system currently used by the local school district as problematic. Morgan expressed his frustration over the perceived lack of training for this system:

It didn’t make sense that we never really learned what [computerized IEP system] was in the [M.Ed.] program. We didn’t have experience with it [through M.Ed. program] and I just thought that was absurd. I still do re-evals now and annuals and I’m still asking my department head questions. And I have a masters, you know? I’m like, I should know this stuff, you know? So that’s something that I was really disappointed with the program. That was the only thing - we didn’t learn how to navigate that system.

Even with their experiences, in place candidates seemed frustrated over their care coordination duties. They vocalized their wish for more coursework to address IEP-related issues they face in the schools. Although IEPs are covered in the M.Ed. program, in place candidates wish for more content in writing and developing IEPs.

Theme 6: The In Place Arrangement Worked Well But It’s Not For Everyone

Overall, in place candidates seemed very satisfied with the in place arrangement. They felt very well prepared for the dual responsibilities of teaching special education. As difficult as they found it was to juggle the responsibilities of graduate school and their teaching positions, all eleven candidates felt satisfied with the training their in place arrangement afforded them.

Brianne, who was trained as a general education teacher stated:
I would recommend in place because you have the opportunity to experience some of the things that you’re learning. I definitely feel that’s the way to go. I feel most definitely that’s the way to go because you learn the school. And you learn the demographics, you learn the community. You learn the child because you definitely have to have a relationship with the child in order to teach the child. I would definitely support in place, I wouldn’t have done it any other way.

Adrian also supported the in place arrangement:

Oh, in place, all the way because hands on is better. It’s hard work. It’s hard to keep up with school. It’s stressful but I would never change. I would do it all over again. All the way. You get to know what you need to know. You get to apply what you learned. So, to me, and a lot of the stuff you needed to turn in for homework [for M.Ed. program], I just used whatever I did with my kids.

Olivia, too, was satisfied with her in place training:

I’m a very hands-on person. For me, practical application is the only way I’ll really get it. There’s only so much book learning that I can do, sporadic in class sessions, you know. For me, teaching is all about doing. You can’t study it and learn it because you get thrown curve balls all the time. If you’re not in there and understanding that you have to be flexible and anticipate things being different, that’s really what it comes down to, being flexible and making that adjustment. It’s going to be every day. It’s not going to be the way it’s taught in class, where it’s here’s what you do and the next step is this. It doesn’t ever work out that way. Something will happen, the timing will be different. It’s just all these things can happen and you don’t get to see that in the classroom when you’re learning
these things. It’s adapting, figuring things out on your own a little bit, too, in addition to what’s being taught to you, I think it really makes a difference - whether you pick up on what’s being told or not. You realize that didn’t work but to have that practice - nothing replaces it.

Lindsey, who had general education secondary training and considerable teaching experience, also felt the benefits of being in place. However, she also recognized that the in place option, as well as it worked for her, is not appropriate for all teacher candidates:

The in place worked better for me because of where I am in my career. But if it’s someone just starting out, I would say the traditional would be more beneficial because they get to experience more, they get to see what different schools have to offer. So for younger [candidates], I think probably the traditional [is better] because you get a more well rounded experience. For me, the traditional may not make as much sense. I had some experience in the classroom.

**Summary**

The majority of the in place candidates had considerable teaching or special education-related professional experiences prior to starting the M.Ed. in Special Education program. They were hired in emergency hire special education teaching positions for up to a semester prior to their starting the M.Ed program. Some candidates had worked at the school in different capacities (e.g., skills trainer, substitute teacher) prior to getting hired for their position. In place candidates cited a desire to teach children with disabilities as their main reason for entering the special education profession. They also maintained that they felt very frustrated with the enormity of their care coordination responsibilities.
In place candidates reported feeling well prepared for both the teaching and care coordination responsibilities of special education upon graduation. This feeling of preparedness may be due in part to the amount of time they spent in supervised classroom activities. In place candidates were also given the full range of the responsibilities of a special education teacher from the onset. As they learned the different tasks of the job, they received different levels and types of support during these critical first few years of teaching. They reported the support their received from the university, from their in place peers, and to a lesser extent, from their schools was very specific to their own needs. In place candidates were also better able to recognize the direct applicability of their coursework and assignments to their daily teaching responsibilities. Overall, in place candidates reported feeling satisfied with in place experiences in preparing them for the dual roles of the special education teacher.
CHAPTER 7
UNIVERSITY FIELD SUPERVISORS PERSPECTIVES ON THE IN PLACE AND TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Four tenured and tenure-track Special Education Department faculty members who served as university field supervisors for several of the in place and traditional participants were included in the study. They included two full professors, one associate professor, and one assistant professor. I interviewed the field supervisors for their perspectives on the in place and traditional student teaching arrangements and how they felt each arrangement prepared teacher candidates. A summary of the university field supervisors in this study are listed below in Table 2:

Table 2
University Field Supervisor Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Field Supervisor</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. W</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. X</td>
<td>Severe/Profound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Y</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Z</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role of the Field Supervisor

Field supervisors are assigned to teacher candidates at the start of the student teaching semester by the field placement coordinator. Factors such as the grade level of the student teaching classroom, type of student teaching setting (e.g., mild/moderate or severe), geographic location of the student teaching site, field supervisor area(s) of expertise, and the needs of the teacher candidate are taken into consideration when field supervisor assignments are made.

Upon receiving the names and contact information of the teacher candidates, field supervisors contact their candidates to schedule an initial field meeting. At this meeting, field supervisors give the student teaching/internship course syllabus and related forms to the teacher candidate and also to cooperating teacher, if the candidate is a traditional candidate. They discuss in detail the requirements and expectations of student teaching/internship. Field supervisors may also schedule the four required lesson observations at this initial meeting.

Field supervisors are required to observe and evaluate a minimum of four lessons (with formal written lesson plans) through the course of the semester. These lesson observations are scheduled in advance. Formal, written lesson plans are drafted by the teacher candidate and given to the field supervisor and/or cooperating teacher in advance. The field supervisor and/or cooperating teacher give feedback on the lesson plan and the teacher candidate makes revisions prior to the lesson observation. Lesson observations are spaced evenly throughout the semester with the second observation occurring at midterm – the end of October in fall and the end of March in spring.
During the lesson, field supervisors complete the lesson observation form. They write down notable events that occurred during the lesson. The cooperating teacher may also complete the lesson observation form although cooperating teachers typically use their own format for note taking. Immediately following the lesson, the field supervisor and/or cooperating teacher debriefs with the teacher candidate. Together with the teacher candidate, the field supervisor and/or cooperating teacher discuss how the lesson went and give suggestions to the teacher candidate on how the lesson can be improved. For in place candidates, this debriefing session includes only the teacher candidate and the field supervisor. Finally, the field supervisor gives a copy of the lesson observation form to the teacher candidate a copy for future reference. Lesson observation forms are located in Appendix E.

In addition to lesson observations, the field supervisor and/or the cooperating teacher schedule a midterm conference evaluation of the teacher candidate. This midterm evaluation summarizes the teacher candidates’ overall teaching ability and professional dispositions at midpoint. Any areas of concern are noted in the evaluation and discussed with the teacher candidate. A plan of action may be developed for candidates with unsatisfactory performance at this time.

Finally, at the end of the semester, the field supervisor and/or the cooperating teacher holds a final evaluation conference with the teacher candidate. At this final conference, the field supervisor and cooperating teacher discuss the overall progress of the teacher candidate. The field supervisor grades the unit of instruction. The field supervisor, with feedback from the cooperating teacher, assigns a final grade to the teacher candidate. A copy of the midterm evaluation is found in Appendix G.
Identified Themes from Field Supervisor Interviews

My interviews with the five identified tenured and tenure-track university field supervisors ranged from 30 minutes to a little over an hour. I transcribed each of the interviews. The field supervisor interview protocol is located in Appendix B. Based on my interviews with the tenured and tenure-track university field supervisors, I identified four themes.

Theme 1: Field Supervisors Believe Traditional Student Teaching Benefits All Teacher Candidates

Field supervisors resoundingly believed in the importance of the traditional student teaching model for all candidates. They felt that the “on the job” teaching experience in place candidates had, could not replace the benefits of a traditional student teaching experience. Field supervisors believed that teacher candidates have a lot to gain when they observe experienced special education teachers modeling good teaching practices and effective classroom management techniques. In other words, “good teaching” on the part of novices is a concern. Field supervisors also felt that it was important for teacher candidates to receive immediate feedback, support, and guidance from experienced teachers and field supervisors.

Dr. Y stated:

I know that there are politicians and others that don’t feel that we should have teacher training and want to eliminate teacher training but I just don’t see it. I think that there are major foundations of a good teacher, an exemplary teacher. You have to have the experienced personnel - supervisors, coordinators, and
cooperating teachers with the experience. I think the traditional placement is better because of that.

The general sentiment among the field supervisors was that traditional student teaching plays an important role in developing and improving the skills of teacher candidates, particularly for those candidates with weak skills. Traditional student teaching allows teacher candidates to observe and model good teaching practices under the supervision of an experienced cooperating teacher. Field supervisors also felt that traditional student teaching makes competent teacher candidates even stronger. Dr. X recalled a previous in place candidate who she had supervised. Although the in place candidate was very competent, Dr. X contemplated the possible impact a good cooperating teacher could have had on this candidate:

[Name of in place candidate] was a very, very good teacher. She would’ve gotten a lot out of a master teacher because she would recognize the importance of what the teacher was doing. She could watch a teacher and say, “oh she’s doing that to manage this behavior and this is why it works.” I think the really good people would really notice the quality and the skills that the cooperating teachers are demonstrating. And they would really learn from it. In their own environment, without that kind of modeling to observe, they’re figuring things out with really rapid learning curves.

Theme 2: Field Supervisors Are Aware of And Concerned About the Limited Opportunities For Care Coordination Practice in Traditional Student Teaching As Both a Problem and a Challenge

Field supervisors identified the challenge of getting traditional candidates more
opportunities to experience special education care coordination activities. Depending on the cooperating teacher and the school, care coordination practice opportunities for traditional candidates can be a difficult issue to negotiate. Some schools and cooperating teachers are willing to allow teacher candidates to access IEPs, attend meetings, and participate in some care coordination responsibilities. Other schools and cooperating teachers, for a myriad of reasons, are not as comfortable with allowing a teacher candidate to conduct care coordination responsibilities.

Field supervisors walk a fine line with regards to this issue. On the one hand, field supervisors want their traditional teacher candidates to experience care coordination responsibilities because they know the importance of getting this type of practice. However, they are also mindful of the delicate legal and confidential nature of these activities and the cooperating teacher’s need to restrict these activities so they do their best to work with the situation:

Dr. Z discussed:

The other big sticking point that I see every single time is the IEP thing. Like how our students need to have access to their IEPs. The IEP thing was very interesting because that was something that was consistently not in [candidate’s] lesson plans and I kept saying, “for future lessons note your IEPs.” And at one point, both she and the cooperating teacher seemed annoyed that I was asking for that. They were like, “we can’t access them.” There was some weirdness there where the cooperating teacher had a little bit of a “we can’t go there” type of thing. I don’t know again, how much that was about the real school culture or how much that was about the cooperating teacher being stressed. I’ve learned this
over time. Now I just say, “well, do what you can as your school will allow.” I do that whole spiel in making it open-ended but that one seems to be a sticking point. How to get the IEP information, how much, and that one is a weird one. I don’t know the individual school’s rules but the candidates need to have some connections to IEPs in their lesson plans. The gray areas are so great, I never know what I’m stepping into.

Dr. X shared:

We try to encourage the CTs to invite the teacher candidates to all their meetings and the outside of school hours kinds of stuff, especially as they move into solo teaching. I try to get the CT to hand over a lot of the paperwork and the communications and that kind of stuff. Some teachers can release some of that; some just don’t feel comfortable doing that.

The field supervisors’ experiences in negotiating with cooperating teachers to allow their traditional candidates access to IEP and care coordination responsibilities with cooperating teachers appear to be consistent with the themes that emerged from the traditional candidate interviews regarding limited opportunities for care coordination practice. Because of the confidential nature of the IEP and other paperwork, this can be a sensitive topic for field supervisors, teacher candidates, and cooperating teachers. Ultimately, the scope of care coordination practice that is afforded to the traditional candidate depends on (a) the comfort level of the cooperating teacher and the host school in relinquishing these responsibilities; (b) the nature of the IEP cases at the various host schools.
Theme 3: Field Supervisors Believe In Place Arrangements with Appropriate Supports Can Prepare Select Candidates For Teaching Special Education

Despite their preference for traditional student teaching arrangements over the in place arrangement for all teacher candidates, field supervisors also recognized that given the right kinds of support, the in place arrangement is a viable option in preparing select candidates for teaching special education. Field supervisors noted that one benefit is the full immersion into the responsibilities of teaching special education. Dr. Z discussed the important role she felt the special education department mentors play in supporting in place teachers:

The in place candidates get a better taste of reality. And they are more prepared. They are better prepared because they’ve had more experience. With the in place, the whole idea has changed with having SPED Department mentors. I think if we lose the mentoring program, we’ll have one hell of a time supporting those in place people. If this was PM – pre-mentors, this interview would be completely different because I would say these guys are thrown to the wolves. Now, I would say, it’s not that bad, it’s really not that bad.

Dr. W also noted the learning benefits of the in place arrangement with supports:

They may or may not have a DOE [school-level] mentor. But at least they have faculty giving them support. Being in place forces them to individualize more and differentiate more. I think for a lot of them, that was sort of an outcome. In some ways they’re further ahead. All that system stuff, a lot of it is routine, once you kind of learn it. It’s not as bad of a situation as it might sound initially.
Dr. Z reflected on her interactions with in place and traditional candidates in her courses. She discussed the differences she has noticed between the two groups. Dr. Z theorized that the candidates’ arrangement experiences (e.g., in place or traditional) influenced the kinds of questions and levels of discussion these candidates brought to her classes. She shared her thoughts on her interactions with the in place and traditional candidates in her courses:

I would say this [discussion] gives some context for the folks who are traditional teacher candidates. Sometimes I found them uncurious whereas the in place are much more like, “give me more information.” I just thought it was characteristic of their personality like, “OK you’re just one of those students who doesn’t ask a lot of questions, you just accept and you don’t ask a lot of questions” and that’s OK. But now it makes me wonder if it’s not knowing what you don’t know. So that’s why maybe the in place seem like sponges because “I’ve seen something like this happen so tell me more.” Whereas the traditional teacher candidates, when I tell them you can do it this way, they’re like OK. I felt like my traditional teacher candidates are much more closed in their absorbing information and not asking for much. Whereas the in place, it’s a like a dialog, I’m having a conversation with them and I just thought it was separate personalities. But it could just be exactly what you just said. These guys just don’t have enough to come back at me with “What do I do there?” Whereas the in place guys have experienced that. Even in my cohort, the ones who were inquisitive were all emergency hires. But maybe it’s not their personalities - it’s survival. That’s why they’re so inquisitive.
Dr. Z’s observations are consistent with the traditional candidates lament over finding themselves in classes with in place peers who seemed much more experienced and well-versed in special education issues. Their limitations in experiencing the full-range of special education teaching responsibilities during their student teaching seemed to hamper their ability to fully participate in their courses or fully utilize and absorb the expertise of their professors.

Dr. X noted that in place candidates experience a broader range of special education teaching experiences. The total immersion into teaching special education affords them the opportunity to not only experience both teaching and care coordination activities but also gives them opportunities to fully experience what it like to be a teacher in a school community:

Our traditional teacher candidates are getting one world. They’re getting the “I’m trained to do teaching” whereas our interns [in place] have the subtext of paperwork. You know, paperwork, administration, school politics, you know? I’ve had teacher candidates who have difficulty with their mentor teacher but it’s very different than a systematic school-wide strife, you know? For in place candidates, the social context and the paperwork and all that around it, that affects them. And that’s not going to affect the traditional teacher candidate. On the other hand, the teacher candidate is somewhat detached from the school. So it’s like, you come in, you do your performance, and you leave.

**Theme 4: Field Supervisors Feel In Place Candidates Must Prioritize Their Jobs Over Their Program Which Limits Their Flexibility To Try Innovative Ideas**

Overall, field supervisors felt that when in place candidates felt pressure from
their special education program and their teaching positions, the teaching position took priority over their teacher preparation program. Unlike traditional candidates, in place candidates are in a unique situation - they are in training for a job for which they are already hired. Their teaching positions are not guaranteed beyond their contract year and, in most cases, contract renewal depends on overall teaching performance. However, the majority of in place candidates are hired back for their second year in the program and they tend to be rehired in the same positions after graduation.

Several field supervisors commented that in place candidates sometimes become so entrenched into the routines and ways of their school that they are not as open to trying new strategies or applying newly learned content as readily as traditional candidates. Dr. W noted:

A few of them got caught up in the system and so when I would recommend improvements or things to change, it was almost like because they were moving with this flow, with this routine that was in place when they got there. They were kind of trapped in that routine. You know how we try to teach students appropriate ways for implementing an IEP that really listens to families? They kind of get into the system of the way things are typically done. And they end up just doing it the status quo way and not really meeting the intention of the law. I saw people kind of caught up and were unable to change or try new things.

Dr. X stated:

One of the biggest things I see between the in place teachers and the traditional teacher candidates is the in place teachers, a lot of times, are not as receptive to feedback. They’re in the classroom, they’re a teacher. Because they are hired and
already working, they knew that the program was just a means to officially get the job. They believed that they have the skills, the knowledge and that this [teacher preparation program] was just jumping a hoop, a formality. To them, the program was a formality, not a real learning experience.

Despite some of the resistance on the part of in place candidates, Dr. X did note the benefit of the in place candidates’ allegiance to their school community:

But what I do see that would be different from a traditional teacher candidate and an in place teacher candidate is that commitment to the school, you know? Teacher candidates don’t necessarily feel like they are a part of the school or are committed to the school, you know? So there’s that loyalty and feeling like you’re part of this grand thing and if they are doing good things that you are a part of that.

Summary

Field supervisors resoundingly supported traditional placements for all teacher candidates. They see the benefit of working directly under the guidance of an experience cooperating teacher as beneficial to candidates of all ability levels. However, they also noted that the traditional candidates’ exposure to care coordination activities is limited in traditional arrangements. They found themselves having to carefully negotiate the relinquishing of some care coordinator-related responsibilities with the placement schools and cooperating teachers.

Field supervisors also recognized the viability of the in place teaching arrangement in preparing select candidates for teaching special education. In place arrangements with appropriate supports such as instruction, guidance, and feedback from
university faculty and specific special education mentoring can give candidates a broader range of special education teaching experiences. In place candidates’ skills such as differentiating instruction and care coordinator responsibilities may be better developed given the opportunities they have to practice these skills on a regular basis. Being included in a school community may also be a benefit to in place candidates. However, some field supervisors noted that the downside to in place arrangements is the resistance of some candidates to trying new approaches that stray from approaches used by their schools. Field supervisors were also concerned that in place teacher candidates were not as responsive to corrective feedback regarding their classroom teaching – perhaps because so much as at stake regarding judgments of teaching and holding their jobs.
CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

The findings of this study suggest that a structured teacher education program with supervised student teaching experiences is critical to developing the skills that are necessary for fully preparing teacher candidates for special education. The job demands of teaching special education clearly require candidates to be prepared for both teaching children with disabilities as well as managing care coordination responsibilities. As evidenced by the experiences of the participants in this study, the skills required for teaching special education are not skills that can be easily picked up on the job. The skills necessary for teaching special education must be learned and practiced with consistent opportunities for feedback and guidance from university faculty and cooperating classroom teachers with expertise in special education issues.

Both the traditional and in place candidates in this study came to the M.Ed. program with considerable teaching and special education-related professional experiences. For all their previously acquired professional skills, however, the candidates acknowledged the critical role the M.Ed program played in their development as teachers. Candidates felt that the traditional student teaching and the in place arrangements gave them opportunities to apply and practice specific teaching and behavioral management skills that are appropriate for children with disabilities. Both traditional and in place candidates indicated that the M.Ed. program taught them how to teach. They were able to manage the duties of their traditional student teaching requirements and in place job demands in large part because of the concerted effort among their university professors, university field supervisors, university mentors, cooperating teachers, host schools, and
peers. However, there were also some clear distinctions between the experiences and perceptions of traditional and in place candidates.

**Traditional Candidate Benefits**

Traditional candidates benefitted from the guidance of experienced special education teachers. Teacher candidates sat with their cooperating teachers to plan curriculum, lessons, and schedules. Cooperating teachers contextualized the classroom setting for traditional candidates to help them make informed instructional and behavior management activities that were specific to the needs of the children in the classroom. Cooperating teachers modeled teaching and behavior management strategies and talked to the candidates about their rationale for choosing such strategies. Teacher candidates received lots of feedback and support from their cooperating teachers that shaped their own instructional practices and behavior management strategies.

In several cases, the influence of cooperating teachers continued long after the student teaching semester was over. Several of the traditional candidates indicated that they immediately called their former cooperating teacher after getting hired for their first teaching position. Others said their cooperating teachers served as their reference and that it helped them get hired for their first teaching positions. Traditional candidates also talked about using the strategies and philosophies they learned from their cooperating teachers into their first classrooms. Some traditional candidates continued to contact their cooperating teachers with questions throughout their first year of teaching. The support many received from their cooperating teachers extended far beyond the end of the student teaching semester.
The Downside of Traditional Student Teaching

For all its benefits, it cannot be overlooked that the traditional student teaching arrangement does not appear to consistently give teacher candidates the full range of practical experiences necessary for the rigors of teaching and care coordination. Although teacher candidates reportedly had many opportunities to hone their teaching-related skills (e.g., lesson planning, behavior management), they lacked consistent exposure to the care coordination responsibilities that are an integral part of the special education teacher’s responsibilities.

This lack of exposure to care coordination duties was not for lack of mention of these activities on the part of the cooperating teacher. On the contrary, traditional candidates acknowledged that they were aware of these duties and, in fact, many candidates were not new to the field of special education; they had worked as EAs or related service providers previously. Traditional candidates had discussions with their cooperating teachers about these duties. Some traditional candidates attended IEP meetings as silent observers. Two candidates reported sitting beside their cooperating teachers and watching them enter IEP data into the electronic system. Several mentioned the stress they noticed in their cooperating teachers felt as result of care coordination duties. However, no candidates reported opportunities to actively participate in care coordination duties (e.g., developing IEP goals and objectives, co-facilitating IEP meetings).

Although traditional candidates may have been aware of the paperwork associated with care coordination responsibilities, they were astounded by the extent to which the demands of paperwork and accompanying responsibilities (e.g., meetings, gathering data)
drew their attention and time away from teaching. Many traditional candidates reported feeling blindsided by the overwhelming amount of care coordination-related work they are required to do in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Traditional candidates felt that the care coordination duties are a far cry from the reason all the traditional candidates cited for entering the special education profession – to teach children with disabilities.

**False Impression**

It can be suggested that the traditional student teaching arrangement gave candidates only a partial view of teaching special education. Given that most traditional candidates were tasked with only teaching-related responsibilities, they came away with the impression that teaching special education involves solely teaching children with disabilities with some paperwork responsibilities. Although the reality is that special education teachers are responsible for far more than teaching children with disabilities, this reality is not congruent with their student teaching experience. Despite their knowledge of care coordination activities, many traditional candidates found themselves in shock over the time-consuming nature of these activities. They felt under-prepared to assume duties such as extensive documentation and paperwork, adherence to legal and ever-changing administrative procedures, and collaboration with many different people. They found these responsibilities to be notoriously time consuming, complicated, and overwhelming. Traditional candidates found it extremely difficult to balance these responsibilities with their teaching responsibilities.

As they reflected on their first year of teaching, many traditional candidates reported the desire to make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities as the
main reason for pursuing a career in special education. Care coordination activities were a big obstacle that stood in the way of their goal.

**Challenges of Care Coordination in Traditional Student Teaching**

Involving traditional candidates in their cooperating teachers’ care coordination activities is a complex challenge. Oftentimes, care coordination responsibilities involve sensitive and sometimes complicated legal matters that may require extensive communication and coordination among many individuals (e.g., parents, related service providers, attorneys) and agencies (e.g., Easter Seals, Child Protective Services) over an extended period of time. The serious ramifications that may result from errors or oversight is enough to dissuade schools administrators and cooperating teachers from allowing the involvement of teacher candidates in such matters. For this reason, host schools and cooperating teachers may find it less worrisome to allow the student teacher to assume only teaching responsibilities. It is not uncommon for cooperating teachers to work on their own care coordination responsibilities while their traditional candidates take over their teaching and planning responsibilities.

**The Lack of Special Education-Specific Support Compounds the Problem**

The very limited special education-specific support available to new special education teachers was reported to compound the problem for traditional candidates. Although the HDOE provides mentor support to new teachers, traditional candidates reported that these mentors typically lacked expertise in special education and tended to provide only general teaching support and advice. General teaching and classroom management advice did little to comfort most traditional candidates because they reported that their biggest struggle was with care coordination responsibilities.
Oftentimes, traditional candidates were either told to call the district office with their questions or they were referred to a special education district resource teacher who was overburdened with other responsibilities. The stress and job dissatisfaction as a result of the unexpected job requirements and lack of support was so great for some that several of the traditional candidates reported seriously considering leaving the special education profession in the near future. They cited stress over balancing teaching with the care coordination duties and the lack of special education support as the main reasons for wanting to leave the profession. The added stress of feeling as though they should know how to manage care coordination tasks seemed to compound the problem for traditional candidates.

These findings are consistent with the special education teacher research literature on teacher attrition. Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004) found that the difficulty special education teachers have with managing care coordination responsibilities and its interference with teaching are significant problems among special education teachers nationwide. These challenges tend to lead to job dissatisfaction, which in turn impacts teacher attrition rates. In the case of the traditional participants in this study, the limited opportunities for care coordination practice as teacher candidates, the surprise at the extent to which care coordination responsibilities eclipsed their teaching, and the lack of access to a mentor with special education expertise post-graduation appeared to significantly impact their ability to feel successful in their first year of teaching.

**Role Dissonance**

This mismatch between the special education teaching ideal - teaching children with disabilities and the actual – teaching children with disabilities in addition to
assuming the responsibilities of the care coordinator is referred to as role dissonance (Gersten et al., 2001). Role dissonance is a strong predictor of job stress - the greater the role dissonance, the greater the stress. Gersten et al. (2001) contended that role dissonance in special education is a major contributing factor to teacher burnout and attrition. The dissatisfaction that traditional candidates, in particular, experienced in their first year of teaching seem in line with the theory of role dissonance. Their special education teaching ideal, spending most of their day teaching students with disabilities was a far cry from the realities of their first teaching positions. The role dissonance experienced by the traditional candidates teamed with the perceived lack of support and training to be successful in their jobs led to stress and dissatisfaction with their new profession.

Cross-Purposes Pitfall

Grossman (1989) posited that one of the challenges of teacher education lies in the cross-purposes pitfall – the notion that the host school serves two roles: to educate preK-12 children and to train teacher candidates. Of the two roles, the needs of preK-12 children will always take priority over the learning needs of the teacher candidate. As a result, this traditional student teaching arrangement does not always lend itself to meeting the learning needs of teacher candidates. For example, although it would be good practice for a teacher candidate to experiment with different reading strategies to determine which is most effective, the candidate is told by the cooperating teacher to follow the reading curriculum currently in use to avoid the unproductive use of class time.
This notion of the cross-purposes pitfall was clearly evident in the interviews with the traditional candidates. Traditional candidates reported implementing the curricula, classroom management programs, and schedules that had been established by the host schools and/or cooperating teachers. Traditional candidates seemed to be very cognizant of the fact that maintaining consistency with children was most important even though it came at the expense of their own learning and practice opportunities. One candidate who student taught children with a wide range of disabilities was interested in implementing different behavioral strategies for her master thesis but decided against it because she did not want to disrupt the stability of her cooperating teacher’s classroom by introducing new strategies to the children.

There are clearly benefits to implementing already established systems. Candidates are able to observe the cooperating teacher implementing the system. They conserve time not trying to find a system that works; instead they direct their energies to consistently implementing a system familiar to the children. Candidates are also able to discuss the rationale for using the system with their cooperating teachers. They are given the opportunity to practice consistently using a system and they are able to get feedback from their cooperating teachers about their implementation of the system.

However, there are also disadvantages to using established systems. First, candidates miss the opportunity to practice: (a) analyzing student misbehaviors; (b) introducing a system to address these behaviors; (c) collecting data to determine the effectiveness of the system; and (d) making modifications to the system as needed. In many instances, candidates will adopt the system that they used in their student teaching classrooms. However, what worked in their traditional placement classroom may not
necessarily be appropriate for their first teaching job. For example, a behavior management system that was appropriate for the kindergarteners in the fully self-contained student teaching classroom may not be appropriate for 5th grade resource students in the candidate’s first job.

**Cross-Purposes Pitfall of Care Coordination**

The lack of opportunities for traditional teacher candidates to routinely practice care coordination responsibilities in student teaching is also a cross-purposes pitfall. In this instance, the legal rights of the child and families as well as the legal responsibilities of the host school and fear of possible legal ramifications trump the learning of the traditional teacher candidate.

Relinquishing care coordination responsibilities to traditional candidates is a sensitive matter that should not be taken lightly. As discussed earlier in this section, there are many legitimate reasons for a host school’s reluctance to allow traditional candidates to assume care coordination responsibilities. One reason is that families may outright reject a traditional candidate’s request for involvement in their child’s matters. Or, in the case of situations that involve complicated legal matters and/or are contentious, school administrators may forbid the participation of a traditional teacher candidate. Teachers and administrators may also be concerned that the traditional candidate may make mistakes that can be time-consuming to correct or undo.

These concerns are certainly valid and must be taken seriously. There are definitely IEP cases in which the involvement of a traditional candidate is not appropriate. However, we must also consider the ramifications of severely limiting traditional teacher candidates’ access to care coordination responsibilities. Although this
may alleviate worries over errors in the short term, the lack of exposure to and practice with these skills during their teacher training program can lead to serious long-term problems in the field of special education. Special education teachers who feel under-prepared for the dual roles of teaching special education are more likely to feel overwhelmed and dissatisfied with their jobs and are less likely to stay in the profession for the long term.

**Traditional Candidates as “Becoming” Teachers**

The findings of this study suggest traditional candidates, through their participation in traditional student teaching activities, live in the “becoming” a teacher realm. By virtue of their status in the student teaching classroom (e.g., as student teacher) and the real world limitations of traditional placements in host schools (e.g., cross purposes pitfall), the structure of traditional arrangements seems to perpetuate the notion that traditional candidates are not yet teachers; they are in the process of “becoming” teachers. Although traditional candidates are given ample opportunities to hone their teaching skills, they are aware that they are not the teacher of record and that they do not manage all the responsibilities of their cooperating teacher. The language used by candidates in the interviews appeared to reflect this notion. For example, when describing their student teaching experiences, traditional candidates tended to use phrases such as “the students” or “[cooperating teacher’s] class” suggesting the students and the classroom are the responsibility of the cooperating teacher and not the candidate’s responsibility. Thus, although they assume a large part of the classroom teaching responsibilities, traditional candidates are still in training and they know their role in the student teaching classroom is secondary to the cooperating teacher. Traditional candidates know at some point that they will turn the class back to their cooperating
teacher who is ultimately responsible for the students. In short, “becoming” (the role of 
the traditional teacher candidate) is a degree of separation from “being” (the role of 
special education teacher).

This degree of separation is problematic when traditionally prepared candidates 
enter their first paid teaching positions. The gulf that exists between “becoming” and 
“being” is great and requires traditional candidates to skillfully manage tasks and 
navigate their way around challenges they may not have been exposed to or even aware 
of during their traditional student teaching period. As a result, traditional candidates 
struggle with doing the job for which they thought they were preparing (e.g., teacher of 
children with disabilities) with the actual job for which they were hired (e.g., teacher and 
care coordinator). With no transitional support to help them move from “becoming” a 
teacher to “being” the teacher, traditional candidates experience high levels of stress and 
dissatisfaction. In some cases, the stress was substantial enough to make them consider 
leaving special education.

Recommendations for Traditional Student Teaching

Care Coordination Activities as a Routine Student Teaching Activity

Having candidates assume care coordination activities as a standard part of the 
student teaching experience can strengthen the current traditional student teaching model. 
Care coordination responsibilities will provide traditional candidates with a more 
comprehensive learning experience that will better prepare them for the care coordinator 
role of special education. Traditional candidate involvement in IEP cases where parents 
and other IEP team members are willing to allow the participation of the traditional 
teacher candidate are prime learning opportunities that must be tapped.
Clear guidelines on the role and scope of responsibilities of the traditional candidate with regards to care coordination responsibilities may be developed by the teacher preparation program and brought to host school administrators for discussion. University field supervisors can assist in facilitating ongoing discussion between the teacher candidate and the cooperating classroom teacher with regards to these activities throughout the semester.

Clearly written learning objectives that describe care coordination learning objectives should be featured prominently in the student teaching syllabus. Traditional candidates should be routinely assigned tasks that will help develop their IEP writing skills and their meeting facilitation skills. For example, cooperating teachers can identify appropriate IEP cases at the start of the semester. Candidates can collect background information on the child to familiarize themselves with the case. They can gather and analyze current assessment data and draft up IEP goals and objectives for the cooperating teacher to review. Prior to the meeting, the cooperating teacher can assign the candidate sections of the IEP to discuss with the team. Similar learning objectives can be developed for candidates to assist with pending re-evaluations.

**Student Teaching Seminars**

Teacher preparation programs may want to consider scheduling student teaching seminars with specific topics and activities that allow teacher candidates to discuss and practice care coordinator responsibilities in depth. These seminars should be held concurrent with the student teaching semester. Seminar leaders may want to consider developing a seminar curriculum that allows candidates time to discuss case studies and allow them to analyze assessment data, practice writing IEP goals and objectives, and
rehearse facilitating IEP meetings. Seminars could also include guest speakers from the HDOE who can introduce system-specific topics such navigating the computerized IEP system.

**Special Education Mentoring**

It is critical to support traditional candidates as they transition from “becoming” to “being.” To bridge this transition period, school administrators may want to consider providing novice special education teachers, particularly those who were prepared in a traditional student teaching arrangement, with a mentor with special education expertise. Given that the care coordination responsibilities seem to be very problematic for traditionally candidates, mentors who are well versed in care coordination duties can ease the transition for new teachers.

Based on the results of this study, these recommendations may help mitigate the gap between current practices in traditional student teaching and the dual responsibilities of special education teachers as teachers of children with disabilities and care coordinators. These recommendations will help ease the transition many traditional candidates face during their first year of teaching.

**In Place as a Viable Option**

The hiring of unlicensed individuals in special education positions came about in response to the critical shortage of special education teachers. School districts in desperate need of special education teachers looked to hiring individuals with college degrees in any area to fill immediate vacancies. Thus, the in place arrangement is a “stop gap” measure to ensure teaching vacancies are filled.
Although hiring unlicensed individuals without special education training to teach special education is not ideal and not recommended, hiring teacher candidates with prior teaching experiences, special education related experiences and/or those with experience working in the school system who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program is preferable to staffing a position with a string of substitute teachers who lack special education training. These in place candidates are more likely to be successful because they will receive regular supervision, corrective feedback, and evaluation from those with special education expertise as well as support from various sources including university faculty (e.g., professors, field supervisors, mentors) in addition to their school administrators.

Given the self-reported information from in place candidates in this study, the in place option may do more than just temporarily fill a vacancy. Many of the in place candidates reported feeling well-prepared for their teaching and care coordination responsibilities post-graduation and voiced their intentions to stay in the field of special education for the long term. It could be argued that the opportunity to practice the full range of responsibilities of teaching special education during their teacher training program contributed to their feelings of preparedness after graduation. One can surmise that the range of responsibilities they carried and, perhaps more importantly, the support they received in their critical first years of teaching prepared them to better manage care coordination responsibilities (e.g., paperwork) – one of the most often cited reasons special education teachers leave the field of special education in the first five years of teaching – with their teaching responsibilities. The intensive amounts of support during
their critical first two years on the job may have helped these in place candidates weather the difficulty of the first few years on the job.

In place candidates with backgrounds in teaching and/or special education-related fields benefitted from a structured, supervised in place teaching arrangement with a rich and comprehensive support system as they learned to teach special education. Close communication with the teacher education faculty, regular and consistent field supervision with targeted feedback, in conjunction with applied coursework, formal special education-specific mentoring support, school-level support, and the support of other in place peers appeared to be important program components that supported in place candidates through their critical first two years on the job.

In place candidates reported feeling more confident in their overall ability to teach children with disabilities as well as fulfill care coordinator responsibilities than their traditionally prepared counterparts. It seems that the in place arrangement may have better prepared teacher candidates for the full range of special education teaching and care coordination responsibilities than the traditional student teaching arrangement. The in place arrangement appeared to give candidates additional learning benefits that are outside the scope of traditional student teaching arrangements.

In place candidates quickly learned that the job of a special educator encompasses a considerable amount of administrative and managerial duties in addition to teaching children with disabilities. In place candidates, by virtue of their job requirements, learned the dual roles – teacher and care coordinator – of teaching special education early in their training. In place candidates learned to write IEPs, completed accompanying paperwork, facilitated meetings, and managed care coordination responsibilities in tandem with
learning to teach. Because they were not yet licensed, many in place candidates reportedly received some support at the school level with these tasks. Some candidates were given abbreviated care coordination loads. Others were guided through the IEP process by special education department heads or other seasoned special education colleagues. In place candidates could also turn to their UH mentors for assistance with these tasks. Unlike the traditional candidates, in place candidates were not expected to know everything about teaching special education and were given some allowances for the fact that they were still learning to teach. Nonetheless, care coordination duties were part and parcel with the duties of teaching children with disabilities from the very beginning of their training. By the time in place candidates graduated from their programs, they held no idealistic notions about teaching special education. They reportedly felt well prepared for all aspects of their jobs.

**More Time for Growth**

In place candidates spent three times as many supervised hours in the classroom as compared to the traditional candidates. Many in place candidates were hired before the start of the university fall semester and they remained in their positions long after the university spring semester ended. They taught and coordinated care full-time for the entire school year. Unlike their traditional counterparts who began their student teaching after the dust of the first day of school had settled, in place candidates worked closely with their students on a daily basis from the beginning of the school year. They reported feeling rewarded for their efforts by seeing the growth and positive changes in their students over a longer period of time. Teaching their students on a daily basis enabled them to notice subtle nuances and changes that occurred as a result of their interventions.
Throughout this time, they also became well acquainted with the families and personal circumstances of their students.

**Immediate Sense of Responsibility**

The nature of the in place arrangement may instill in teacher candidates a more immediate sense of responsibility to learn to teach and coordinate the care of their students. As the teacher of record, in place candidates bear the direct responsibility of teaching their students and on some level, may have felt immediate pressure to produce positive student outcomes. Phrases often used by in place candidates such as “my kids, my parents, my classroom” in describing their students, students’ families, and their classroom setting illustrates the deep sense of responsibility and ownership in place candidates felt about their students.

**The Need to Know**

It can be surmised that the learning needs of the teacher candidate are more targeted and pressing as a result of this direct responsibility for students. As one field supervisor noted, in place candidates tended to be more assertive in seeking out answers to specific questions based on the challenges they encountered in the classroom. They were also quick to implement strategies they learned to address their students’ needs.

The benefit of directly applying coursework to the classroom setting is consistent with Knowles’ (1988) andragogy theory. Knowles posited that learning readiness in adults comes about when they are faced with a problem that needs to be solved and are therefore reliant on learning new information to solve this problem and/or develop their level of competency to solve this problem. Thus, to meet the meet of needs of adult learners, learning tasks should be tied to real-life, or “experiential” situations (p. 50).
Based on this theory, it seems as though the in place arrangement is appropriate for adult learners because it provides candidates with authentic learning opportunities to apply their learning to an authentic environment. The immediacy of the needs of the students teamed with the direct responsibility in place candidates may have felt to meet those needs creates an authentic learning experience for in place teacher candidates.

**Schools as Communities of Practice**

Hired as full-time teachers, in place candidates are expected to fulfill the typical duties expected of full-time teachers. As a result, in place candidates are absorbed into the greater school community. In addition to teaching their students and fulfilling care coordinator responsibilities, they interact on a regular basis with teachers and other school-level personnel on student-related matters. They participate on curriculum planning committees. They may serve as coaches for after-school sports or as the faculty advisor for a student committee. This total immersion into the school community instills in them a sense of belonging to the greater school community. In place candidates become privy to the inner workings of their school as a member of the faculty. Over time, they eventually learn to speak the same “school” language and align themselves with school colleagues to achieve the same goals.

This notion of learning as the result of deep involvement and participation in a learning community is consistent with Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice theory. Wenger theorized deep learning occurs when individuals are engaged in and are part of a greater learning community with others who have shared goals. Relationships and interactions with others who speak a common language and who use similar practices to achieve shared goals help individuals make sense of their own learning and practice.
Individuals working within this larger community also learn appropriate social mores of the learning community. Through the interviews with in place candidates, it is very clear that they are very much a part of their school communities; perhaps much more so than their traditional counterparts.

**In Place Candidates as “Being” Teachers**

The structure of the in place experience sets the stage for teacher candidates to step into the world of “being” the teacher. Like their traditional counterparts, the language used by in place candidates in the interviews appeared to reflect this notion. For example, when describing their in place experiences, candidates used phrases such as “my students” or “my school” suggesting a certain level of responsibility and ownership. In addition, several field supervisors noted the depth of discussions and questions raised by in place candidates in their classes. Thus, although they were technically still in training, in place candidates tended to take their roles seriously because they knew that as teachers of record, they were ultimately responsible for the educational outcomes of the students in their charge.

As the hired teacher of record, in place candidates were fully immersed in the school learning community. With few exceptions, in place candidates were expected to assume the typical responsibilities of full-time, licensed special education teachers. Inclusion into the community of learning gave in place candidates authentic learning opportunities with others who were more experienced. Unlike their traditional counterparts, in place candidates received a lot of specialized support as they made their short and steep transition to “being” the teacher. This support buffered the gulf between “becoming” and “being.” Having spent their formative teacher training years as “being”
the teacher, in place candidates seemed better prepared for managing the dual roles of teaching special education.

**Downside to the In Place Arrangement**

For all its benefits, the in place arrangement also has its drawbacks. The in place arrangement is not a suitable arrangement for all special education teacher candidates. Although the candidates self-reported that this arrangement worked well in preparing them, it must be emphasized that these candidates were “experienced novices.” They entered the M.Ed. in Special Education program with, in some cases, considerable teaching and/or special education-related work experiences. These in place candidates recalled drawing upon their knowledge and experiences to help them weather their first years of teaching special education. Despite their background knowledge, however, many in place candidates reported feeling considerably stressed as they learned to balance the demands of teaching with the demands of learning to teach (e.g., graduate school). In place candidates themselves cautioned against recommending the in place arrangement for those without a background in teaching or special education. Based on the results of this study, it is unknown whether the in place experience would be reported as favorably among teacher candidates with little or no special education teaching experience.

**Limited Opportunities for Observing Other Teachers**

As full-time teachers, in place candidates are confined to their own schools and classrooms for the duration of their training. Without opportunities to visit other special education teachers, in place candidates miss out on opportunities to observe and perhaps adopt the practices of successful and more experienced special educators to add to their own teaching repertoires. A number of in place candidates lamented their inability to
observe other special education teachers in action. In place candidates simply did not have the luxury to visit other special education teachers on other campuses. Such off-campus visits requires permission from administration, the use of limited professional development or personal leave days, preparation of lesson plans for the substitute teacher, and a coordinated effort to arrange visits with other teachers/schools.

The one campus one classroom experience can narrow the perspective of in place candidates. As some university field supervisors noted, the ways of the school can sometimes become so ingrained in some candidates that they become reluctant to consider other perspectives or not as willing to try practices/strategies different from what is in use at their schools. This hampers the candidate’s ability to break away from the “status quo” and try new innovations. Wenger (1998) refers to this reluctance as a “trade-off” of learning communities (p. 175). He posited that the very forces of the learning community that make it powerful (e.g., immersion) can also be an “obstacle” that prevents one from moving the practice forward (p. 175).

**Recommendations for In Place Candidates**

**Recruitment of In Place Candidates**

The overwhelming majority of participants had teaching and special education-related experiences prior to entering the M.Ed. Program. This background knowledge may have contributed to the self-reported successes of the in place candidates. Special education teacher preparation programs and school districts that must resort to hiring unlicensed individuals for special education positions may want to consider targeting recruitment efforts toward “experienced novices.” Educational assistants (EAs) and skills trainers, for example, may be highly desirable for these in place positions because they
have the professional experience of working with children with disabilities and they have a working knowledge of classroom settings.

This suggestion is consistent with Dai, Sindelar, Denslow, Dewey, and Rosenberg (2007) findings that “step-up” programs that recruit and train paraprofessionals (e.g., EAs, skills trainers) for special education teaching positions are a good investment because program participants: (a) can be selected based on past performance in classrooms; (b) tend to invest considerable amounts of time in their teacher preparation and (c) tend to live in or are very familiar with the communities in which they teach. Further, in their review of the different alternative special education teacher preparation programs, Sindelar, Dewey, Rosenberg, Corbetti, Denslow, and Lotfinia (2012) suggested that “step up” programs are a good investment because program completers of such programs are more likely to complete their programs and they are more likely to remain teaching in special education.

Organized Visits to Other Schools

Coordinated efforts to arrange for school visits with cooperating teachers on different campuses may be something that teacher education programs want to consider for in place candidates. In place candidates benefit from observing and talking with more seasoned teachers who teach in similar teaching lines in different schools. In place candidates can also benefit from the opportunity to discuss with veteran special education teachers different strategies and perspectives that may be appropriate for their students.

Formal Opportunities to Connect with Peers

In place candidates described the support they received from their cohort classmates as critical. They credited peer support for getting them through the first years
of teaching. They shared lesson plan ideas, teaching strategies, and turned to teach other for emotional support. Although these individuals are new to their teaching positions, one cannot underestimate the power of support and guidance from peers who are going through similar experiences. In their synthesis of special education teacher education programs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) candidates, Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, and Flippin (2004) suggested the importance of peer support in teacher candidate retention in these programs. Given the diversity of the teacher candidate in this study, these findings are consistent with the findings of Tyler et al., (2004). Teacher preparation programs may want to consider providing purposeful opportunities for teacher candidates to develop rapport with each other. Building these opportunities into teacher preparation programs may be particularly important for programs that have minimal face-to-face opportunities for candidates, such as programs with online coursework.

Summary

In this section, I will summarize the findings drawn from this study to answer the four research questions that guided this study. The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to explore in-depth the perceptions of in place and traditionally prepared teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences and how these experiences influenced their feelings of preparedness to teach special education.

Research question #1: What are the perceptions of recently graduated special education teacher candidates on their student teaching experiences (in place and traditional)?
Traditional and in place candidates entered the M.Ed. in Special Education program with considerable teaching and/or related special education experiences. These “experienced novices” felt their student teaching experiences were positive and productive experiences that prepared them for teaching children with disabilities.

Overall, traditional candidates reported supportive relationships with their cooperating teachers and these relationships continued after the student teaching semester ended. In place candidates reported that although it was stressful to juggle the demands of teaching (e.g., in place arrangements) while learning to teach (e.g., graduate school), the comprehensive support system made it a workable situation.

**Research question #2: To what extent do teacher candidates believe student teaching experiences contributed to their success or challenges in the classroom?**

Although traditional and in place candidates believed that their student teaching experiences prepared them for the rigors of teaching children with disabilities, traditional and in place candidates seemed to differ in their perspectives on the extent to which their student teaching experiences prepared them. Traditional candidates felt well prepared to assume the teaching (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management) responsibilities of special education, however they felt very unprepared for the care coordination responsibilities of special education (e.g., IEP development, facilitating meetings). They attributed their lack of unpreparedness to the very limited and inconsistent opportunities for practicing care coordination activities during student teaching. In place candidates, on the other hand, felt very well prepared for teaching children with disabilities and for fulfilling care coordination responsibilities because they were required to manage both teaching and care coordination as in place candidates. In addition, in place candidates
also seemed better able to see the direct applicability of their coursework to their classrooms, although they noted the need for more IEP-related coursework in the M.Ed. program.

**Research question #3:** Are there any substantial differences in the perceptions of former traditional and in place candidates regarding their special education teacher preparation program?

In place candidates reported feeling much better prepared and considerably less stressed as compared to their traditional counterparts one year after graduation. Some in place candidates reported serving as mentors to newer teachers and assuming leadership roles at their schools. This may be due to the fact that in place candidates, though considered newly licensed, are really in their third year of teaching in the year following their graduation. During the M.Ed. program, in place candidates also spent considerably more time in supervised field activities than traditional candidates. Throughout their critical first two years of teaching, in place candidates had access to a comprehensive and specialized support system. This specialized support system included university professors, field supervisors, special education mentors, school-level supports, and peers. By the time they graduated from the M.Ed. program, in place candidates felt considerably more prepared for teaching and managing care coordination duties than their traditional counterparts. The lack of special education-specific mentoring in their first year of teaching seemed to compound the first year challenges for traditional candidates.

**Research question #4:** What are the perceptions of experienced field supervisors regarding traditional and in place student teaching experiences?
University field supervisors resoundingly believed traditional student teaching arrangements can benefit all teacher candidates. Field supervisors felt that teacher candidates of all skill levels have a lot to gain by observing experienced special education teachers model good teaching practices and effective classroom management techniques. Field supervisors also realized the challenge of getting traditional candidates to consistently practice care coordination activities. Because of the confidential nature of the IEP and other paperwork, this can be a sensitive topic for field supervisors, teacher candidates, and cooperating teachers. Field supervisors also recognized that given the right kinds of support, the in place arrangement is a viable option in preparing select candidates for teaching special education. Field supervisors noted that one benefit is the full immersion into the responsibilities of teaching special education, including care coordination activities. However, the challenge of in place arrangements is that candidates can sometimes become so entrenched into the routines and ways of their school that they are not as open to trying new strategies or techniques as readily as traditional candidates.

**Limitations**

There are many limitations of this study and therefore, the results must be interpreted with caution. This qualitative study focused on the perceptions and recollections of in place and traditionally prepared teacher candidates on how well they felt their student teaching and in place arrangements prepared them for teaching special education. All the teacher candidates from this study were from one teacher preparation program, the M.Ed. in Special Education program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The results of this study reflect only the experiences of the candidates from a singular
preparation program. It is unknown whether the results of this study can be generalized to candidates from other teacher preparation programs.

Second, although the collective tone of the in place interviews appeared favorable and supportive of the in place arrangement in preparing select individuals for teaching special education, the impact of having an in place candidate as a teacher on student outcomes is unknown and cannot be gleaned from this study. Future studies that examine student outcomes of in place candidates are warranted.

Third, the candidates in this study represented a wide range of teacher candidates who varied in age, ethnicities, and program emphases. They taught in different schools, settings, and grade levels. However, they represented a small and select group of teacher candidates. Despite these limitations, however, their responses to many of the interview questions were similar in vein and therefore, this may not be a major issue.

Fourth, I knew all 18 participants in a professional capacity. I knew seven of the 18 participants well; I had supervised them for one semester of field experience or student teaching at some point in their programs. The remaining 11 participants had contact with me through phone conversations or email exchanges about field-related program requirements or licensure requirements. In addition, I secured field experience and student teaching placements for five of the seven traditional candidates. My familiarity with the participants may have strengthened the data I collected in that I knew many of the participants’ situations well. It is possible they trusted me and they felt comfortable to freely share their thoughts and perspectives. However, my familiarity with them could have also influenced the candidates to respond to questions in a manner they felt would please me.
Finally, this study relied on the perceptions and recollections of the candidates. Participants may have forgotten details from their student teaching and in place experiences or they may have chosen to not share certain details with me. In addition, participants may have responded in ways they considered as being socially acceptable or that put them in a positive light.

Suggestions for Future Research

Teacher education researchers may want to consider further exploring the concepts of “becoming” and “being” with regard to teacher candidates’ developing professional roles. How do teacher candidates move from “becoming” teachers to “being” teachers? How might we best support new teachers as they transition from “becoming” to “being”? Targeted research aimed at understanding this transition process may lead to the development of more effective ways of supporting and mentoring new teachers.

School administrators and policy makers may want to re-examine the current dual job responsibilities of special education teachers. They may want to consider ways to substantially minimize or eliminate entirely the heavy burden of care coordination responsibilities on special education teachers. Based on the extant special education teacher retention research and the findings of this study, care coordination responsibilities seems to be a driving force in the high rates of special education teacher attrition. Might the minimization or elimination of the care coordinator role increase special education teacher retention? And if so, how can schools go about managing the federally mandated paperwork without relying on special education teachers to carry this responsibility?
Finally, large-scale studies that examine the influence of in place teachers on the educational outcomes of children with disabilities are needed. With its benefits and challenges for teacher candidates, we ultimately need to know whether or not allowing yet-to-be licensed special education teachers to teach children with disabilities is a sound practice.

Based on the results of this study, the term “special education teacher” seems to only partially describe the extent of the responsibilities that accompany this job. As the findings of this study suggest, the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers require teachers to have the ability to teach students with a wide variety of needs across many different settings. It also requires that teachers manage a considerable amount of administrative responsibility. As a result, structured learning and practice opportunities in both teaching and care coordination are critical to preparing special education teachers for the demands of teaching special education. Special education teacher candidates need consistent opportunities with feedback to hone their skills in both teaching and care coordination activities. Current models of traditional and in place arrangements each have benefits and drawbacks. Suggestions for improvements to strengthen each arrangement should be considered. In addition to focused practice opportunities, support for new special education teachers as they transition from becoming special education teachers to being special education teachers might be considered. To prepare teacher candidates for special education, it is critical to prepare and support candidates for the dual roles of special education - teaching and care coordination.
APPENDIX A

Table A-1

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>In Place (n= 11)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Traditional (n= 7)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed – Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Emphasis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild/moderate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe/profound</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preK-3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Field Supervisor</td>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. W</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. X</td>
<td>Severe/Profound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Y</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Z</td>
<td>Mild/Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

In Place Participants

*Thank you again for participating in this interview! The purpose of my project is to better understand the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates and to explore the perceptions of traditional and in place teacher candidates and their field supervisors on the different student teaching experiences. This interview should take no longer than one hour. I will ask you seven questions during this interview. If I ask you a question that you would rather not answer, please let me know. Also, please let me know if, at any point during this interview, you need a break or wish to stop the interview.*

*I will record this interview for transcription purposes. I will not share the recording with anyone. I will conceal your identity in my report by assigning you a pseudonym (fake name). In addition, I will not reveal any other identifying information about you (e.g., name of school).*

**Do you have any questions before we begin?**

1. What kinds of experiences working with children did you have prior to starting your special education program? Were these experiences in Hawaii or elsewhere?

2. What made you decide to go into the teaching profession? What made you decide to go into special education?

*If participant had special education experience prior to the program:*

2a. What are your thoughts about the other special education classrooms that you’ve seen?

**FOR ALL IN PLACE PARTICIPANTS**

3. Think back to your in place teaching experience. Why did you choose to be in place? How long were you in this position? How did you obtain this position?

4. Tell me about the students in your class. What were the disability categories of the students? What were they like?

5. What were the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of your students? How comfortable were you in teaching students whose backgrounds were different from your own? Did you receive any specific training (i.e., coursework) to address the needs of diverse students?
6. As you know, special education teachers have very specific responsibilities. During your student teaching, were you able to get opportunities/guidance in:
   a. lesson planning
   b. teaching methods/strategies
   c. behavior management
   d. assessment of students’ academic and behavioral performance
   e. RTI
   f. developing IEPs
   g. collaboration with school-level personnel (e.g., educational assistants, skills trainers, administrators, other teachers)
   h. collaboration with parents

7. How successful did you feel in these areas? Was there anyone you could turn to for help in these areas?

If participant is currently teaching:
7a. Do you currently receive mentoring/support? From whom?

8. In your opinion, how helpful was your special education program coursework in helping you manage the duties and responsibilities of teaching special education?

9. What did you enjoy about your in place teaching experiences?

10. Were there any difficulties you experienced while in place? What were these difficulties?

11. Was there anything you wish you learned more about during your in place experience? Why? What could have been done to provide you with more experience in this area?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding your in place experience?

Thank you again for allowing me to interview you! I appreciate your time! In the event I have questions or need to clarify your responses, may I contact you via email?
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Traditional Participants

Thank you again for participating in this interview! The purpose of my project is to better understand the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates and to explore the perceptions of traditional and in place teacher candidates and their field supervisors on the different student teaching experiences. This interview should take no longer than one hour. I will ask you seven questions during this interview. If I ask you a question that you would rather not answer, please let me know. Also, please let me know if, at any point during this interview, you need a break or wish to stop the interview.

I will record this interview for transcription purposes. I will not share the recording with anyone. I will conceal your identity in my report by assigning you a pseudonym (fake name). In addition, I will not reveal any other identifying information about you (e.g., name of school).

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. What kinds of experiences working with children did you have prior to starting your special education program? Were these experiences in Hawaii or elsewhere?

2. What made you decide to go into the teaching profession? What made you decide to go into special education?

If participant had special education experience prior to the program:
2a. What are your thoughts about the other special education classrooms that you’ve seen?

FOR ALL TRADITIONAL PARTICIPANTS

3. Think back to your student teaching experience. Why did you choose do a traditional student teaching? Can you tell me about your experiences?

4. Tell me about the students in your student teaching class. What were the disability categories of the students? What were they like? Tell me about your mentor teacher. What was your relationship like with him/her?

5. What were the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of your students? How comfortable were you in teaching students whose backgrounds were different from your own? Did you receive any specific training (i.e., coursework) to address the needs of diverse students?
6. As you know, special education teachers have very specific responsibilities. During your student teaching, were you able to get opportunities/guidance in:
   a. lesson planning
   b. teaching methods/strategies
   c. behavior management
   d. assessment of students’ academic and behavioral performance
   e. RTI
   f. developing IEPs
   g. collaboration with school-level personnel (e.g., educational assistants, skills trainers, administrators, other teachers)
   h. collaboration with parents

7. How successful did you feel in these areas? Was there anyone you could turn to for help in these areas?

If participant is currently teaching:
7a. Do you currently receive mentoring/support as a first year teacher? Who provided you with this support?

8. In your opinion, how helpful was your special education program coursework in helping you manage the duties and responsibilities of teaching special education?

9. What did you enjoy about your student teaching experiences?

10. Were there any difficulties you experienced in student teaching? What were these difficulties?

11. Was there anything you wish you learned more about during your student teaching? Why? What could have been done to provide you with more experience in this area?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding your student teaching experience?

Thank you again for allowing me to interview you! I appreciate your time! In the event I have questions or need to clarify your responses, may I contact you via email?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

University Field Supervisor

Thank you again for participating in this interview! The purpose of my project is to better understand the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates and to explore the perceptions of traditional and in place teacher candidates and their field supervisors on the different student teaching experiences. This interview should take no longer than 1 hour. I will ask you eight questions about a student you supervised during student teaching/year-long internship. If I ask you a question that you would rather not answer, please let me know. Also, please let me know if, at any point during this interview, you need a break or you wish to stop the interview.

I will record this interview for transcription purposes. I will not share the recording with anyone. I will conceal your identity in my report by assigning you a pseudonym. In addition, I will not reveal any other identifying information about you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. You supervised ________________ for his/her student teaching/year-long internship last fall/spring. What do you remember about his/her student teaching/in place situation?

2. How good of a practice teaching experience do you think ______ got through this placement? What could have been done to make it a richer learning experience?

3. How conducive was (name of student)'s student teaching placement/in place position in teaching him/her how to:
   a. plan for lessons
   b. use teaching methods/strategies
   c. apply behavior management principles
   d. assess students’ academic/behavioral performance
   e. write IEPs
   f. collaborate with other adults (e.g., educational assistants, skills trainers, other teachers, parents)
   g. teach students from diverse backgrounds

4. Over the years, you’ve supervised students in both traditional and in-place arrangements. What is your opinion on these two types of clinical teaching situations? How well do you think each type of placement prepares candidates for the teaching profession?
Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me! I really appreciate it!
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

In Place and Traditional Teacher Candidates

Consent to Participate in Research Project:

A Tale of Two Pathways: The Perceptions of Newly Graduated Traditional and In Place Special Education Teacher Candidates On Their Teacher Preparation Experiences

My name is Linda Oshita. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH) in the Special Education Department. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project. The purpose of my project is better understand the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates and to explore the perceptions of traditional and in place teacher candidates and their field supervisors on the traditional and in place student teaching experiences. I am asking you to participate because you recently completed your student teaching experience.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you participate in this project, I will meet with you for an interview at a location and time convenient for you. The interview will consist of 12 open ended questions, and will take 45 minutes to an hour. Interview questions will include questions like, “Think back to your in place/traditional student teaching experience. Why did you choose to be in place/do a traditional placement? What did you enjoy about your in place teaching experiences? Was there anything you wish you learned more about during your in place experience? Why? What could have been done to provide you with more experience in this area?” Only you and I will be present during the interview. I will audio-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses. You will be one of about 15 people whom I will interview for this study.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. I hope, however, that the results of this project will help the University improve the student teaching experience for future teacher candidates. I believe there is little risk to you in participating in this research project. If however, you become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions or discussing topics with me during the interview, we can skip the question, or take a break, or stop the interview, or withdraw from the project altogether.
Privacy and Confidentiality: During this research project, I will keep all data in a secured location. Only my University of Hawaii advisor and I will have access to the data, although legally authorized agencies, including the UH Committee on Human Studies, can review research records. After I transcribe the interviews, I will erase/destroy the audio-recordings. When I type and report the results of my research project, I will not use your name or any other personally identifying information. Rather, I will use pseudonyms (fake names) and report my findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time without any penalty or loss. Your participation or non-participation will not impact you.

As compensation for time spent participating in the research project, I will provide you with a $20 gift certificate to either Starbucks or Jamba Juice.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at (808) 383-0429 or email me at lindao@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808) 956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to:

Linda Oshita, Principal Investigator at: lindao@hawaii.edu or 956-4345 (fax)

Signature:

I have read and understand the information provided to me about participating in the research project, A Tale of Two Pathways: The Perceptions of Newly Graduated Traditional and In Place Special Education Teacher Candidates On Their Teacher Preparation Experiences

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this research project.

Printed name: ______________________________

Signature: _________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Please check one:

______ I give my consent to be audio-recorded during the individual interview.
_____ I do not give my consent to be audio-recorded during the individual interview.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.
Consent Form for University Field Supervisors

Consent to Participate in Research Project:

A Tale of Two Pathways: The Perceptions of Newly Graduated Traditional and In Place Special Education Teacher Candidates On Their Teacher Preparation Experiences

My name is Linda Oshita. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UH) in the Special Education Department. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project. The purpose of my project is better understand the student teaching experiences of traditional and in place teacher candidates and to explore the perceptions of traditional and in place teacher candidates and their field supervisors on the traditional and in place student teaching experiences. I am asking you to participate because you supervised a recently graduated traditional or in place teacher candidate.

Activities and Time Commitment: If you participate in this project, I will meet with you for an interview at a location and time convenient for you. The interview will consist of 4 open ended questions, and will take 30 - 45 minutes. Interview questions will include questions like, “You supervised ____________ for his/her student teaching/year-long internship last fall/spring. What do you remember about his/her student teaching/in place situation? How good of a practice teaching experience do you think ______ got through this placement? What could have been done to make it a richer learning experience?” Only you and I will be present during the interview. I will audio-record the interview so that I can later transcribe the interview and analyze the responses. You will be one of about 7 university field supervisors whom I will interview for this study.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. I hope, however, that the results of this project will help the Special Education Department improve the student teaching experience for future teacher candidates. I believe there is little risk to you in participating in this research project. If however, you become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the interview questions or discussing topics with me during the interview, we can skip the question, or take a break, or stop the interview, or withdraw from the project altogether.

Privacy and Confidentiality: During this research project, I will keep all data in a secured location. Only my University of Hawaii advisor and I will have access to the data, although legally authorized agencies, including the UH Committee on Human Studies, can review research records. After I transcribe the interviews, I will erase/destroy the audio-recordings. When I type and report the results of my research project, I will not use your name or any other personally identifying information. Rather,
I will use pseudonyms (fake names) and report my findings in a way that protects your privacy and confidentiality to the extent allowed by law.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time without any penalty or loss. Your participation or non-participation will not impact you.

As compensation for time spent participating in the research project, I will provide you with a $20 gift certificate to either Starbucks or Jamba Juice.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at (808) 383-0429 or email me at lindao@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at (808) 956-5007, or uhirb@hawaii.edu

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date this signature page and return it to:

Linda Oshita, Principal Investigator at: lindao@hawaii.edu or 956-4345 (fax)

**Signature:**

I have read and understand the information provided to me about participating in the research project, *A Tale of Two Pathways: The Perceptions of Newly Graduated Traditional and In Place Special Education Teacher Candidates On Their Teacher Preparation Experiences*

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this research project.

Printed name: ______________________________

Signature: _________________________________

Date: ______________________________

**Please check one:**

_____ I give my consent to be audio-recorded during the individual interview.

_____ I do not give my consent to be audio-recorded during the individual interview.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.
APPENDIX D

Traditional Mild/Moderate Program Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-requisites</th>
<th>First Semester (Fall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 404: Foundations of Inclusive Schooling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 485: Classroom Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 404: Foundations of Inclusive Schooling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 485: Classroom Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 611: Methods &amp; Strategies for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 613: Advanced Assessment &amp; Curriculum Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 626a: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Semester (Spring)</th>
<th>Third Semester (Summer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 603: Principles of Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 621: Language Arts Strategies: Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 626b: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 600: Foundations of Exceptionality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 625: Teaching Skills for Social Competence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 640: Seminar on Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Semester (Fall)</th>
<th>Fifth Semester (Spring)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 605: Collaboration in School and Community Settings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 642: Seminar on Applied Research/Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 627: Advanced Practicum OR (can be taken in fall or spring)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 635: Procedures for Early Childhood Special Education OR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 652: Transition &amp; Supported Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 699: Directed Reading/Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 627: Advanced Practicum (can be taken in fall or spring)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRADITIONAL SEVERE/PROFOUND SCHEDULE

Traditional Severe Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-requisites</th>
<th>First Semester (Fall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 404: Foundations of Inclusive Schooling</td>
<td>SPED 605: Collaboration in School &amp; Community Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 485: Classroom Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td>SPED 632: Language/Communication Intervention-Communication Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 612: Methods &amp; Strategies for Students with Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 626a: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Semester (Spring)</th>
<th>Third Semester (Summer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 603: Principles of Behavior</td>
<td>SPED 600: Foundations of Exceptionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 614: Assessment &amp; Instruction – Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 626b: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Semester (Fall)</th>
<th>Fifth Semester (Spring)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 630: Positive Behavioral Support - Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
<td>SPED 635: Procedures for Early Childhood Special Education OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 642: Seminar on Applied Research/Special Education</td>
<td>SPED 652: Transition &amp; Supported Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 627: Advanced Practicum (can be taken in fall or spring)</td>
<td>SPED 699: Directed Reading/Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 627: Advanced Practicum (can be taken in fall or spring)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX E

#### Lesson Observation Form

**Lesson Observation Form – Mild/Moderate/Severe Disabilities**

Fill in course number: SPED _______  Circle: (a) (b) or (c) Lesson # _____ Date ____________

Student ___________________  UH Supervisor ___________________  School/Class ___________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating/Grade Code:</th>
<th>4 (A)=Demonstrates at a level beyond expectations  NO = Not Yet Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 (B)=Demonstrates at a level expected  NA = Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (C)=Demonstrates at a level below expectations  MP = Making Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (D)=Does not demonstrate competency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Content Specifics</th>
<th>Comments/Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning/Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Lesson Plan specifies behavioral objectives that are linked to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ (a) long-term goals,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ (b) current functioning level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Conveys clear presentation, opportunities for both guided &amp; independent practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Describes accommodations/modifications for child(ren) with special needs, if appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Materials assembled and adapted as necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Lesson is appropriate to students' learning levels</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Elicits students' attention at outset</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Provides clear, simple directions/prompts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Communicates expectations for appropriate behavior (cuing words, paces lesson, appropriate language level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Effective presentation of content with explicit modeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Frequent checks for student understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Moves to guided practice, independent practice, or evaluation when students' performance indicates readiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Provides appropriate closure to lesson</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses research-supported instructional strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses effective strategies to support students' independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Strategies used maintain student attention/engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Provides repetition and assistance as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses correction/reinforcement strategies appropriately</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Use of Instructional Time</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Begins lesson right away (materials are ready, distractions minimized)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Lesson is paced appropriately</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Allows sufficient time for student practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Transition between tasks/lessons is smooth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Maintains a high rate of time engaged on skills and academic tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Alternative activities planned that meet long-term goals</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/Content Specified</th>
<th>Comments/Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Demonstrates understanding of management strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Delivers consequences consistent with management plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Applies strategies consistently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses positive strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Ignores misbehavior paired with reinforcement of other behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses reinforcement that is frequent, sincere, age-appropriate, purposeful/directed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Delivers reinforcement directed at independent, self-directing behavior (self-management used when possible)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Anticipates/deals with disruptions calmly/effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Intervenes before inappropriate behaviors escalate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses natural and task specific reinforcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Monitors (collects data on) application of management procedures and modifies as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Collaborates with MT to develop, implement, and monitor individualized management strategies as needed</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses appropriate procedures to assess students’ understanding/performance of lesson objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Takes data that will provide information about student performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Uses data to determine instructional needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Shares progress with student(s), if appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Allows student participation in data collection, if appropriate (self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-recording)</td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development/Self-Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Identifies areas of strength/weakness in lesson planning, presentation, strategies, management, and evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Accepts and uses supervisor suggestions in a timely manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Communicates with supervisor and MT in an open, constructive manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Lesson Rating/Grade:</strong></td>
<td>4 3 2 1 NO NA MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Additional Comments:*
APPENDIX F

Unit of Instruction/Lesson Set
SPED 627/628

During the student teaching/internship/practicum, students will prepare a planned Unit of Instruction, including at least a 5-lesson sequence designed to accommodate the individual learning differences of students in the field setting. Impact on student learning should be evidenced through student interviews, work samples, and direct probe measures.

The Unit with the five detailed lesson plans should address all components of direct instruction. The lessons are to be implemented with a group of students. A minimum of one lesson in the sequence will be observed and evaluated by the university supervisor (US). The UH student will prepare a written post-reflection following completion of the Unit. Visual documentation of classroom students’ performance may include photos of materials used and student work samples. The UH student will submit the unit plan, the post-reflections, the US evaluation of at least one lesson, and documentation of student performance. Students will demonstrate mastery and understanding of scope and sequence of the skills and knowledge that are to be taught through both lesson planning and implementation.

REQUIREMENTS
1. Submission of five lesson plans that follow the format provided.
   a. The five lessons should be focused on a particular content/skill area—required
   Demonstrate your ability to integrate across content areas—optional
   b. Each lesson plan should include specific IEP objectives, lesson objectives and relevant Hawaii Content and Performance Standards.
   c. Lesson and IEP objectives should be reflected in your evaluation section (independent practice) of your lesson plan.
   d. Be sure to include specific accommodations and modifications that were used.
   e. At least one lesson will be observed and evaluated by your university supervisor.

2. Submission of a SUMMARY/REFLECTION of the five lessons that you had implemented. The summary should include
   a. Your evaluation of your own teaching (e.g., effectiveness in conveying material, recommendations for any changes that you might incorporate next time).
   b. Your assessment of whether the student(s) were responsive to your approaches, the material, etc. Were the students engaged? Was the material appropriate for their current level of performance?
   c. Your recommendations for future lessons (e.g., extension activities, additional related material that could be covered, etc.)

3. Submission of your field supervisor’s observation form from one lesson. Submission of additional observation forms from your field supervisor of subsequent lessons—optional

4. Permanent products: Examples of students’ work documenting their use of the strategy that you had taught; examples of students’ work documenting their progress (e.g., may include photos—with appropriate permissions)
I. **INTRODUCTION**: Provide a rationale and overview of your unit. This section should include a justification for the content/skill area, IEP objectives, and Hawaii Content and Performance Standards that you selected on which to focus. Why did you select this particular focus and strategies to use? How does teaching the unit benefit the student(s)?

II. **METHODS**: Provide a clear description of each of the following:
   a. **Student(s) with whom you will be working**: Grade/age level, learning strengths and needs; Documentation of their present level of performance (e.g., observational data, teacher/self-made assessments, IEP information). Include information that is directly related to the purposes of your project.
   b. **Setting**: Describe the environment where you will be implementing this project (e.g., resource classroom, shared classroom with another resource class, in the general education classroom, etc.). Provide enough detail so that it is clear as to under what conditions you will be working.
   c. **Content and Curriculum**: Describe the content area that you will be addressing; provide an overview of the curriculum that will be used; describe the unit or theme of instruction; describe how your lessons will ‘stand alone’ as a piece of instruction or how your lessons fit into the larger scheme of an ongoing ‘unit’ or ‘instructional theme.’
   d. **Specific learning objective(s)**: Identify specific learning objective(s) that will be targeted for this project. Each learning objective should be measurable and observable. You will be collecting data on the learning objectives to document student progress.
   e. **Procedures**: Describe (a) how you collected initial (baseline) data and formative data to monitor students’ progress and (b) the organization of your lessons. Provide an overview of how you developed your lessons (e.g., instructional decisions made and links between your lessons).

III. **LESSON PLANS**: Include your five lesson plans under this section (5 minimum). Format will be provided. Include your supervisor’s evaluation of one lesson in this section.

IV. **REFLECTION** of your teaching: Include a reflection on each of the 5 lessons that you taught. You can put these reflections in a separate section OR include the lesson reflection after each of your lessons in section III.

VI. **DATA**: Documentation of students’ progress (table(s), graphs)
   Provide data on your student(s) progress. Include baseline data (e.g., data prior to introduction of the instructional strategy) as well as ‘intervention’ data (e.g., data after you present the instructional strategy). You will be documenting student progress in specific areas (IEP objectives, lesson objectives).

VII. **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**: Provide an overall evaluation of your project.
   a. Students’ progress
   b. Implementation of lessons: Your effectiveness in terms of presentation/instruction
      1. Were students responsive to your lessons?
      2. What worked? What was especially effective in terms of your presentation of the material?
3. What are your recommendations for adjustments to teaching? Changes in presentation? Changes in monitoring progress?

VIII. APPENDIX
   a. Permanent Products (Students’ work): Thoughtful selection of samples representative of progress
   b. Teacher created materials related to this project

IX. MECHANICS AND ORGANIZATION
   a. Typed, double-spaced
   b. Grammar & punctuation
   c. Completeness & clarity of expression
Midterm/Final Cooperating Teacher Evaluation - Special Education Field Experience – SPED 627 or 628

Preservice Teacher: ___________________________________________

Date: ______________________________

Mentor Teacher: __________________ UH Supervisor: ___________

School: __________________

Directions: Apply the following rating scale to the items below with consideration for the preservice teacher’s level within their teacher education program. Focus on Bloom’s Taxonomy of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

N/O No opportunity to observe
4 (A) (Target) Demonstrates a level beyond expectations
3 (B) (Acceptable) Demonstrates a level expected
2 (C) (Unacceptable) Demonstrates a level below expectations
1 (D-F) (Unacceptable) Does not demonstrate competence

Foundations
Indicates a developing philosophy and is mindful of becoming part of the profession. 4 3 2 1 N/O
COMMENTS:

Characteristics
Demonstrates sensitivity to diverse needs within the classroom. 4 3 2 1 N/O
COMMENTS:

Methods of Instruction
Demonstrates knowledge of, and applies, appropriate types of planning, instruction, and use of technology. 4 3 2 1 N/O
COMMENTS:

Management
Demonstrates a commitment to a safe, positive, and supportive learning environment. 4 3 2 1 N/O
COMMENTS:

Communication
Demonstrates use of effective and appropriate communication and collaboration skills. 4 3 2 1 N/O
COMMENTS:
**Assessment**
Demonstrates the ability to appropriately assess and modify instruction for diverse learners.

| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | N/O |

COMMENTS:

**Professionalism**
Demonstrates professional dispositions* and a commitment to facilitating the highest quality of life for all learners. Maintains confidentiality and demonstrates respect for the school community.

*See Field Experience Syllabus

COMMENTS:

RATING/ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I have been informed of this evaluation.

_______________________________  __________
Student Signature  Date

_______________________________  __________
Evaluator’s Signature  Date
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professional and ethical conduct</td>
<td>Candidate consistently listens attentively; understands and responds to feedback by making suggested changes; is solution-oriented; models integrity and ethical conduct.</td>
<td>Candidate reluctantly listens to or ignores constructive feedback; does not make suggested changes; becomes defensive or argumentative and makes excuses for behavior; conduct is unethical and/or disrespectful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individual and cultural sensitivity</td>
<td>Candidate always respects and values diversity; appreciates and responds to other's perspectives; models cultural sensitivity.</td>
<td>Candidate is judgmental and inappropriate in response to others' feelings and perspectives; culturally naive and/or insensitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Work habits</td>
<td>Candidate is consistently and independently reliable, punctual, and follows through on work commitments and responsibilities; exhibits exemplary communication, organization and time management skills.</td>
<td>Candidate is excessively unreliable and/or disorganized; disregards time commitments, and/or fails to follow through on work assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Effective communication</td>
<td>Candidate communicates clearly in an open and respectful manner with students, peers, professionals, and families; asks questions and seeks information appropriately; models effective communication with others.</td>
<td>Candidate's communication is unclear, closed, disrespectful, garrulous, offensive, and/or contextually inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX H**

**PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITION RUBRIC**
**The M.Ed. in Special Education Program**

Students who fail to meet any one of these required dispositions may not be allowed to continue in the program. These indicators are not in exhaustive list. The descriptions outlined in the disposition rubric are general in nature. These indicators are not an exhaustive list. Students who fail to meet any one of these required dispositions may not be allowed to continue in the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-reflection</td>
<td>Candidate is insightful in examining on his/her psychological, emotional, and professional characteristics and thinking how these characteristics impacts others; takes the initiative for personal and professional growth.</td>
<td>Candidate reflects on her/his psychological, emotional, and professional characteristics and monitors the impact on classroom and the larger professional environment.</td>
<td>Candidate does not recognize the importance of self-reflection and does not show a willingness to grow personally or professionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collaboration</td>
<td>Candidate initiates and participates in collaborative efforts with others; encourages input from others; participates in problem solving; shares responsibilities and is flexible in performing various roles.</td>
<td>Candidate is able to work in a collaborative manner and can contribute as a member of a team.</td>
<td>Candidate has difficulty or is rigid in working with others--individually or in teams; ineffective in group problem solving; is unable or unwilling to accept her/his share of group responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** These dispositions reflect the standards of the Council for Exceptional Children and the University of Hawaii at Manoa and are required to be demonstrated in all program-related activities (classes, field experiences, advising meetings, etc.). The descriptions outlined in the disposition rubric are general in nature. These indicators are not an exhaustive list. Students who fail to meet any one of these required dispositions may not be allowed to continue in the M.Ed. in Special Education program.

Instructors/Supervisors: Mark each category with point score (2, 1, 0); any category marked with a “0” requires an action plan or dismissal.

With my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this document with my instructor/supervisor.

Instructors/Supervisors: Mark each category with point score (2, 1, 0); any category marked with a “0” requires an action plan or dismissal.

With my signature, I acknowledge that I have reviewed this document with my instructor/supervisor.

______________________________
Name

______________________________
Date
APPENDIX I

In Place Mild/Moderate Program Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-requisites</th>
<th>First Semester (Fall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 404: Foundations of Inclusive Schooling</td>
<td>SPED 611: Methods &amp; Strategies for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 485: Classroom Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td>SPED 613: Advanced Assessment &amp; Curriculum Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 626a: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Semester (Spring)</th>
<th>Third Semester (Summer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 603: Principles of Behavior</td>
<td>SPED 600: Foundations of Exceptionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 621: Language Arts Strategies: Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
<td>SPED 625: Teaching Skills for Social Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 626b: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
<td>SPED 640: Seminar on Mild/Moderate Disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Semester (Fall)</th>
<th>Fifth Semester (Spring)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 605: Collaboration in School and Community Settings</td>
<td>SPED 635: Procedures for Early Childhood Special Education OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 642: Seminar on Applied Research/Special Education</td>
<td>SPED 652: Transition &amp; Supported Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 628: Internship</td>
<td>SPED 699: Directed Reading/Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 628: Internship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**In Place Severe Program Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-requisites</th>
<th>First Semester (Fall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 404: Foundations of Inclusive Schooling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 485: Classroom Organization &amp; Management</td>
<td>SPED 605: Collaboration in School &amp; Community Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 632: Language/Communication Intervention-Communication Disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 612: Methods &amp; Strategies for Students with Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 626a: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Semester (Spring)</th>
<th>Third Semester (Summer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 603: Principles of Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 614: Assessment &amp; Instruction – Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 626b: Field Experiences in Special Education</td>
<td>SPED 600: Foundations of Exceptionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourth Semester (Fall)</th>
<th>Fifth Semester (Spring)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPED 630: Positive Behavioral Support - Severe Disabilities/Autism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 642: Seminar on Applied Research/Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPED 628: Internship</td>
<td>SPED 635: Procedures for Early Childhood Special Education OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 652: Transition &amp; Supported Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 699: Directed Reading/Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPED 628: Internship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Müller, E. (2012). *Using grow your own programs to promote recruitment and retention of qualified special education personnel: Three state approaches*. Alexandria, VA: Project Forum and the Personnel Improvement Center at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Retrieved February 21,


